

SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL/PARTNERS IN ACTION

Quarterly Report: July 1 to September 30, 2022

VISION STATEMENT: A safe, healthy and inclusive community in which to live, work and grow

MISSION STATEMENT: To identify and implement manageable solutions to social issues by mobilizing community-based action teams

COMMITTEE COORDINATOR: Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan

COMMITTEE FUNDING SOURCE: City of Vernon

ACTION TEAM FUNDING SOURCES: Provincial and Federal Government, Local Funders and Various Foundations

COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Community Safety Office, Community Futures North Okanagan, Interior Health, Kindale Developmental Association, City of Vernon, Archway Society, NexusBC, Independent Living Vernon, Downtown Vernon Association, Turning Points Collaborative, Upper Room Mission, United Way North Okanagan Columbia Shuswap, Vernon and District Immigrant and Community Services Society, Canadian Mental Health Association, Family Resource Centre, Vernon Native Housing Society, Chamber of Commerce, Community Living BC

STRATEGIC GOALS:

- Build awareness and understanding of social issues
- Work collaboratively to problem-solve areas of concern
- Develop resources/policies to address gaps
- Monitor and evaluate the Partners in Action model and outcomes
- Provide sustainability for the Partners in Action Committee

| Action Team | Open/ Closed | Background/Activities | Outputs | Direct Outcomes | Updates/Follow Up |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|---|--|---|--|
| Homelessness/Housing | | | | | |
| Extreme Weather Action Team | Open | In order to be prepared for potential heat waves over the summer, a team was formed with participation from Turning Points Collaborative, the Upper Room Mission, the Community Safety Office, and the COOL Team. | <p>A protocol that outlines additional resources available during a heat wave.</p> <p>A communications plan and resource poster.</p> | <p>Plan in place with community partners in case of a heat wave.</p> <p>People sleeping outside have access to safe, cool spaces and water.</p> | In June 2022, the Extreme Weather Action Team developed a plan for extreme heat, to ensure people sleeping outside have access to cool spaces and water during heat events. A resource poster was developed that includes health and safety tips. The plan was successfully activated during the heatwave over the August long weekend. Social Planning Council also assisted the City of Vernon to plan for other vulnerable populations during the heat event. |

| Action Team | Open/ Closed | Background/Activities | Outputs | Direct Outcomes | Updates/Follow Up |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|---|--|---|--|
| Strengthening Communities Grant | Open | The City of Vernon successfully applied to the second round of the Province of BC's Strengthening Communities Grant. | Partnership Development. Completed Grant Application. Grant secured. | Improved health and safety of unsheltered homeless people. Reduced community concerns. Improved coordination among health/social service providers. Increased capacity towards culturally safe spaces and trauma-informed responses. | The City of Vernon successfully applied for the second round of the Strengthening Communities Program and has received \$312,500 to support the municipality's efforts to address homelessness. The contract runs from August 1, 2022, until July 31, 2023. The approved deliverables include ongoing support of the Bylaw Specialized Unit and the Wellbriety Program. In addition, funding has been confirmed for a Homelessness Crisis Intervention Team pilot project, designed to support programs and First Responders if they require de-escalation assistance with a client. Turning Points Collaborative Society is currently recruiting qualified staff for the Homelessness Crisis Intervention Team. |
| COOL Team Update | Ongoing | The COOL team is a partnership between bylaw officers and outreach workers for a collaborative approach to addressing homeless campers. The COOL team follows a protocol where bylaw officers and outreach workers connect campers to services provided by Turning Points Collaborative, emergency food programs and Interior Health. | Census/survey of homeless population. Protocol development and updates. | The COOL team works closely to monitor the health and safety of camps/spaces. | Social Planning Council and the COOL Team have been monitoring the service needs of people sleeping outside and ensuring ongoing access to meals, showers, laundry, harm reduction supplies and referrals to mental health/substance use programs. The Specialized Bylaw Team estimates that that there were approximately 100 different individuals sleeping in public spaces over the summer months, with at least 60 people sleeping outside on a regular basis. Bylaw officers also report more intense behaviours involving mental health issues. The goal of the Homelessness Crisis Intervention Team is to provide assistance to the Specialized Bylaw Team in these types of situations. |

