

ANKORS Men's Health Initiative Program Report

April 2022 – March 2023

This report highlights the programming and initiatives that have taken place under the men's health umbrella over the past year. The focus of the men's health initiative programming has been to connect with gay, bisexual, queer, two-spirit and trans-identified men to support holistic health measures in a rural setting. Since the population I serve is smaller compared to larger centers, this report centers on a narrative approach.

PLUS Clinic

Every 3 months and working closely with Robin Van Stolk, our health outreach nurse, I organize and host an HIV and STI testing clinic geared toward GBTQ2S men and non-binary folks. Our hope is to provide a safer space for our folks to receive low-barrier and non-judgmental testing that they may not find attending other general testing clinics. Oftentimes, there is a fear of discriminatory practices, biased attitudes, or passed judgments when seeking out medical professionals who will test for HIV and other STI's. Finding a queer affirming doctor or nurse can be a challenge, so as a queer individual myself, I can provide that safer environment. We average between 2 to 4 individuals using the services each quarter.

Kootenay Queer Men's Support Group

I facilitate a monthly meeting for GBTQ2S identified men in a safe space where they can speak openly about their struggles and connect with other men who may feel the isolation of living in a smaller center or are perhaps located even more remotely. Since its inception in January of 2021, I have witnessed the shift in participants from a very mixed membership in the beginning to an older group in the past year. The support group consistently draws in 4 to 6 participants each month and those members remain consistent. We discuss the struggles of meeting others in remote locations, the stigma around coming out as an older queer individual in a small town and grappling with substance and alcohol use.

KOOTENAY QUEER MEN, 2S AND NON-BINARY SUPPORT GROUP



West Kootenay
GBTQ2 identified
men and
nonbinary folks
supporting one
another



**MONTHLY
MEETINGS.
NEXT GROUP
SATURDAY,
MAY 27, AT 2
PM.
101 BAKER ST.**



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ankors.bc.ca kootenaymhi@gmail.com

Party and Play Presentation

I have recently developed a presentation with the assistance of a few folks with lived experience focusing on harm reduction and destigmatizing the assumptions and biases around chemsex and the Party and Play lifestyle. The presentation is geared toward both healthcare professionals to help them better understand and provide unbiased support, while also providing harm reduction techniques and methods for those involved in the lifestyle. I discuss the hazards of mixing substances with sex and being proactive in taking control of one's choices while minimizing harm. I have even included important issues folks with lived experience wish healthcare providers knew when supporting people who PnP. The presentation additionally offers a resource guide to unbiased and low-barrier services around the West Kootenay region.

Support, Counseling, and Outreach

Oftentimes my work takes me out into the different communities of the region to connect with folks who may need extra support or who may not feel comfortable coming to see me in a busy office. I have a work-based account on the queer dating apps, where I advertise upcoming PLUS Clinics, the support group, and offer to meet at coffee shops to provide connection and resources. Currently, I support 3 folks one-on-one. One older gentleman who has just come out at the age of 72, one individual with support and harm reduction gear for their PnP lifestyle, and one person who is struggling with both recovery and finding stable housing.

Walk and Talk

In the warmer months of the year, I organize and facilitate a queer walk 'n' talk group as a monthly activity. We gather at one of the many local hiking trailheads and get out for some exercise. Additionally, this activity sparks conversations to arise. Sometimes we end up on more intensive hikes and sometimes it's an easier walk. Either way, I have had the opportunity to connect with many queer men in the region this way and hold space for them while getting some exercise. There have been a few occasions where it has been just myself and another participant, but often I see around 4 or 5 folks joining up.

Shambhala Music Festival

In July of 2022, I had the opportunity to work at the Shambhala music festival with ANKORS in the harm reduction and drug checking capacities. I helped create and facilitate the space, decorated with pride flags, and provided harm reduction tips to folks partaking in substance during the festival. The ANKORS drug checking services drew in almost 2500 folks and, personally, I estimate I connected with 75-85 folks each shift I worked. Having queer representation at the festival and in the drug checking facilities, is crucial to engage the queer community as they are often a segment of the population that is overlooked. Additionally, being trained on using the FTIR spectrometer and being a member of the queer community brings a sense of ease to other queer folks to utilize our services.

2022 BC INTERIOR FESTIVAL DRUG CHECKING

Results of drug checking services from two of the largest electronic music festivals in British Columbia, Canada.

24 900
Total festival attendees
6900 | 18 000
Base Coast | Shambhala
3868
Samples analyzed
2327
Service Uses
0.1.7
Average drugs tested per service use

What is drug checking?

Drug checking is a harm reduction based service that enables people to know what is in their drugs.



Substance composition is analyzed using specialised technology. For this report, testing kits, reagents and FTIR spectroscopy were used.



Results are discussed with non-judgemental experts and access to a variety of other harm reduction related services is available.



The service user is empowered in making an informed and potentially safer choice regarding their use of substances.

