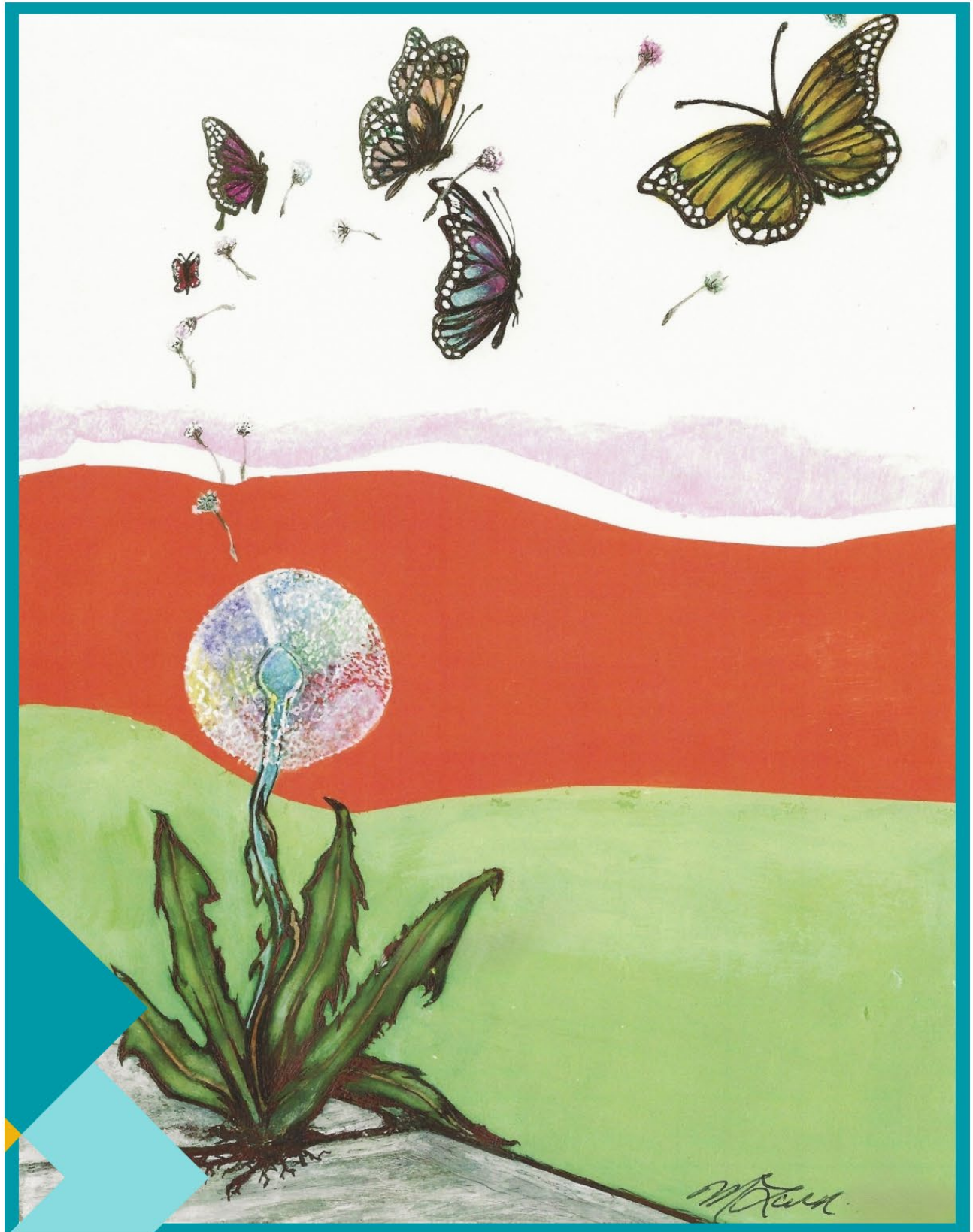


BRIDGING RURAL HOMELESSNESS AND WELL-BEING

West Kootenay Homelessness Response Summit 2025



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Bridging Rural Homelessness & Well-being Project

The 2025 West Kootenay Homelessness Response Summit was a part of Selkirk College's applied research project, [*Bridging Rural Homelessness & Well-being: A Sustainable and Collaborative Regional Response*](#). The summit took place in Nelson on April 29 and 30, 2025. This is the project's third and final summit, building on the momentum of the [2023 summit](#) in Castlegar and the [2024 summit](#) in Trail.

Direction of Travel

The project's overall goal is to improve the well-being of residents experiencing or at risk of homelessness living in and around the rural communities of Trail, Castlegar, and Nelson.

Objectives

The project aims to:

- Conduct research for evidence-based decision-making.
- Strengthen relationships for sustainable regional collaboration and response actions.
- Build regional homelessness response capacity through college resources (faculty and students).
- Disseminate lessons learned in the region and beyond.

Community Partners

Anglican Parish of Kokanee (Nelson, Kaslo, and North Shore)	City of Castlegar	Kootenay Savings Credit Union	Rural Empowered Drug Users Network (REDUN)
	City of Nelson		
ANKORS	City of Trail	Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction	Regional District of Central Kootenay
BC Housing	Castlegar Community Harvest Food Bank	Navigation Table - Trail & Area	Regional District of Kootenay Boundary
Career Development Services - Trail	Interior Health Authority	Nelson CARES	Trail Community Action Team
Castlegar Community Services	Kootenay Boundary Community Services Co-operative (The Koop)	Nelson Committee on Homelessness	Trail FAIR
Castlegar Integrated Services Collaborative	Kootenay Career and Development Society	Nelson Community Services	Trail Skills Centre
Circle of Indigenous Nations Society (COINS)		Okanagan College	Trail United Church

2025 West Kootenay Homelessness Response Summit

Theme & Goals

Theme: Cultivating Change: Planting Seeds of Action and Growing Together

Goals:

- **Share and Learn:** Engage with diverse perspectives on rural homelessness and learn from those responding in innovative ways.
- **Build Relationships:** Strengthen connections with others working toward improving the well-being of those experiencing homelessness.
- **Collaborate and Act:** Join forces to generate action ideas, build momentum, and leave with concrete steps, fostering community-driven solutions.

Schedule

Tuesday, April 29, 2025, 5 PM – 9 PM

- Welcome
- Community Connection and Dinner
- Innovation Ideas Showdown

Wednesday, April 30, 2025, 9 AM – 5 PM

- Welcome
- Service Provider Ignite Talks
- Community Perceptions Research Summary and Deliberative Dialogue Report
- Lived-Experience Perspective Sharing
- 2024 Summit Actions Recap
- Cultivated Action Open Space – Planting Seeds
- Cultivating Action Open Space – Tending the garden
- Cultivating Action Open Space – Harvest
- Seed Money Announcement
- Closing Circle

Video

A short video of the 2025 West Kootenay Homelessness Response Summit can be found [here](#).

Funding

The *Bridging Rural Homelessness and Well-being* project is funded through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Mitacs, with cash and in-kind contributions from community partners. The 2025 summit was funded as part of this project, with additional funding support from Kootenay Savings Credit Union and Concentra Bank.



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

Mitacs



Concentra



Bank



Equitable
Bank

Summit Team

The summit was led by the Selkirk College team, with invaluable support from various members of the Nelson Committee on Homelessness and the West Kootenay Lived-Experience Circle on Homelessness.

Selkirk College: Jayme Jones (Project Director), Jennifer Preston (Nursing Faculty), Leeza Perehudoff (Research Assistant), Brina Bowen (Practicum Student), Zakeea Al-Hanafy (Intern), Richard Hilde-Radulovich (Intern), Amber Streukens (Lived-Experience Co-researcher), Matthew Wheating (Lived-Experience Co-researcher), Rhona Belczyk (Health & Human Services Faculty).

Nelson Committee on Homelessness Workgroup: Amanda Ladner (Nelson CARES); Erin Thompson (Nelson CARES); Katia Dolan (ANKORS); Distance Bullock (COINS), June Tayes (Nelson CARES), Taryn Tayes (Nelson CARES/Selkirk College), Melissa Cline (Interior Health Authority), Katie McEwan (Nelson United Church/Nelson At Its Best), Jennifer Arrowsmith (Nelson CARES Practicum Student).

Lived-Experience Circle on Homelessness – West Kootenay: Megan Laveau (Interim Coordinator), Matthew Wheating (Coordinator–On Leave), Ryan, Lisa, Mike, Janette, Candace, Cam.

