

CENTRAL CITY  
FOUNDATION

PROFILES IN  
COMMUNITY  
LEADERSHIP:  
Maura Gowans

# COMMUNITY REPORT

Update on the opioid  
crisis in the DTES:  
A crisis of our  
collective humanity

FALL 2023

# ANNUAL FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN 2023

With your support, we are helping to ensure our most vulnerable neighbours and friends have a roof over their heads, food in their bellies, cultural connections, employment and learning opportunities and access to harm reduction supports, including overdose prevention sites and treatment options. Together, we can continue to make change happen by investing in possibilities and hope for brighter futures for everyone.

Your gift to our annual campaign will have a lasting impact on those who need our support and help people in the inner city improve their lives.

**\$1,000**

will provide one day of comprehensive support services and help building a sense of community and belonging for our residents

**\$700**

will ensure access to harm reduction supports, including overdose prevention teams, detox supports and treatment options

**\$250**

will ensure access to life-saving cultural support led by Indigenous Knowledge Keepers and Community Elders

Please give generously to support Central City Foundation by donating at [centralcityfoundation.ca](https://centralcityfoundation.ca)

If you have any questions or would prefer to make an offline donation, please feel free to contact our office at 604.683.2263 or by email at [development@centralcityfoundation.ca](mailto:development@centralcityfoundation.ca)



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FALL 2023

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Maura Gowans, Indigenous Relations Consultant and Cultural Training Leader in the hallway at CCF's Cosmo Women's Transitional Housing Program, where she is a key member of the support team.

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On the traditional and unceded ancestral homelands of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and Səlilwətaʔ / Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

Fall 2023  
Printed in Canada

Paper certification



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## DID YOU KNOW?

Central City Foundation has been helping people in the inner city improve their lives since 1907.



For more information on the innovative, community-led solutions we fund, please watch for our e-news or visit [centralcityfoundation.ca](http://centralcityfoundation.ca)

**Change can  
happen** and we  
remain hopeful  
at Central City  
Foundation.



# Message from the CEO



This past year has been a deep struggle amidst truly challenging conditions for our neighbours in our inner-city community. It has also been a year of tremendous change at Central City Foundation. We are thrilled to introduce some wonderful new team members in this year's Community Report, and I know you will join me in welcoming these dedicated folks to our mission to improve the lives of our neighbours in need.

In 2022, we launched our housing operations at Central City Housing Society – building a strong team to manage the Abbott and Cosmopolitan buildings, ensuring clean, safe, and affordable housing for everyone as we have done for over a century. At the Cosmo Women's Transitional Housing Program, dedicated front-line workers with lived and learned experience support our program participants on their journeys to stable, permanent housing and wellbeing. Fourteen women have successfully transitioned along this pathway through our Women's Transitional Housing program, finding jobs and opportunities, stable homes, and reuniting with their children and families.

This past year, we once again supported dozens of community partners who are working towards justice through long-term change while also meeting the critical day-to-day needs of our most vulnerable community members with consistency and compassion. The incredible work of these community-led organizations includes important things like helping people rebuild connections with culture and identity, organizing with others who seek justice in our community, providing safe places for young people, connecting people with employment and learning opportunities and striving to find people an appropriate, secure home.

When we finished building The Crossing at Keremeos 15 years ago, our vision was to create a place where young people struggling with addiction could recover their health, reconnect with their families and realize their full potential. Since then, we have supported two different community-based programs with similar objectives that have saved hundreds of lives, but unfortunately, our government partners chose to close both programs. But we have not given up at Central City Foundation. For the past two years, we have been working alongside the Okanagan Nation Alliance to support the development of *n?aysn?la?x?*, a new land-based, culturally rich, and trauma-informed program firmly rooted in the healing knowledge and culture of the Syilx people that will be welcoming young people on a true journey to wellbeing by late 2024.

Our feature story in this year's Community Report provides a much-needed update on the impacts of the unregulated, toxic drug supply and ensuing overdose crisis in our community. It is hard to convey the depth of grief and sadness that permeates everyday life right now as the losses of friends, family and colleagues continue to mount each week. We hope that through our report, you will have a better understanding of how this crisis plays out in our inner city and see the very real possibilities for hope that our community partners provide each day through their essential services and programs.