70 It takes a village!

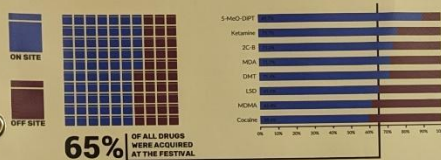
As many as 70 people take part in the drug checking team at Shambhala. The crew at festivals is made up of people who use drugs, social workers, activists, chemists, pharmacists, nurses, drug nerds and many other passionate individuals. This diversity represents a wealth of knowledge and experience to share with service users.

Important Note

The following results do not represent overall drug use at festivals. They are based solely on findings from the drugs that voluntarily come through the drug checking service.
Alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and magic mushrooms are not analyzed by drug checking services, so this report does not look into their prevalence and composition.

WHERE DO PEOPLE GET THEIR DRUGS?

A general overview of the origin of the drugs analyzed.

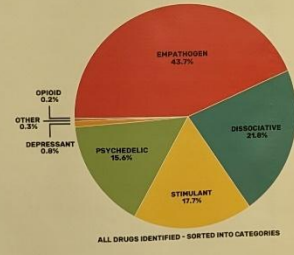
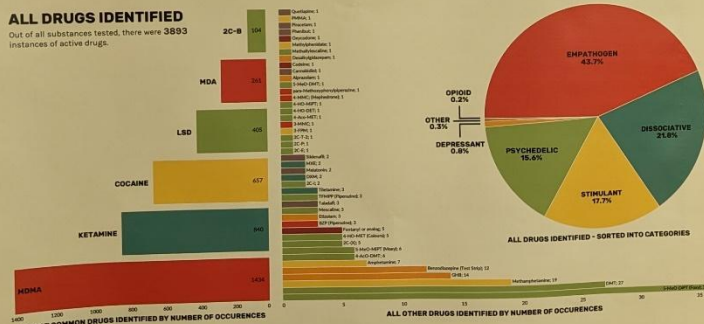


TAKE THIS REPORT HOME



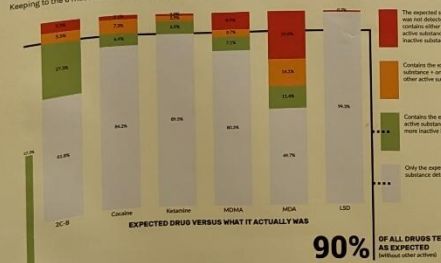
ALL DRUGS IDENTIFIED

Out of all substances tested, there were 3893 instances of active drugs.



DRUGS. WHAT ARE THEY REALLY?

Keeping to the 6 most common drugs analyzed, we break down what the drug was expected to be and what it actually was.

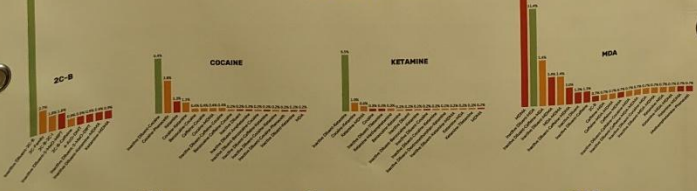


ACTIVE OR INACTIVE?

ACTIVE ingredients are substances that have a noticeable effect. They can be illicit drugs or buffs and cuts used to bulk the drug or change its effects.

INACTIVE ingredients are substances that do not have a significant or noticeable effect on the body or mind. They are usually used to either bulk up the volume of a drug to save money, or to dilute a substance that is too strong on its own.

Inactive ingredients are grouped under "Inactive Diluent". This category includes carbohydrates, sugars, health supplements, food additives, salts and oils such as: Microcrystalline Cellulose, Sucrose, Glucose, Maltodextrin, Inulin, Dextrose, Erythritol, Lactose, Xylitol, Creatine, Chitosan, Lecithin, Guar Gum, Diethyl Salicylate, Calcium Phosphate, Sodium Bicarbonate, Stearic Acid, Magnesium Sulfate, Mannitol, Citric Acid.

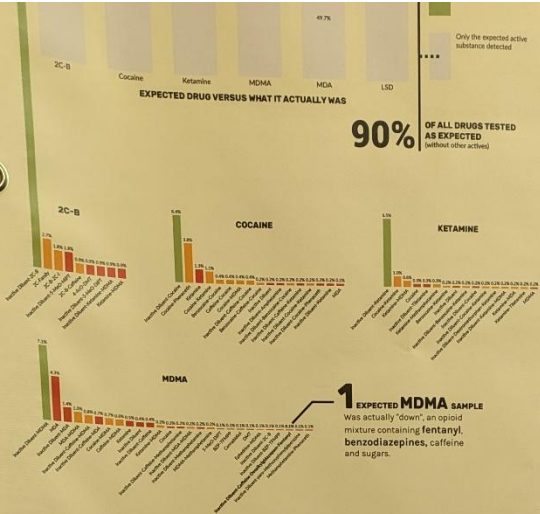


Know Your
ALWAYS START
Test BEFORE

Light 10-15mg	Light
Medium 15-30mg	Medium
Strong 30-75mg	Strong
Very Strong 75-150mg	Very Strong