Graphic Recording: Lisa Gates (Insightful Ink)

Indigenous Elder: Donna Wright

Catering: Rico's Catering

Facilities: Selkirk College, Tenth Street Campus and Mary Hall – Martin, Penny, Jenny, Lonnie, Ashley, Richard, Dave, Tunde

Photos: Bob Hall & others on the Summit Team

Summit Artwork: Mike Laren

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO MADE THIS EVENT A SUCCESS!

Participants

Registrants for both days of the event signed up from across the West Kootenay region and beyond. Between the two days, there were 132 participants in attendance, all with diverse perspectives and who were very engaged in the process. Participants self-identified from the following perspectives (they could identify with more than one):

23	51	6	18	22	14	9	5	4
Persons with lived / living experience of homelessness	Employees of social service agencies / organizations	Elected officials	Government staff	Interested residents	Students	Employees of Selkirk College	Business community representatives	Other

Setting the Tone

Each day of the summit, when arriving at the venue, participants walked through exhibits by members of the Lived-Experience Circle on Homelessness (LECoH) and a Selkirk College student. To further set the tone, there was an Indigenous welcome, and a presentation summarizing the project with an invitation for how participants could work together in a good way.

Lived-Experience Display

Members of LECoH prepared a display featuring three distinct encampment styles. The intent of this display was to get participants to get a feel of what it is like to live without a house.



Zero Percent Vacancy Display

This display was prepared by Selkirk College Digital Arts student Paul Sotropa for his year-end show. Using photos and words, his display provided an example of how Selkirk College students link course curriculum with supporting community issues.

Zero Percent Vacancy



A Photo Series by Paul Sotropa.

Paul is a first-year student in the Digital Arts Program at Selkirk College.

He completed this project in his first semester for the Introduction to Photography class and displayed it at the Year End Show.

paul@sotropa.com
@paulsotropa_

How many times each day do you see evidence of homelessness?
How often does this spark deeper thought into what you are looking at?
How frequently do you actively or subconsciously ignore the evidence of homelessness to maintain peace of mind?
Does homelessness affect your life directly?
How well can you empathize with those without homes?
What factors and experiences lead people to being on the street?

These are some of the questions I sought to explore in this photo series.

I believe our society has become far too accustomed to the presence of a homeless population in our communities. Across the nation, the lack of affordable housing, rampant mental health struggle, and a drug abuse epidemic has led to an unprecedented number of citizens living on the streets, sleeping in cold, desolate conditions; with no hope of ever recovering. As a whole, we who experience far more comfortable living conditions, have become numb to this whole situation. We are all well aware of its existence, but do we truly acknowledge it? It seems to me that we have begun removing the human aspect from people living without homes and view them as a subsector of our species. Far from equal.

Yes, there are many programs in place to aid the situation and steer the crisis toward solution, but are they effective?
Do we even know what these initiatives actually are, or what their intended outcome will be?
For me, the answer to these questions is no.

Drug abuse is excessive, mental health issues are growing, physical disabilities and learning disabilities are driving forces at this station, and I do not foresee any of these factors decreasing whatsoever, despite the initiatives by communities, local organizations, and the government sector. I wish I had solutions to these problems, but I do not. I do, however, possess the ability to raise awareness. When people become aware of issues, they begin deeper, more critical thinking around the topic, and I believe that a higher rate of awareness could lead to more people stepping up, speaking up, and ultimately creating better plans and ideas to solve our country's problems.

These affairs are congruent across the nation, through the largest cities and the smallest towns. Nelson is no exception. The city has a zero percent vacancy rate across all housing. This includes housing for all classes; from high to low income, and supportive housing. There are no vacant beds in any shelters anywhere. According to the NCOH (Nelson Committee on Homelessness) Annual Report on Homelessness for 2022, 37% of Nelson's population rents, and the average price of a single bedroom rental is almost double what is considered "affordable" based on minimum wage. This leads to less people being able to make ends meet and more people without homes. For every one thousand people in Nelson, there are eight people without a home. This is a higher rate than that of the province as a whole.

Walking through downtown, it is almost impossible to make a lap up or down the street without observing someone sleeping on the sidewalk or asking for money, among many other signs of homelessness. These observations are quite obvious, but I think the aftermath of homelessness has just as much of an effect on our towns and people, though it often goes unnoticed. Aside from these prevalent cues, the belongings, campsites, and garbage left behind by people on the street leaves a huge impact on our physical and emotional environment. I do not say this to criticize the people leaving these things behind as much as I say it to raise awareness for the factors causing this and its effect on the world. It is evidence of a massive gap in understanding and effective problem solving.

Through this project, I aimed to capture the subtle signs of homelessness, which I normally would never have paid attention to. I learned a lot about how I feel about the homeless crisis and increased my empathy with the people suffering. I wanted to display the way that these little things now coexist with everything else in our world, even though we might not recognize it. Just as subtle as these signs are in the world, the evidence is subtle in these photos.

The homeless crisis in Nelson and across Canada is much more intertwined into our daily lives than one might think.

Indigenous Welcome

For both days of the summit, “Old One” Donna Wright graciously welcomed us into our shared space, setting a positive tone for the event. She reminded us we are all perfect, and her drum helped to ground and energize us for our time together.



Donna Wright (right) and Leslie Payne, City of Nelson Councillor (left)

Essential Conditions for Growing Together

Each day of the summit started off with sharing expectations on how participants would work together in the collaborative space.



Following the theme of the summit, the essential conditions for ‘growing together’ were:

- Come as you are
- Welcome and respect our diversity
- Invite participation from others
- Listen to past experiences, focus on future possibilities
- Share your perspectives, listen to others with an open mind
- Be curious – “I never thought of it that way”
- Be both a safe and brave space
- Ask for what you need, offer what you can
- Take care of yourself and each other
- Question GEFNSETT – Is it “Good Enough For Now, Safe Enough To Try”?

Tuesday, April 29: Dinner & Dialogue

The evening focused on connection and shared learning. Over dinner, people had an opportunity to network and strengthen connections with people from across the region. This was followed by an engaging opportunity for shared learning through the Inspiration Ideas Showdown.

Inspiration Ideas Showdown



The **Inspiration Idea Showdown** was a unique opportunity to hear innovative ideas to address housing and homelessness. Four local leaders shared ideas and explained why these ideas are something we could/should do in the West Kootenay region. See **Appendix C** for the Inspiration Ideas Showdown presentations slides.

After the leaders presented their idea, the merits of each idea were explored through a moderated debate with questions from the audience.

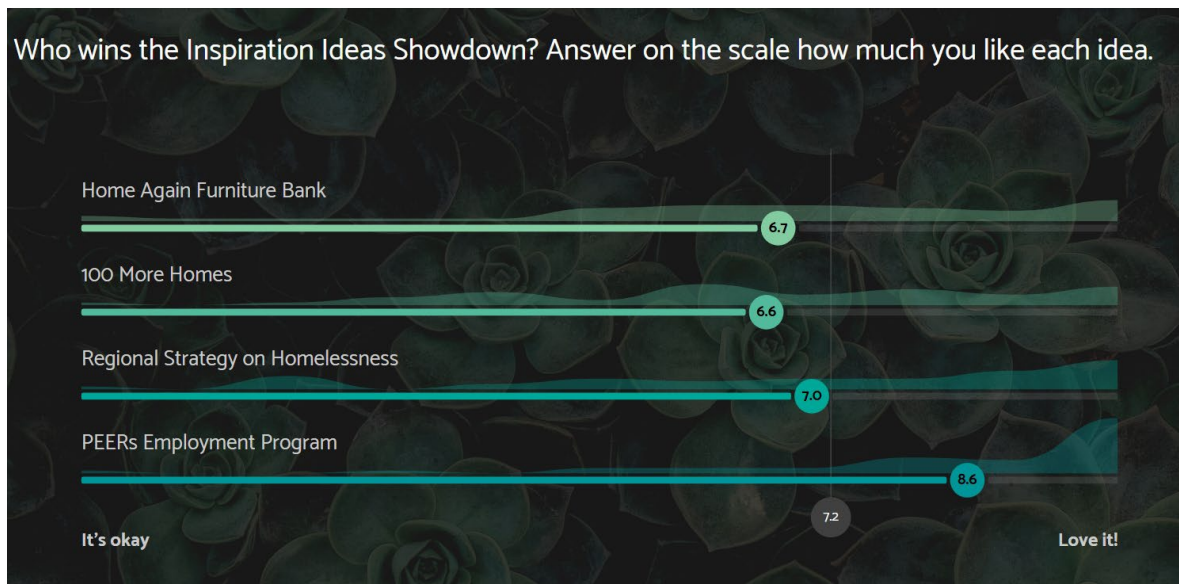
Inspiration Ideas Showdown Host:

- Amanda Ladner, Coordinator of the Nelson Committee on Homelessness

Local Leaders:

- David Burrows shared *Home Again Furniture Bank*, a program aimed at furnishing homes for those in need.
- Joanna Motta shared *100 More Homes Penticton*, an innovative and collaborative system of housing and supports to prevent homelessness.
- Alex Hawes shared *PEERs Employment Program*, a successful pilot project for workforce integration.
- Colleen Jones, City of Trail Mayor, shared *Regional Strategy for Homelessness, Rehabilitation and Public Safety*, a local government resolution gaining support through local government channels, outlining a regional approach to addressing homelessness challenges.

