



**Cowichan Community Action Team  
Annual Report**

**2018-2019**

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# Cowichan Community Action Team Annual Report 2018-2019

## Background

### Activating BC communities to prevent and respond to opioid overdose<sup>1</sup>

In 2016, there were 978 illicit drug overdose deaths in British Columbia, the highest amount on record. Fentanyl was detected in 67% of these deaths, compared to 29% in 2015, and 25% in 2014. In response to this sharp increase, BC's provincial health officer declared a public health emergency in April 2016.

In September 2016, CAI approved \$750,000 in funding to the OPEN project, with the goal of increasing the MHSU sector's capacity to prevent and respond to opioid overdose. OPEN provides 11 convening grants to community-based organizations across the province, with special focus on activating community networks that address populations at greater risk of opioid overdose.

OPEN's goal is to activate mental health and substance use (MHSU) service providers across British Columbia to respond to opioid overdoses within their communities, equip them with overdose prevention education and response tools, and ultimately reduce harm to people who use opioid drugs.

### Cowichan Community Action Team (CAT)

The CAT began as the Sobering and Detox Task Force in 2016 at the request of local government leadership via the CVRD. We started with a group of 12 community partners addressing the identification of sobering and detox needs and the extent of substance use in the Cowichan region. This group continued to grow as the crisis grew in our region. In 2018, the taskforce evolved into the CAT to provide a broader community response to the opioid crisis.

The Cowichan CAT is a voluntary forum for discussion on:

- mental health and substance use
- social determinants of health
- the identification of health service priorities
- community and health services planning and development
- and other issues related to the opioid crisis and or substance use of Cowichan Valley citizens and communities.

The CAT supports the coordination and communication of Overdose Response within the Cowichan Valley.

It also coordinates with Island Health's Regional Response Committee to promote/support: Optimal naloxone supplies; diversity of community level OD and prevention programs; referral systems; low-barrier access to OAT and comprehensive treatment approaches; strategies for social stabilization and recovery, peer empowerment/employment, cultural safety and humility, addressing stigma, human rights; address impact on community stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> Community Action Initiative website: <https://communityactioninitiative.ca/grants-training/overdose-prevention-and-education-network/>

The CAT is a network of organizations and is not a registered non profit society. It cannot hold or administer funding. It is supported by Our Cowichan Health Network<sup>2</sup> through facilitation.

The CAT Membership includes but is not limited to:

- MLA or representative
- Our Cowichan Communities Health Network
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Municipality of North Cowichan
- Cowichan Tribes
- City of Duncan
- Town of Lake Cowichan
- Cowichan Valley Regional District
- BCEHS
- RCMP
- Front-line Community Agencies
- First Nations Health Authority
- Indigenous/FN communities
- Cowichan Division of Family Practice
- Cowichan Housing Association
- Island Health
- Social Planning Cowichan
- Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- Cowichan Women Against Violence
- School District 79
- Discovery Youth Services
- Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Phoenix Wellness Centre
- Business Representatives
- Physicians
- Peers and Families with lived experience (via peer project and outreach)

The CAT is supported by a Leadership Table that:

- Plans, communicates and provides logistical duties on behalf of CAT and subcommittees
- Assist in providing leadership to CA
- Assist Chair/Co Chair to finalize agendas and minutes for distribution
- Follow through with actions as requested by CAT
- Facilitate and provide strategic direction for CAT
- Ensure transparency regarding decisions and address where perception of conflict is possible
- Assist with accurate and timely communications with public
- Communicate financial and logistical processes to the CAT membership
- Oversee responsible recording and reporting of CAT financial information

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<sup>2</sup> OCCHN's mandate is to create change by identifying local health issues and bringing together the people and resources best able to develop community-based solutions. <http://www.ourcchn.ca/>

The OCCHN has facilitated a number of initiatives over the years. Their current Strategic Plan can be found at : <http://www.ourcchn.ca/files/Next%20Level%20Impact%20OCCHN%20Strategic%20Plan%20May%203%202019.pdf>. OCCHN is a network that receives funding from Island Health. This funding is administered by the Cowichan Valley Regional District.

