

# TRI-CITIES COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM 2025 YEAR WRAP UP



The Tri-Cities Community Action Team (TC CAT) serves as a pulse of support for Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Anmore, and Belcarra. Established in 2017 as a direct response to a crisis that has claimed over 14,000 lives in BC, we have spent years refining a foundation built on breaking down stigma through creative expression, resource connection, and interactive education. We recognize that the toxic drug crisis does not discriminate, affecting all walks of life—from the tradespeople on our local job sites to families behind closed doors. Because this crisis reaches into every corner of our community, we ensure our awareness efforts and education are tailored to meet people where life happens, sparking vital conversations and sharing resources at community events, parks, and schools.



This past year has been one of our most impactful to date, marked by a deep commitment to visibility and inclusion. We've been on the ground hosting events that bridge gaps for everyone—focusing on men's health, youth, the LGBTQ+ community, and newcomer populations who often face unique barriers to support. Through memorial walks, winter drives, and senior outreach, we've created a space where story-sharing honors those we've lost while strengthening the safety net for those still with us. While every year brings its own set of challenges, the steady guidance of our peers and the unwavering support of our partners have kept the TC CAT running with purpose and pride. There is a lot to look back on this year, and even more to share.



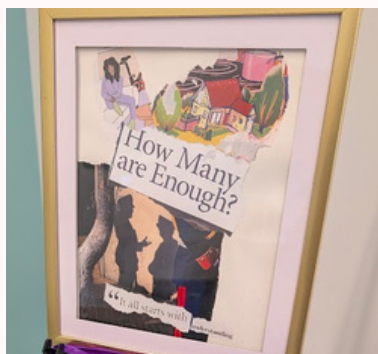


# CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS

At the TC CAT, we believe that where words often fail, art speaks. Creative expression is a vital tool for mental health; it allows us to process complex emotions, reduce the isolation of trauma, and cause the community to pause in a world that often moves too fast. Art makes the invisible visible, turning a "statistic" into a human story that demands compassion.



We used art to transform heavy statistics into human stories, inviting the community to pause and reflect. We embraced symbols like the sunflower, representing our choice to turn toward one another for light, and black balloons to honor those we've lost. The butterfly became a focal point for the beauty of transformation in recovery and a graceful release for memorial, while our TC CAT bears offered a tangible embrace of hope and community. Across the Tri-Cities, these symbols came to life: from the sea of flags at Lafarge Lake that created a sacred memorial walk, to our memorial trees where ribbons and messages held space for loved ones over the holidays. Through collaborations like Access Youth art journaling, the performance of the play Precarious, and our Tree of Coping Methods, we've shown that creative expression—whether through a Pledge of Kindness or a physical art piece—is a powerful tool for mental health and a vital bridge to compassion.



## A Call for Your Expression

Creativity is most powerful when it is shared. We invite you to contribute your own expressions to our community platform. Whether it is poetry, a story, a physical art piece, a play, or any other medium—we welcome your voice.

We value stories of loss, recovery, community, and the personal journeys that make up our Tri-Cities family. If you have a piece you would like us to share on our social media or in future newsletters, please reach out.

# CONNECTING RESOURCES



“This year has been nothing short of amazing. We have a men’s health and a youth health collective. These have brought so many opportunities by their creation alone, with more to come next year. We have assisted many youth and young men with the members of these collectives.

In an increasingly dark world, I am truly thankful for this position. My cup is full when I am working on behalf of the TC CAT. To have the ability to be proactive to issues in our community is one of the best feelings I get. Listening to the needs and building out from there.

We receive high praise from the administration at Dr Charles Best as well as UBC Men’s Health Research.

Looking forward to a new year and evolving with the new changes.”

- Michelle, TC CAT Peer Coordinator

This year, our focus has been on simplifying the path to support by bringing services directly to the people. Through events we hosted—such as Black Balloon Day, our Health Anniversary, the Men’s Health Collective, International Overdose Awareness Day, and student resource fairs at Charles Best Secondary—we’ve created central hubs where multiple providers are available in one place. Beyond our own events, we’ve also made it a priority to attend various community gatherings, acting as a bridge to ensure individuals are pointed toward the right resources. Our goal is to remove the burden of navigating complex systems alone, replacing a maze of lists with a warm, direct connection to care.

We are incredibly grateful to the partners who have been by our side, including NaloxHome, SHARE, Progressive Housing, HIM, Heads Up Guys, ACT 2, Fraser Health OOT, the IHART team, Kwikwetlem, Pacifica, Hope For Freedom, and Talitha Koum Society. Because substance use is so deeply intertwined with mental health, trauma, and physical pain, a siloed approach simply isn't enough. By collaborating, we are able to offer a holistic spectrum of support that addresses the whole person. Thank you to everyone who continues to work with us through this ongoing crisis; your presence makes a comprehensive, "no wrong door" approach possible.





