

**Network Minutes**

**Thursday July 8, 2021 via zoom**

**Present:** Denise Williams Chair, Sheila Service, Cindy Lise, Sue Kurucz, Elizabeth Croft, Dave Gutscher, Linda Roseneck, Rosalie Sawrie, Lynne Smith, Lise Haddock, Carla Bortoletto, Kristine Sandhu, Marcia Hower, Linda Dirksen Gale, Carol Newington, Jane Hope, Robin Routledge, Chris Hall, Madelaine McLeod,

**Welcome New Members:** Leah Vance, Vanessa Bramhill

**Presenters**: Sophia Palmer Cowichan Valley Youth Services, Amy Bell Canadian Mental Health Association Cowichan Branch, Douglas Hardie Discovery Youth and Family Substance Use Services, Marcia Hower Ministry of Children and Family Development, Toni Williams Cowichan Tribes

**Update on OCCHN Activities**

* Meeting with Island Health and School District re: smoking and vaping initiatives. Drops in youth vaping were reported during the pandemic but concerns of increasing rates as youth return to unrestricted social contact are rising. McCreary data reports that increase due to increasing concerns in mental health and wellbeing are likely. SD 79 working with youth within school programming. Our Cowichan will work with the broader community in the fall to raise awareness.
* Working with COVID temporary shelter task force in applying for service delivery funding via UBCM to support and extend the temporary shelter sites as we transition from COVID shelter to supported housing.
* Working with community partners supporting youth to enhance service delivery model and align services to address priority needs
* Supporting the Town of Ladysmith and Cowichan Lake as they undergo poverty reduction strategy planning via Social Planning Cowichan
* EPIC information packages to seniors receiving vaccines
* Ongoing support of CAT, EPIC, primary care network and new CDH hospital project

**Call to order** at 5:30 by Denise who welcomed members and initiated round table introductions.

**The agenda was approved** by general consent.

**The Financial statement** was accepted as presented by general consent.

**Correspondence** – No correspondence

# Youth @ Home (Housing First for Youth)- Cindy Lise

* Over the past number of years Our Cowichan has been stewarding the collective impact group previously called Housing First for Youth. Together with community partners the collective has met to network and learn more about the resources and services provided in the Cowichan Region. In light of the Opioid Crisis, Pandemic and recent loss of lives a small working group has come together to plan ways to better align and enhance the service delivery model in Cowichan. Data collected by youth service providers, the Point in Time Count and others indicate that the need to address youth health and wellbeing is never more evident than now. Efforts are underway to create a term of reference and identify key priorities as presented.

# Current Priorities include:

* ***Integrated Youth Services Hub with Extended Hours and Safe Space***
* ***Youth With High-Risk Behaviours***
* ***Youth With Lower Risk Behaviours***
* ***Supported Housing for Youth Transitioning Out of Care***
* ***Rapid Response- (Emergency Shelter) When Required***

The health and wellbeing of youth in the region is not the sole responsibility of the community service providers but also falls upon all community members to create a welcoming, inclusive and supportive community that follows the lead of youth.

# Cowichan Valley Youth Services- Sophia Palmer

Cowichan Valley Youth Services is a Not for Profit that has been running since 1973 offering trauma informed counselling to youth aged 13-18 and their families.

Youth in the region are powerful resilient and currently hurting. It is estimated that in the last year CVYS has supported over 700 youths and families. Their relational counselling program supports youth with the time they need and as such has not time limit. If a youth needs support CVYS is there. Isolation has had an impact on youth due to the rural nature of our communities. That has been increased exponentially with the pandemic. In addition, many youths are currently grieving the loss of many significant life experiences with family and friends such as graduations, going off to college and living independently. It is going to take time to recover and for life to settle.