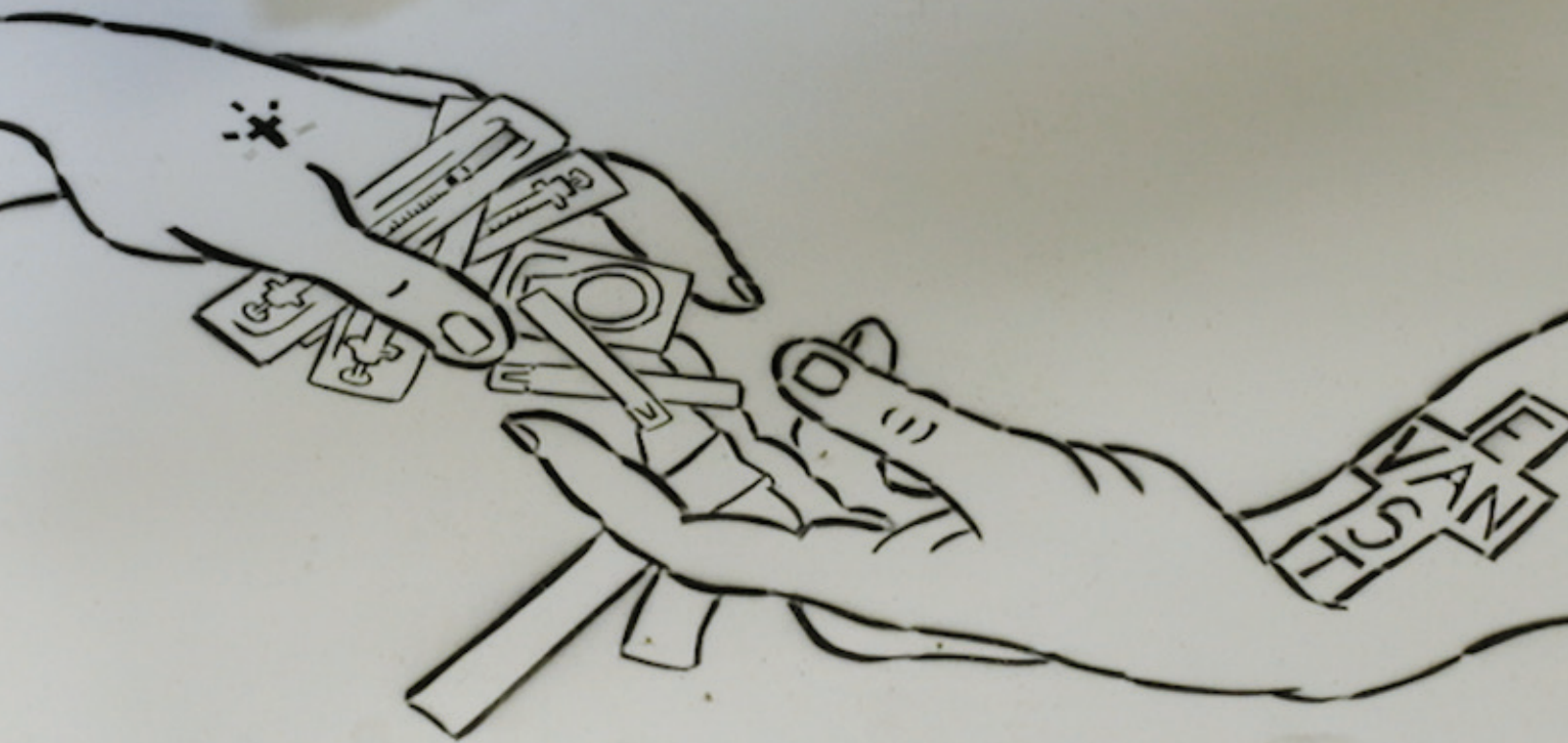
In our last interview with him, my late friend Ken Lyotier said that along with social justice in this community, we just need a little mercy. In this past year, we have struggled with the depiction of our neighbours in print and broadcast media, social media and even in the halls of government. The prevailing narrative reduces our friends and neighbours far too often to the problems and challenges they face. At Central City Foundation, we never forget the mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, children and elders – these are the people of the inner-city community, and all deserve our compassion and our care.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Johnstone'.

Jennifer Johnstone  
President & CEO  
Central City Foundation

# COMMUNITY REPORT:

Update on the ongoing  
Opioid Crisis





**FOR MORE THAN 116 YEARS, CENTRAL CITY FOUNDATION**, together with our generous donors, has joined with our neighbours and community partners to support their tremendous and innovative work improving the lives of those who need it most in our inner city.

In 2017, Central City Foundation published a Community Report entitled “On the Front Lines of the Opioid Crisis: How community organizations and their staff are coping,” which included eight specific recommendations from our community partners on how to address the crisis and improve conditions for their teams and for the community.

Six years later, we are experiencing yet another year of tragic, record-breaking numbers of deaths from overdose in BC. The Downtown Eastside continues to be profoundly impacted, with so many lives continuing to be lost in this small community. We know that our community partners have spent the intervening years doing all they can to cope with the loss of their family, friends and neighbours. They continue to work hard at creating new and innovative programming. They are constantly fundraising to try and keep up with emerging best practices and new and increased demands on services. And yet, many have noted that the conditions in our Downtown Eastside community have never been worse.

This year, we set out to reinterview our community partners to hear about how they are coping today. We also wanted an update on progress against the proposed solutions and recommendations from our 2017 report. We were also interested in the impacts of the intersecting crises the community has faced throughout the past six years. How has the opioid crisis been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing affordable housing crisis, epidemic of gender-based violence and the increase of violence in the community related to the toxic, unregulated drug supply?

For this report, we interviewed 25 community partners. Despite all of the challenges and complexities, we continue to see an inspiring sense of hope and possibility in our inner city.

One of the questions that gets asked a lot in our conversations in the wider community is, “Why does the crisis affect people living in the Downtown Eastside more than anywhere else in BC?” This is true. The poisonings occurring in the DTES are at a much higher rate per capita than in other communities.

The reason for this reflects the truly challenging conditions in this inner city neighbourhood. There is extreme poverty. Many folks are suffering from pain and trauma. There is a long history of colonial systems and government policies and practices that have resulted in intergenerational trauma. There is also a chronic lack of adequate resources to address these issues. When we peel back the layers of why this crisis is so prevalent in our city, we have come to understand that the overdose or opioid epidemic is merely a symptom of a much greater crisis of our collective humanity.

### The opioid crisis

It's been almost 2,800 days since the Province of British Columbia declared a public health emergency due to the toxic, unregulated, illicit drug supply. Since then, more than 13,112 people have died. These 13,112 people are our friends, family members and co-workers. These 13,112 people are smart, funny, generous individuals with gifts to share. These 13,112 people loved and were loved.

“The relentlessness and scale of this public health crisis require a proportionate response. The BC Coroners Service continues to recommend urgent, collaborative action on the part of ministries and health authorities to coordinate a province-wide continuum of care that saves lives. Improvements in the quality and reach of harm reduction and evidence-based treatment services are essential, as is the critical need to ensure that those at risk of dying can access safer, regulated drugs. If we cannot implement these changes, our loved ones will continue to die.”

— Lisa Lapointe, Chief Coroner of BC

While interviewing our community partners, we spoke to people providing services all along the continuum of care. We repeatedly heard about the importance of options, wrap-around support systems, and innovative harm reduction services. "There's always hope when there's breath in the body," Jennifer Humchitt, Support Worker, Central City Housing Society.