# PARTNER SHOUT OUT!

**Insights from Access Youth: The Role of Trust**  
*Contributed by Access Youth Outreach Services Society*

“When youth are struggling with stress, trauma, or substance use, the first thing they need isn’t advice. It’s safety and trust. And trust is often missing. It is missing between youth and the adults around them, and it is missing between youth and the systems meant to help them.

All too frequently, we see youth turning away from community. They may be hungry and not accessing food programs. They are struggling and not accessing mental health supports. They are lonely and not engaging in community activities. It all begins with connection. Trust is at the heart of that connection and the foundation for any meaningful support.”



We want to extend a massive thank you and a heartfelt shoutout to ACCESS Youth Outreach Services Society, our new Lead Financial Agency (LFA). Since stepping into this role, they have been a powerhouse of support for the TC CAT. Their impact goes far beyond the spreadsheets; while they have been instrumental in tightening our financials and mastering our budget, their guidance has been vital to our overall direction. From high-level problem solving to fresh project ideas, ACCESS has provided the steady hand and creative vision needed to keep our team moving forward.

Beyond their leadership with us, ACCESS is a lifeline for local youth. They meet the community where it’s at through their PRO Bus mobile outreach, 1:1 empowerment and system navigation, and food security programs for families. By offering everything from after-school art journaling to job opportunities for youth, they are building resilience and brighter futures every day. We are incredibly proud to work alongside a team that shares our deep commitment to compassion and action.



# INTERACTIVE EDUCATION AT COMMUNITY EVENTS

"This was a challenging and rewarding year for me in the Tri-Cities Community Action Team. This year I was able to devote much more time and energy to the TC CAT, which led to a much greater understanding of BC's toxic drug crisis and its effect on our communities, and it's driven me to action and change! I assisted with a number of events, men's health, pride, youth fair, live theatre, actual aid to folks dealing with multiple barriers, and naloxone training, to name a few. It was during all of these events that I came to realize that using an Indigenous lens while planning and participating makes these moments that much more meaningful for everyone, and it's a really positive step in working towards Truth and Reconciliation. The basic principles of trust building, integrating traditional knowledge, ceremonies, and medicines, and delivering judgment-free services with kindness and compassion is now a checklist that I go through in my head to help me analyze and improve various actions that we as a committee do.

I am hopeful and excited to push that agenda forward more this year. My personal goal is to learn more about Indigenizing Harm Reduction and share it with other TC CAT members so that we can use these teachings and recommendations to help us plan and organize our events for 2026. I'd also like to take the emotional first aid program so that when we're out in the world working with the general public, I can better offer my own support in the moment. I have dreams of making words and phrases like "harm reduction," "overdose," "drugs," and "naloxone" so common that no one even blinks an eye when they hear them. For me, I'd like this to be a year of breaking down the stigma and stereotypes through a combination of support, education, and action. We're such an amazing and diverse group of people; we can make it happen!"

All my relations,

Tina Beads



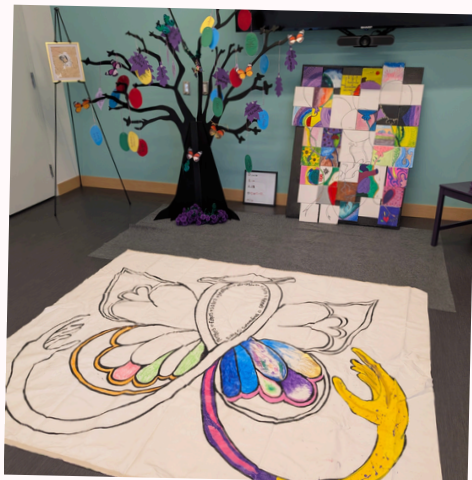
Our approach to education is all about meeting people exactly where they are—whether we're talking to students, seniors, or local politicians. We take "big picture" concepts and break them down into interactive experiences, using everything from one-on-one conversations and formal presentations to engaging games like Jeopardy. This allows us to tailor vital information to the person in front of us. Whether it's hands-on naloxone training or deep dives into the complexities of the toxic drug crisis, our goal is to make learning accessible and practical. By using these interactive tools, we turn heavy topics into moments of real connection and shared understanding.

We are also intentionally "changing the script" by moving toward a more holistic view of healing and support. While the term "harm reduction" is often misunderstood, we see it simply as the practice of reducing harm in all areas of our lives to create space for wellness. This means embracing an indigenized model that focuses on healthy living, resilience, and coping skills. By centering our education on kindness and compassion—toward ourselves, each other, and our environment—we acknowledge that healing isn't just one-dimensional; it involves the mind, body, and spirit working together. We are excited to continue evolving our language to promote this brand of wellness, breaking down the barriers of fear and stigma along the way.



