

Program Spotlight: The Doorway Project

Ending stigma and building capacity through community empowerment

The Doorway is a community-centred project that recruits, trains, and transitions people with lived experience of substance use to become employed in the field of harm reduction. Group members take part in a two-year training program becoming educators, advancing their leadership skills and contributing their knowledge to the course curriculum. Their experiences are an integral part of this innovative project.



The Project fosters a collaborative, non-stigmatizing environment that is culturally safe as well as being sex, gender and trauma informed. By including the voices of those with lived experience, we are gaining awareness of how those who use substances can make valuable contributions in the workforce and as volunteers. We are also increasing capacity across the spectrum of support services to provide informed care to those who use drugs.

Lessons are organized and conducted each week by Harm Reduction Outreach Educators — Ben Ward, Leahanne Swan and Patty Quesnelle — with essential support provided by Monica Forrester, Mentor and Mary Kay MacVicar, Project Coordinator.

Topics explored in-depth include: communication, conflict resolution, triggers and boundaries, harm reduction history and philosophy, harm reduction practical skills, equipment, ethics, and HIV prevention. The program focuses on the application of theory, principles, and best practices of harm reduction. There is a strong emphasis on connecting the theoretical concepts to experiences in the field through guest speakers and case studies. The use of media and planned experiential learning opportunities also enhance the program.



The Project will also provide CPR and overdose response training to 70 community members. This CPR certification is essential to building the skills and confidence among people who are well placed to respond to drug overdoses.



Street Health has received funding to lead this initiative from the federal government's Substance Use and Addictions Program (SUAP) which prioritize the involvement of those with lived and living experience of substance use. The Doorway Project aligns well with this emphasis but the program's focus is not simply to check a box. It is a central tenet of the project that the knowledge and expertise is best found in those people with past experience. "People with lived experience will always add valuable and effective insight to how we work with the community," states Mary Kay. "By measuring and documenting this information, we are sharing strategies that help communities embrace a harm reduction approach, rather than labeling those with substance dependency with stigma and blame."

Stigma leads to discrimination which prevents people from accessing needed services and supports. The ever-present reality of stigma reinforces the need for people with lived experience to play a leading role in shaping harm reduction programming. "Working in harm reduction is one of the few fields you can get a job with a background in addiction. You can't go to college and get this kind of expertise," explains Leahanne Swan, Harm Reduction Facilitator for The Doorway Project. **"The bottom line is I don't believe anyone deserves to die because they are addicted to using drugs. We can build trust with clients because we have been in their shoes. We know where clients can go to get treatment, where to go for referrals, and shelter. If you call Central Intake, they will refer you to the first available bed, but they may not consider what your specific needs are."**



By placing a priority on involving those with lived experience in the development and implementation of projects, we reflect the diversity of who is affected by substance use. They are not simply participants, but become partners in the educational process and advancing public understanding.

Find out more about The Doorway Project and all of Street Health's services at www.streethealth.ca

Street Health Honoured by Charity Intelligence and MoneySense

In late 2021 Street Health was named a Top 5 impact Charity for the second year in a row by Charity Intelligence! We are honoured to receive this distinction as a frontline charity that delivers the highest value per donation dollar spent.

Street Health has likewise been ranked as a Top Charity by MoneySense, a digital magazine and financial media website for our impact per donation dollar spent in 2021.

MoneySense is committed to helping Canadians make informed charitable giving decisions by analyzing financial statements, annual reports, tax filings, and program expenditures to determine the social impact produced for each dollar donated.

Thank you to Charity intelligence & MoneySense for the commendations. We are committed to working hard every day to help build a community where everyone has equitable access to quality health care, housing, income, and services necessary to achieve health and well-being.



* Coldest Night of the Year (CNOY) *



Each year, Canadians from across the country take part in the Coldest Night of the Year. This annual walkathon takes people outside the warmth of their homes to learn more about those who are experiencing homelessness, hurt, and hunger. The 2022 event took place on February 26th. We are beyond words of appreciation to all those who walked, donated, and sponsored this fundraiser. Our initial goal was to raise \$20,000 and to date we have raised over \$45,000!



As COVID continued to rage on early in 2022, we made the decision to pivot to a virtual fundraiser for the health and safety of everyone involved. Participants chose their own 2km routes and walked either by themselves or with a small group. We asked walkers to send us a photo with a "because" statement sharing why they decided to walk in support of Street Health. We asked and you delivered, soon after the request was made, photos began to pile in.

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to our lead sponsor, **Generation Capital**, without their generous support, we would not have surpassed our goal!



generation capital

Street Health would also like to thank: Motion Clothing Company, Hilditch Architect Inc. IFDS Group and Starbucks - Morningside & Lawrence for their support.



Thanks to the 11 Team Captains for stepping up and putting together teams of individuals who were motivated to fundraise and walk. In total, team captains rallied 60 walkers and 371 donors. Captains included Elly Kaas, newly retired Street Health Director of Finance. Since 2019 she has been rallying her family, friends, and contacts for CNOY. Everyone at Street Health thanks Elly for her insights and professionalism. We wish her the very best on her next adventures including becoming a Grandma!

Special acknowledgement also needs to go out to:

- Street Health's Clinical Manager, Joyce Rankin, who ranked in the top 110 fundraisers in the country (out of over 30,000 walkers!),
- Our Board of Directors for being so supporting and offering their unique set of skills to help make this event a success,
- Loretta McDonald, milk bag mat maker volunteer who was one of our outstanding fundraisers.
- Melville Presbyterian Church for their unwavering support. The Melville G Force surpassed their goal for a third year and raised over \$4400!

Thank you again to all those who supported CNOY. If you are reading this, please plan to join us to fundraise and walk for those experiencing homelessness on February 25, 2023!

Due to "Coldest Night of the Year 2022" pivoting to a virtual event, we were unable to take participants on walk around the community. As a result, we created a narrated map to illustrate how Street Health and partner agencies located in the of the downtown east core of Toronto are combatting the opioid and homelessness crises.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the issues our clients are facing, and the work being done to bridge the gap for those who are often stigmatized and underserved by the healthcare system.

SCAN BELOW for the narrated map!