| Action Team | Open/ Closed | Background/Activities | Outputs | Direct Outcomes | Updates/Follow Up |
|----------------------------|-----------------|--|---|---|---|
| Housing Action Team | Ongoing | The housing action team meets quarterly to review the housing inventory, identify gaps and explore opportunities. This provides the non-profit housing sector a chance to network, brainstorm and be strategic with plans for future affordable units. | Quarterly meetings. Updated inventory. Increased collaboration and partnership development. | Increased number of affordable units owned and managed by the non-profit sector. | Social Planning Council provided input to the City of Vernon's Housing Action Plan and took part in consultations on the plan through the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee. Of particular interest to the Housing Action Team, is the goal of acquiring land for affordable and attainable housing. Lack of land has been a barrier for non-profits moving forward with new units. Support from the City would be beneficial for ensuring more affordable housing projects are approved for Vernon. |
| Harm Reduction/HART | | | | | |
| Harm Reduction Team (HART) | Open | Vernon receives provincial funding to address the opioid crisis at the local level and support Community Action Teams (known locally as the HART Committee). | Grant secured. Launch of RCMP/OAT Pilot Project. Development and launch of Folks on Spokes Program. Development and launch of Peer Outreach Program. | Reduce opioid deaths and overdoses. Enhance access to treatment, recovery, social stabilization, and supports. Reduce the community impacts of opioid addiction. Strengthen cultural supports/services for Indigenous peoples. Reduce stigma and prevent opioid misuse. | The Social Planning Council and the HART Committee oversee the implementation of the <i>Harm Reduction and Opioid Overdose Response Strategy</i> . The goal of the strategy is to reduce and prevent overdose deaths in Vernon. Tragically, since the pandemic began, the number of overdose deaths has risen significantly, with Vernon recording 26 deaths in 2020, 43 deaths in 2021, and 23 deaths in the first six months of 2022. By comparison, in 2019, 15 people died in Vernon from overdose deaths. These are devastating statistics for the families, friends and coworkers who are impacted by the loss of loved ones. |

| Action Team | Open/ Closed | Background/Activities | Outputs | Direct Outcomes | Updates/Follow Up |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|--|---|--|---|
| Sobering Centre Action Team | Open | The HART Committee is exploring the concept of a sobering centre in Vernon. This is a safe space for unhoused people to become sober and connect to mental health/substance use supports. This would reduce pressure on the hospital and/or RCMP cells, and redirect services to a more appropriate community-based program. | 24/7 service with mental health/substance use supports. | Alleviate pressure on Emergency Department and RCMP cells. Safe space for people to become sober and access community supports. | The action team has met three times to brainstorm what a sobering centre could look like in Vernon. A backgrounder was developed to review how sobering centres are working in four other communities in BC to inform the direction of the Vernon action team. Vernon RCMP are members of the action team and assisted with research and feedback. Funding would need to be secured for this project to move forward. The action team is ready to apply should a funding opportunity become available. |
| Peer Ambassador Program | Open | This action team was created in response to concerns from downtown businesses about discarded needles and debris being found in alleyways. The concept was expanded to include the peer ambassador program, located in the vicinity of the two downtown public washroom locations. | Community partnership and sharing of resources. Launch of Folks on Spokes and Peer Ambassador Program. | Reduce number of needles in public spaces. Provide support and information to downtown businesses. | The Folks on Spokes program has been active in the downtown area during the spring and summer of 2022. There has been positive feedback from both the participants and downtown businesses. The Peer Ambassador Program was also successful during the spring and summer months. The program consists of peer teams setting up tables close to the downtown public washrooms, to share information and resources to people in the downtown core. This includes tourism guides and general information about Vernon, in addition to the Vernon Survival Guide. |
| Peer Outreach Programs | Open | The main role of this action team is to get direct input from key target populations with lived experience to identify opportunities/priorities and to develop and support peer led programs. | Peer Outreach Program. | Identify and address gaps/barriers. Ensure people know where to access interventions, treatment and recovery programs. | The Street Clinic continues to host the peer outreach program which provides harm reduction supplies, overdose preventions services, referrals to treatment, and support services to marginalized people. Peer outreach workers provide visits to areas where people sleep outside, office support within the Street Clinic, and assistance coordinating the laundry and shower programs. |

