



## Vancouver Street Patrol/Outreach Services

Over 1,000 overdose deaths occurred in British Columbia between January and September of 2017 (Coroner's, 2017). Indigenous people in Vancouver are 10 times disproportionately affected by the opioid crisis (FNHA, 2017). The *Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC)* recommends that Indigenous-focused street patrols be supported to provide culturally appropriate prevention to this demographic at risk.

Street patrols are operating 7 days a week in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES). Times vary between 8 am until midnight with the bulk of services being offered between 9 am to 5 pm. Peak ambulance times occur usually between 12 pm to 4 pm and again between 7 pm to 11 pm. Paramedics in this area believe street patrols and harm reduction initiatives have reduced the burden felt by BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS). People in the DTES area have often been resuscitated upon arrival and people who use substances chronically appear to be using them more safely.

There were 13 street outreach services identified in Vancouver providing harm reduction options to promote the health and safety of those on the streets. Each program has its own particular focus, such as youth, women, shelter referral, volunteer operated, harm reduction, & Indigenous. There is currently no working relationship between the city's emergency responders, BCEHS, and these groups. Representatives from these services explained that a system for information sharing between groups does not exist, however, they agreed unanimously that this would be beneficial. Information sharing show which services are being unnecessarily duplicated and could assist in identifying service gaps.

Each program has unique indicators of quantifiable success. *Street Saviours* is a volunteer organization running on donated time and funds that have reversed approximately 20 overdoses with naloxone since it began less than a year ago. The VCH *Overdose Outreach Team* assists about 20 clients a week to access support services, WISH's *MAP Van* makes over 1,400 connections a month with women working on the street, and the PHS *Mobile Needle Exchange* has made Vancouver streets safer by retrieving millions of used needles.

Qualifiable successes were also identified to be significantly impactful. A common discourse is to think of people on the streets as forgotten, ignored, and dismissed. Societal stigma has shamed people to use substances out of the mainstream's sight (CAMH). When asked what service he provides, Kevin, a street outreach volunteer from the *Aboriginal Front Door*, responded that he offers people *a moment of human connection* and *acknowledges the person inside*. Although interactions like these may be difficult to measure, they exemplify how low-barrier interventions can offer the most basic of human needs.

Indigenous street outreach patrols are less stigmatizing and can increase the likelihood someone on the street will access support. Having exposure to workers with similar lived experiences can offer a sense of hope and understanding. Indigenous patrollers may also be able to provide more tailored cultural support. *Culture as Intervention* suggests that exposure to Indigenous culture can serve as an intervention for wellness (Dumont, 2014). These patrols can offer culturally specific support, referrals, and practices to support the holistic healing of the people

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they serve. The *Bear Clan Patrol* is one example of a successful Indigenous street patrol operating in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The patrol operates around 100 hours a week with over 100 volunteers trained in first aid and naloxone administration.

Workers with lived experience are to be considered an asset because they understand their clients' circumstances from having been there themselves. Rapport is accelerated because less time is needed to gather contextual information. Peer support programs also serve as vehicles of healing for the supporter. Workers gain a sense of purpose knowing that they are in a position to help others. Volunteers and workers are often success stories themselves and can be living examples to others that recovery is possible.

Those who have lived experience or work with people with lived experience may also be aware of certain challenges. Working in the field may trigger past traumatic events or desires to use substances. Peer support workers may be at various points along their healing journey from substance use. Workers of all experiences may require various degrees of support, therefore, it is recommended that additional time and resources for staff care be included into the program's structure to ensure the best service possible (Seeking Help, 2017).

Street patrolling also provides a direct line of communication with those on the street whose voices are seldom heard. Frontline workers have an opportunity to hear concerns from the streets and report back the information. Issues identified by *Aboriginal Front Door* street patrollers were the need for indoor low-barrier spaces where people can use substances safely. It was also reported that beneficial programs have been in place, but were then disbanded. Inconsistent services damage trusting relationships that were initially difficult to establish.

Trust building is crucial when engaging with people on the streets. Probing for information and asking a survey of questions can quickly create suspicion. Patrollers explained that the clients they engage with are routinely focused on their needs for the immediate future, for example, where to get food, money, or drugs at that moment. Assessing any longer-term needs appeared to be an impossibility. Peer-support street patrollers themselves have the unique perception of seeing situations from both supportive and personal angles. It is recommended that their knowledge is gathered when seeking information on the needs of those in the streets.

