

## Drug User Groups & Community Resilience Conference



**Date of Event:** Tuesday, December 5th & Wednesday, December 6th, 2017

**Location:** Abbotsford Banquet and Conference Centre, in Downtown Central Abbotsford

**DAY 1: Was set aside for people who use drugs to meet together to plan their presentations for the next day.**

Traditional indigenous welcome from WAHRS member **Melissa Steinhauer**

**Erica Thompson** welcomed people to the event and provided information on logistics.

### **SOLID - Society of Living Illegal Drug Users**

- **Wolfe Madge** and **Dave Keeler of SOLID Victoria** made presentations.
- **SOLID** has two Overdose Prevention sites and believes it is their role to stand up for people who use(d) drugs. We have a voice, we can say something.
- They did 400 Naloxone trainings in 2 days.
- Noted that running OPS is tough work. There are people in the community that do not care and they make it more difficult to run the sites.

### **REDUN – Rural Empowered Drug Users Network**

#### **REDUN; Nelson chapter**

- REDUN was formed because VANDU helped them. The reason why they started the group is Dignity, Health, Human Rights.
- They serve a community in Nelson of 10,000-11,000 people.
- The most at risk users have continuous overdoses and REDUN is facing lots of deaths. Funding is required to bring in more staff, doctors, and professionals as well as to increase capacity.

- REDUN is frequently called to participate in city meetings. People with lived experience have to be at the table to get community movement.
- There is varied access or in-access to high quality opioid assisted therapy. We are in need of a progressive stable doctor and a pharmacist.

### **REDUN; Grand Forks chapter**

- Grand Forks has no Methadone doctor.
- Rig Digs have commenced.
- Story shared about the need for better protocol and response to overdoses. BCDCC worker witnessed the severity of the overdose crisis in Grand Forks and this was the catalyst for them to receive the Take Home Naloxone Program.

### **VANDU – Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users**

- Ann Livingstone gave a presentation on the role drug user groups can play in communities.



### **Matsqui-Abbotsford IMPACT Society**

- **Executive Director, Brian Gross**, shared his story and demonstrated how an individual can be productive even when angry.
- Youth & family meetings are organized around inclusion.
- With Health Canada funding created Valley Youth Partnership for Engagement and Respect (VYPER).
- Youth looked at through one lens, as uniformed people which is not true.
- Project explores helping youth through power-sharing and resiliency training.
- Challenges people to ask questions, attend workshops.
- Provides opportunities for youth to present at conferences.
- BC/Yukon Association of Drug War Survivors made it possible for youth to have drug user groups.

### **BCAPOM – BC Association of People on Methadone**

- **Laura Shaver & Garth Mullens** made a presentation on the proposed settlement in Methadone Clinic Fee Class Action and the tragic consequences of being forced to switch from Methadone to Methadose.

### **WAHRS - Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society**

- Purpose is to celebrate indigenous rights, recover culture, traditional values, and ensure people who use drugs can live healthy, productive lives.
- Passionate about helping the community and their members.
- Participates in VANDU's OPS as a RPIG (Responsible Person In Charge)

### **An excellent lunch was served and enjoyed by all!**

### **The AGM of the BC/Yukon Drug War Survivors was held (one hour long).**

- Discussed issues with the police & prosecutors demanding long jail sentences for fentanyl possession for the purpose cases.
- Continuing tension with police who are increasing # of arrests for simple possession in the midst of our opiate crisis across BC.
- Working groups will be struck as we proceed so not everyone has to be on the board.

- Difficult to make quorum of board members if the board is too large.
- Motion to make board smaller in 2018 – 7 members voted in by members that have current or lived experience.
- Support members of BCYADWS have no drug history & cannot vote. They can advise the BCYADWS board but have no vote.
- Board members from each BC Region are represented plus a backup but we have board openings for Northern & the Yukon.
- Indigenous/ First Nations reps were elected to the BCYADWS board



**\* Twitter lessons were given by Jacqueline Frost from the University of the Fraser Valley**

**DAY 1 ended with a Moment of Silence**

## **DAY 2: Drug Users Groups & Community Resilience**

**Melissa Steinhauer welcomed us to the Upper River Nations**

**Dr. Alexis Crabtree from BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) presented on Stigma with Ann Livingston**

After a short break, Erica Thomson gave a history of how the event came about.

