

## **ANKORS AGM Annual Report April 30, 2022- March 31, 2023**

### **Katia Dolan BSW (she, her and they) - Support and Outreach Worker**

I respectfully and gratefully acknowledge my living, working and playing relationship with the ancestral unceded territories of the Ktunaxa, Sinixt, and Syilx Nations. I give thanks for the mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, insects, plants, and rocks with whom I live in reciprocity.

From my perspective as a white, privileged, low-middle class, cis-gendered European, Settler woman I have learned a great deal about diversity and inclusion. More and more people are dying from illicit drug poisonings which is perpetuated by underlying absence of affordable housing. Upstream work of decolonizing ourselves, our interpersonal relationships, and policies, needs improving. The following includes some activities and events of my second year as Support and Outreach worker. Roughly there are three aspects: interpersonal relationships, community education, and continued learning.

#### **Interpersonal Relationships**

I strive to honour people where they are at, recognize their strengths and support personal empowerment. I work one on one with people who are living with HIV, Hep C, Blood Borne Infections or at risk for, as well as with other individuals who need help with social determinants of health. Front line work can make the primary voice of experience available to fuel systemic equity via policy change.

#### **Community Education**

My greatest contribution to community work is outreach in Castlegar which has also led to working with a few individuals as needed. Acquiring birth certificates and tackling tenancy issues tend to be common agenda items of the people I help and support – such is the case in Castlegar. I have also worked alongside the Community Action Teams (CAT) in Castlegar (Castlegar Fentanyl Opioid Working Group) as well as Nelson (Nelson Fentanyl Task Force), and Grand Forks CAT. I help with monthly education table at farmer's markets, foodbank and other suitable locations. We provide much in the way of information, clean HR supplies, naloxone training and snacks. I enjoy the educational portion of my work and am gaining more confidence as time goes on.

Unfortunate news for Castlegar is the closing of the *Way Out Shelter* which has caused an increase in the number of people sleeping outside—thirteen to be exact. After this closure a new plan was hatched for the shelter building (owned Castlegar and District Community Services Society) and interested parties including myself for ANKORS, to open a community connection centre. The idea is to offer multiple service providers a place to offer consistent weekly services. This was in process at the end date of this report. The lack of a homeless shelter is unresolved.

Also in Castlegar I contribute to the Community Integrated Service Collaborative which, now in its second year, was instigated by the Castlegar City Council to address the homelessness situation in Castlegar. The organization has connected many stakeholders together but due to lack of affordable housing few people are off the street. One success was the acquiring of some temporary toilets at 3 strategic locations of town. It is rather shocking to think that people living on the street have to go without this facility for even one day never mind on a generally permanent basis. This lack of respect for a person's dignity that our culture considers as normal is heartbreaking.

In Grand Forks I have helped support the local ANKORS co-worker as much as possible—mostly from a distance and by travelling to Grand Forks on occasion. The big event this fiscal year was the Compassion in Action Conference June 2022 which was strongly supported by BC Centre for Substance Use. The focus was harm reduction. The conference itself was held in the beautiful setting of the GF Union Of Spiritual Communities of Christ Community Centre and was a success in many ways. This included the number of people attending, the connections made, the local Doukabor heart offerings and the local Indigenous (Bannock) drumming group and blessings. For me this all made an atmosphere of caring, reciprocity and of being held.

### **Continued Learning**

I participated in a *Blood-Borne Infections Partner Network Face to Face Meeting 2022* at Fairmont Hot Springs. The attention was on Indigenous ways of being together as teams. Len Pierre (Coast Salish from Katzie (kate-zee) First Nation), Smokii Sumac (Ktunaxa), Warren Hooley (Okanagan) Territory in Penticton, British Columbia were our presenters. I welcomed the Indigenous and less cerebral approach to medicine wheel balance.

*Getting to Tomorrow* (GTT) was an event organised by The Canadian Drug Policy Coalition (CDPC) ... “a non-partisan, evidence-based policy advocacy organization ... [that] operates as a project within

Simon Fraser University in the Faculty of Health Sciences” (<https://drugpolicy.ca/>). The event allowed community input for creating change to toxic drug policies and laws. I was pleased to contribute to a voice for change. I participated digitally in an *Educator’s Round Table* offered by Pacific AIDS Network. I learned more on the importance of Indigenous storytelling, decolonization, checking for HIV, syphilis, and supporting to individuals who are leaving correctional facilities in BC. (<https://unlockingthegates.org>).

The year has been challenging in many ways, though rewarding in other ways. The toxic drug crisis and homelessness effects often dominate my work I appreciate the opportunity to work both individually with people on the front line as well as upstream. I continue to learn in ways that enhance my Support and Outreach work towards equity and social justice.