# INTERNATIONAL OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY

On August 31st, we gathered in the heart of Coquitlam for our 5th annual International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) event. IOAD is a global campaign—supported by Penington Institute (overdoseday.com)—that invites communities to remember those who have lost their lives without stigma and to acknowledge the grief of the family and friends left behind. By moving to a more central location this year, we were able to bring this vital conversation to a wider public audience. The day was a beautiful blend of practical support and creative expression, featuring life-saving naloxone training and a special shout-out to Cassandra Cake Co. for the incredible naloxone-themed cookies! We were also honored to partner with ACCESS Youth art journaling students, who shared their own powerful messages of resilience through their work.



The atmosphere was grounded in a deep sense of belonging, starting with on-site smudging and moving through a room filled with art, a community mural, and a memorial tree where names and photos of loved ones were hung with care. We were joined by returning friends, including Curtis' Dream Car, Pacifica, NaloxHome, Fraser Health OOT, Moving Forward, and The Wondrous Tree Fellowship. We also want to share a special thank you to the Coquitlam Foundation for providing the grant that made this event possible. Together, we created a space to listen to stories of grief, recovery, and hope. This day is so much more than an awareness campaign; it is a sanctuary for families to connect and a bridge between the heaviness of loss and the strength of community. It reminds us that while the crisis continues, no one has to carry the weight of it alone.





# BREAKING DOWN STIGMA

A major part of our work this year has been providing education on what stigma actually is and, more importantly, how to combat it. Stigma thrives on distance and misunderstanding, so we work to break it down by bringing people closer together. This year, our peers with lived and living experience have been at the heart of this mission. Whether they were helping with behind-the-scenes planning, working community events, or leading the collection and distribution of our winter drive for unhoused individuals, their presence reminds us that those who have walked the walk are the real experts. By delivering warm meals, providing community education, and leading naloxone training, our peers are showing that the best way to fight stigma is through direct, meaningful action.

One of our goals within the Community Action Team is to help reconnect those who have felt pushed to the margins or disconnected from their community. By centering the voices of those with lived experience, we shift the conversation from judgment to empathy. This approach doesn't just provide a service; it helps restore dignity and builds an environment where everyone feels they have a place. When we lead with kindness and recognize the intertwined nature of mental health, trauma, and substance use, we create a community where the barriers of stigma can finally begin to fall away.



# Tri-Cities Community Action Team

## Toxic Drug Response Guide

The toxic drug crisis affects people from all walks of life. The street drug supply is unpredictable and contaminated, making every use a risk. This card provides simple steps and local supports to help keep you, your friends, and your community safer.

### What to do during an overdose

- Call 911 immediately
- Give naloxone
- Following the SAVE ME Steps)
- Give breaths – oxygen saves lives (1 breath every 5 seconds)
- Stay until help arrives

### How to Stay Safer

- Don't use alone – buddy or virtual
- Start low, go slow
- Have naloxone ready
- Know your source – Testing at Purpose Society (604-526-2522)
- Avoid mixing substances
- Stay hydrated and nourished

### Where Can you get Naloxone in the Tri-Cities?

Available for free at most pharmacies, the Tri-Cities Health Unit (Newport), and SHARE (Port Moody, Clarke St). Outreach distribution also available through Access Youth and TC CAT.

Tri-Cities CAT – Naloxone training & education  
[info@tri-citiescat.ca](mailto:info@tri-citiescat.ca) | [www.tri-citiescat.com](http://www.tri-citiescat.com)

### Local Resources

- **ASTRA** (Access & Support for Teens at Risk): 604-314-2038
- **Fraser Health Substance Use Services** (Tri-Cities) – 604-777-6870
- **Foundry – youth & family supports** | [www.foundrybc.ca](http://www.foundrybc.ca)
- **Fraser Health Overdose Outreach Team** (FH OOT) – 604-360-2874
- **iHART Team** (Integrated Homelessness Action Response Team) – 236-885-6915
- **RAAC (Rapid Access Addiction Clinic)** – intake line: 604-806-8867
- **Community Transitions Team @ PHSA** (After incarceration support) – [CommunityTransitionTeams@phsa.ca](mailto:CommunityTransitionTeams@phsa.ca)

### Provincial Resources

- **211** – Community & social services information line
- **BC Alcohol & Drug Information & Referral Service** – 1-800-663-1441
- **BC Bereavement Helpline** – 1-877-779-2223
- **BC Mental Health Support Line** – 310-6789 (no area code)
- **KUU-US Crisis Line** – 1-800-588-8717 (Indigenous-specific, 24/7 in BC)
- **Lifeguard App** (iOS/Android) – digital tool for safer substance use
- **NORS** (National Overdose Response Service) – 1-888-688-NORS (6677)
- **Suicide Crisis Helpline** – 988 (national, 24/7)
- **Opioid Treatment Line** - 1-833-804-8111



Scan here for a more comprehensive list of resources  
Break Down Stigma and Check in on your Loved ones. #itTakesaCommunity