Following the presentations, the audience engaged in a lively discussion, sparking debate and asking questions about the ideas. Through an audience vote at the end of the process, one idea was identified as the favourite idea. While every idea was well presented, had support, and was worthy of trying in the region, the winning idea was the *PEERs Employment Program*, as presented by Alex Hawes. See the results of the voting below.



The **Inspiration Idea Showdown** served as the perfect conclusion to the evening, leaving the audience energized and deeply engaged. The thought-provoking presentations and passionate discussions sparked innovative ideas, strengthened connections, and reaffirmed a collective commitment to finding innovative solutions for housing and homelessness.

Wednesday, April 30: Amplifying Voices & Developing Actions

The daytime event on April 30 focused on listening, amplifying diverse voices, and working together to develop meaningful actions.

The morning sessions featured contributions from both service providers and individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness. Participants also received a selection of findings from the *Community Perceptions of Homelessness Survey*. Together, these perspectives helped inform the collaborative discussions that followed.

Service Provider Ignite Talks

Across the region, many service providers are doing impactful work addressing homelessness. However, the full scope of their efforts isn't always widely understood. To help bridge this gap, a selection of service providers from the three communities were invited to briefly introduce their organizations and highlight the services they offer. Each was also asked to respond to the question: ***"What's one thing our region can do to better support your work?"***

This session not only helped participants gain a clearer understanding of the diverse roles and contributions of local organizations, but also fostered opportunities for connection and collaboration, key elements in strengthening the region's collective response to homelessness.

The Ignite Talks session was facilitated by Selkirk College Health and Human Services Practicum Student Brina Bowen.



Service Providers Presenting in Ignite Talks:

1. Nelson CARES – *Sarah Magee*
2. Coordinated Access, Nelson CARES – *Erin Thompson*
3. Nelson Drop-in, Nelson CARES – *Taryn Tayes*
4. Nelson Community Food Centre – *Alex Hawes*
5. Castlegar Community Services – *Reidun Rossi*
6. Trail Community Action Team – *Mary Davies*
7. Career Development Society - Riverside Shelter – *Sheila Adcock*
8. Lived-Experience Circle on Homelessness (LECoH) – *Megan Laveau*
9. ANKORS/REDUN – *Cheryl Dowden*
10. Selkirk College Student Nursing Outreach – *Rochelle Christensen and Jen Bouliane*
11. Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction – *Tammy Hunter*
12. Seniors Advocate, Castlegar Community Services– *Sandi McCreight*
13. Nelson Committee on Homelessness - Report Card on Homelessness – *Amanda Ladner*

Other service providers were invited to stand up to be acknowledged, as there were many more service providers in the room – each providing invaluable services to the region.

Lived Experience Perspective Sharing

Sharing the perspectives of people with lived and living experiences (PWLLE) of homelessness was an important part of the summit. In the previous summits, lived-experience perspectives were shared in a panel discussion. While this was a valuable way to share their voices, there was a strong desire from PWLLE to try something different at this year's summit.

Through the leadership of PWLLE (LECoH members), a different way to share PWLLE voices was tested. PWLLE split into smaller pods, allowing for smaller discussions spread around the room. There were five PWLLE pods, each consisting of one LECoH member, with other PWLLE in attendance invited to participate as much as they felt comfortable. Summit participants self-organized around the room, listening to PWLLE.

In the PWLLE pods, people with lived/living experience answered the following questions:

1. **What?** - *What does homelessness look like to you?*
2. **So What?** - *Why does it matter?*
3. **Now what?** - *What ideas do you have?*

While the hosting team had originally planned to encourage attendees to visit multiple pods, a last-minute decision was made to allow conversations to continue uninterrupted for the full allotted time. Each pod was deeply engaged, with participants hearing powerful stories of lived experience and thoughtful ideas from PWLLE on how to create meaningful change.

Feedback from participants highlighted this session as one of the most impactful parts of the event. It provided a vital platform for amplifying the voices of those with lived experience, fostering empathy, understanding, and connection. PWLLE participants also expressed that the session was deeply meaningful and worthwhile, affirming the importance of centering their voices.



Community Perceptions of Homelessness

Members of the Bridging Rural Homelessness and Well-being team shared key findings from the *Community Perceptions of Homelessness Survey*, with a [summary report](#) made available to participants. These insights help address stereotypes, inform evidence-based decisions, and support the creation of safer, more inclusive communities.

The team also highlighted outcomes from the [Regional Deliberative Dialogue Addressing Homelessness](#), which took place ahead of the summit and explored the community perceptions research with diverse partners, exploring local challenges and opportunities to address the challenges. The dialogue produced four actionable recommendations focused on Indigenous-led responses, inclusive community culture, workforce development, and cross-sector collaboration.

Together, these community perspectives added depth to the summit, complementing service provider and lived experience insights, and helping to shape the collaborative discussions and actions that followed.

What's Needed When Working Together

Through a quick, engaging activity, participants reflected on a time when working together with others led to a positive change in their community. Participants then considered what they learned from that experience. These learnings were recorded on paper leaves and posted on a large poster of a tree for everyone to see. These insights helped set the stage for the collaborative efforts later in the summit.

Needed characteristics for working together for positive change:

- Advocacy
- Commitment
- Compassion
- Empowerment
- Funding
- Humour
- Inviting
- Kindness
- Listening
- Love
- Low barrier
- Openness
- Passion
- Shared priorities
- Shared values
- Solidarity
- Space
- Time
- Transportation
- Trust
- Understanding



Cultivating Action Open Space

The afternoon centered on relationship-building, collaboration, and action planning, using an adapted Open Space facilitation method. Open Space empowers participants to lead or join discussions of their choice. They can host a session, join one, act as a 'bee' by moving between groups pollinating ideas, or be a 'butterfly' engaging in informal conversations outside the group discussions.

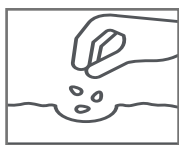
To host a discussion, participants signed up on the 'marketspace' wall (see below) and briefly presented their topic, helping others decide which conversations to join.



Open Space has four principles and one law that guide the process:

- *Whoever come are the right people*
 - *Whatever happens is the only thing that could have*
 - *Whenever it starts is the right time*
 - *When it's over, it's over*
 - *The law of two feet – if you are not contributing or learning then it's okay to move and join another discussion.*
-

Cultivating Action Open Space had three stages to help participants move from ideas to tangible actions:



Planting Seeds: short discussions on any topic. What SMART¹ actions can grow from these ideas?



Tending the Garden: deeper conversations building on earlier ideas, working through questions to develop SMART actions and next steps.



Harvest: highlights of developed actions, with an opportunity for participants to identify their support for the ideas.

¹ SMART actions are those that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely. See **Appendix A: SMART Action Worksheet** for the prompts that helped participants develop actions.

Planting Seeds

There were 18 'planting seeds' discussions spread over two rounds. These discussions explored ideas on a variety of topics that were led by summit participants.

