



Building AUD Supportive Communities:

KAMLOOPS, BC

On November 25th 2024, the United Way BC, in partnership with CAUDS, hosted ReThinking Drinking: A Community Conversation on Alcohol. This event marked the kickoff of a year-long campaign dedicated to collaborative, community-focused approaches to addressing AUD and drinking culture.

The day began with a Traditional Welcome and deeply reflective remarks from Elder Colleen Seymour, who shared her personal experiences and offered a prayer, setting the tone for a safe and supportive space for all participants. Following this, Sam Riozzi and Penny Ecker provided insights into Indigenous care pathways, while also highlighting the events organized by Tíkemlúps te Secwépemc in recognition of National Addictions Awareness Week, which coincided with the start of the day's discussions.

The morning sessions continued with a series of impactful presentations. A delegation from CAUDS set the stage, followed by Dr. Andy Delli Pizzi, the local Medical Health Officer, and a team from Population Health, who discussed the broader public health impact of AUD. Next, the Integrated Treatment Team (ITT) and Outpatient Withdrawal Team (OWT) from Interior Health presented, offering both professional expertise and powerful personal stories from the Peers they work alongside. The morning wrapped up with Dr. Rachel Cook, a local family physician, who provided valuable perspectives on how AUD is approached and treated within primary care settings.

In the afternoon, participants engaged in facilitated discussions aimed at identifying and building upon the community's existing strengths and successes. Together, they explored how these resources could be leveraged to more effectively address AUD, and began strategizing initiatives and events that would cater to the unique needs of the community moving forward.

Attendees from diverse sectors came together to learn more about AUD and envision a future where it is addressed through grassroots-led efforts that:



Raise Awareness

Educate people about AUD as a treatable health condition.



Increase Access

Encourage and support people to access various care options.



Shift Culture

Foster informed, mindful alcohol use to promote a healthier culture.



Strengths & Successes

The community discussion began with participants sharing what they believe their community does best and reflecting on past successes from various initiatives. This initial conversation allowed attendees to explore what has worked well in the past and why, highlighting stories of resilience, successful interventions, and the supportive resources that made these outcomes possible. These reflections laid the groundwork for identifying strengths and strategies that can be leveraged in future efforts.

Among the answers, the most common and widely agreed-upon examples included:

- **Community Events:** Known as the "Tournament Capital," Kamloops hosts a full calendar of events—from *Boogie the Bridge* and the Santa Claus Parade to Ribfest, the Film Society gatherings, and various large-scale arts and sports events—showcasing the town's world-class facilities, dedicated volunteers, and a deep sense of community pride.
- **Strong Service Organizations:** The city benefits from a strong network of service organizations that address diverse community needs through holistic approaches. Examples include The Family Tree, Out of the Cold Shelter Society, the Naturalist Club, and the TteS Food Bank.
- **Inclusive Indigenous Perspectives:** Indigenous wisdom and the lived experiences of its Indigenous community members are integrated into the social and cultural fabric, reflecting a collective effort to honour and reflect Kamloops' history rather than shy away from it.
- **Collaborative Efforts:** Service providers, charities, and community groups create a cooperative spirit through cross-sector partnerships. The Community Action Team exemplifies this kind of outreach and advocacy.
- **Action-Oriented Initiatives:** Kamloops blends the resources of a larger town with the compassion of a close-knit community with initiatives like Operation Red Nose and in responding to crises, such as providing aid to evacuees of surrounding towns during fire and flood emergencies.



Desired Outcomes

In the second part of the community discussion, participants were invited to think beyond current limitations and envision what conditions would need to be in place to achieve three key goals: widespread understanding of AUD as a treatable health condition, increased comfort for individuals in seeking care, and a shift towards healthier drinking behaviours. This exercise prompted participants to describe the necessary changes and conditions to make these goals a reality.

Outcomes envisioned by the group included:

- **Reduced Stigma and Cultural Shift:** language reflects compassion, and everyone is seen through a lens of understanding. Positive messaging replaces judgment, and vulnerable populations receive the support they need without stigma. The "us vs. them" mindset fades, replaced by a culture that values empathy, giving individuals the benefit of the doubt.
- **Strong Leadership and Advocacy:** passionate individuals with personal connections to alcohol-related issues lead the charge for change. Community leaders actively engage and a shared sense of responsibility permeates every sector. Volunteers are empowered, and the efforts of those in frontline roles are acknowledged and celebrated.
- **Increased Public Conversation about Alcohol:** alcohol is no longer a taboo subject and even difficult conversations are approached openly. Public education initiatives and awareness campaigns make information widely accessible, and media—both traditional and social—promotes critical thinking about marketing tactics.
- **Empowered Sense of Self:** people feel a deep sense of acceptance and self-understanding. Tools and resources are readily available, encouraging individuals to seek help without hesitation. Language around support is empowering, self-reflection is valued, and strong kinship bonds create a network of mutual respect and personal growth.
- **Greater Peer Involvement:** peer support is a cornerstone of recovery and education. Personal stories are shared openly, fostering connection and understanding. Materials and initiatives are co-created by those with lived experience, making outreach efforts authentic and relatable.



Actionable Ideas

The third section of the community discussion focused on shaping practical plans and initiatives. We gathered participants' ideas and identified events and activities that aligned with the community's needs. The goal was to transform broad visions for addressing AUD into actionable steps that the Action Team could build on and implement moving forward.

Some of the ideas shared included:

- **Promote More Fun Alcohol-Free Events:** Normalize substance-free socializing by organizing events that are fun, accessible, and reflective of the diverse interests and cultures of the community. Design gatherings that appeal to a wide audience, including families and children, to foster a sense of community and belonging.
- **Engage Local Government:** Develop a municipal strategy. Review zoning, planning, and liquor licensing regulations to ensure they promote safer environments. Lobby government to consider factors like event timing and designated drinking areas when approving events.
- **Create Youth-Specific Events:** Collaborate with School District 73 and local youth programs to design events that resonate with young people. Can combine with other relevant topics such as gender, mental health, and peer relationships. Ensure events are low-cost and low-barrier, using messaging that speaks directly to young people's experiences.
- **Identify and Engage Key Industries:** Directly engage industries like construction, trades, immigration services, and corrections. At the same time, involve community organizations such as churches, chamber of commerce, and unions to extend outreach and awareness efforts to new and diverse audiences.
- **Host Public Conversations and Education Sessions:** Organize public talks and education sessions at venues such as local libraries to share knowledge and foster dialogue about alcohol use. Promote early education initiatives in schools and consider hosting targeted workshops for specific audiences to create ongoing public engagement.



Organizations Engaged

- T'kemplúps te Secwépemc
- Kamloops Family Resources Society
- Day One Society
- Interior Health
- First Nations Health Authority
- Kamloops Immigration Services
- A Way Home Kamloops
- Interior Community Services
- The Seed
- Elizabeth Fry Society
- Kamloops City Council
- Le7 te Melamen (Good Medicine) Health Society
- Kruger Papers Holding
- BC Public Services
- Canada Corrections Services
- BC Schizophrenia Society
- Thompson Rivers University
- New Afton Mining

Lead the Change: Funding Available for AUD Community Initiatives

We're offering funding opportunities for organizations ready to take on a leadership role in this project. Bring your ideas to life by organizing events or initiatives that drive positive change and make a difference in your community!

To get involved, contact

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For more information visit
www.cauds.org/community-supports



Ministry of
Mental Health
and Addictions



United Way
British Columbia