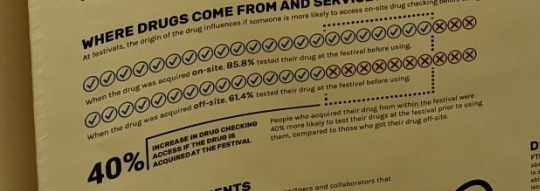
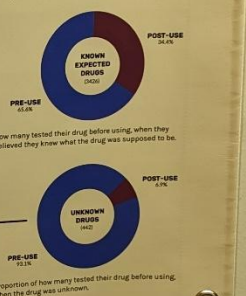
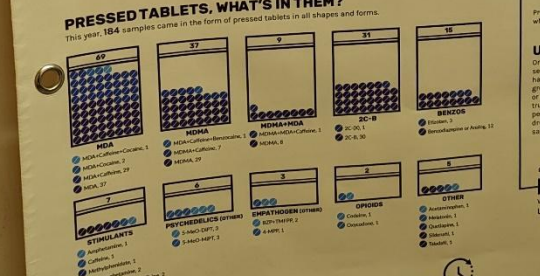
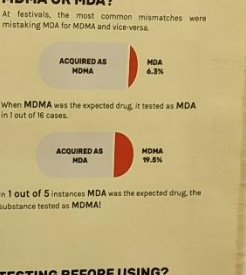
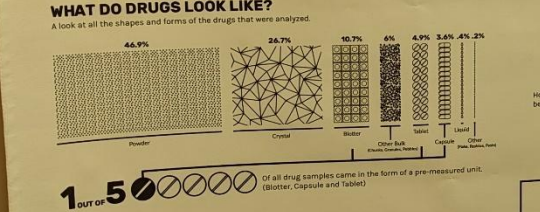
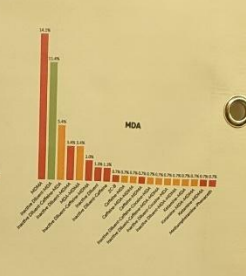
GHG Health
Start with a test dose (2-5mg) and
feel your way up.

All drugs have risks & supplies and drug ch...



Ingredients are grouped under "Inactive Diluent". This category includes carbohydrates, sugars, health supplements, food additives, salts and oils such as:

- Microcrystalline Cellulose, Saccharin, Glucose, Mannitol, Inositol, Dextrose, D-xylose, Lactose, Xylitol, Cereals, Calcium Stearate, Croscarmellose, Cellulose, Gelatin, Dimethyl Sulfoxide, Disodium Phosphate, Sodium Bicarbonate, Stearic Acid, Magnesium Stearate, Hydroxypropyl Cellulose, Glycerol



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to acknowledge the contribution of the many partners and collaborators that make drug checking and harm reduction possible at festivals.

Thank you to ANKORS, ASK Wellness, Bass Coast Festival, BECU, Evin, Fraser Health, GRIP Project, Inver Health, POUND Project, Shambhala Music Festival, USBC and UVIC Substance.

Thank you to the festival drug checking coordinator Chloe Sage, for your work and inspiration.

Thank you to all attendees who donated, your contribution made this possible.

Above all, thanks to all the volunteers. We wish to note that festival drug checking is a mostly volunteer effort. In the case of Shambhala, over 70 people come from all over Canada to participate in providing drug checking and related harm reduction services.

Infographic by Arlene Marchbanks, Inver Health, Drug Checking Lead
 Consulting by Megan Armitage (Data Analyst), Shambhala and Arlene Marchbanks
 Population Health - Harm Reduction Program

Know

ALWAYS START
Test BEFORE

Estimate:
 Threshold: 10-15mg
 Light: 15-30mg
 Common: 30-75mg
 Strong: 60-125mg

Microdoser Limit:
 Threshold: 5mg
 Light: 5-10mg
 Common: 10-20mg
 Strong: 20-40mg

GHG Urges
 Start with a test dose (2-5mg) and
 Get baseline and food

All drugs have risks get
 supplies and drug check

For more information, and to find drug checking in your community, visit:

drugchecking.ca

DISCLAIMER

FTIR Spectroscopy (Fourier Transform Infrared) uses light absorption to determine the composition of a drug. This technology is quick, non-destructive and relatively accurate. However, it is not able to accurately detect any substances that are in a quantity of less than 1%. It cannot accurately measure the quantity (amount) of each component in a sample. The results from this report take into consideration the limitations of technology used. It is important to be aware that results obtained by the drug checking service used for this report may be missing important information regarding the composition of substances.

Testing strips for powder drugs like fentanyl and benzofentanyl are used with the FTIR to overcome some of these limitations, but they have some addressable weaknesses.

LSD was tested using Evinch reagent. This method can test if there is a high likelihood, but not confirm, of having LSD or other imides containing iminodiphenylacetone. It does not inform about other substances present or occurring in the sample.



Education and Field Placement

In addition to the programming, I have been building and maintaining, I was attending school full-time to pursue my bachelor's in social work. From January of 2023 until the end of March, I was fortunate enough to have a field placement with ANKORS in which I immersed myself in many other aspects of the work. I connected with and had the opportunity to build trusting relationships with many of the individuals who use our services, I was able to pick up and cover for our social worker while they were away and built up my own skills and tools to better support and advocate for our folks when necessary. The experience was fulfilling and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with such an amazing group of peers and folks in general.