

Erin's Year End Report OAT Support and Outreach April 2026 to May 2026

From April 2026 to March of 2026, it was yet again another fulsome year of OAT support and outreach work. It is essential to remark that within the nature of our work, we are still collectively facing the hardships and tragedies of the toxic drug crisis, including the hard realities of the poly crises of the homelessness and the affordability/economic state of our current social landscape.

In the context of our collective work at ANKORS, we continue to shoulder each other up as we face the systemic barriers and challenges in the tireless and ongoing advocacy for the individuals that we support. The difficulties for those individuals who have been chronically unhoused and deeply entrenched in poverty and street life can be insurmountable. But, there always exists the continuum of hope. Resiliency, solidarity, hope, and true community is what supports the fabric of humanity within our every day work.

It is often with a very heavy heart that we have to show up and do our daily jobs in the field of harm reduction as we continue to witness the losses of lives due to toxic drug deaths . Moreover, I have seen many colleagues not return to work because of burn out, illness, or work related trauma over the last year; this makes for a harder work environment, as jobs are often not promptly filled and taxing on the present work force.

I would like to give much much credit and gratitude to the ANKORS team who holds up the downtown ANKORS Baker Street location, serving the community in whom we support at least 6 days a week on a regular schedule whilst exceeding exemplary work demands of being open during hot and cold weather spells within this unprecedented toxic drug and homelessness crisis.

About my OAT Outreach & Support Work:

In my role, I continue to work part time, 12 to 18 a week, plus add on an extra 6 hours every other Friday at the Rise Oat Clinic hosted at the ANKORS location. RISE OAT clinic operates 2 Fridays a month. In addition, I work 6 hours a week as a Life Skills Worker at the Kootenay Boundary Support Recovery Program.

Every Thursday I work at the Drop In/Hub, providing outreach and support for RISE clinic patients including the Drop in guests. I provide appointment reminders, health system navigation, and referral supports to other agencies. In addition, I support unhoused and precariously housed individuals in the housing continuum, accessing Coordinated Access/housing service system within the BC Housing registry/supportive housing pathways. I also provide people with ongoing psycho-social and emotional support. I also respond to drug overdoses and attend to people who are experiencing the negative effects of the drug poisoning and living rough.

Every month I participate in the monthly housing tables, CHAT (Coordinated Housing Access Table) and CASH (Coordinated Access Supportive Housing) tables. CASH table is a BC Housing led interagency round table that case manages individuals in the housing service system that prioritizes unhoused individuals to be housed into Supportive Housing. The CHAT table is our community connections case conferencing table. *NOTE: My other part time job is running the CHAT table, Coordinated Access Data Coordinator that run through Nelson CARES.*

The Drop In/Hub, open once a week, provides essential services for unhoused and precariously housed individuals. On average, the Hub serves about 60 to 90 people every Thursday. The Hub services and supports include: laundry services, showers, clothing, food and hydration, small food hampers. Including weekly interagency agency supports from: ANKORS Peer navigator, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, Street Outreach, Public Health Nursing, Selkirk College Nursing (during school year), haircuts, and intermittent Mental Health and Substance Use outreach.

About The OAT/RISE clinic:

The RISE Clinic schedule runs every 2nd Friday, with the occasional extra clinic day.

The clinic primarily runs only in the morning with occasional overflow afternoons.

On Fridays, the Rise Clinic patients are supported by the Street Outreach (now Jonah Haake, previously was Jeremy Kelly) who picks up individuals from the North Shore Inn, Stepping Stones, and in the community.

We have an awesome team that runs the Friday clinic – Shana Waskul is the manager/admin, while Rise is still Dr. Joel Kailia's clinical practice (he attends Rise OAT clinic every 6 weeks), and Zak Matieschyn is the main Prescriber. Seamus Judd and David Nixon are the back bone team of the Rise clinic, supporting the clinical operations.

Since January of 2026, The RISE Clinic has teamed with Interior Health to provide the Fentanyl Patch Pilot Program for a maximum of 10 individual with nurse prescriber services from Zak Matieschyn.

-The Fentanyl Patch Program (FPP) offers nursing outreach for individuals accessing the program. NOTE: The FPP is piloted through IH and is ran through Rise.

-RISE clinic offers regular OAT (methadone, kadian, suboxone, sublocade and some stimulant replacement), including fentanyl patches, However, Rise clinic patients may not be a part of the Fentanyl Patch Pilot Program but can still be prescribed fentanyl patches.

Changes to OAT & Prescribed Safer Supply – Post De-criminalization

-During the summer of 2025, The College of Physicians changed the mandate of prescribed opioids such as hydromorphone to be witnessed by a pharmacist or a health provider. Hydromorphone carries were no longer offered to patients (due to apparent public outcry of selling hydromorphone/ opioid diversion into the illicit market).

Meaning, individuals in the RISE clinic, for example, who lived rurally, would no longer have the privilege of carries- many patients were not able to access the pharmacy daily. Many folks reported to using illicit drugs to supplement their need for spikes in daily cravings due to loss of hydromorphone prescription.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CLEAN UP PROJECT

In the spring of 2025, I received a grant of 750 dollars from the St. Saviour's Anglican Church. With the funds, Holly Trider and myself initiated a community engagement clean up project where the funds were allocated to pay peers and ANKORS service users to engage in clean up in the town of Nelson. From this clean up project, we were also able to support several garbage clean up on government road, supporting peers and the unhoused community who lives on

government to clean up their camps and surrounding areas. It was a great project, one that has developed a great community interface, while peers are supported to invest in cleaning up the community.

***April 2025 – Homeless Response Summit with Selkirk College
SEED Money received for Community Clean-up***

-ANKORS staff, including Holly Trider and myself (Erin Thomson) received 1000 to continue expanding the vision of empowering peers and ANKORS service users to participate in the Community Engagement Clean up Project. With the funds, we have been able to extend the projects, paying and supporting folks to clean up their camps and surrounding areas. From this project, ANKORS staff has built stronger and positive relations with City of Nelson by law in an ongoing basis.