Planting seeds topics included:

- Regional homelessness response table – who could be on this?
- Paid peer support in OPS spaces
- Youth homelessness services
- PEER Program – Food security / no cook program at the Nelson Community Food Cupboard
- Partnership opportunities for Selkirk College Social Work program and...
- Stigma and how we start expanding and communicating the definitions of "success"
- Regional Task Force on mental health and housing
- Interactive services resource platform
- Banishment of space
- Treatment facility in the Kootenays
- Hospice outreach providing grief support and a hot meal for vulnerable and unhoused people
- PEER engagement community work project providing casual employment in service to the community
- Bridging beyond government funding
- Connection and friendship on and off the streets; finding a sense of belonging
- LECoH (Lived Experience Circle on Homelessness)
- Period products
- Micro homes
- Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness Conference

PLANTING SEEDS								
TOPIC: Regional Homelessness Response Table HOST: Michelle	TOPIC: Youth Homelessness Services HOST: Leslie	TOPIC: Paid Peer Support in OPS spaces HOST: Leslie	TOPIC: Food Security / No Cook Program at the Nelson Community Food Cupboard HOST: Michelle	TOPIC: Partnership opportunities for Selkirk College Social Work program and... HOST: Michelle	TOPIC: Stigma and how we start expanding and communicating the definitions of "success" HOST: Michelle	TOPIC: Regional Task Force on mental health and housing HOST: Michelle	TOPIC: Interactive services resource platform HOST: Michelle	TOPIC: Banishment of space HOST: Michelle
TOPIC: Treatment facility in the Kootenays HOST: Sandra	TOPIC: Hospice outreach providing grief support and a hot meal for vulnerable and unhoused people HOST: Sandra	TOPIC: PEER engagement community work project providing casual employment in service to the community HOST: Sandra	TOPIC: Bridging beyond government funding HOST: Sandra	TOPIC: Connection and friendship on and off the streets; finding a sense of belonging HOST: Sandra	TOPIC: LECoH (Lived Experience Circle on Homelessness) HOST: Sandra	TOPIC: Period products HOST: Sandra	TOPIC: Micro homes HOST: Sandra	TOPIC: Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness Conference HOST: Sandra

Planting Seeds Marketspace: Each space had a topic and a host identified. Coloured squares identified the table location for each discussion.

Tending the Garden

Summit participants had another ‘marketplace’ to determine topics for a deeper dive and SMART action development. Called ‘Tending the Garden,’ eight topics were identified for nurturing and action development.

These eight topics included:

- Peer engagement work project
- Microhomes
- Lived Experience Circle on Homelessness (LECoH)
- Bridging beyond government funding
- Youth housing
- Accessible service mapping
- Sponsor a homeless person/Photo ID bank
- Period backpacks



To help participants work towards tangible actions, a SMART Action worksheet was used. See **Appendix A** for this worksheet template.² This template includes questions to help develop strong, tangible actions. This included SMART details (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timely), who will be involved, action steps, obstacles, solutions, lived-experience participation, Selkirk College participation, other considerations, committed first steps, and seed money needs.

Breaking the Rules Welcomed

Participants were encouraged to adapt the afternoon’s facilitated process in ways that best suited their needs, even if that meant stepping outside the planned structure. For example, using the SMART Action Worksheet during the ‘Tending the Garden’ stage was optional. If someone preferred to spend the time connecting one-on-one rather than joining a group discussion, that was welcomed, too.

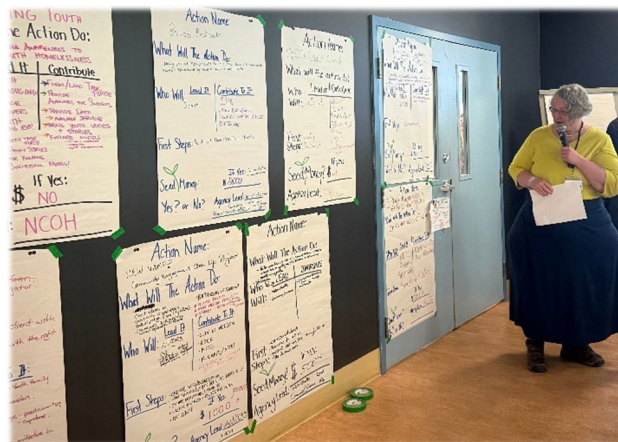
As long as participants engaged in a way that was meaningful to them and respectful of others, they were fully supported in doing so. This flexible, participant-centred approach helped create a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere where everyone could contribute in a way that felt authentic and valuable.

Actions Harvest

Once participants had some time to work through action development during the ‘Tending the Garden’ stage, they presented a summary of their action to all summit participants and indicated whether the action required seed money to get started. These actions are briefly summarized below. A photo of each action harvest sheet, with additional information, is found in **Appendix B**.

² Completed SMART Action Worksheets were not left with the Summit Team. They were kept by participants involved with action development; therefore, they are not shared in this summary

Action Name	Action Description	Agency Lead Identified	Seed Money Requested
Housing Youth	Elevate and bring awareness to youth homelessness.	Nelson Committee on Homelessness (NCOH)	No
LECoH Lives On	Continue the Lived-Experience Circle on Homelessness (LECoH), finding funding and getting more involved within the region.	LECoH Group, with support from Selkirk College	Yes \$5,000
Nelson's Piggybank	Providing sustainable funding and resources for a permanent drop-in center with wrap-around services.	Anglican Church	Yes \$5,000
Community Engagement Clean-up Project – PEER employment	Provide low-barrier employment opportunities, cleaning camps, business entrances, and other opportunities. This will help clean up the community, reduce poverty, and strengthen relationships.	ANKORS & NCOH	Yes \$5,000, or \$1,000
Period Backpacks	Collect and distribute monthly period/feminine hygiene products for our most vulnerable community members needing these products.	Many options identified. Selkirk College will help support first steps	Yes \$2,000
Interactive Service Navigator	Developing a web application to share up-to-date details about services available in the region. This resource would need to be developed with long-term sustainability of updates built in. Could have a front-facing resource for service users and another level for service providers to communicate and coordinate.	Nelson CARES (Selkirk College could support)	Yes \$5,000
Homeless Connect	Support vulnerable populations in connecting with the public to lower stigma, discrimination and promote education to the public around the homeless. The idea includes sponsoring a homeless person and having a photo ID bank.	Castlegar Community Services & LECoH Member Mike	Yes \$500
Spread Awareness to Entire Bioregion	Crushing the costs of living through an innovative micro-home community.	Kootenay Lake Innovation Center	Yes \$250K



Seed Money

To help move forward with implementing the SMART actions developed, \$5,000 in seed money was made available. This seed money was possible thanks to the funding support of Kootenay Savings Credit Union and Concentra Bank.

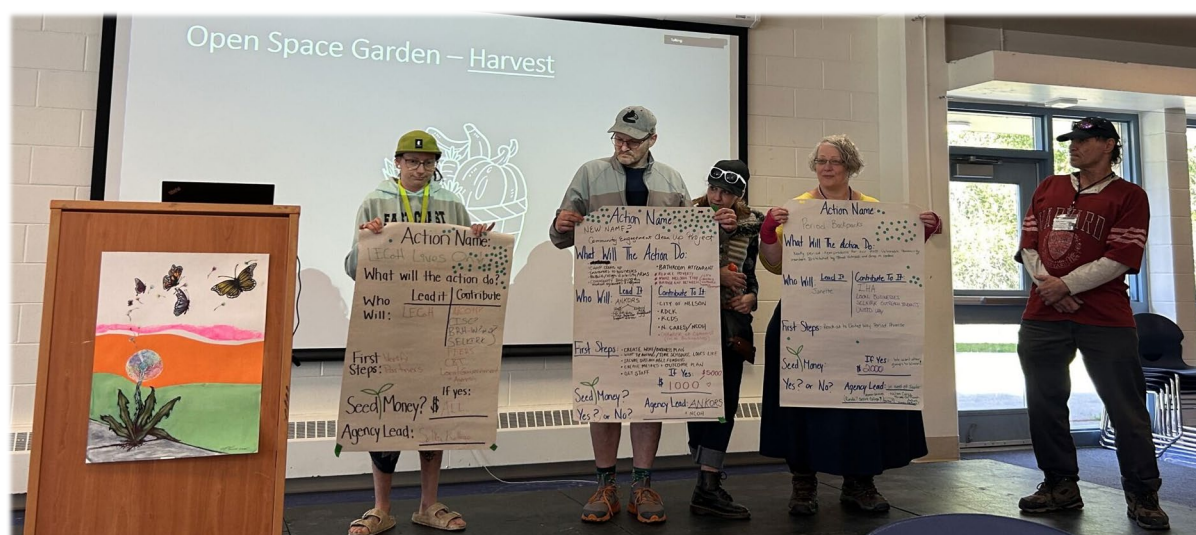
Deciding who got this seed money was done through a three-stage process:

1. Action development groups identified if they needed seed money and how much they requested (knowing there was only \$5,000 in seed money available).
2. Summit participants voted on their favourite action ideas using three circle (dot) stickers. They could put all their stickers on one action or distribute across up to three action ideas – a dotocracy.
3. Lived Experience Circle on Homelessness (LECoH) members, with the support of other people with lived experience participating in the summit, made the final decision on how to distribute the seed money. In making this decision, they considered the dot voting results from all summit participants.