| Action Team | Open/ Closed | Background/Activities | Outputs | Direct Outcomes | Updates/Follow Up |
|--|-----------------|---|--|--|---|
| Cultural Audit Team | Open | The Cultural Audit Team is provided with funding to initiate and oversee Indigenous programs and projects to implement the Indigenous peer recommendations within the strategy. | Individual interviews of Indigenous peers. Access to cultural sensitivity training for service providers. New recovery program using Indigenous perspective. | Identify cultural gaps/barriers in service. Identify resources and tools to address cultural gaps. Increase cultural capacity of services and the number of culturally sensitive services. | A Wellbriety Program is being funded by the HART Committee and the Strengthening Communities grant for the Fall of 2022. This is a recovery program that uses Indigenous knowledge and principles to support people seeking to recover from alcohol and/or drug use and make positive changes in their physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. The HART Committee continues to provide culturally appropriate harm reduction kits to service providers and has also funded Indigenous Wellness Workshops for Indigenous peers working with the Cammy LaFleur Street Clinic. |
| Anti-racism/Inclusiveness/Multiculturalism | | | | | |
| Local Immigration Partnership Council (LIPC): Immigration and Settlement Strategy for Vernon | Open | The final strategy document as well as supporting research reports are available at www.socialplanning.ca | Community Survey on Immigration. Labour Market Report. Marketing Strategy. Vernon Immigration and Settlement Strategy. | Newcomers choose Vernon as their new home. Newcomers participate in the local labour market, broader community and social networks. | The Local Immigration Partnership Council (LIPC) implements and monitors the City of Vernon's Settlement and Immigration Strategy. The purpose of the strategy is to attract and retain Immigrants to Vernon. The LIPC meets three times each year, to provide input, direction and feedback on the implementation of the strategy. The meetings also provide partner members an opportunity to share information and promote collaboration on initiatives that support newcomers to Vernon. |

| Action Team | Open/ Closed | Background/Activities | Outputs | Direct Outcomes | Updates/Follow Up |
|---|-----------------|--|---|---|--|
| Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot - Vernon | Open | Support is being provided to Community Futures North Okanagan for the federal Northern and Rural Immigration Pilot (RNIP). | Pilot project that assists employers to attract and retain Immigrant employees. | Newcomers choose Vernon as their new community. | <p>Given the skills shortage and local labour challenges, this program is an important tool to assist employers in recruiting new staff. More than 200 employers have been approved to access the program and the average wage for posted positions is approximately \$22 per hour. To date, 274 individuals have been approved from 40 different countries.</p> <p>In order to address housing challenges for RNIP participants, a new homestay program is being developed by community partners in conjunction with a private home share provider called Happipad. The partners will continue to track the results of the program to see if this option expands access to housing for newcomers.</p> |
| Supporting Ukrainian Refugees Action Team | Open | LIPC, VDICSS, Nexus, and local citizen/Ukrainian community representative are meeting regularly to share information and gather resources for possible new arrivals. | Webpage and media release. | <p>Community efforts are coordinated.</p> <p>Ukrainian individuals and families are welcomed and supported.</p> | To date, Vernon and District Immigrant and Community Service Society (VDICSS) is supporting over 100 displaced Ukrainian clients, with more anticipated to arrive in the next few months. VDCISS offers multiple services including language classes, conversation circles, women's group, family activities, settlement worker in schools, employment support and Work BC programs. |
| Resilience BC Funding | Open | In the Fall of 2022, the Social Planning Council received another \$7500 grant from the Province of BC to coordinate anti-racism projects at the local level. | <p>Anti-racism Advisory Council</p> <p>Anti-racism Committee</p> | <p>Identify and address racism at the local level.</p> <p>Provide resources and education to service providers and community members.</p> | SPCNO is developing the framework for an Anti-racism Committee. It will consist of an Advisory Council, which will be composed of local IBPOC experts in the field of anti-racism, and an Action Team of service providers who are spearheading anti-racism initiatives and programs in Vernon. The Advisory Council will provide mentorship and guidance on the initiatives and programs being run by the Action Committee. |

| Action Team | Open/ Closed | Background/Activities | Outputs | Direct Outcomes | Updates/Follow Up |
|--|-----------------|---|--|--|--|
| Evaluation of Partners in Action Committee | | | | | |
| Indicator Updates | Ongoing | As part of the evaluation process, the Partners in Action Committee collect statistics from local partners as well as regional and national sources on an annual basis. | Indicator data tool on a wide range of topics. | Evaluation and monitoring of data guides informed decision making. | The data is used on an ongoing basis by the Partners in Action Committee to inform the discussion of social issues in the community and ways to address these problems/concerns. |