

## ANKORS AGM REPORT

Our ANKORS Grand Forks office has now been open for 2 years and 3 months. To date we have had no community, city, RCMP or Bylaws complaints.

### Some key successes of our HOPE group include:

- Our HOPE group has held weekly meetings from April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025, through to May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026, providing a consistent and supportive space for peers to connect, access resources, reduce isolation, build community and address social issues, and take part in peer engagement opportunities and workshops.
- We attend monthly CAT meetings and continue to identify challenges and wins in our community and to keep up with the coroner's report and other info shared by community services and organizations.
- Office hours are Monday to Thursday and some Fridays to provide harm reduction supplies, individual peer support, referrals and advocacy, a safe and warm environment, a warming and cooling centre for individuals during extreme weather events, a non-judgmental space for people to rest, talk, and access individual supports and referrals support and to hold weekly HOPE meetings.
- We continued to see increased engagement and collaboration with community partners throughout the year and strengthened partnership with Interior Health Mental Health and Substance Use (MHSU).
- Interior Health delivered monthly workshops focused on: Exploring change, Boundary setting, and wellness support.
- Continued collaboration with Boundary All Nations Aboriginal Council and Elders who provided cultural teachings, Indigenous arts and crafts for art therapy, drum making, talking circles, and medicine wheel ad cultural teachings.
- We have continued to partner with Debbie Pownall from the Ministry of social development and poverty reduction. Debbie comes to the Grand Forks ANKORS office every Monday from 11:00 am until 2:00 pm to support folks in applying for service, or other financial supports.
- We collaborate with COINS healing our hearts to facilitate a monthly circle with peers which is led by an Elder (Grandma Jo White) and COINS Indigenous Health Coordinator, Josie. This cultural ceremony is deeply rooted in sacred traditions and provides culturally grounded healing and support opportunities for participants.
- Our Grand Forks ANKORS office continues to serve as an important low-barrier support space for vulnerable community members as well as during extreme weather events.

## Some challenges we observe

- We continue to observe growing needs within our community related to homelessness, substance use mental health challenges, poverty, social isolation, and access to safe supportive spaces to sleep or to stop and rest. We still do not have a portable toilet in our community for our unhoused folks to use, nor do we have any unlocked dumpsters for folks to dispose of their garbage, yet our unhoused population is still publicly shamed on social media and by the bylaws officer for leaving their garbage and other waste at locations around the community.
- The increasing unpredictability of the toxic drug supply is changing the nature of overdoses with the added risks of different benzo's and medetomidine. Not having an overdose prevention site is a huge service gap as is access to alternative OAT options.
- In addition to the toxic drug supply, folks who use substances in our community face lack of affordable housing and barriers to securing housing due to lifestyle and this further increases risk of overdose. There are no designated spaces within our community where unhoused folks who use substances can rest without fear of the bylaws officer literally hunting them down and displacing them regardless of the time of night. The Bylaws officer is permitted by the city to make his own hours and often works at night. I have witnessed him myself working at night, and have multiple reports of peers experiencing displacement at 2:00 and 3:00 am. This enforcement by the city contributes to instability, sleep deprivation, fear and isolation, all of which increases vulnerability and increased risk of overdose. Folks also report the confiscation and disposal of personal belongings, tents, sleeping bags, and cherished mementos during interactions with the bylaws officer. While the city bylaw states that belongings will be held for 72 hours, folks report that this is often not the case and personal belongings are disposed of much sooner. The loss of ID, medications, harm reduction supplies such as tents, blankets, phones, and other personal items create additional barriers to survival.

## Highlights

Some of our highlights of the year include:

ANKORS Christmas dinner with approximately 60 people in attendance.

International Overdose Awareness Day – Hosted by HOPE Peers and community partners ie: Interior Health, Boundary Women's Coalition, Boundary Patient Advisory Community Committee, Freedom Quest, and Circle of Indigenous Nations Society, Grand Forks Fire Department and First Responders, Grand Forks Mayor and Council members, Grand Forks RCMP.

## **A few stats**

40 x HOPE meetings in the last year. Typically, 4 meetings per month. Some meetings were canceled due to health or out of town appointments. 203 attendances for HOPE meetings in the last year.

HOPE peer wellness day and haircuts x 3 (Free haircuts from Tammy Battersby) x 3

Participated in a community event called Hamburger and Haircuts Day with Interior Health x 1

Training and workshops with IH x 8

Peer engagement opportunities x 3 - "Speaker Series" through the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition

Elder led Cultural Trainings and Workshops x 6

CAT meetings x 13

Community Wellness and safety meetings x12

Educational events x 3 (eOPS training with Amber Struckens)

Peer led art therapy events x 4

Drug testing x 9 times

Presentation to Grand Forks City Council and Mayor on cold weather response and emergency winter Kits x1

All My Relations

Tanis Carson

Grand Forks ANKORS/HOPE