It was an intentional and important decision to give the final decision on the seed money to people with lived/living experience of homelessness. They decided to split the seed money between three of the actions.

Seed Money Decision:

- \$1,000 – Community Clean Up PEER Employment Project
- \$2,000 – LECOH Lives-On
- \$2,000 – Period Backpack Project



Closing

15% Solutions

Near the closing of the event, participants were asked to consider their own personal 15% solutions. These are small steps that can be taken immediately without more resources or authority.

Participants answered the question, ***“What can you do NOW to make a positive difference and help us address homelessness as a region?”*** Some of the 15% solutions include:

- I can connect people with people, utilize social and business networks, connecting skills and opportunities.
- I can advocate for low-barrier peer employment programs at my organization.
- I can continue to learn about organizations assisting and making a difference. Volunteer and contribute to one or more of these organizations.
- Be aware of my own biases and privilege, then use this to help.
- Maintain a positive attitude toward unhoused people – smile and interact. Show interest.
- Inform people about the Nelson Community Food Centre and other services that may be helpful.
- Try to combat stigma by educating those around me and informing them about the services offered.
- Make connections with the community, practitioners, and the homeless.
- Continue to contribute to the organizations that support the vulnerable.
- Maintain awareness of the issues in our community.
- Remember it is okay to not have all of the answers – have grace through the process and know that frustration is the fuel before the breakthrough.
- Facilitate broader regional collaboration annually through the tri-cities.
- As an individual, I will continue to educate people, use my voice to share my knowledge. I can also continue to love and care about everyone in my community.
- Introduce and advocate for myself in the interest of finding where I can apply my skills and passions towards supporting people experiencing homelessness.
- Creating a non-judgmental space where people can feel comfortable being themselves, honouring agency and individuality. Continue to be an advocate for those with lived experience.
- To see every person as a unique individual, being curious and making time for their stories.
- Learn how to better convey the complexity of homelessness and prevention.
- Learn how to address stigma in my community and work.
- Monthly donations to local organizations.
- Volunteer, continue learning, and keep engaging in collaborations.
- Encourage colleagues to take care of themselves in this field of work.
- Dispel stigma with facts, data, research, and stories from those with lived experiences.

Closing the Circle

To close the summit, we had a heartfelt surprise. LECOH member, Mike Laren, unveiled a powerful piece of artwork that had been intentionally present and visible throughout the event. While we chose not to draw attention to it during the summit, its presence was quietly impactful. At the conclusion of the gathering, Mike shared the story and symbolism behind his creation. The original painting was then auctioned off, with proceeds going to a homelessness support service at Nelson Community Services—an organization personally chosen by Mike. This moving gesture underscored the intersection of creativity and advocacy, showing how personal expression can be a catalyst for awareness and change. The auction was more than a fundraiser—it was a celebration of resilience, talent, and the importance of amplifying voices too often left unheard.



Our time together concluded with a circle closing led by 'Old One' Donna Wright. Each participant was invited to share a final reflection, creating a space of connection, gratitude, and mutual respect. It was a powerful and meaningful way to end the summit.

The 2025 West Kootenay Homelessness Summit was a deeply impactful gathering that brought diverse voices for meaningful dialogue and collective action. Through shared stories, thoughtful discussions, and collaborative action development, the summit deepened understanding of the complexities of homelessness and created momentum for continued regional collaboration to address rural homelessness.



Graphic Recording Summarizing Event

Thank you to Lisa Gates from Insightful Ink for preparing this incredible visual event summary for us!



Appendix A: SMART Action Worksheet

Action Name	
S	SPECIFIC: <i>What exactly will be accomplished?</i>
M	MEASURABLE: <i>How will we know when this action has been successful? What do we need to measure?</i>
A	ACHIEVABLE: <i>Is this action achievable with effort and commitment? What resources are available to achieve this action? For missing resources, how can we get them?</i>

R	RELEVANT: <i>How will this action have an impact? For example, describe the impact it will have on improving the well-being of people experiencing homelessness. What would this look like? How many people would be impacted? Would it be a direct impact or indirect impact?</i>
T	TIMELY: <i>When can this action get started and when can it be completed? Can it be started by the end of the year? Are there mini actions that make up this action and when can they be done?</i>
WHO?	<i>Who will <u>lead</u> this action? Who will <u>support</u> this action? Who else needs to <u>be involved</u> to make it successful? Can you find these people in the room today and bring them into this action development? How can regional collaboration help?</i>

ACTION STEPS		<i>List at least 5 small, specific steps that need to be taken to achieve the SMART action. Try making the first step something that can be done with less than 30 minutes of effort. When will this be done? Who will do the action steps?</i>	
Specific Next Steps:		When will it be done:	Who will do it:
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
OBSTACLES		<i>List 2 potential obstacles to achieving the SMART action.</i>	
1.			
2.			
SOLUTIONS		<i>List 2 potential solutions to overcoming obstacles.</i>	
1.			
2.			

LIVED-EXPERIENCE PARTICIPATION	<i>How can people with lived-experience be involved and at what stage – development, coordination, implementation, evaluation, other?</i>
SELKIRK COLLEGE PARTICIPATION	<i>How can Selkirk College faculty and/or students be involved and at what stage – development, coordination, implementation, evaluation, other?</i>
OTHER CONSIDERATIONS	<i>What else needs to be considered to make this SMART action doable?</i>
COMMITTED FIRST STEP	<i>What can you commit to start right away and make this SMART action happen?</i>
SEED MONEY	<i>Do you need seed money to get this ACTION started? (Y/N)</i> <i>If yes,</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>How much do you need?</i> <i>What organization will manage the seed money, ensuring it is used as intended and will do a brief report back to summit participants by December 2025?</i>

Appendix B: Action Harvest Summary Photos

Action Name:
"HOUSING YOUTH"

What Will The Action Do:
ELEVATE + BRING AWARENESS TO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Who Will:	Lead It	Contribute
	→ NCOH	→ FORM/LEAD TASK FORCE
	→ BC HOUSING	→ PROVIDE AGENCIES FOR SUCCESS
	→ SERVICE PROVIDERS	→ PROVIDE DATA
	→ YOUTH LIVING EXP.	→ AVAILABLE SERVICES
		→ BRING YOUTH VOICES + STORIES
First Steps:	- START YOUTH TASK FORCE	→ EXPLORE MODELS
	- GATHER DATA + STORIES	- TRIP/IMPROVED
	- AGENCIES FOR FUNDING	- YOUTH AND
	- FINDING SUCCESSFUL MODELS!	- PARTNERSHIP

Seed Money? \$ **If Yes:** NO

Agency Lead: NCOH

Action Name:
LECOH Lives On

What will the action do?

Who Will:	Lead it	Contribute
	LECOH	NCOH?
		CISC?
		BRH-W? pl. 2?
		SELKIRK
		PEERS
		CBT
		Local Government + Agencies

First Steps: Verify Partners

Seed Money? \$ **If yes:** ALL

Agency Lead: Selkirk College

Action Name:
Nelson's Piggybank

What Will The Action Do:

1. Provide sustainable funding + resources for permanent drop-in centre with wrap-around services (Nelson)
2. Future collaborative goals
3. Copy model for other cities (e.g. Kelowna + Trail)

Who Will:	Lead It	Contribute To It
	NCOH	All stakeholders who want to opt in

First Steps: June meeting

Seed Money? \$ **If Yes:** \$5,000

Yes? or No? **Agency Lead:** Anglican Church

Action Name:
NEW NAME?
Community Engagement Clean Up Project

What Will The Action Do:

- CAMP Clean up
- Entrances to businesses
- Public/High Visibility AREAS
- COMMUNITY BUILDING AND mutual agreements & respect

BATHROOM ATTENDANT

- * REDUCE POVERTY
- * MAKE NELSON TIDY
- * BRIDGE GAP BETWEEN CITY BUSINESS + HOMELESS

Who Will:	Lead It	Contribute To It:
ANKORS		CITY OF NELSON
		RDCK
		K.CDS
		N. CARES/NCOH
		CHAMBER OF Commerce (local Businesses)

