

**Network Minutes**

**Thursday March 11, 2021 via zoom**

**Present:** Sheila Service Chair, Cindy Lise, Rhoda Taylor, Jane Hope, Sue Kurucz, Elizabeth Croft, Barry O’Riordan, John Horn, Leslie Welin, Dave Gutscher, Judy Stafford, Lynne Weaver, Linda Roseneck, Douglas Hardie, Maeve Maguire, Michelle Staples, Robin Routledge, Rosalie Sawrie, Colleen Fuller, Gretchen Hartley, Debra Toporowski, Mary Beth Small, Carol Newington, Tracy Parow, Cailey Foster, Trisha Fothergill, Colleen Fuller

**Welcome New Members:** Linda Dirksen Gale, Christine Bareli,

**Presenters:** John Horn Cowichan Housing Association, Patricia Fothergill Island Health

**Update on OCCHN Activities**

* Preparing for distribution of all EPIC seniors’ resources during vaccination process.
* Have been working with community partners to determine the resources required for at risk youth via the Housing First 4 Youth Project.
* Met with a group of youth via SD 79 for the vaping project. There has been great news in that the number of youth vaping since the pandemic hit has decreased significantly. The vaping committee stewarded by OCCHN will determine next steps as a result of the significant decline. It is hoped that once the pandemic is over that vaping rates do not increase again
* Our Cowichan has joined health networks from across Vancouver Island and today was the final day of two-mornings of learning sessions. The on-line event was well attended and it was amazing to learn about the incredible work underway via health networks across the island.
* A peer-to-peer pilot project has been developed via the Cowichan Community Action Team. An unfortunate vandalism incident sparked the idea of peers connecting with peers along the highway corridor. A small grant from Island Health has provided the opportunity to engage peers to do an outreach, harm reduction, personal connection approach to calm challenges along this challenging area. The peers from the Saint Julien Street site have designed their own 16-week project.
* Facilitator has recently participated in a 3-day session regarding decolonizing networks. Learnings will be integrated into the OCCHN and resources will be shared via the newsletter.

**Call to order** at 5:30 by Sheila Service 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

**Cowichan COVID 19 Temporary Housing Initiative Update – John Horn Cowichan Housing Association**

John Horn opened the conversation by thanking the multiple community partners who have worked tirelessly within the region over the past number of months. It was soon requested that communities find a way to mitigate the spread of COVID by housing the community members who were living on the street. A team of community partners worked on the temporary COVID shelter task force and a plan were put in place that included working with local governments to find property, working with hotels to find spaces as well as with BC Housing and other granting opportunities to provide food and other resources such as health care, outreach, security and more. The plan was in place early but it took until May to get funding and approval to move individuals into the sites. Careful planning, vetting and outreach were involved to ensure that each of the sites became a community. Vetting and planning also ensured the success of the sites. Food, outreach and security were implemented.

Over the late spring, summer and fall the tents provided the shelter that was needed but with the winter on the horizon, COVID still prevalent in our community and no supported housing yet available efforts switched to transitioning the tents into sturdier sleeping cabins. The new sleeping cabins are made of wood, are insulated, have a window, heat, electrical outlet, locking door and sleeping deck. Saint Julien has 13 structures- 12 for residents and one for support staff. Cowichan Tribes also has 26 cabins- 24 for residents and 2 for staff. The Cowichan Tribes sites are broken into two. 1 for adults and 1 for youth aged 19 to 24.

The impact of the warmer, dryer cabins has had a profound impact on the residents who are now able to stay warm, dry and sheltered throughout the day and night. Another very positive impact has been a result of the residents having access to 3 healthy meals a day. The wellness of the peers is very evident as their bodies are healthier, they are able to shower and feel different when they go into public. They have been in a stable place and are now making contact with family and friends and loved ones are able to find them. Their health has improved significantly. When combined with access to a warm place to live and the outreach provided many are doing very well. In addition, the relationships that the residents have with bylaw have also improved and they are reporting that they have never felt safer. The same results are found at the Ramada where 34 rooms continue to be occupied. Combined 95 individuals are housed. With that said, there are still a number of people who remain unhoused and whose circumstances and place where they are make it very challenging to house without extensive support. The success in Cowichan has resulted in significant interest from other communities across BC and Alberta regarding the design and implementation of the Cowichan project with the sleeping pods in small manageable communities.

Currently the ongoing funding for these sites is not guaranteed and efforts to work with BC Housing to maintain shelter is underway. There are also not enough supported housing units coming to our region to house everyone that is homeless or underhoused in our region so efforts to address the next steps are also in progress. Unfortunately, the Rapid Rehousing Federal Grant that was applied for over the Christmas break was not successful. The small planning task team continues to seek out other funding opportunities and grants to enhance the housing currently in place and to maintain shelter for those who may not be able to access the supported housing.

**Cowichan Vaccine Roll Out- Patricia Fothergill**

Vaccine roll out started in BC in December with the first vaccines going to health care providers who work directly on the front lines and to seniors in residential care facilities. Indigenous communities have also started the vaccination process within our region.

Current vaccines are:

* Pfizer which is 95% effective and requires a booster at 4 months. The -75-80 degrees storage makes this more challenging to administer in rural locations
* Moderna which is 94.1% effective and requires a booster at 4 months. The -20 degree storage makes this vaccine easier to manage
* Astra Zenica will be arriving in BC today and requires a booster at 4 months. This vaccine can be stored at 2-8 degrees and is 62% effective
* The Janssen (Johnson and Johnson) is anticipated to be approved soon and is a single dose vaccine that is 66% effective.

All vaccines take 2 weeks to develop a good immune response so all vaccine recipients are asked to follow all previous measures to prevent transmission including, wearing a mask, social distancing, washing hands and keeping contact with those outside of your home low.

The extension of 4 months has been scientifically proven effective as more data has been captured from around the globe. As with everything with the pandemic we learn as we go and adapt as needed. The space between vaccines is one of those learnings.

Currently all seniors in residential care facilities and assisted living have been vaccinated. Health care providers who provide direct service to patients have been vaccinated. Those who are underhoused and residing in the COVID sheltering sites and shelters are also being vaccinated.

Starting Monday March 15, the Cowichan Community Centre will be open 7 days a week until October. The hours will be from 9 to 4 pm and will be moving to 9-7 pm starting in April. The Red Cross will be providing assistance with Administration and lead roles for the clinics.

The number to call for making your appointments is 1-833-348-4787. The public will be notified when the time to call for their age cohort is announced.

1. **New Business**:
   * Cowichan Green Community was successful in receiving one of three grants on Vancouver Island to create a Cowichan Agriculture Food Hub. The project will help to support local food providers in our region and will be located at the Beverly Street Garden site.
   * **Next Meeting May 13**

**Adjournment**: at 7:00 pm. Minutes taken by Cindy Lise