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Outreach Team	Demographic	Service Provided	Workers	Hours	Location
<b>YOUTH</b>					
Aboriginal Outreach Team (UNYA)	Indigenous youth ages 12-18	Referrals, harm reduction options, snacks, naloxone, condoms, needles, smoking kits, clothes, cultural support, crisis intervention, and referrals to culturally-specific services	2 males & 2 females	1pm-12am, 7 days a week (flexible)	Vancouver: East Van, Britannia, & DTES
Covenant House Outreach	Youth aged 16-24	Food, counselling, minor medical attention, & friendship. Youth are invited to Drop-In Centre to access professional mental & medical health professionals			Vancouver
Directions Outreach	Youth up to age 24	One-to-one support, food, water, harm reduction supplies, & referral services	4 full-time & 3 part-time workers	12pm-11pm, 7 days/week	Vancouver Streets
<b>REFERRAL BASED</b>					
Overdose Outreach Team (VCH)	Those at risk of overdose	Harm reductions options and assists clients with appointments, care, and other services	4 outreach workers & 2 social workers	9am-5pm, Mon-Fri	VCH Region
STOP Team Housing Workers (Lookout Society)	Those on the streets	Street patrol, harm reduction supplies, housing, crisis intervention, and service/shelter referrals	1 male & 1 female worker	8am-5pm, 7 days/week	Vancouver DTES
Carnegie Community Centre Outreach Program	Those on streets and alleys	Emergency first aid, emotional support, harm reduction supplies, food, clothing, and referrals to shelters, services, & detox/addiction supports		Weekday evenings & 12 hours on weekends	Vancouver DTES
<b>RECOVERY BASED</b>					
VRC Street Outreach Program		Referrals to shelters, detox, & health services			Mount Pleasant, Vancouver
<b>HARM REDUCTION</b>					
PHS Mobile Needle Exchange	Community service	Picks up used needles, empties city boxes, promotes safer drug-use habits, & delivers harm reductions materials			Vancouver city limits
PHS Spikes on Bikes	Those on the streets	Peer support and harm reduction supplies: fresh needles & naloxone kits		12 hours/day 7 days/week	Vancouver DTES
<b>STREET PATROLS</b>					
Street Saviours	Those on the streets	First aid, harm reduction supplies, naloxone administration, clothes, & referrals to services	Approx. 30 volunteers (10 regular)	8pm-12am, Wed & Sat	Vancouver DTES
Aboriginal Front Door Society	Indigenous people on the streets	Harm reduction supplies and emotional & cultural support to promote health & safety	2 full-time staff + volunteers	9am-5pm Mon-Fri	Vancouver DTES
MAP Van (WISH)	Women working on the streets	Improves the health & safety of women in sex work	Women with lived experience	10:30pm-6am 7nights/week	Vancouver
Peer Safety Patrol (WISH)	Indigenous women on the streets	Promotes the health & safety of Indigenous women in the sex trade and helps them reclaim culture & connection to community	Former sex trade workers trained as patrollers		Vancouver

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# Vancouver Street Patrol/Outreach Services

## Web Resources

Coroner's Office, 2017: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/death-investigation/statistical/illicit-drug.pdf>

First Nations Health Authority (FNHA, 2017):  
[http://www.fnha.ca/newsContent/Documents/FNHA\\_OverdoseDataAndFirstNationsInBC\\_PreliminaryFindings\\_FinalWeb\\_July2017.pdf](http://www.fnha.ca/newsContent/Documents/FNHA_OverdoseDataAndFirstNationsInBC_PreliminaryFindings_FinalWeb_July2017.pdf)

Street Saviours: <https://www.streetsaviours.com/>

CAMH:  
[http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health\\_information/a\\_z\\_mental\\_health\\_and\\_addiction\\_information/stigma/Pages/stigma\\_brochure.aspx](http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health_information/a_z_mental_health_and_addiction_information/stigma/Pages/stigma_brochure.aspx)

Dumont (2014), Culture as Intervention: [http://www.addictionresearchchair.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/FINAL-ReferenceGuide\\_June25\\_DIGITAL.pdf](http://www.addictionresearchchair.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/FINAL-ReferenceGuide_June25_DIGITAL.pdf)

Seeking Help: <http://seeking-help.com/index.html>

City of Vancouver, Four Pillars Drug Strategy: <http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/four-pillars-drug-strategy.aspx>

WISH: <http://www.wish-vancouver.net/programs-and-services/mobile-access-project-map>

Bear Clan Patrol: <https://www.bearclanpatrolinc.com/>

UNYA: <http://www.unya.bc.ca/programs/personal-support/aboriginal-outreach-team>

Covenant House: <http://www.covenanthousebc.org/continuum-of-care/community-support-services/>

Directions: <http://directionsyouthservices.ca/outreach/>

Overdose Outreach Team (VCH):

<http://www.vch.ca/public-health/harm-reduction/overdose-prevention-response>

Lookout Society: <http://lookoutsociety.ca/solutions/our-programs/outreach>

Carnegie Community Outreach: <http://vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/carnegie-centre-outreach-programs.aspx>

VRC Street Outreach: [http://www.vancouverrecoveryclub.com/?page\\_id=131](http://www.vancouverrecoveryclub.com/?page_id=131)

PHS: <https://www.phs.ca/index.php/project/mobile-needle-exchange/>

Aboriginal Front Door Society: <http://www.abfrontdoor.com/>

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