First Steps:

- CREATE WORK/BUSINESS PLAN
- WHAT TRAINING/TIME SCHEDULE LOOKS LIKE
- SECURE SUSTAINABLE FUNDING
- CREATE METRICS + OUTCOME PLAN
- GET STAFF

Seed Money? \$ **If Yes:** \$5000
\$1000

Yes? or No? **Agency Lead:** ANKORS + NCOH

Action Name:
Period Backpacks

What Will The Action Do:
Monthly period - Fem products for our most vulnerable community members. Distributed by Street Outreach and drop in centers

Who Will:

Lead It	Contribute To It:
Janette	IHA LOCAL BUSINESSES SELKIRK OUTREACH STUDENTS UNITED WAY

First Steps: Reach out to United Way Period Promise

Seed Money? **IF Yes:** We want other groups to bloom!
\$ 2,000

Yes? or No? **Agency Lead:** In need of Supplier
Human Services. - Nelson Corcoran
Ronda? Selkirk College? Street Outreach
Ankers? - Nelson Corcoran

Action Name:
Interactive Service Platform Navigator

What Will The Action Do:
Connect/bridge services of the client with services.
Provide service providers & community with the right services.
Identify gaps.
Keep data current

Who Will:

Lead It	Contribute To It:
Social & Poverty Reduction? IHA? Service Provider eg. Nelson Corcoran Selkirk College?	Regional Child & Youth Family Committee All service providers. Selkirk College - practitioners - Capstone.

First Steps: Find the agency to lead this initiative in partnership with Selkirk.

Seed Money? **IF Yes:**
\$ 5,000

Yes? or No? **Agency Lead:** Nelson Corcoran

Action Name:

What Will The Action Do:
- Help homeless connect with general public to create a bond, lowering stigma & discrimination as well as educating the public.
- Info sharing

Who Will:

LEAD	CONTRIBUTE
Mental Health Community Services	Connecting Spouses & Spouses in a safe environment.

First Steps:
- CRIM Record check.
- Resources for location.
- Gas cards, expenses, soap. Time for set up.
Possible News media.

Seed Money? **IF YES:**
\$ 500

Agency Lead: Mental Health Lecha
Community Services. Mike

Action Name:
Spread Awareness to entire bioregion

What Will The Action Do:
Crush the costs of Living

Who Will:

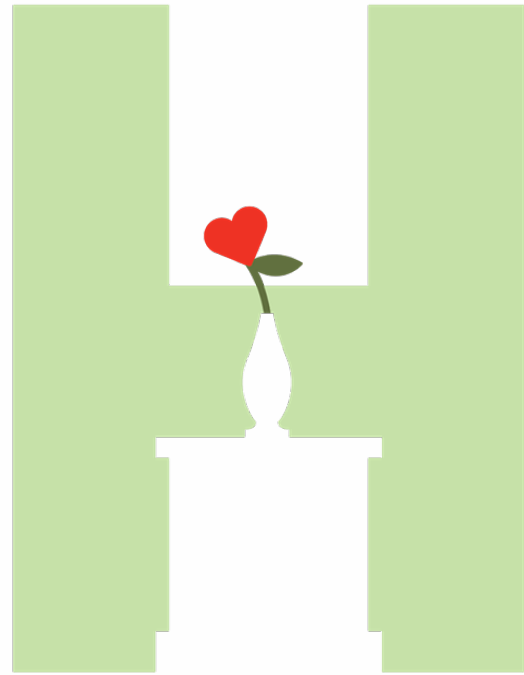
Lead It	Contribute To It:
KLIC Housing Developers	Kootenay Org ALL Residents

First Steps: Events & Media

Seed Money? **IF Yes:**
\$ 250K

Yes? or No? **Agency Lead:** KLIC

Appendix C: Inspiration Ideas Showdown Presentations

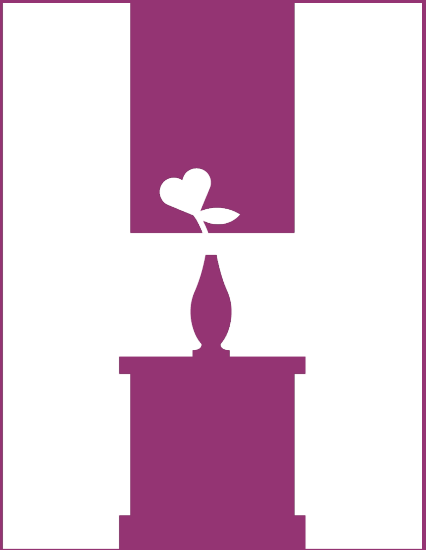


HOME AGAIN

FURNITURE BANK

ENDING FURNITURE POVERTY

ONE HOME AT A TIME



- City of St. John's
- 2014 - 2015 Research conducted
- Need presented, but no agency willing to take it on, due to capacity challenges
- \$25,000 grant and 12 organizations at the table
- Home Again was born



40 PARTNER REFERRING AGENCIES









OUR IMPACT

Over 3840 Households
are now furnished.

750+ Volunteers
helped us make a difference.

4402 Furniture Donors
gave comfort, dignity & stability to neighbours in need.

More than 740 Tonnes
of furniture diverted from the local landfill.



Again & Again

- Social enterprise
- Thrift furniture and home decor
- Opened Nov 2022
- First staff were at-risk youth who were participating in an employment training program (CFY) and needed workplace experience. One of the original youth was hired on after his training ended and is now our storefront supervisor
- Offer space to local crafters who showcase their talent - teaching others their craft, promoting their business and helping to fund A&A
- Many volunteers, including the Wellness Group benefit from shared safe social space, learning new skills and opportunity to give back
- New funded employment training project for newcomers currently underway (hoping to extend this as long as funds allow). Provide "Canadian work experience", various training, language support, etc.





STAY INVOLVED

Volunteer

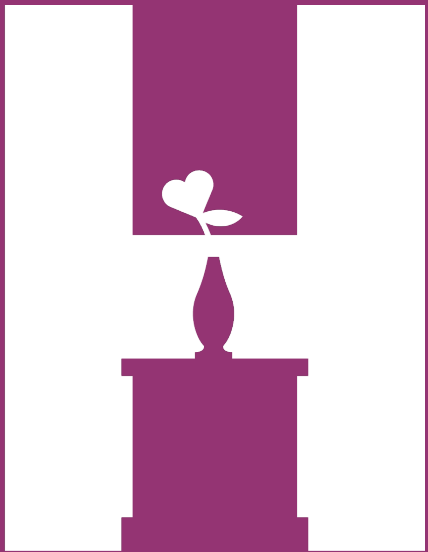
Become a Dreamer

Support Heads Without Beds

Plan a Fundraiser

Like & Share Social Media

Shop at Again & Again





HOMEAGAIN
FURNITURE BANK



CONNECT WITH HOME AGAIN

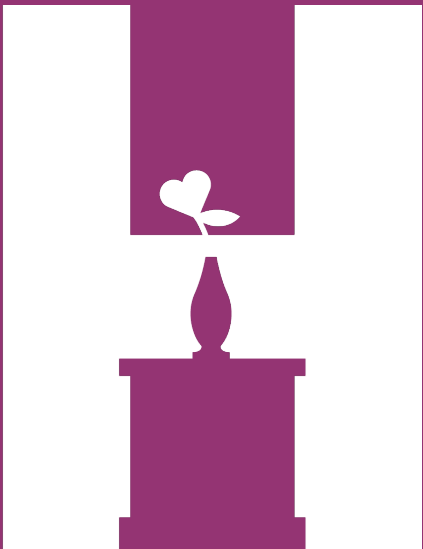


www.homeagainfb.ca



Amy Tulk,
Executive Director
amytulk@homeagainfb.com

Maureen Lymburner,
Director of Development
maureenlymburner@homeagainfb.com



- What is needed in our communities?
- How can we rally diverse sectors of community to enable the best possible outcomes for care?
- What barriers exist in engaging with Businesses, Non-Profits, Government and Community Partners?
- How can we work together to affect great change in our context?



100 More Homes Penticton

Collective Impact

About 100 More Homes

Over the last 8 years, 100 More Homes Penticton has transformed from a small informal group that met to discuss housing needs in the community into a formal collective with over 27 diverse organizations representing housing needs for a wide range of people.

In 2018, the collective efforts resulted in the construction of over 200 units and wrap-around housing support services, and it is now working towards creating a community where every resident has safe, accessible, and affordable homes to live in.