## 2018-2019 Funded Activities

During 2018-2019, the CAT received funding in the amount of \$100,000 from the Overdose Emergency Response Centre (OERC) to undertake a number of activities that were prioritized by the CAT membership.<sup>3</sup> This funding was administered by the CVRD.

### Key Results 2018-2019

#### CAT Coordination

- The CAT Coordinator was hired July 29, 2018.
- Through a Collective Impact approach, the CAT Coordinator worked with partners to establish a shared vision, aligned activities, ongoing evaluation and communication. The CAT Coordinator tended to facilitation and administration of the CAT.



#### Cowichan CAT Operation Summary

- 11 CAT team meetings were organized and held (no meeting December 2018)
- All communications, agendas, minutes and documents circulated to CAT over the period of a year
- **CAT Membership grew from 61 members to 82**
- Facilitated strategic planning and priority development
- Joint planned and co-facilitated five community opioid dialogues
- Leadership table established
- Leadership TOR Completed
- A draft regional strategy has been developed and was reviewed by the CAT leadership team in early September.



#### CAT Training

- Together with the Peer Coordinator, over 130 people in the community have been trained to use recognize an overdose and administer naloxone.
- CMHA staff took the Naloxone training and carry kits.
- We had a staff in-service with the RCMP to gain awareness of the hot spots and drug usage/dealers/runners.

#### Peer Engagement

- The Peer Coordinator actively engaged peers in the community through a variety of methods:
- The Street School program was started in September 2018 and carried through the entire term, adjusting from weekly to monthly meetings in January 2019. This program alone engaged over 180 unique individuals ranging from age 16-78. Attendees were provided with dinner and a \$5 stipend for attending were encouraged to share their unique perspectives in

<sup>3</sup> Estimated in kind services provided exceed \$14,000.00 in time and resources including room rental due to significant expansion in the number of members meeting each month. Teleconferencing costs also covered by OCCHN for last 6 months.



a safe space around safety, stigma, services available, policies, procedures, housing, areas of needs and wants.

- The Peer Coordinator connected numerous Peers with agencies who were looking for feedback on their services.
- For cultural foundation of the services, we increased the Elder's presence. Our regular Elder was not available, but it turned out well in that we had a female Elder attend instead. The clientele was happy to see her and receptive to having one to one time with her.
- PWLE played a significant part at our CAT table providing a unique perspective to strategic planning and decision making.
- Peers were invited to the CAT table beginning November 2018. One individual ended up attending the majority of meetings with 1-2 who attended in addition.

### Street School



- Motiv8 dissolved shortly after OERC funds were received. Street School was started in its place.
- The Peer Coordinator consulted with SOLID and AIDS VI on several occasions about the Street College program and developed the Street School program as a way of supporting Peers to develop advocacy and outreach skills.
- PWLE were offered 'train the trainer' naloxone training and First-aid/CPR training as well as psychological first-aid. The peers that followed through with these training sessions felt that they were provided with an opportunity that they would not have otherwise had an opportunity to take.
- Peers were invited to attend several training sessions over the past year including but not limited to:
  - Psychological First-aid
  - Emergency First-aid/CPR
  - Naloxone training
  - Naloxone trainer training