We need to come together as a society with unconditional compassion. We need to understand that "[people] don't spawn out of the concrete," said the late Ken Lyotier, United We Can Founder, in one of his last interviews. "Every person here has a story unique to them, and lots of these people are in pain, physically, mentally and spiritually. Our systems, income inequity, racism, gender-based violence, intergenerational trauma caused by the residential school systems, these are some of the reasons people are here," said Lyotier. At Central City Foundation, we understand that past policies and inadequate investments have created these appalling conditions, and we need everybody's help to fix it.

"Addiction is not their choice, but a result of circumstances. In order to pull oneself out of addiction, you need to be connected to the right people. We can't do this work alone."

— Carrie Humchitt, Vancouver Aboriginal Health Society.

With the help of our donors, during the last six years, Central City Foundation has been a proud partner and has supported our neighbours and our community partners in developing a toolbox of services for folks who struggle with their substance use. Some of the newer tools include expanded Indigenous-led programs, outreach programs for women, residential treatment programs and safe consumption sites. "It's important to meet people where they're at. Every person, every story and every life is unique," said Jennifer Johnstone, President & CEO, Central City Foundation. "A one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work. We need to provide options to people, and those options must be flexible, immediate and without judgment."

Before the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic, our community was making progress against the toxic, unregulated drug supply. "In 2019, overdose death rates were on the decrease, then COVID hit... death rates started to increase again," said Marc Majorel, Pacifica Treatment Centre. "Isolation, using alone, and the toxic supply got worse."

Given what is currently happening in our communities, we believe it is essential to continue pushing for harm reduction strategies that are immediate, low-barrier ways to help keep people alive long enough to allow them the opportunity to access resources and supports. Every individual's path to wellbeing looks different.

This crisis doesn't affect everyone in the same way. Indigenous people are overrepresented in our inner city because of the lasting effects of colonialism.

Together with young people, racialized folks, women and gender-diverse people, First Nations, Inuit and Metis people face multiple barriers to these pathways to wellbeing.

"Since the pandemic started, people's addictions have worsened. Additionally, the supply is more toxic."

— Mebrat Beyene, Executive Director, WISH Drop-in Centre



Mebrat Beyene





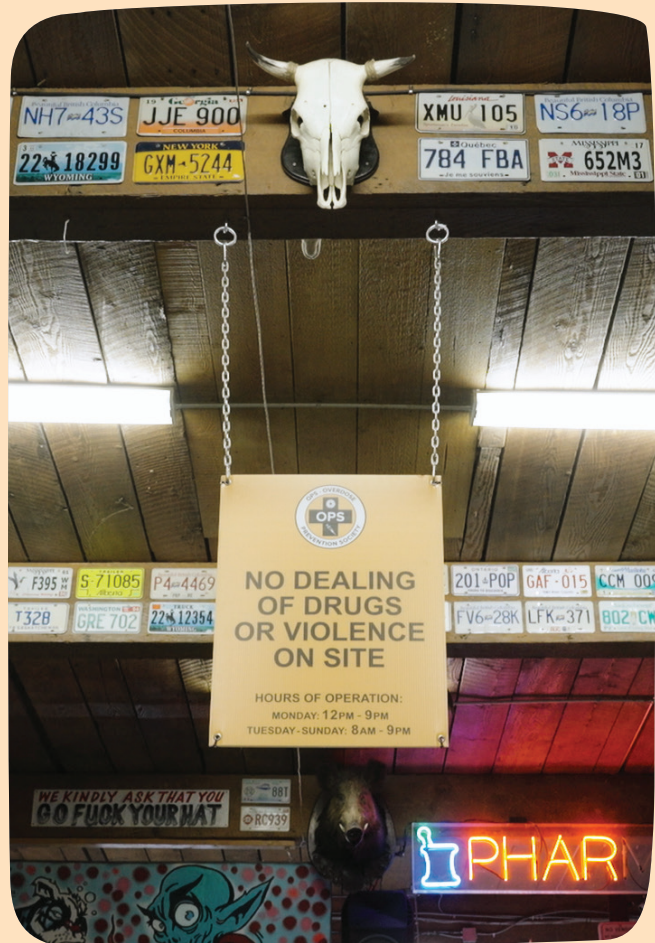
### Compounding the crisis: extreme poverty

Imagine starting every day with the same four goals. How will I eat? Where can I use a washroom and get clean? How can I stay safe? Where will I sleep tonight? This is what our community partners refer to as "survival mode."

Living in survival mode means that every minute of your day is consumed with sourcing and securing the basic human needs that so many of us take for granted. Where can I get something to eat? Where is it safe to sleep? How can I make some income? Where can I use the bathroom? Where can I wash my clothes and shower? Unfortunately, many people in our community also struggle with mental wellness and are at the mercy of an unregulated, toxic drug supply that has already killed so many people around them.

"Poverty is the root of everything. It compounds the issues. [During the pandemic] CERB changed the lives of many in the community and showed the importance of introducing basic income. If people's basic needs aren't met, there is no stability," said Tara Taylor, Overdose Prevention Society Board Member. Adequate social assistance and access to low-barrier, flexible employment is essential to addressing the conditions in our inner city community.

Over the years, we have heard this theme repeated time and again from our community partners. Only once an individual's basic needs are met are they able to transition out of survival mode and start thinking about what's possible for their future.



With our donor's help, some of the sources of possibility that Central City Foundation has been able to support include:

- Organizations who are building a local, inclusive economy that provides purpose through meaningful, flexible work along with critically-needed supplemental income. These include organizations such as Mission Possible, Binner's Project, EMBERS, Megaphone, Potluck Catering and East Van Roasters,
- Organizations that provide inclusive and tailored support specifically for youth in the inner city. This includes programs that provide cultural support, training and safe spaces to rest and connect with support staff and their peers. These include organizations such as Broadway Youth Resource Centre, Aunt Leah's Place and Urban Native Youth Association.
- Community centres that provide places where folks can access food, washroom facilities, support programs and connection with their neighbours. These community centres include DEWC, WISH Drop-in, Dugout, DTES Neighbourhood House, DTES Seniors Centre and Vancouver Women's Health Collective.