100 More Homes

Mission

- To work collaboratively to build a system of housing and supports to prevent and address homelessness in Penticton.

Values

- Every person in our community deserves to have a home
- Multisector collaboration with shared goals and priorities is essential
- Incorporating the Lived Experience voice within the Committee's work
- No one group or agency can solve the issue of homelessness alone; collaboration is essential

Strategic Goals

- Housing and Supports: Increase housing and supports for those experiencing and at risk of homelessness
- Community Coordination: Create a coordinated system of intake, assessment and supports
- Data: Produce consistent, reliable data to inform decision-making and advocacy
- Communication: Enhance communication and education to the wider community

<https://uwbc.ca/program/100-more-homes-penticton/#about>

GUIDE TO MULTI-SECTOR COLLABORATION



United Way
British Columbia

Working with communities in
BC's North, Interior, Lower Mainland,
Central & Northern Vancouver Island



100MOREHOMES@UWBC.CA

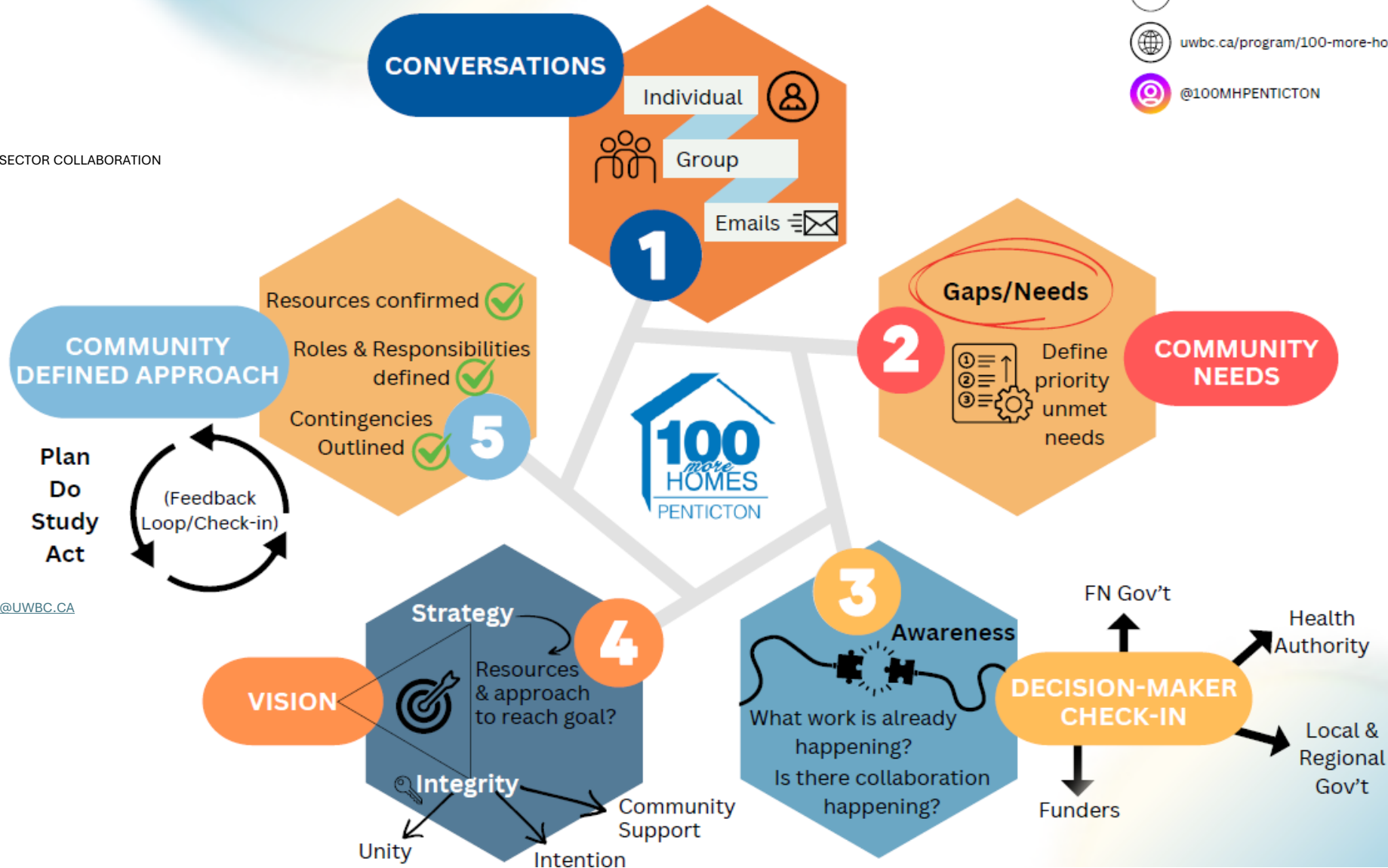


uwbc.ca/program/100-more-homes-penticton



@100MHPENTICTON

GUIDE TO MULTI-SECTOR COLLABORATION



100MOREHOMES@UWBC.CA



Penticton Constellation Model



Partners

- 1 Access Center
- 2 Ask Wellness
- 3 BC housing
- 4 Bylaw Enforcement Penticton
- 5 Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)
- 6 City of Penticton
- 7 Community Foundation of the South Okanagan (CFSOS)
- 8 Foundry
- 9 Interior Health
- 10 Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR)
- 11 One Sky
- 12 Ooknakane Friendship Center (OFC)
- 13 Penticton & District Society for Community Living (PDSCL)
- 14 Penticton Indian Band
- 15 Penticton Outreach and Prevention (POPs)
- 16 RCMP
- 17 South Okanagan Restorative Justice Program
- 18 South Okanagan Similkameen Brain Injury Society (SOSBIS)
- 19 South Okanagan Women in Need Society (SOWINS)

BBL Five Things You May Not Have Known about Homelessness in Penticton 21:38
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0Tj8lCX0rs&t=453s>