* As we recover from the pandemic and begin to celebrate can we explore opportunities to celebrate youth?
	+ Absolutely it would be wonderful to highlight youth in our celebrations. Members will consider ways in which to do so as we open back up.
* What can we do about youth vaping?
	+ First, we need to determine what it is that youth may be protesting. Whether it is vaping, smoking, alcohol or substance use (amongst others). Our efforts to build relationships and safe intentional spaces for youth to be themselves and to be supported are the first steps.
* Sophia sent a document highlighting the services and programs at CVYS that will be distributed with the minutes.
* Thank you to all of the community partners for also making it through some very difficult times and in particular to the organizations that are coming together to support and honour youth. The opportunity to collaborate and work together is inspiring.

# Canadian Mental Health Association- Amy Bell

**Bikeworks Artworks**

* Summer hours Mon-Fri 2-5:30
* New location 360 Festubert st.
* Created around Circle of Courage
* Focus on connection and engagement
* Youth aged 12-19
* Access to GP Thurs 1-5
* Activities offered
* Bike mechanics, art supplies, video games, cooking, music

**Open Door**

* New location 360 Festubert St
* Summer hours Mon-Fri 9-1
* Safe space for youth 12-24
* Access to GP Thurs 9-12
* Access to laundry, food, phone, computer and comfy couches
* Connect to staff who can liaise with other youth teams for wraparound care
* First point of contact/minimal barrier

**Youth Outreach**

* Summer program- 1:1 connection to fill gaps
* Ability to be flexible to meet youth where they are at
* Currently focusing on linking youth with resources
* Getting ID, bank accounts, housing applications, PWD applications

**Family Capacity Program**

* Collaborative approach with counsellor and family outreach worker
* MCFD referral only- 16-week program
* Focusing on parenting support for youth with mental health needs
* Working with families to build life and parenting skills
* Available Mon-Thurs flexible hours

**SAIP Sexual Abuse Intervention Program**

* Sexual Abuse Intervention Program
* Youth up to 19 who have experienced sexual abuse
* Youth up to 12 who are displaying sexually intrusive behaviours
* Personalized counselling with youth that may include family and parents
* Individualized support
* Play and art therapy integrated into counselling

**Rainbows Support Program**

* Group to nurture grieving children
* Socializing for youth who are experiencing loss
* Safe space to understand grief and loss
* Age groups set on needs of youth
* Running once a week 2x a year- Sept and Jan start dates
* Waitlist taken year round

**Bounce Back**

* CMHA provincial program
* Online or through telephone
* Serving youth with mild to moderate depression
* Adapted video, workbooks and telephone counselling for individualized support
* Learning skills to manage stress, worry and low-level anxiety

**Affordable Counselling**

* Individual counselling for all ages
* 63$ a session with Masters Level counsellor
* Low barrier
* Zoom, in person and outside meetings

**Malahat Girls Group**

* Facilitated Girls Group for ages 9-13
* 2 Youth Workers and an Elder from Malahat Nation with food provided by Malahat cook
* Structured groups that focus on learning life skills and resiliency
* Communication, Critical Thinking, Confidence, Culture and Connection
* Summer program focused on fun activities and connection

**Notable Gaps**

* Safe consistent spaces for youth to hangout
* Youth turning 19 with no ID, bank accounts, SIN etc.
* Communication between teams to support youth
* Social isolation and loneliness

# Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) -Marcia Hower

* The Ministry supports children and families from birth to age 19. Services range from:
	+ Early years prevention and working with families to meet their needs
	+ Children requiring supported needs
	+ Child and Youth Mental Health 1-1 and groups
	+ The care system including foster care, extended family care, child welfare and child protection
* The opioid crisis hit our region with a “bang” and youth who were both in care or not in care were on the street and putting themselves at harm. In 2020 the crisis was more evident as two youth died as a result of overdosing on the toxic drug supply. Immediate response was required but there were no funding supports in place. Immediately the staff redeployed as outreach staff (many who worked during the day and then stepped up for overtime at night). They began reaching out to youth each night connecting, handing out food and providing support. This was extremely emotional work and the dedication and energy required from the staff was exemplary and worthy of acknowledgement. In response MCFD started a pilot project with funding support from Island Health. In collaboration with MCFD and Island Health, the youth outreach project continued to provide outreach, harm reduction, connections and supporting relationships with the youth.
	+ The chat included gratitude and thanks to the front-line social workers and outreach workers for their efforts

