



Phase Three Comox Valley Substance Use Strategy
Report on MOU Deliverables
To
City of Courtenay
July 30, 2024

The development of a Comox Valley Substance Use Strategy was built on the work of the City of Courtenay’s Drug Strategy Committee. In 2020, the Community Health Network (Network) signed an initial Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Courtenay to broaden the membership of the Drug Strategy Committee to develop a regional Comox Valley Community Substance Use Strategy (Strategy). A [Phase One Report](#) was released in 2021 followed by the City of Courtenay and the Network entering into second MOU in April 2022 that has continued through Phase Two and Phase Three. A [Phase Two Report](#) and the [Walking Together](#) companion report was released in 2023. The earlier reports provide the background and context for this report which is the final report on the deliverables to fulfill the MOU.

At the end of Phase Two, the Strategy committee evolved into the Comox Valley Community Substance Use Strategy Collaborative (Collaborative). This group was tasked with overseeing the implementation of the strategy recommendations and ongoing work as needed. The Collaborative continued with the understanding of substance use as developed by the committee and described in the Phase Two report.

To action recommendation 14 in the Phase Two report, the Strategy Collaborative Table put out a call for Expressions of Interest in April 2024 to find an organization to facilitate the Collaborative Table and oversee the Strategy moving forward. In late May an interview was held and following a unanimous vote at the Collaborative Table the Indigenous Woman’s Sharing Society (IWSS) was the successful organization to continue the work. The transition will take place throughout the summer and will be fully in place by the fall of 2024.

The Following is the completed MOU Deliverables Table for Phase 3 (Appendix A of the MOU). There is some carry forward of unspent funds and we are requesting that the City of Courtenay write a letter to the CVRD, where the funds are currently held, in support of transferring these funds to the Indigenous Women’s Sharing Society in September 2024 to be used for the ongoing implementation of the Strategy recommendations.

Phase Three MOU Deliverables Summary

<u>MOU Deliverables</u>	<u>How the report met the deliverables</u>
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing in-depth examination of power imbalances to uncover systemic biases and create culturally safe spaces. • Ongoing research, consultation and attention to root causes that contribute to substance use (e.g., poverty, lack of affordable housing, history of trauma, stigma and discrimination, classism, racism, gender/sexual diversity discrimination, and colonization). • Ongoing active involvement, including decision-making, of peers, First Nation Elders/traditional knowledge keepers in Strategy recommendation implementation. • Ongoing active involvement of local governments and community organizations in Strategy recommendation implementation.
Vision, Mission and Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing adherence to Vision, Mission, Belief Statements and Guiding Principles developed in Phase One and modified in Phase Two and Three. • Modified Belief Statements to strengthen Indigenous perspective, effects of colonization and relationship between housing and health care options, need for rapidly available supports and services. See new statements #9 and #10. • Developed Guidelines (Terms of Reference) for the newly formed Substance Use Collaborative.
Expected Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful engagement with peers, Indigenous elders/traditional knowledge keepers, service providers and community members. • Strengthen and broaden membership of newly formed Collaborative. • Implement specific recommendations from Phase Two report to improve current CV Substance Use System Network. • Ongoing substance use data collection and review. • Community event to update on Strategy progress. • Transfer facilitation of Strategy from Network to local non-profit organization.
Community Stakeholder Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In keeping with approach this deliverable surpassed consultation and included active involvement of stakeholders (peers/people with lived expertise) at the Collaborative Table and as speakers at the community event in June 2024. • The Phase Two Report and the Walking Together Report both included peer engagement to develop recommendations that were acted on in Phase Three. • Elders from Indigenous Women’s Sharing society were active at the Collaborative Table, Action Tables and the Community event.

<p>Obstacles and Barriers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing data-sharing agreements has continued to be a challenge. The data that the Collaborative Table would like to have and what organizations are or can collect is proving to be an obstacle. Ongoing conversations are continuing as relationships are built and Collaborative Table members discover what they are all each collecting or have the capacity to collect. New and updated data has been included in the Phase Three report even though data-sharing agreements are not in place. • Relationship and engaging with K’òmoks First Nations continues to be slow and the Collaborative continues to work to develop relationships.
<p>Strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two training sessions for the Collaborative Table facilitated by Indigenous Women’s Sharing Society were presented – one session focused on Working with Peers, and the second centred on Cultural Awareness and Humility. • Development of a Peer Support Plan for Collaborative Table and Action Table that included ways for creating safer spaces for peers to participate and a process for paying honoraria for peer participation. • Develop Expense Guidelines for participants to help reduce potential barriers for participation due to factors such as income, travel, and care needs. • Review all Phase Two recommendations. • Group together recommendations into 6 Action Tables. • Develop Guidelines for Action tables. • Form Action Tables to address recommendations.
<p>Initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made delegations to all local governments to report on Phase Two actions and encourage continued funding for Strategy Implementation. • Letters and delegation to Comox-Strathcona Regional District Board to include voice of Peers from Walking Together Report in proposed health services hub which is recommendation #8. • Held Community Event featuring a panel of Peers as keynote speaker, a report on Phase Three actions and an introduction to IWSS who will be facilitating the Strategy progress moving forward.
<p>Performance Measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance - \$30,000 (15,000 from Comox and 15,000 from Courtenay) in funding was secured during Phase Three. • Lead Organization - IWSS was chosen to lead the work going forward and will be hiring a new contractor to facilitate the ongoing Strategy work. • Action Tables – Collaborative Table and 2 Action Tables formed to begin work on recommendations. • Recommendations - Progress has been made on recommendation numbers 3,4,5,6,8, 10, 11, 12,13,14 and 20 (see detailed Phase Three Report). • Data – 2021 census data, 2023 ongoing toxic drug poisoning crisis data, 2023 adolescent health data and 2023 Emergency Services Response data compiled. • Reporting - Phase Three Report will be completed by mid-August. • Event – Held Community Event in June 2024 to report to the community on progress to date.

<p>Peer Stakeholder Feedback on Performance Measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with lived expertise (Peers) were actively engaged throughout the process of developing Action Tables and implementing recommendations. Their participation was more than feedback as they are equals in decision-making. • Indigenous perspectives were also sought regarding our processes and how the Collaborative and Action Teams functioned. • The Phase Three report was circulated to Peers and Indigenous Collaborative Table members for changes and feedback. • Panel of Peers was the keynote address at the event and spoke directly to the community members who attended. • Supported one peer to attend 2 conferences – Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction National Conference in November 2023 and the 6th Annual BC Substance Use Conference in May 2024. Peer brought feedback from conferences to the Collaborative Table.
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The work accomplished in Phase Three strengthening the Collaborative Table, engaging more organizations and beginning to implement recommendations has proven to be an excellent start for breaking down silos and strengthening the Substance Use Support Network in the Comox Valley. Progress has been made and there is still much more to do. As a community we look forward to the accomplishments the Collaborative Table, the Actions Tables and the many dedicated organizations working within the Substance Use Support Network under the leadership of the Indigenous Women’s Sharing Society can accomplish.