5 Things You May Not Know About Homelessness In Penticton

Tanya Behardien

Chair, 100 More Homes

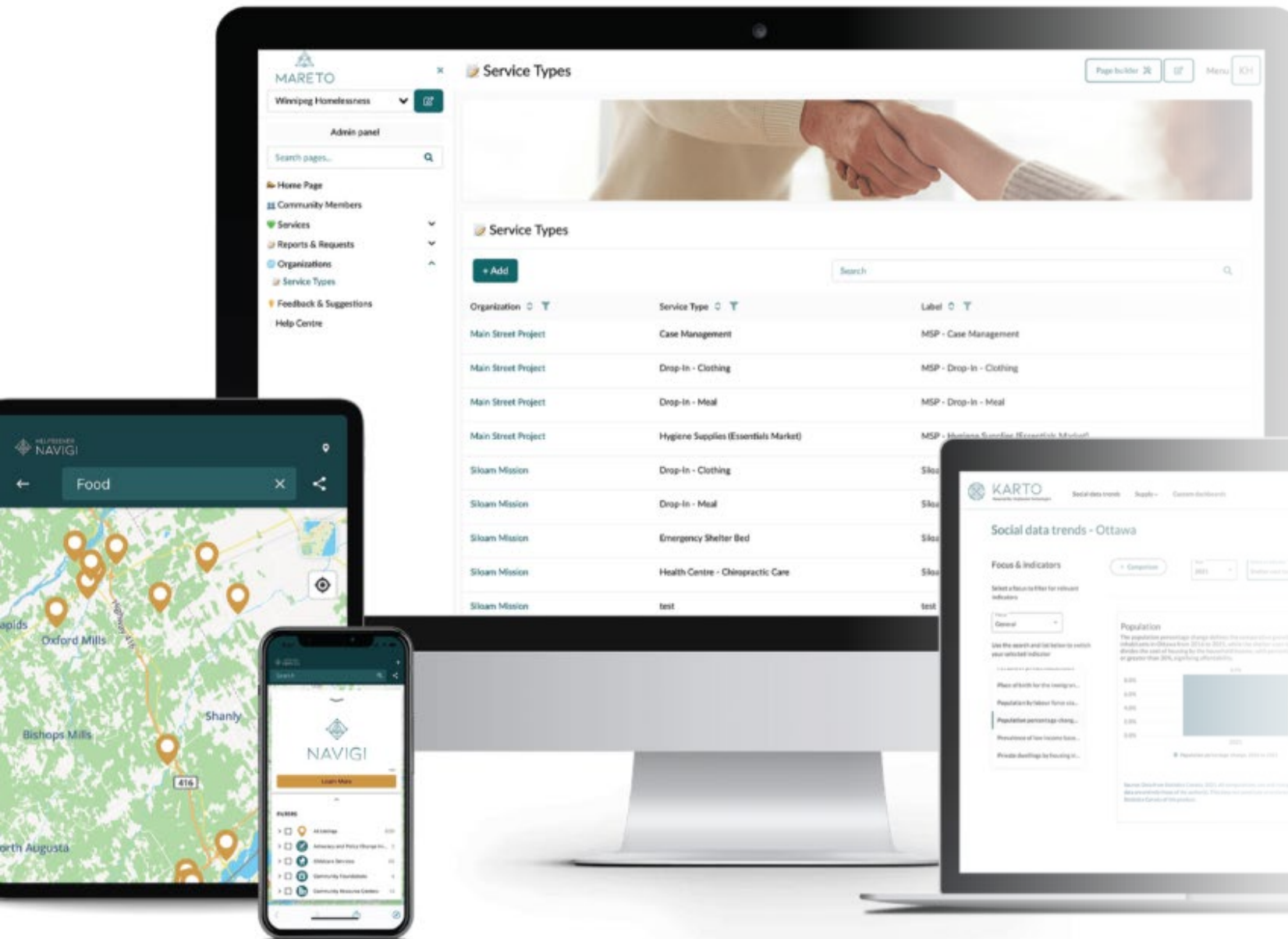
Jamie Lloyd-Smith

Community Mobilizer



Help Seeker

- <https://www.helpseeker.org/>
- Data-driven solutions to address social challenges such as homelessness, addictions, community safety, and more.



How can we
adapt this plan
for
implementation
in Nelson?





Regional Strategy for Homelessness

Regional Strategy for Rehabilitation, Homelessness And Public Safety

City of Nelson, City of Trail, City of Castlegar

Whereas individuals facing severe mental health and addiction challenges require comprehensive and coordinated care, and the current resources in southeastern BC are insufficient to meet the growing demand for detoxification, rehabilitation, and supportive housing, leading to inadequate treatment and forcing individuals to leave their home communities for essential services;

And whereas communities in British Columbia have experienced a significant increase in the street population, leading to heightened concerns about public safety, community well-being, and the challenges associated with mental health, substance abuse, and public disorder, while current policing resources remain insufficient to effectively address these complex issues:

Therefore, be it resolved that the provincial government be urged to:

- Increase funding and resources to expand and enhance detox and rehabilitation services across southeastern BC;
- Establish initiatives that foster collaboration among local governments, government agencies, healthcare providers, nonprofit organizations, and community members to ensure effective coordination, resource allocation, and holistic support for individuals undergoing detox and rehabilitation;
- Develop a regional strategy to address homelessness by increasing funding for housing, shelter, and treatment services in the Kootenay and Boundary regions; and
- Provide dedicated funding streams for local governments facing increased street population challenges, including direct grants through the Provincial Policing and Public Safety Fund, additional allocations to the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Branch, and enhanced federal contributions under the Reaching Home program to support specialized policing units, mental health crisis response teams, and community safety initiatives.

The Impacts of Peer Employment for People Experiencing Homelessness in Rural and Remote Communities



GEANINE GERROW & MALORIE MOORE



Who Are We?



What does your work mean to you?



Work is important.



What does the research tell us?

- People who are unhoused want to work.
- Many of the work opportunities available for un-housed folks are precarious, unreliable and high-risk.
- Barriers to employment include a lack of vocational skills/training, mental/physical health challenges (and lack of needed accommodation), institutional barriers and discrimination.
- Employment programs are successful when they encourage collaboration between employers/community partners and provide an individualized (customized) approach.

Nelson BC: Population 11,106



Distance = 68.8km
90 minutes on public transit



Trail BC: Population 7,709



PEERS: Pathways to Engagement and Employment Readiness

PEER employment placements

Employment counselling and skill development

Wrap-around supports

Customized service delivery

Flexible financial supports

What worked?

- Strong community partnerships
- Flexible employment opportunities
- Long-term support and relationship focus
- Non-punitive approach
- Customization

“PEERs program has been positive with rebuilding confidence, extra working and keeping busy helps the most.”

– PEERs Participant



What jobs are best suited to Peer Employment?

“

"Gave me a reason to get over my past via an outlet to help others. I literally found a reason to live"

– PEERS Participant

”



“

“It’s helped me get out of my slump, helped me get back working with people again. It’s brought hope back into my head, and structure and learning things that I find helpful.”

– PEERS Participant

”

“

“I went from being homeless to having a place to live. (I) have gotten full time sustainable employment and lessened the stresses of not having enough income. I do not have to struggle with juggling debt and can now relax and enjoy the day to day living. It has changed (my) life dramatically. When I first came to town I was very depressed. Now when I smile it is a real smile. The program has helped my perception of life and made me a happier person. I don't feel lost anymore.”

– PEERS Participant

”



Challenges

- Stigma
- Community attitudes
- Rural location
- Metrics of success
- Impact on staff
- Toxic drug supply

Lessons Learned

- Prioritize trust-building through actions and systems
- Build service delivery in a way that is consistent and non-punitive
- Embed service delivery in locations that makes sense
- Offer flexible financial supports
- Ensure that services are long-term and relationship-focused
- Prioritize community partnerships for placements
- Dream big
- Employ creative service-delivery models





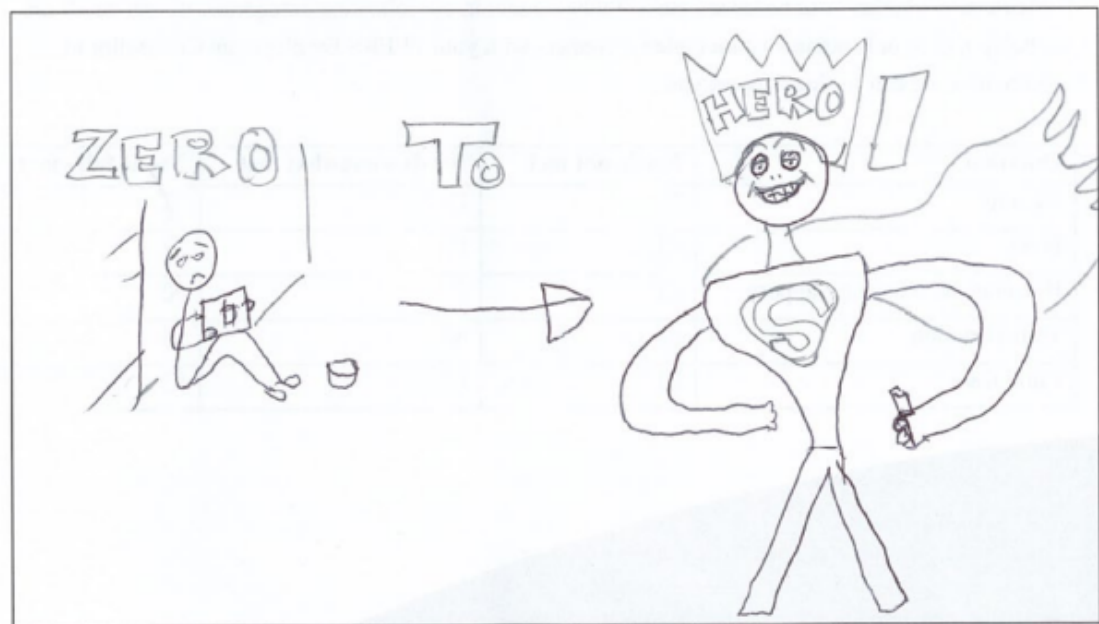
Program Blueprint

- Approach your local Employment Services Centre
- Build a program model based on customized peer employment with fair remuneration
- Ensure flexible financial supports
- Build strong partnerships with employers
- Emphasize research and curiosity with regards to success

“

All the people from my placements, in the program with me, without even trying the connections I made had a big impact on my life. One of my work placements ended up opening a new low-income housing unit, and they let me in there from my work and from knowing me at Our Daily Bread. I was sleeping in a tent and waking up at 6am, with cars driving by constantly. Now that I'm staying in comfy bed, in a house, I don't really want to go camping for a long, long time. **The view from my place, you can see the spot on the highway where I used to tent.**

”





Geanine Gerrow
WorkBC Trail Centre Manager

geanine.gerrow@kcds.ca