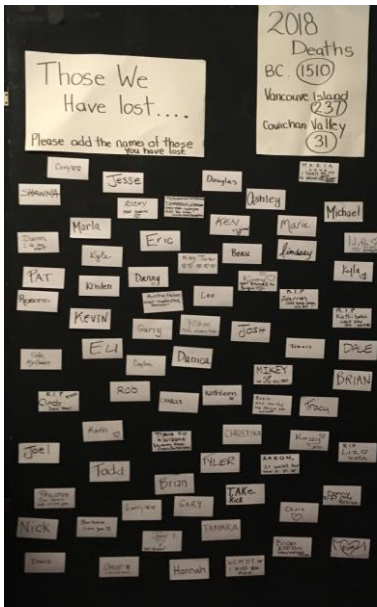
### Peer Employment Program

- Peers were hired to pick-up sharps in the community while providing information about Naloxone, overdose awareness, and safe sharps pick-up strategies.
- A Peer was hired as Harm Reduction peer worker as a way to connect with other substance users at the Overdose Prevention Site. The HR Peer Worker was able to provide information, take information, help to connect with local services, provide education and information around safe use and harm reduction.
- Peers were paid honorarium for snow removal at the OPS and shelter as well as maintenance and yard work around the OPS.
- Four peers were trained as naloxone trainers.
- As a result of the Peer based Clean-team/Sharps Team, camps are being visited regularly by Peers who carry naloxone.
- Our Peers Driving Peers program supported a PWLE to drive people to their medical appointments or to pick-up their daily OAT.

### Addressing Systemic Discrimination



- PWLE were able to discuss their experiences at the Cowichan District Hospital and more specifically the Emergency department with Island Health representatives. They also had opportunities to speak with a local Nurse Practitioner, an Addictions Specialist, Mayors and staff from the two local municipalities, regional district and Cowichan Tribes.



### Raising Awareness of the impact of Stigma and Discrimination

- An exhibit was created with the assistance of the Peers who contributed stories, information, video, and audio. This exhibit was displayed on several occasions in the Cowichan Valley as well as in Port Alberni.
- There were thirteen *Stigmatized* showings in the community and beyond and nine presentations about stigma provided to the public, community organizations and educational institutions.
- Alert First-aid came to Duncan and offered Emergency First-aid/CPR over two 4-hour sessions on January 16 & 17. Five peers attended the first day and only two of them completed the training and became certified.
- Peer Coordinator/CAT Coordinator attended a SD79 school board meeting to talk about the Street School program. Additionally, the Peer Coordinator/CAT Coordinator facilitated a workshop at Youth Action Day where approximately 40 grade 9 students were shown parts of the stigma exhibit and partook in conversation about substance use, overdose awareness, naloxone, and stigma.



### **Shower & Laundry Program**

- The House of Friendship was able to maintain full operation of their Personal Care Program that provides access to showers, laundry facilities, clothing, and personal care products.



### **Cultural Safety and Humility**

- The House of Friendship was successful in having an elder in residence address cultural trauma that has impacted individuals and could lead to addictions.



### **Social Stabilization**

- House of Friendship was successful in connecting individuals living rough to services, supporting individuals to access social stabilization supports via the breakfast program and shower/laundry facility, and provide open door to staff who have expertise in trauma informed practices as well as indigenous approaches to healing and wellness.



### **Overdose Prevention**

- In order to keep those who are using at home informed about overdose trends and bad drugs, a dope alert website was created and is maintained accordingly. The website provides the number of overdoses at the OPS weekly, bad drug trends in the Cowichan Valley (reported through OPS statistics and peer input), Vancouver Coastal Bad Dope Alerts (<http://www.vch.ca/about-us/news/new-alert-system-starts-for-bad-dope>) and Victoria's bi-weekly Dope Guide put out by AIDS Vancouver Island and SOLID,

as well any updates. The website address is <http://www.cvdopealerts.ca/>. 138 unique individuals have accessed the site to date and 8 people have subscribed.

- Our OPS site carries Fentanyl testing strips that clients can test their drugs with if requested. We have found that most people using the OPS recognize that there is likely Fentanyl in their drugs and take other measure of safety (using the OPS, using a small amount, using the first dose of a new drug batch at OPS) instead of testing for a Yes/No answer. If we had access to a spectrometer, people would be more inclined to test their drugs so that they knew what to expect.