**Dr. Jane Buxton of the BCCDC presented about how important working with people with lived experience.**

- Disease Prevention, Harm Reduction, Overdose Response, and Take Home Naloxone kits and trainings.
  - A total of 57,622 Naloxone kits were distributed by BCCDC.
  - 616 sites were given Take Home Naloxone.
  - Prisoners are now offered a Naloxone kit upon release.
  - 29,000 take home Naloxone kits were distributed in 2017.
- Trainings at BCDCC from people with lived experience.
  - Carried out the Peer Engagement and Evaluation Project (PEEP).
  - Best practice guide for engaging with people who use(d) drugs.

**Doug Smith presented Erica Thompson, Ann Livingston, and Dr. Jane Buxton with Harm Reduction Hero Awards!**

### **CAPUD – Canadian Association of People Who Use Drugs**

- **Jordan Westfall** made a presentation on the necessity of drug user groups being funded & engaged in work to end the deaths of PWUD.
- Asked for more engagement between local government and people with lived experience.
- Epidemic is structural ie. barriers prevent access to all vital resources: food, shelter, toilets, etc. (things everyone else takes for granted)

**A delicious lunch was served.**

### **SUSTAIN – Substance User Society Teaching Advocacy Instead of Neglect**

- **Dan & Ayisha from Powell River** made a presentation about the new drug user group they are starting.

## SOLID – Society of Living Illegal Drug Users – Victoria

- **Wolfe Madge:**
  - SOLID was born roughly 12-14 years ago
  - 3 men and 1 woman started the organization which was basically needle pickup + handing out clean needles.
  - As years went on, more people came on board with SOLID. That was the beginning.
- **Dave Keeler:**
  - Is a worker at the overdose prevention sites in Victoria; also does outreach and distributes harm reduction supplies (ie. pipes and accessories).
  - Considers himself – self taught counsellor
  - Buffer between users and paramedics, other certified support workers, and residential employees.
  - Has a maximum of 8-10 people in ODP room at a time.
  - Since receiving HR contract, they have been averaging 60+ people per day.
  - “We are all sent to watch over our fellow man/woman. We all have to keep people breathing, hearts beating..and I take pride in this.” (Dave K, 2017)
  - Personal note: he looks back on his life and addiction. He’s now 30 years old – almost 3/4 of my life as an addict.
  - Was brought to SOLID by close friend, Jack Philips, who has taken the reigns with Wolf and Mark Wilson.
  - Will continue to serve and advocate for those who need their support.



## BCAPOM – BC Association of People on Methadone

- **Laura Shaver:**
  - Formed in 1999.
  - Exciting news: methadone clinic fees now covered by Income Assistance.
  - There is a settlement – for every dollar paid – 70% with interest paid back! which effects 11,919 people who were or are on Methadone.
  - “If you believe in what you do, you can change things” (Laura, 2017)
- **Garth Mullins:**
  - “It’s really important we celebrate our wins – that are few and far between.” (Garth 2017)
  - BCAPOM’s goal is to make substance use system more humane.
  - In 2015, the government presented MMT patients with methadose which totally destabilized people!
  - MMT is supposed to stabilize folks but half way through the day we’d start to get sick. We lost members to OD because they supplemented their methadose with poisoned street drugs.
  - The treasurer of BCAPOM died this way.
  - “Give us the old methadone back! Don’t make us use the branded methadose that doesn’t work!” (Garth Mullens, 2017)
  - Been on methadone for 15 years. Has lost half his friends from the big OD crisis in the 90’s, – here we are today saying the same thing.
  - We need prescription heroin. We need safe drugs.



- There is more unrest & activism today than years ago.
- Have a petition both online and pen-and-paper for people on methadone to sign to take to Judy Darcy, to at least have choice of old methadone back.
- We need more support!
- “We aren’t dying from bad drugs. We’re dying from bad drug policy. “ (Garth Mullin, 2017)
- The methadone system is designed to fail right now.