### Compounding the overdose crisis: a critical shortage of affordable housing

Since 2017, the housing shortage has become a deep crisis. The cost of housing has skyrocketed in recent years, with the average one-bedroom rental in Vancouver costing more than \$3000 per month. In the inner city, the critical shortage of suitable, affordable housing results in people sleeping in doorways, alleys, tents and makeshift shelter structures on the sidewalk. We see continual long lineups of people hoping to get a shelter bed and women living in transitional housing with nowhere to go when their time runs out.

Every single one of our community partners interviewed identified housing as one of the keys to ending the ongoing intersecting crises people experience, including the heightened danger of the unregulated toxic drug supply.

"Homelessness and addiction is a double-edged sword. The homeless have nowhere to go. There aren't enough homes. Poverty, homelessness and drug addiction go hand in hand." said Carrie Humchitt, Vancouver Aboriginal Health Society. The point-in-time homeless count in Metro Vancouver for 2023 identified more than 4800 people without a home. This was a staggering increase of 32% from the 2020 count.



"Homelessness and poverty compound the [unregulated toxic drug supply] crisis. Imagine searching for a job while being unhoused. We have high expectations for folks with limited to no resources."

— Lisa Curry, Megaphone

This connection between homelessness and addiction is no surprise to our community partners, who have reported drastic increases in people looking for shelter beds, sleeping in makeshift shelters or on couches in drop-in centres. The DTES Women's Centre has reported a 100% increase in demand for services since 2020. "Housing is a huge issue," said Sarah Stewart, Executive Director of Aunt Leah's Place, an organization that assists youth who are ageing out of the foster care system. "One of the ways we can prevent homelessness, trauma and addiction is to figure out how to keep families together."

As with harm reduction, one size doesn't fit all when it comes to housing. We know people have complex needs and often require different levels of support. During our interviews, community partners shared some of the initiatives they believe would make a difference in changing the landscape of affordable housing with adequate government investment.

Finally, we also know from years of experience working with our community partners in the DTES that the women living in shelters, SROs (single-room accommodation), or who are unhoused are women who have either grown up in the foster care system or have had their kids taken into foster care – often for lack of safe, affordable housing.







## A CALL TO ACTION TO ADDRESS THE HOUSING CRISIS

Central City Foundation's community partners are calling for a comprehensive SRO replacement plan that addresses the terrible conditions of many of the under-resourced and poorly maintained buildings.

We need immediate investment in housing options while we wait for more suitable housing stock. We need tiny homes like we have seen in places like Los Angeles. We need modular housing built on all empty city lots across our city.

We need housing for and by Indigenous people. All of our community partners identified the over-representation of First Nations, Metis and Inuit in the DTES due to years of systemic racism and colonial practices, including residential schools, the '60s scoop and the Indian Act. Housing that includes wrap-around culturally inclusive practices and supports can

reconnect Indigenous people with the land, community and culture to begin healing from intergenerational trauma.

We need more housing for women and gender-diverse people. Housing for women means a place to rest without fear of violence and with supports in place to heal from the violence, rape, and assaults they have endured. Our partners report over and over again that having women-only spaces means more women access services, more women have the opportunity to heal, and more women get their children back from care.

"Central City Foundation is working to redevelop our SRO suites into better housing, and we are reimagining housing in our community at both the Abbott and the Cosmo," said Central City Foundation's, Jennifer Johnstone, "This will ensure we are building for a future that includes everyone."







### Another epidemic: gender-based violence

Violence against women has risen in this community, with the unregulated toxic drug supply fueling so much of that violence. In January of 2023, Atira Women's Resource Society released a survey of 50 women interviewed on Hastings and surrounding streets. Of those 50 women interviewed, more than half were living in tents or makeshift shelters. All of the women reported feeling unsafe. 100% of these women reported they had experienced violence, assault and/or rape. "There aren't enough resources for women outside the DTES," said Shannon Skilton, Executive Director, Chrysalis Society. "For men, it's easier to access beds as there's a higher number of beds available to them. It's more challenging for women. Women experience homelessness, pain, pain management, and the medical system differently. Addiction doesn't happen in a vacuum. Homelessness and poverty all contribute. Violence results from this."

Dedicated safe spaces for women are extremely important. Suppose a woman is lining up to get a meal or harm reduction supplies, and the person next to her is the same person who assaulted her the night before. In most cases, the individual will choose not to eat, not to get a clean needle and not to access

any of the supports or services. "With the right support, women get out, they get better, they get into treatment. They return to their families. Despite the system," said Alice Kendell, Executive Director at the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre. There is a critical need for additional government investments in the life-saving programs of community partners like the women's centre.

SisterSquare, Canada's only outdoor overdose prevention site for women, trans-women and transfeminine people, offers not only a place to use their substances with peer witnesses and support but also redefines what an overdose prevention site can look like. There is no time limit for visits, which often means people use smaller doses over longer periods of time. There are washroom trailers with showers. There are support services, such as counselling, wound care, and housing supports. But most importantly, SisterSquare offers a place to rest, use safely and make meaningful, trusted connections.

### **What's next? How we can come together to end these intersecting crises?**

Central City Foundation believes that we, as a broad community, need to reclaim our collective humanity. We need to develop a better understanding of the intersecting challenges that have created the current climate in the DTES, where an unregulated, toxic drug supply can take so many lives. We believe that investing in community-led solutions to address each area is how we move our community forward. We believe that, together, we can make change happen and build a healthier community. Dr. Gabor Maté, a renowned addiction expert, calls on all of us to take a compassionate approach toward addiction, whether in ourselves or others. Dr. Maté believes “the source of addictions is not to be found in genes, but in childhood trauma and in stress and social dislocation endemic to systems of inequality and injustice.”