# Discovery Youth and Family Substance Use Services-Douglas Hardie

* Douglas thanked Our Cowichan and Facilitator Cindy Lise for the efforts to bring youth service providers together in the last 6 months to align efforts and unite to address the needs of youth in the region.
* Discovery Youth and Family Substance Use Services offers free community-based counselling services, access to residential care and treatment for youth struggling with substance use. We assist youth and/or their families to reduce the harms associated with substance use and related issues.
* Discovery’s services are available to anyone in the community directly or indirectly impacted by substance use.

This includes:

* Youth aged 13 to 19 who have concerns about alcohol or drug use
* Families/Caregivers who are concerned about a youth using alcohol or drugs
* Any support person who is worried about a youth’s use of alcohol or drugs
* Youth who are affected by someone else’s use of alcohol or drugs
* Building on the introduction of this work from Marcia – Douglas provided further information on the outreach team and the challenges that they faced in the past year as they met youths out on the street and found ways to come along beside them by building caring and supportive connections, providing harm reduction, snacks and access to places to go. There were some very challenging times in the dead of winter when working with vulnerable youth. It was equally important to take care of the team staff and extra supports were provided.
* In addition to working with MCFD, Discovery began to work closely with Cowichan Tribes and Toni at the youth shelter as well as CMHA and others. Outreach and emergency response were required by MCFD and on occasion RCMP safety checks.
* Significant efforts to engage and work with families has been important. Determining “who is important to the youth is very helpful and most families are grateful for the support from Discovery and care very deeply for the wellbeing of their children
* Douglas shared data to highlight the needs and the resources provided. The numbers speak volumes of calls and what outreach staff are doing.
* A significant grant has just received been received that will enhance the outreach program by adding nursing, addictions medicine and child and youth psychiatry

# Cowichan Tribes- Toni Williams

* Toni is the manager for the youth programs within Cowichan Tribes and over the winter months stepped into the role as the manager of the barrier free Youth Shelter that opened in December 2020 and provided services to May 31, 2021.
* There were 28 unique youths that were supported with the shelter and 189 points of contact.
* The average age of youths accessing the service were 16.5 years old but there were some as young as 12 or 13 who arrived on site.
* Not all youths were using substances and some were fleeing violence or challenges within the home. Some were experimenting with drugs and alcohol.
* Significant challenges had to be overcome by some very brave staff in efforts to provide this kind of care while ensuring COVID safety measures.
* It was quickly learned that youth don’t access shelter in the same way that adults do. They are seeking a safe space. This includes a place to access food, clothing, a shower, to charge their phone and for a nap. Not all youths needed to stay for the night.
* It is also very important to note that the discussion or prevision of harm reduction for youth is hard to come to terms with for many. It is perceived that harm reduction is promoting substance use but in fact is every measure to keep youth safe and alive.
* What is needed is a barrier free safe space for youth where they can have their needs met and connect with skilled and caring adults.
* The winter cold weather shelter will be opening again this fall. More information will come in the fall.
* Current focus is on getting kids reconnected to each other and to just have fun this summer. Cowichan Tribes is working to open summer camps!

Cowichan Family Life -has just received funding for child and family counselling. This is not for severe cases that require trauma informed specialists but is a program built via peer related counselling. Further opportunities to enhance young adult mentorship/peer counselling programing is under development.

**Next Meeting September 9 2021: 5:30 PM IN PERSON** (based on Provincial Health Orders and is subject to change) Location to be determined