

Nelson, Castlegar & Grand Forks Community Action Teams Rural Inclusion in Community

AGM Report for the Community Action Teams for June 2026:

Amanda Erickson MA RCC~ Community Engagement

I am honored to coordinate the local Nelson, Castlegar, and Grand Forks Community Action Teams. This is a grassroots community advocacy group, that works to bring education about the toxic drug crisis to local communities, to bring regional issues to the attention of the province, to improve access to low barrier public healthcare and substance use supports in our rural region. I have worked in this capacity since 2016. I advocate strongly for the full continuum of care for local populations. While I am encouraged to see drug poisonings reduce by almost 20% in 2025, there is still so much work to do. I am committed to ongoing work to support local populations and continuing to center the voices of the local community of people with lived and living experience of substance use. We must also acknowledge the greater impact of the crisis on Indigenous communities, and the ongoing impact of colonialism in Canada. I work to keep meetings and events trauma informed and culturally safe for people.

The local Community Action Teams or CAT teams I work with include the: Nelson Fentanyl Task Force (NFTF); the Castlegar Fentanyl Opioid Working Group (CFOWG); and the Grand Forks Community Action Team (GFCAT). Nelson Fentanyl Task Force was established in 2016 and is one of the first provincial CAT teams. We now have over 350 dedicated members in our three CAT teams in the West Kootenay Boundary region of British Columbia.

Recent Work for the region:

I travelled to Victoria in June 2026 to speak on our local work and population needs at the Legislature. At the Legislature, I met with Siobhan Clancy, Minister Osborne's Constituency Advisor and Evan Howatson, the Executive Director for the Overdose Emergency Response. We have a strong movement here in the Kootenays, to strengthen public health and low barrier public healthcare, and it is important that the government knows about this. Some issues I brought up include: the need for more peer support workers; the need for local residential treatment; the need for continued peer group funding; and the need for renewed community housing funding.

While in Victoria last week, I attended the Community Action Team provincial conference, over 2 days in Victoria, where we learned about the new CAT 2.0 plan for the next 3 years of this work. We heard speeches from the MLA from Surrey Central and learned more from others in attendance, including the Mayor of Victoria.

Education Event Report:

A Community Conversation on Current Issues on the Toxic Drug Crisis~ Reducing Stigma, Division and Misinformation

We ended up having 170 people attend this regional learning event on Tuesday, May 26th in Trail BC. It was an amazing day, with respectful learning, lots of positivity and a real focus on reducing stigma, misinformation, and division in our communities here in our rural and remote region. There are a lot of people asking for more events now!

We had media coverage from Rogers TV, CBC, Trail Times, and Kootenay Coop Radio.

Here is the [Trail Times interview](#).

Here is the [Kootenay Coop Radio Article](#).

The CBC did a radio spot with Garth Mullins and talked about our event.

Here is the Eventbrite Information:

[A Community Conversation on Current Issues in the Toxic Drug Crisis~
Reducing Stigma, Division and Misinformation in the West Kootenay Boundary.](#)

Our Keynote Speakers were:

Garth Mullins, producer, and author of the [Crackdown podcast](#), and activist from Vancouver. Corey Ranger, President of the [Harm Reduction Nurses Association](#), and a registered nurse with extensive experience in street outreach, community, and public health nursing from Victoria.

This was a collaborative event hosted by the Nelson, Castlegar and Grand Forks CAT groups, the Trail CAT group, and ANKORS.

Feedback from Attendees:

Janna – Peer Support Worker- Creston

“I just wanted to reach out and thank you for putting on such an amazing learning opportunity. It was an absolute privilege to attend the conference. I am currently working as a Peer Support Worker for the Creston Den Society, and I learned so much that I will use in my work and pass on to my colleagues.”

Holly- Youth Substance Use Counsellor- Grand Forks

“These communities are really lucky to have you and I think you do an amazing job.... I REALLY enjoyed the conference!!! Listening to Garth and Cory was very inspiring and enlightening!!!! Thank you for all your hard work on putting that together!!!”

Comments from the conference evaluations:

I have been feeling burnt out lately so thank you for the re-inspiration to this work.

I feel confident to carry & use a naloxone kit.

I will continue to advocate for marginalized and stigmatized people that access services in my workplace.

This was invaluable – thank you so much.

I will be more willing to engage in difficult conversation.

As a result of this conference, I feel a re-ignition of that spark of passion.
I will continue to approach this with a much more open mind and be willing to help where needed.
I will take time out to not be reactive.
Thank you for doing this, I really needed my cup to be filled up again.
Impacted my perspective and gave a sense of solidarity as a front-line worker.
Adapting how I speak and when to pick battles.
Loved the drumming.
It was incredible, very informative and engaging.
Great tips on creating understanding.
A lot of support in and around my community whose values and truths align with mine.
Kudos to the organizers.

More about our local Community Action Team Focus:

Our members work together collaboratively to find integrative ways to respond to the toxic drug poisoning crisis across agencies and alongside municipalities. We provide community educational events and training events, and work to reduce stigma and spread awareness. We work closely with Interior Health, ANKORS, the REDUN/HOPE network, and advocacy groups throughout BC. Some CAT funds go to support vital outreach supports in our region through ANKORS to help reduce death due to toxic drug poisoning.

In 2025, we arranged International Overdose Awareness Day events and educational events, held ongoing interagency monthly meetings, and participated in advocacy work. Here is an article on the [Nelson IOAD day](#) in the Nelson Star. We also did events in Grand Forks. The event in Castlegar was led by REDUN with support from ANKORS. We collected data on attendees, and naloxone given out to attendees.

I also work in Nelson as a psychotherapist. In addition to the CAT work, I provide knowledge translation work for ANKORS.

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