We have witnessed the very real, damaging impacts of trauma in our community, and we have seen the daily efforts by our community partners to provide avenues to healing and wellbeing. We have also seen continued government underfunding of essential community-based services. In the media, we have watched a dehumanizing narrative develop about the people who continue their struggle to survive in our inner city.

Central City Foundation believes that we need to continue to support the efforts of our community partners to meet the critical needs of our neighbours in the inner city. We believe that through compassion and kindness, we will understand the connections we all have as human beings to the people who live in our city and who “in addition to social justice, just need a little mercy,” according to our friend Ken Lyotier. We have seen tremendous possibilities in the inner city since the COVID-19 pandemic. Organizations have come together to support each other to advocate collectively for changes to systems that prevent people from moving out of survival mode and into places of healing.

Through 116 years of working with people in our inner city, Central City Foundation has come to understand that change can happen. People in the inner city can improve their lives. They just need their basic human needs secured. They need a roof over their head. They need some food in their belly. They need a way to earn some income. They need to feel connected to a community. They need access to non-judgemental healthcare. They need access to mental health

supports. They need access to culturally appropriate services. And they may need access to a safe, regulated supply of substances.

Please join us as we continue to invest in essential community-led solutions and provide support for our incredible community partners. Make a gift to the Central City Foundation today. Your donation will help people in the inner city improve their lives.

We would like to thank our interviewees for their time, immense knowledge rooted in the lived expertise of community members, as well as for their beautiful words of hope.

Chrysalis

WISH

Pacific Community Resource Society

(PCRS) – Broadway Youth Resource Centre

Urban Native Youth Association

Aunt Leah's Place

Vancouver Aboriginal Health Society – PBFC

Binnars' Project

OPS (Overdose Prevention Society)

DTES Neighbourhood House

Dugout

Mission Possible

Eastside Works/EMBERS

Hope in Shadows/Megaphone

Lu'ma Native Housing Society

Pacifica Treatment

DTES Seniors Centre

Spencer Creo

Central City Housing Society

CIRES

Alternate Emergency Response

Aboriginal Front Door

Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing

DTES Women's Centre

# CHANGE CAN HAPPEN

2023 Profiles of Community Leadership

Central City Foundation is once again celebrating examples of extraordinary community leadership. We are highlighting the dedication and determination of those whose support for community-led solutions helped people in our inner city and beyond and have demonstrated that change can happen in our community. As part of this celebration, we asked each of our profiled leaders to share with us their thoughts on leadership, community, and their relationship with Central City Foundation.

To read more of these in-depth interviews, please visit [centralcityfoundation.ca](http://centralcityfoundation.ca).





## CHERYL ROBINSON

*Chief Executive Officer,  
Urban Native Youth Association*

Cheryl, who comes from the St'at'imc and Nisga'a Nations, has spent over a decade empowering Indigenous youth to make positive changes in their lives through UNYA's individualized services, opportunities and supports. She is currently leading the development of the new, greatly expanded Native Youth Centre.

"Knowledge is power. For people to understand the Indigenous experience, they need to educate themselves. I want everyone to understand the impacts of colonialism because that will help them better understand the trauma being carried on the backs of Indigenous people. A better understanding of the impacts of colonialism and the residential schools experience will help with the healing process. It's going to take a lot more understanding of what's happened for true healing to happen."

## FRANCE-EMMANUELLE JOLY

*Executive Director, Vancouver Women's  
Health Collective*

France-Emmanuelle is a feminist leader and tireless advocate for equity and inclusion. Her steadfast commitment to centre the voices of all women and gender-diverse people has helped to ensure that services and supports in our community truly meet their needs.

"I believe in growing capacity in others so they can advocate for themselves. Participants in our counselling program, as well as peers leading our Gender-Based-Violence Mapping project, are living examples that with a relationship-based approach, growth or "(re)finding my power" (as per participants) can happen in anyone. We also hear from our volunteers about how their experience at VWHC is shaping their future work, their values and community involvement."





## MAURA GOWANS

*Indigenous Relations Consultant and Cultural Training Leader*

Maura is an inspiring healer who has supported and guided women in the inner city for more than two decades. As a consultant and counsellor, Maura continues to ensure women in our community have access to the necessary services, supports and traditional cultural practices along their path to healing and wellbeing.

"Connection and belonging are everything. It's about providing a safe space in this world when many of the people I work with have been taught most of their life there is no safety. To show up when I am called upon and to do my best to serve the community. Many of the people I serve do not have anyone. Many of them are far from home, so they do not have their family or community support. It is often about reconnecting them within their current community so that they feel connected."

## SARAH STEWART

*Executive Director, Aunt Leah's Place*

Sarah has built on Aunt Leah's legacy of caring and has helped change the landscape for young people in foster care, built more spaces and better services for new mothers and has started the organization's journey towards truth and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

"We believe there needs to be a provincial and national youth-specific housing plan and strategy. Kids aging out of the foster care system have some unique housing needs. Without a specific plan, we continue to see far too many kids homeless. We believe there also needs to be a basic living income for kids aging out of care until age 25. This would provide the safety and assurances of income so they can continue to learn, grow and put their lives together versus focusing on survival only. Most importantly, we believe these projects and programs need to be protected and enshrined in legislation. This will ensure that services for youth in care will be safe from interference from future governments."





## ROWENA VEYLAN

*Founder and Lead Instructor,  
The New School of Fundraising*

Founder and Lead Instructor at the New School of Fundraising, Rowena is working to build equity and expand access to exceptional learning and professional development for non-profit fundraisers. She continues to demonstrate an exceptional commitment to share learning and help fundraisers build the capacity that will make change in the community.

"We genuinely believe that the next step in capacity building is to support organizations to raise more money and to build the infrastructure that they need to actually do it. The organizations that we work with need help to create fundraising plans and ensure that they can resource those plans in order to change their future. My call to action would be to donate to the greatest need, trust the organizations to spend the money how they need to and also think about how to support their learning and development."



