

AGM report 2025-25

Lived expertise coordinator

This year I made 4910 connections with 150+ individuals. These interactions ranged from general check ins, OPS/ outreach, pool passes, harm reduction distribution and education, naloxone trainings, phones for our clients, court (advocacy, reminders, rides), PWD applications, Medical support (referrals, advocacy, rides, reminders), Housing/ shelter support, laundry, peer lead community clean up, food distribution, Supporting REDUN meetings, encampment support, wound care, and overdose support. I also attended several monthly community meetings: NCOH and Nelson fentanyl task force meetings, Joined the CHAT table, and attended the West Kootenay Homelessness summit.

A couple successes in the community are the opening of the North shore Inn trailers, which has provided 28 of folks with a safer and stabilized living situation. Having a location where so many of our clients are also makes offering our services much more fluid. I do outreach to the NSI weekly. REDUN has begun hosting 1 monthly meeting at the NSI.

Another success is the re-opening of the HUB. This multi agency approach includes health care, mental health support, ministry support, housing support, peer support, nutrition, showers, laundry, and more. It's an effective model of care for some of the most vulnerable and hard to reach individuals in our community.

We applied for and received a grant of \$750 from the Anglican Church to start a same day cash pay program, where people with lived/ living experience (PWLLE) get paid to go out in the community to clean. This gives PWLLE the opportunity to give back to the community, get a fair wage for their work, and hopefully break down the stigma in our community. We presented this idea to the West Kootenay rural homelessness summit, and received another \$5000 of seed money from Selkirk college, with interest from the city of Nelson to contribute in some way as well.

Also of note, on April 14, the 9th anniversary that BC declared a public health emergency, REDUN set up an inhalation tent in protest of the inaction of the BC government to properly or effectively address the overdose crisis. This was a peer planned and led site, which was organized in 2 sittings with less than 10 people. This alone shows how easy it is to set up life saving services, which we have seen health authorities over complicate, draw out, and even shut down.

One of the ongoing challenges is the public discourse around many of the people we serve. These conversations and actions have grown more toxic and are fueled by misinformation, disinformation and stigma. I have seen people turn their anger towards our clients as well as ANKORS and other service providers. The Nelson Neighborhood Network continues to be an echo chamber for apathetic and uniformed information to spread. There has been a real push from some community members and politicians to get rid of safe supply programs, defund harm reduction services, and bolster involuntary treatment, which we know does not have evidence to back its effectiveness, but has been known to cause harm and death. People are already

fighting for their lives each day, and this type of rhetoric just adds additional barriers and elevates risk in an impossible situation.

The illicit supply continues to grow more toxic and our community is still without inhalation OPS. We have continued to lose the people that we love. It saddens and frightens me that drug policy is buckling to stigma worse than ever before in this crisis. We have known how to prevent deaths this whole time yet we seem to be veering further away from effective measures as the years go by, ignoring the voices of those who have expertise in this crisis.

Overall, while we have seen successes in our community with a small amount of housing and added support, without replacing the illicit supply with safer alternatives and providing housing for all with wrap-around care, the desperation will continue to grow, the grief compound, and our communities will continue to be ravaged by this crisis.