## REDUN – Rural Empowered Drug User Network – Nelson

- **Alex Sherstobitoff – also works at ANCHORS**

- Mission: to help create an environment that supports dignity, health, human rights, and respect for current and former drug users to affect the community at large.
- Nelson: REDUN was born in 2004 after presentation from VANDU
- Groups are 2-12 people.
- Never have had funding. Occasional donations from people. Interior Health will sometimes give some they can give them.
- Anchors gives a place for REDUN to meet in Nelson.
- Whispers of Hope (a religious group) – gives a place for REDUN to meet in Grand Forks which started in 2010
- Frustrations- can’t see the drug use.
- Can see poverty.
- Safe injection sites are bathrooms.
- REDUN meetings once a month in both Grand Forks and Nelson.
- Do some advocacy to help most vulnerable, but they get shunned by community.
- Have one methadone doctor in Castlegar who has 150 people on list.
- Need more MMT doctors but no word from Interior Health.
- Have 1 doctor in Castlegar, and 3 in Nelson. – none in Trail or Grand Forks.
- Most doctors are abstinence based. If piss hot – won’t be on MMT program for long.
- Nelson has a community of about 11,000 people, Grand Forks 6-7,000 people, Castlegar 6,000-7,000 people.
- 96 homeless & affected by addiction in the Grand Forks area.
- Grand Folks REDUN does rig digs, secondary needle exchange, has a needle exchanges once to twice a month.

## *Remembering members we've lost this year*

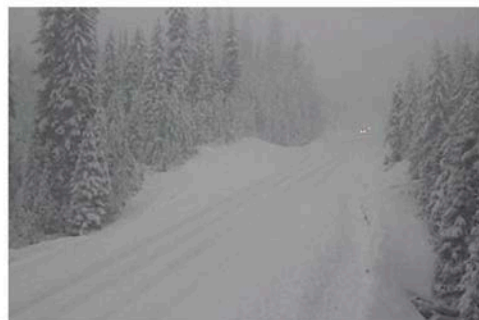
Jill Cater, secretary - treasurer,  
2005-2017



Rick Peters, board member,  
2009-2012



## The Troll of the W.Kootenay/Boundary – Paulson Summit to access O.A.T. services or any specialized health care for Grand Forks people



## Mom’s Stop the Harm:

- **Alex Unger** – long line of addiction in family, father still in addiction; everyone she knows uses substances or alcohol and has affected her life.

# Our Streets Zine

- Early teens experimented with drugs, later teens became addicted.
- At NA met partner Merlin.
- Person can't be judged based off their substance use disorder.
- On Christmas Eve Merlin overdosed, and not knowing the severity of fentanyl yet, we did not have naloxone kit at our house. He was in coma for 3 days, and then he passed away.
- It took over 1 year to be eligible for grief counselling.
- Been clean since April & pay \$28-\$50 a day for Suboxone.
- No help, and if there is help, it costs thousands of dollars.
- Things need to be provided for us. Things need to change.
- **Barbara Saunders** – I am Merlin's mom.
  - Started Fentanyl Victims We Remember after Merlin died.
  - Frustrating as we were not supported & Merlin was not supported.
  - 10 years of supporting my son has educated me & inspired me to would united with drug users to change the system that is broken & damages so many.



## SNAP

### SNAP – the SALOME/NAOMI Association of Patients

- **Dave Murray:**
- Formed a group after NAOME study and worked to influence the SALOME study.
- Organized to ensure previous people prescribed heroin could get heroin under compassionate access.



### SALOME/NAOMI ASSOCIATION of Patients

SNAP is a unique group of people who were participants in the NAOMI and/or SALOME heroin-assisted therapy (HAT) clinical trials in Vancouver, BC. We are an independent group dedicated to supporting each other and educating peers, researchers, government, and the public. We advocate for the human rights of people who use opiates, the establishment of permanent and less medicalized HAT programs in Canada and an end to drug prohibition.

### VANDU - Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users



- **Kevin Yake**
  - Is Six Nations Mohawk and has been on the VANDU board for 8 years but also had a position on the BCAPOM board as well as WAHRS board.
  - VANDU empowers people.
  - Life has completely changed with opportunities that VANDU activism has given me by working with a researcher on the Rat Study, working on the DTES Local Area Planning Process, the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood Council & the Street Market.
  - “A lot of Native Communities across Canada are quick to dismiss anything to do with illicit drug use & Harm Reduction – nothing, as they just as soon you go away.” (Kevin Yake, 2017)
  - Works as an RPIC at VANDU’s OPS & we have had 28,000 uses of the site.
  - We have put on 100s of Naloxone trainings at VANDU including a huge outdoor event with over 200 people trained in 1 day.