## ALICE KENDALL

*Executive Director, Downtown Eastside  
Women's Centre*

For over 25 years, Alice has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to women in our community. A place of respite, connection and belonging, the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre (DEWC) continues to centre the needs of women in the development and expansion of programs and services.

"There are many ways you can be a partner in helping make the change that's needed. We are a DTES women's organization with a specific focus, but the issues relating to poverty, homelessness and addiction are widespread. You can look at the mess and the crime, but that doesn't help. I'd like to ask people to try to look at the solutions instead of the problems. And maybe consider what part you can play. There are so many ways to be a part of the solution. If you're building a shopping mall, how do you help? What are the ways you can make a difference and have an impact on people's lives? Look for organizations that you think are doing good work and help them however they need it. There are all kinds of ways for you to be part of the solution."







## DEREK CHU

*Director of Operations*

## ADRIANA ZEPEDA

*Settlement Worker*

## LOREN BALISKY

*Director of Engagement*

## KIMBRACE COMMUNITY SOCIETY

For 25 years, Kinbrace has been building connection and belonging with and for refugee claimants arriving in our community. In addition to welcoming families from all parts of the globe into their transitional housing community, Kinbrace is now sharing their understanding of the transformative power of human connection through the Beyond Refuge program.

"Refugee claimants arrive in Canada as survivors. They bring their voice, lived experience, professional skills, languages, stories, and courage. They exhibit remarkable resilience. They also carry two traumas: persecution from their country of origin and survival struggle from their migration journey to safety. Arriving in Canada, they encounter a third trauma as they grapple to meet their basic needs: finding shelter, food, and appropriate-to-weather clothing. Throughout all of this, their quest for refugee protection means engaging the extremely complex legal system fraught with multiple moving parts and players, which they must navigate, all the while trying to tell their story with clarity."



# SOCIAL PURPOSE REAL ESTATE UPDATE

## Central City Housing Society

We have been providing safe, clean and affordable housing in Vancouver's inner city since 1910. Most recently, we have been building connections and community for our tenants and program participants at our two buildings, the Abbott and the Cosmopolitan. At the innovative Cosmo Women's Transitional Housing Program, dedicated front-line workers with lived and learned experience support our program participants on their journeys to stable, permanent housing and wellbeing. Fourteen women have successfully transitioned along this pathway, finding jobs and opportunities, stable homes, and reuniting with their children and families.

## Phil Bouvier Family Centre

Culture, sustenance, child development, family supports, health and dental services, counselling, and connection, all deeply rooted in traditional Indigenous knowledge and wisdom, makes the Phil Bouvier Family Centre truly a place of belonging for hundreds of Indigenous families and children in Vancouver. Central City Foundation is honoured to support the Indigenous Early

Years program of the Vancouver Aboriginal Health Society at this social purpose real estate location we created together in 2007.



## Aunt Leah's Place

Central City Foundation's goal is to build a resilient, caring and inclusive community where everyone belongs. We strongly believe in Aunt Leah's mission to strengthen families by supporting young mothers and youth in the foster care system. We very much value our longstanding relationship with Aunt Leah's and look forward to continuing to invest in all the wonderful things they do.

## The Crossing – ɪʔaySnūlxʷ

Since the closure by government of the Ashnola at the Crossing program, Central City Foundation has been collaborating with Okanagan Nation Alliance to develop a new land-based, culturally safe and trauma-informed program firmly rooted in the traditional knowledge and culture of the Syilx people to support young people on their journey to wellbeing. Reconnecting with culture and identity is essential to healing from trauma and colonization for young people. The Crossing at Keremeos, located on the traditional unceded territory of the Lower Similkameen Indian Band, will be home to this new program and will serve the far too many children and families

who continue to struggle with the challenges of addiction and mental health amidst our deadly drug poisoning and overdose crisis. Program development and a new business plan are underway. At the same time, negotiations with regional health authorities, the First Nations Health Authority and the Provincial Health Services Authority continue to secure ongoing operational funding.





# HOW YOU HELPED

At Central City Foundation, our grants are as diverse as the needs of our community partners. Together, we're helping people in the inner city cope with the current challenging conditions while building a more hopeful future.



## Kimount and Kivan Kids' Clubs

For over 85 years, the South Coast chapter of BGC (formerly known as Boys & Girls Club) has been helping to provide children and youth with a safe, supportive place to experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships and develop confidence and skills for life. BGC has 11 neighbourhood-based clubs across the Lower Mainland where kids can connect with others and feel a sense of belonging when they aren't at home or school. BGC staff and volunteers serve as role models and connect with kids through a variety of activities, such as sports homework clubs or creative arts. BGC also offers specialized counselling, family supports, and employment programs.



This year, Central City Foundation provided a substantial grant to help BGC acquire much-needed furniture and equipment upgrades for BGC's Kimount and Kivan Clubs in East Vancouver. Throughout yet another busy summer, staff and volunteers at Kimount were able to serve snacks on a newly-equipped deck where kids enjoyed a new picnic table,

new Adirondack chairs and the protective shade of a new sun umbrella. The activity room crafts tables and youth lounge area also received much-needed new seating. Meanwhile, at Kivan the activities room received new games and craft tables where there is now additional space for kids to participate in the many group activities they enjoy at their Club.

"Our focus in everything we do is to help kids and youth develop relationship skills, healthy living behaviours, a love of lifelong learning and leadership, because those set them up to live their best life! HUGE thanks to Central City Foundation for believing, like BGC does, in the promise of kids and youth."

— Carolyn Tuckwell, President & CEO

## Mission Possible

Since its founding in 1992, Mission Possible has transformed lives in the DTES by helping people navigate their journey to meaningful employment. MP walks alongside people facing barriers to employment by providing supportive, transitional work experience and community for those who are ready to enter the workforce.



