

ANKORS Executive Director's Report

For the 2022 AGM



I want to express my gratitude to live, work and play on the un-ceded territory of the Sinixt and the territories of the Ktunaxa and Sylix Nations. I also wish to acknowledge, honour and respect the Metis peoples of this region.

The heart and soul of the work of ANKORS has always been rooted in social justice, human rights and the rightful place of people with lived expertise. The staff, peer leaders, board, membership and volunteers of ANKORS are central to moving forward the work in HIV, Hepatitis C and Harm Reduction in the region, the province and beyond. The organization came of age during the HIV crisis and now at nearly 30 years old has become a well-respected rural leader in harm reduction work. There are hundreds of people who have contributed to supporting the most vulnerable members of our communities through dignified, compassionate and trauma informed care. ANKORS is innovative, daring and has taken a leadership role in sexual health education, care and programming for the lgbtqia2S+ population; developing rural drug user networks; drug checking at festivals and in community; Overdose Prevention services outreach support for OAT; the Kootenay Boundary Adult Support Recovery Bed Program; the Rural Trans Connect program; peer leadership development and training and now Indigenous-focused harm reduction education, outreach support and wellness programming.

The last few years, have presented exceptional challenges for the people we serve as well as for our team. The toxic drug poisonings, the COVID 19 crisis and the housing crisis have impacted the psycho-social, economic and physical well-being of our communities and our work places. Through all of this, the ANKORS team has risen with courage and compassion to support those we serve. It has not been easy and there are times that the work and life in general takes a toll on our mental health and well-being. I want to acknowledge that this is the struggle and that our well-being is so crucial to being able to provide care and stay in this kind of work. I encourage everyone to take breaks, do the things that give you joy

and to hold each other up in kindness and understanding for all the struggles we face on a daily basis. You are the true heroes of the work in harm reduction and I have so much respect for each and every one of you.

In spite of the challenges, I want to acknowledge some of the small and not so small victories of this past year. In the East Kootenays, the team worked hard on grant writing and were able to find funding for the Indigenous Wellness Program, for Street Beats and for expanded Drug Checking. In the West Kootenays, we were able to form a new relationship with BC Housing who have provided us with the financing to purchase a house for the Support Recovery Program. Interior Health came through with additional funding for the purchase of a Mobile Outreach Van, some additional funds for harm reduction education and support for the communities of Trail and Grand Forks. The Community Action Initiative continue to fund the CAT groups in Nelson, Grand Forks and Cranbrook as well as providing funds for the OPS and Castlegar CAT. The Trail CAT fundraised for monies to support the pop up OPS in Trail and our partnership with Nelson CARES provided funding through Reaching Home for the HUB staff. SUAP has generously provided for ANKORS peer navigation and leadership development, Rise Up and Street College. CBT has provided funds for the wellness program in the East Kootenays and PSHA has been amongst our other generous donors. We appreciate and acknowledge our partnerships with community based organizations, Interior Health, the Province, SUAP and in particular our Indigenous partnerships with COINS, Ktunaxa Nation Health, First Nations Health Authority and the Metis Association.

There are so many volunteers that provide support to ANKORS including members of the ANKORS board of directors. Your time and dedication is deeply appreciated. We couldn't do it without. On that note, I'd like to extend a huge note of gratitude to Nora Lilligren for your work on the Support Recovery house project. Your hours of time developing budgets, dealing with contractors and renovations and lawyers is above and beyond. Still with all this work, you have managed our benefit plan and for all of this we are deeply grateful. Thank you Nora. I would like to also acknowledge the ANKORS team leads, Polly Sutherland, the ANKORS Harm Reduction Team lead who has supported the team through some challenging times with personal and shared losses this year; with the change in office space and the growth of programs and services in the East. Thank you for your wisdom, your compassion and your hard work. A huge thank you to David Nixon for all of the work you do in keeping the communication flowing amongst the staff, the coordination of the team meetings, the scheduling of staffing in the OPS and the front of house, the support of the OAT clinic, the RELATE group and the Nutrition Hydration Program! You do it all and you are such an incredible support to us all. A big thank you as well to RYALL Giuliano for being the program manager and leading the support recovery team. Also, to Amanda Erickson who has provided so much support and leadership to the CAT groups in our region. Thank you for your work in leading these communities forward in the work to address the overdose crisis. Thank you also to Leah, our incredible bookkeeper who does the work of keeping us paid and supporting us with all of our financial questions and needs. You are truly a super hero! To the peers, casual, part-time and full-time staff and each and every individual member of the ANKORS Team, including the REDUN, HOPE and EKNPUD thank you for your incredible work in our communities. I know how much you give of yourselves every day in addressing stigma, caring for others and effecting change on micro and macro levels. You make a difference every single day.