ANKORS OPS Annual Report

Ben Duncan

The Annual General Meeting gives us an opportunity to reflect on the past year's accomplishments and challenges. It also allows us to look to the future to see where we might improve.

First, it has to be noted that the OPS was open every single day of the last year. This is a big accomplishment and a testament to the dedication of our team. Recently, Wade Swaggar left us to pursue a career at Interior Health as a Substance Use Councillor. I would like to thank Wade for the time he dedicated to ANKORS and the example he set for the rest of us. With Wade leaving, Jen King stepped in briefly in the OPS. Recognizing her obvious aptitude for this type of work, she was tapped as Drug Checking Co-Ordinator to replace Chris Kling. Also, I moved from my role at the KBSRP and the OPS to the Mental Health Support Worker job at Interior Health. This position has me in the OPS at least three times a week. Thank you to Seamus Judd and Sheldon Antifaev for being reliable and dedicated to your roles in the OPS. Finally, thank you to David Nixon our Office Manager for running one of the most reliable services in Nelson.

ANKORS underwent a big floor renovation this year, which was a huge undertaking. We managed to stay open the entire time with reduced services. Nonetheless, the OPS was fully accessible the entire time. The new hardwood floor and furniture has improved not only the look but also the vibe of the building. It is easier to clean, and the new look comes off as refined and professional. Thank you to the Board for approving this expensive upgrade; it was well worth it.

Another big change at the OPS is related to the completion of the North Shore Inn. Some of our most regular guests, who we used to reliably see every day, are now able to use an OPS where they live, so they visit less often. It has been nice to see some of our long-time street entrenched guests finally get a roof over their head and a room to themselves. We are still busy supporting people who stay at the shelter, North Shore Inn, the surrounding bush camps and the community at large. The location of ANKORS at 101 Baker should be cherished as it is in the perfect spot to service our most vulnerable citizens of Nelson. With the spring and summer especially, we are seeing new faces on a weekly basis.

From a big picture perspective, very little has changed from last year. We still have Fentanyl contaminated with Benzodiazepines, Xylazine and other analogs. Detox and Treatment are barriered and underfunded. Politicians and the media use our most vulnerable citizens as a wedge to get votes. We try our best to support our guests to the best of our abilities.

In an ideal world, we would have a detox centre in Nelson. It is not uncommon for us to have guests that express an interest in going to detox but are faced with long wait lists and paperwork. Also, a large percentage of our guests are smoking Fentanyl and Methamphetamines on our back porch, stairway and front alcove. It would be nice if there was a better place for inhalation. The solution to this problem is elusive, since the community likely won't accept a Safe Inhalation Site, and the funding/ political will isn't there to retrofit our current location for that purpose. We have also seen an increase in the need for wound care and other first aid. Most of our site users do not feel comfortable going to the hospital, so infections and illnesses fester unnecessarily. It would be nice to have an expanded street nurse program.

On behalf of the OPS team, thank you for reading the Annual Report.

Ben Duncan