

# Integrated Planning for a Healthier Community

Integrated development of harm reduction, homelessness, and housing strategies

November 6, 2019

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# Overview

- Introduction
  - Housing & Homelessness
  - Overdose Crisis
- A Community Response
- A Human Centred Approach
- Developing the housing and homelessness strategies
- Developing the harm reduction and opioid overdose response
- Process successes and impacts
- Implementation successes and impacts

# Introduction – Housing and Homelessness

- In 2007 the Social Planning Council of the North Okanagan (SPCNO) adopted its first community homelessness strategy; in 2008, the City of Vernon produced its first Attainable Housing Strategy.
- In 2014, significant housing pressures re-emerged as a major community issue.
- In 2018 161 individuals were interviewed during a PiT count
  - 65% of respondents were men, 31% were women, 4% identified as another gender
  - 34% of respondents were Indigenous
  - 50% had grown up in Vernon and/or had family connections in the community



# Introduction – Overdose Crisis

- April 14, 2016 the BC Provincial Health Officer announced a Public Health Emergency due to the growing number of illicit drug overdose deaths.
- In 2016 there were 991 illicit drug overdose deaths and by 2018 that number was a tragic 1,510
- In the Interior Health region 624 lives were lost between 2016 and 2018
- Four hardest hit communities include: Kelowna, Kamloops, Penticton and Vernon
- Nearly 80% of those individuals who have dies are young males with deaths occurring in private residences



# A Community Response

- With an understanding of these challenges...
  - Moving Forward is an action plan building on work done by the municipality, the Social Planning Council of the North Okanagan, and the Partners in Action Committee (PIA)
  - Vernon Harm Reduction and Opioid Overdose Response Strategy is an action plan developed by people with lived experience in partnership with the Social Planning Council of the North Okanagan, and the Harm Reduction Action Team (HART)



# A Community Response

- Partners in Action are a diverse group of community partners (non-profits, businesses, government officials, etc.) focused on addressing the root causes of crime to increase health and safety of the community
- HART is a community leaders sub-committee of PIA acting as the local coordinating body working together to address the overdose crisis
  - Also known in BC as a Community Action Team
  - Has targeted funding from the Ministry for Mental Health & Addictions



# A Human Centred Approach

- Involving and gathering the voices of people with lived experience foundational to the change the community desired
- Engagement designed to support a variety of first voice perspectives throughout both processes
- Some overlap in participation across plans to ensure integration between plans

## Harm Reduction and Opioid Overdose Response Strategy

- Interviews
- Focus groups
- HART Committee participation
- Implementation support

## Housing and Homelessness Strategy

- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Community Meetings



# A Human Centred Approach

- Peers have unique knowledge and experience that is essential to designing safe and accessible services that are trustworthy
- Peers have insider knowledge of the community and can provide valuable knowledge of substance use and factors influencing substance use that others on the team do not have
- Peers can help shift common perceptions and misperceptions of substance use among professional service providers and reduce stigma
- Peers can provide appropriately tailored education on safer use and overdose prevention
- Peers are known, respected and trusted by people accessing services and they can pave the way for other service providers
- Peers can act as navigators to support others to access the system and improve experiences of those accessing the system





# Developing Housing and Homelessness Strategy:

- The Moving Forward consultant team, guided by the municipality and the Social Planning Council of the North Okanagan (SPCNO) and City of Vernon, engaged community partners through a process intended to align strategies to address housing and homelessness in Vernon.
- The process:
  - Reviewed all previous work conducted by the City and SPCNO since 2007;
  - Engaged with local stakeholders and people with lived experience through interviews, in-person focus groups, and community meetings;
  - Identified best practices designed to impact the challenges and issues identified by community;
  - Developed draft strategies and reviewed these with key stakeholders;
  - Solidified a community action plan that coordinates goals and activities.



# Developing Housing and Homelessness Strategy:

## Housing strategies

1. Investing in attainable housing
2. Regulating and incentivizing attainable housing
3. Building support for attainable housing

## Homelessness strategies

4. Systems Planning
5. Strengthening Services
6. Public Education and Awareness



# Developing the Harm Reduction Strategy:

- The HART consultant team, guided by the Social Planning Council of the North Okanagan (SPCNO) and the Harm Reduction Action Team, engaged community partners through a process intended to align strategies to address the opioid crisis in Vernon.
- The process:
  - Review community issues, previous community work, and literature on overdose response plans
  - Facilitated workshops with HART throughout process
  - Cultural Audit to better understand the experiences of people with lived/living experience of accessing Indigenous cultural supports in community
  - Peer Audit gathered perspectives from people with living experience, people in recovery, and family members



# Developing the Harm Reduction Strategy:

## FOCUS AREAS



Prevention



Intervention



Referral / Treatment



Social Stabilization

## Strategic Goals

1. Reduce opioid deaths and overdoses
2. Enhance access to treatment, recovery and social stabilization supports
3. Help problem solve the community impacts of opioid misuse
4. Advance reconciliation by strengthening culturally relevant supports and services for Indigenous peoples
5. Reduce stigmas to increase community inclusion

## Our Engagement Involved:

**15**

Indigenous peers with lived experience of opioid misuse

**12**

Family members with loved ones active in their substance misuse

**57**

RESPONSES TO SURVEY

**21**

peers active in their substance misuse

&

**5**

peers in recovery from opioid misuse

**25**

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

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# Process Successes and Impacts:

- Peer involvement
  - compensated for their involvement in cash at \$25/hour for focus groups and committee participation and \$5/survey
  - Built actions, prioritized them and confirmed final project shares their voice in a meaningful way
- Additional capacity and trust built between community organizations and peers
- Both processes led from compassion and empathy
- Reconciliation and inclusion of Indigenous culture critical to continued success
- Both plans work alongside Partners in Action and various actions to more effective implementation



# Implementation Successes and Impacts:

- 52 units of supportive housing
- Continued momentum with the Harm Reduction Action Team
- Created over 500 cultural representations (prayer rocks, sage pouches, medicine bags) in Harm Reduction supply kits
- Elder outreach program – harm reduction training for elders and elders rotate through service provider locations providing support for peers
- Peer network formed through Cammy LeFleur Clinic



# Questions?

# Thank you!

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