MP's Employment Readiness Program helps individuals acquire employable skills, on-the-job work experience and support with other employment-related tasks. Through MP Maintenance, a full-service exterior property cleaning company, participants have the opportunity to develop their income-earning abilities in landscape maintenance, pressure washing, window washing, graffiti removal, awning cleaning, painting and site cleanup. With a growing demand for both their programs and services, one of the challenges Mission Possible continually faces is a shortage of the work vehicles needed to transport more employees and equipment to more job sites.

This year, Central City Foundation stepped up with a significant grant to sponsor the purchase of an additional MP work truck. In doing so, Central City Foundation donors helped MP Maintenance social enterprise take on a growing number of work contracts and helped achieve their goal of assisting 118 people in the DTES move into transitional employment.

"Mission Possible has been experiencing incredible growth in the number of people wanting to join our Employment Readiness Program. We are working hard to keep up with the demand. With every additional vehicle, we are able to expand our capacity and provide more employment opportunities for those looking for a fresh start. Vehicles are at the core of our operations and allow us to work towards our mission of empowering individuals to achieve a renewed sense of dignity and purpose through meaningful work."

— Matthew Smedley, ED, Mission Possible



### The Dugout Drop-In Centre Society

With annual, ongoing support from Central City Foundation, in December 2022, the Dugout celebrated 55 years of continuous operation and service to the DTES community. The Dugout continues to offer a low barrier welcoming "community living room" space for individuals, many of whom are unhoused or living in substandard single occupancy rooms. The 7:30 am soup service they provide is the earliest point that free food is currently available in the community. Through building their community networks and



creating new relationships with various groups, The Dugout has been able to play a wider role in food distribution to patrons, providing snacks, bread and produce daily to a wide variety of residents, including many seniors. Unfortunately, The Dugout is facing the possibility of losing its place of operations for the past 55 years due to the sale of the building. Through a grant provided by the City of Vancouver, they have initiated a strategic planning process they hope will allow them to improve their service and operations, as well as plan for an uncertain future.

### **BWSS Safety Changes Everything**

The BWSS Safety Changes Everything outreach team was created in partnership with Central City Foundation in 2021 as a direct response to an alarming increase in gender-based violence and the intersections of the opioid crisis, COVID-19 pandemic and extreme poverty. For a second year, the Safety Changes Everything outreach team is the only resource in the DTES community providing a specialized gender-based violence response in the form of street-based outreach and connecting with women, girls, and femme-identified folks who live, work, or are connecting in this community. To date, this innovative program has connected with hundreds of women in the community, providing a range of supports such as harm reduction supplies and assistance finding transitional housing.

### **East Van Roasters**

East Van Roasters is a thriving social enterprise serving artisan chocolate and coffee that provides training and jobs for women in the inner city. A women-only employer (including trans, two-spirit and transfeminine folks), East Van Roasters helps women acquire various employable skills such as chocolate-making, barista training and other skills related to retail operations and food services. This year, Central City Foundation provided a significant grant to support the purchase of capital equipment for a second location that will provide a production facility and create much-needed additional employment opportunities, training and support for women.

This new location will double the number of women being trained by East Van Roasters and add ten new peer positions, with the goal of scaling up to twenty women with an additional ten peer workers being trained and employed.

### **EMBERS**

Central City Foundation provided a grant to EMBERS to support the next phase of developing a feasibility study for the creation of an Alternative Emergency Response in the DTES that emerged from the work of the Decriminalizing Poverty Research and Engagement Project. Community engagement and research have been underway in the Downtown Eastside for the past year to explore alternatives for crisis response

in the community. A community-led project that brings together community organizers, academics and city partners, this approach would offer a variety of community and peer-based response teams throughout the community.

There is a need now to undertake a further feasibility study to support a pilot project bringing together teams trained in trauma-informed de-escalation, harm reduction, culturally sensitive practices, women's safety and more to respond to emergency calls and provide alternatives to police response and fill gaps in services. Teams are expected to involve lived-experience peer workers complemented by clinical specialized support (e.g. firefighters, paramedics, mental health workers and Indigenous community workers).



*BWSS Safety Changes Everything outreach team members*

## **THERE'S MORE!**

For more detailed beneficiary reports about how you've helped these and other community-led solutions, visit [centralcityfoundation.ca](https://centralcityfoundation.ca)



# COLLABORATION UPDATES

Central City Foundation plays a critical role in strengthening connections in our community through our convening role and our participation in numerous important community collaborations.

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## **Coordinated Community Response Network (CCRN)**

The Coordinated Community Response Network was created at the start of the pandemic to ensure resources and services were effectively coordinated to provide safety, connection and nourishment for residents of the inner city. The CCRN has continued to meet weekly, building relationships among more than 100 community organizations and ensuring a timely and focused community response to crisis situations in the Downtown Eastside, as well as advocating for the systemic changes needed to address the truly challenging conditions across our inner-city community. In addition to providing funding to ensure staffing for the CCRN, Central City Foundation continues to provide leadership as a member of the facilitation team and supports initiatives to improve policy and programs at both the provincial and municipal governments.



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## **Feminists Deliver**

Feminists Deliver, a grassroots collaboration of more than 25 diverse organizations and individuals, has been working to build a network of activism across BC to address the inequities faced by women and gender-diverse people. Through networking, education, public awareness campaigns and support for member initiatives and events, Feminists Deliver continues the work of decolonization. Feminists Deliver also provides important policy analysis, such as a submission to the Ministry of Child & Family Development on transforming the child welfare system. As a follow-up to the successful 2019 conference that launched the collaborative, Feminists Deliver will be hosting a conference in March 2024 that will explore the theme of Climate

Justice. Central City Foundation continues to provide funding support, and our CEO is the co-chair of Feminists Deliver.

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## **TRRUST Collective Impact**

Central City Foundation participates in the TRRUST Collective Impact Collaborative group, which works to improve the conditions for youth aging out of government care. With a focus on housing, education, meaningful connections, health, wellness and culture, TRRUST CI uses a collective impact model that brings young people, service providers and allies together to work to improve the outcomes for youth transitioning out of government care. The Youth Leaders of TRRUST continue to inspire us through this work and their tireless efforts on behalf of all young people in care.