- **Samona Marsh**
  - My dad recently died from a fentanylity but was alive for a few days in hospital.
  - Few years back, in 2014, Vancouver Coastal Health forced VANDU to shut down an injection room we had for many years.
  - For every 29 overdoses in the DTES only 1 death occurs whereas in South Vancouver 1 in every 2 overdose results in a death.
  - I’m doing a jail sentence on weekends and I am learning a lot.

- **Dave Hamm**
  - VANDU Board Member.
  - VANDU does collective action on many issues.
  - Pedestrian Safety Project. BC had the highest pedestrian death rate in Canada.



VANDU’s pedestrian safety project has reduced the number of pedestrian deaths and lowered the speed limit.

#### WAHRS – Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society

- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8KhKqYJH\\_g&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8KhKqYJH_g&feature=youtu.be)
- **Malcom, Melissa, Martin, and Starr**
- Mission: To improve the quality of life for Aboriginal people who use illicit drugs and/or alcohol by encouraging the development of support, education, and training programs that reflect the values of Aboriginal people.

#### BC/Yukon Association of Drug War Survivors – Abbotsford chapter report

- **Doug Smith, Ann Livingston, Brian Gross, Harvey**
  - Purpose
  - History of BC/Yukon Association of Drug War Survivors.
  - Challenges with funding for peer groups.
  - Policy change in Abbotsford.
  - Home space for BCYDWS.
  - Regular meetings where group discusses what needs to be done locally.
- **Brian Gross**
  - Formed Supporting Wellness And Reducing Harm (SWARH).
  - Organizations (ACS, PLFV, SARA, 5 and 2, BCYDWS) created a combined memorandum of understanding stating, “not only have we been doing illegal harm reduction distribution in the community but we’re working together now and preparing to do even more.”
  - We want to bring a diverse group – everybody – to the table.
  - “No matter how clumsily you work, as long as you show a willingness to learn and some effort I want to work with them personally.” – (Brian Gross 2017)
- **Harvey**
  - Lack of space for the homeless.
  - Shelter standards.

#### Closing:

- **Erica Thompson**
  - Acknowledging various areas of expertise and scopes of practice.
  - Acknowledging and agreeing that we do not want any more loved ones to die!
  - Closing Remarks and Thank You for Attending.
- **Tiny**
  - Led a Moment of Silence in recognition of the many people who use drugs who have died, are in prison, suffering outside homeless and are in hospital.

#### Conference Attendance

- **1st Day** – 70 people
- **2nd Day** – 200 people

#### Organizations Present:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fraser Health</li> <li>• VANDU</li> <li>• REDUN</li> <li>• SOLID</li> <li>• WAHRS</li> <li>• Matsqui-Abbotsford Impact Society</li> <li>• University of the Fraser Valley (UFV – Criminology Department)</li> <li>• Sumas First Nations</li> <li>• Pacific Hepatitis C Network</li> <li>• Kwantlen Polytechnical University – Crim Department</li> <li>• HOME Society</li> <li>• Provincial Health Services Authority</li> <li>• BC Center of Disease Control</li> <li>• Mom’s Stop the Harm</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• House of James (Local Bookstore/Coffee Shop)</li> <li>• Abbotsford Community Services</li> <li>• The 5 and 2 Ministries</li> <li>• Abbotsford Regional Hospital</li> <li>• Fraser Valley Aboriginal Child and Family Social Services</li> <li>• Fraser Health Early Psychosis Intervention</li> <li>• City of Abbotsford</li> <li>• Abbotsford Police Department</li> <li>• Mamele’awt Qweesome/To’o Housing Society</li> <li>• Agassi Community Service</li> <li>• Women’s Collaborative Hub</li> <li>• Surrey School District</li> <li>• Abbotsford School District</li> <li>• Triangle Resources</li> <li>• Purpose Society</li> <li>• Elizabeth Fry Society</li> <li>• Xyolhemeylh</li> <li>• Mission Community Services</li> <li>• SALOME NAOMIE Association of Patients</li> <li>• BC Association of People on Methadone</li> </ul> |
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