The House of Friendship provided support First Nations individuals using substances and living rough. In 2019, they provided outreach meals for those in homeless camps and isolation. On a busy evening, their Outreach worker provided 40 dinners. We have tried to reduce those numbers and focus on spending time and reaching those who are more isolated.

## CAT Goals and Project Plan 2019-2020

At the end of the project term (September 2019) some planned activities could not be completed. Initially, the OERC did not approve these activities, but the CAT stressed their importance and further communications were required with the OERC to obtain approval. By the time this was achieved, the following activities were late in commencing:

- The Peer Driving Program was budgeted for \$10,000 but began late in the term, and only \$4,500 could be utilized during the timeframe of the project.
- Funding designated to support activities out of the House of Friendship could not be fully utilized. This was also due to late approval for use of funds for these activities.

\$A total of \$12,765 was rolled over into the 2019-2020 year to support planned activities.

During 2019-2020, the CAT received \$66,875 for project activities. With the addition of funds rolled over from 2018-2019, the total budget for the current year is \$79,640. This year, funding is being administered by CMHA.

In September of 2019, the CAT reviewed its 2018-2019 achievements and developed a Strategic Plan and project priorities for 2019-2020.

### CAT Strategic Goals 2019

- Improve the health and wellbeing of individuals who use drugs by enhancing the Peer Engagement Project
- Increase educational opportunities for peers, frontline workers and community
- Reduce the number of individuals who are using alone
- Advocate for the Creation of Cowichan Treatment and Recovery Programs
- Address stigma through a communications strategy
- Engage with youth with a focus on prevention



**CAT Project Goals (CAT Project Application) 2019-2020**

- Increase individual training and naloxone kit distribution among general public and front-line services in Cowichan communities
- Address stigma, discrimination and human rights through engaging CDH staff, business community, School District and Cowichan Valley Leadership table
- Reach out to those using alone (i.e. Coffee Conversations, and Street School- special session)
- Increase Social Stabilization through Pilot Street School for young peers and Indigenous peers
- Increase Peer empowerment and employment through involving people with lived experience in strategic program planning and decision
- Increase Cultural Safety and Humility through providing opportunities for Peers to connect with Coast Salish Elders

<b>SUMMARY OF PLANNED OBJECTIVES 2019-2020</b>	
<b>Community Action Team Coordinator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Project oversight, coordination and reporting</b> in support of the Cowichan Community Action Team multi-sectoral response to the overdose crisis</li> <li>• <b>Link, plan, connect</b> and align the multiple responses currently underway within the Cowichan Valley</li> <li>• Develop and implement ongoing engagement with <b>Indigenous communities</b></li> </ul>
<b>Stigma Project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Raise understanding, explore options and inform action re: OER</b></li> <li>• Conduct focused dialogs:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Business community</li> <li>○ SD-79</li> <li>○ Cowichan Leadership table</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Reach out to those who are using alone</li> </ul>
<b>Peer Coordinator</b> – support staff (peer empowerment and employment; cultural safety and humility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance individual and community capacities of people with lived experience</li> <li>• Enhance capacity within Peer Leadership Team and support them in the successful completion of their project initiatives.</li> <li>• Support the voice and safety of peers within the Community Action Team and other community tables</li> </ul>
<b>Peer Leadership</b> (peer action/advisory group): peer developed, peer led initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach activities</li> <li>• On-call advocacy</li> <li>• Enhance the awareness of peer-to- peer advocacy to accompany a peer to the hospital or doctor’s office</li> <li>• Peer empowerment and employment; naloxone; overdose prevention service; addressing stigma</li> </ul>
<b>Street School: Enhance impact and reach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street School Pilot Projects with Youth and Indigenous people</li> <li>• Provide a unique opportunity for the voices of the most vulnerable to be heard</li> </ul>
<b>Incorporate Indigenous approaches to healing &amp; wellness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture and teaching incorporated into services and Supports</li> </ul>