## COLLABORATIONS, CONT.

**SPRE Collaborative**

The Social Purpose Real Estate Collaborative (SPRE) is a group of funders and investors that strategically engage with and support social purpose real estate in BC. The members of this Collaborative work together on strategies to assist not-for-profit and social enterprise organizations with their real estate needs. CCF remains a leader in this collaborative and provides regular consulting to organizations and local governments working on policies or projects for social purpose real estate.

**Exchange Inner City (EIC)**

Exchange Inner City is a collaborative group that works to foster a vibrant, inclusive and equitable local economy in the Downtown Eastside while also working to influence systemic change. This collaboration is working hard to influence both businesses and governments to expand the use of Community Benefit Agreements and social procurement efforts that directly benefit inner-city community members. CCF is a member of EIC and directly supports many of its member social enterprises.

**Funders Connect**

Funders Connect is an informal network of private and family foundations, philanthropists and funding partnerships hosted by Central City Foundation. This collaboration provides an opportunity to improve philanthropy in our local community, leverage additional funding for our community partners and ensure funding reaches many of the equity-deserving groups in the inner city while working to improve grant-making and philanthropic investments across communities.

# A PROMISING FUTURE: LEAVE A LEGACY OF CARING

Your planned gift will help people in the inner city improve their lives

When you include a gift in your will to Central City Foundation, you will be helping to ensure that the most marginalized people in the inner city receive the support they need in the future. Your legacy will not only give inner-city residents the resources they need to improve the quality of their lives, but it will also enable us to fund innovative and effective organizations.

A gift of any size will help make a difference. Even a small percentage of the residue of your estate will help make a better life for people living in the inner city.

For more information on planned giving with Central City Foundation, please contact our office at (604) 683-2263 or [development@centralcityfoundation.ca](mailto:development@centralcityfoundation.ca)



With Central City Foundation your Legacy Gift can make a lasting impact on lives in the inner city:

**\$1 million**

Can build a treatment centre  
and save young lives.

**\$100,000**

Can build housing to help  
fight homelessness in the  
inner city.

**\$50,000**

Can equip an inner city  
daycare to ensure quality  
early childhood development.

**\$25,000**

Can buy equipment that will  
provide training to women  
working to overcome barriers to  
employment.



# FAiR iN THE SQUARE

**Save the date: Sunday June 9, 2024**

We're so incredibly excited to once again co-host this beloved event! We can't wait to join our many passionate neighbours, volunteers, community partners, artists and all others who cherish this very special annual event. Please be on the lookout for updates and volunteer opportunities early in the new year. We'll see you there!



CO-HOSTS

**CENTRAL CITY  
FOUNDATION**



# FOUNDATION UPDATE

## Meet our new Central City Foundation team members

We are pleased to introduce several new members to the Central City Foundation core team.

### **CAITHLIN SCARPELLI**

*Director, Development & Engagement*

With a passion for addressing gender-based violence in our community, Caithlin has been working in the non-profit sector for over 22 years. In her role as Executive Director of Communications and Fund Development at Atira Women's Resource Society, Caithlin was responsible for Atira Women's Arts Society and various social enterprises. Recently, Caithlin established a consultancy and is thrilled to bring her broad experience to our team.



*A welcome lunch for our new team members*

### **CRYSTAL PAULL**

*Program Director, Indigenous Initiatives & Strategic Partnerships*

Crystal is from the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation). With over 20 years of management experience leading high-performing teams, Crystal has come to recognize the importance of giving back to communities and Indigenous peoples. She has two sons and two grandchildren and is involved in many Indigenous projects, sitting on various Indigenous boards and committees.

### **LANESSA AMED-YOUSUF**

*Operations Manager*

Lanessa has worked in the non-profit sector for the last four years serving Indigenous mothers, children and community members in East Vancouver. Born and raised in Calgary, Lanessa's family came to Canada as refugees from Ethiopia. Lanessa believes that growing up in a refugee family has given her a unique empathy and desire to work with those within marginalized communities.

### **MARJORIE AGUSTIN**

*Executive Administrator*

Marjorie moved to Vancouver from the Philippines five years ago as an international student. With over four years of experience supporting non-profit organizations through her expertise in administration and accounting, Marjorie enjoys working with people of diverse backgrounds, where she can learn about different cultures and improve her communication skills.

### **THANK YOU, DEANNA!**

After 14 years in a variety of roles at Central City Foundation, Deanna Wing has made the difficult decision to pursue other opportunities. Central City Foundation and our many community partners are so grateful for the invaluable energy, efforts and empathy Deanna has shared with us over the years. We wish you the best, Deanna!



# Who is Central City Foundation?

Central City Foundation is the legacy that was created in 1907 when a small group of men and women in Vancouver came together to help their neighbours in need. We believe in the intrinsic value of human beings, in their agency and right to self-determination. All people have value, strengths and gifts to share with their community. By providing supports and addressing barriers, we are working to build a resilient, caring and inclusive community where it is possible for all people to overcome injustice, participate and thrive.

We believe there can be a healthier, more vibrant inner city that is a valued part of our larger community. Healthy and vibrant communities value social justice. People care for one another. Basic health and social services are assured. Safe and affordable housing is available. People have jobs, reliable income and other opportunities. Arts and recreation flourish. Children have the chance to play and learn. Streets are safe and neighbours are connected. To this end, we mobilize our capital for good. We help people in the inner city improve their lives by investing in social purpose real estate, capital grants, programs and subsidies. We are committed to community-led solutions. To respond to the evolving needs within our community, we continually seek to expand our deep understanding of the history and context of the issues. We are prepared to tackle the difficult problems that others will not.

On the traditional and unceded  
ancestral homelands of the  
xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam),  
Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish),  
Stó:lō and Selilwəta? / Selilwitulh  
(Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

**CENTRAL CITY  
FOUNDATION**