



Community Action Initiative and the Province of BC Announce New Supports for Bereaved Youth Impacted by the Toxic Drug Crisis

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After nearly a decade since the toxic drug crisis was declared a public health emergency in BC, youth across the province have been profoundly impacted by deaths within their families and communities. We are pleased to announce that youth can now access specialized bereavement care to help support their emotional health and wellness.

Through [Community Action Initiative](#) (CAI), 12 organizations in BC have been awarded new Youth Wellness Grant funding to provide community-based bereavement care for youth and their families who are left grieving. Funding for this initiative has been provided by the Ministry of Health's Overdose Response Branch. Grant awards are for \$80,000 per year for a 3-year term.

The grants will support organizations to provide specialized community supports for youth and families who have been affected by toxic drug poisonings, including individual and group programs, land-based activities, cultural healing, expressive arts therapies, family-centred activities, and peer supports. Youth engagement is at the heart of each organization's project, with youth in program advisory and peer leadership roles.

Applications were adjudicated through a peer review process with representatives from community-based organizations, health authorities, youth and families, and Indigenous organizations. The application process was highly competitive, with more than 60 groups across BC recognizing this urgent need to help grieving youth and applying for support. The adjudicators considered bereavement programming and service quality, budget and funding, and alignment with funding priorities, with consideration of underserved youth populations and locations where service gaps exist.

We are thrilled to announce the successful grant recipients and look forward to seeing the positive impact that these programs will have on youth and families in BC:

Northern region:

- [Carrier Sekani Family Services](#)
- [Fort Nelson First Nation](#)

Interior region:

- [Canadian Mental Health Association-Shuswap](#)
- [Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society](#)
- [Ktunaxa Kinbasket Child and Family Service Society](#)

Island region:

- [Comox Valley Hospice Society](#)
- [Learning Through Loss](#)
- [Lumara Grief & Bereavement Care Society](#)



Fraser region:

- [Low Entropy](#)
- [Matsqui-Abbotsford Impact Society](#)

Vancouver Coastal region:

- [Association of Neighbourhood Houses of BC d.b.a. Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House](#)
- [Tsleil-Waututh Nation](#)

Quotes:

Josie Osborne, Minister of Health:

“The toxic drug crisis continues to have a devastating impact on communities and families across the province, and it can be especially difficult for young people who are struggling with the loss of a loved one, family member or friend. Providing community-based bereavement grants helps provide the support youth need and deserve during a difficult time in their life. This is just one way our government is expanding and enhancing supports so that everyone, including young people, can access a seamless system of mental health and addictions care where and when they need it.”

Grant recipient – Dr. Heather Mohan, Registered Clinical Counsellor, Executive Director & Co-Founder of Lumara Grief & Bereavement Care:

“Most people are aware that there are thousands of drug-related deaths now happening every year in BC, yet there are very few supports in place for the youth and families who are left behind. As a registered charity specializing in bereavement care, Lumara has been overwhelmed by the staggering increase in referrals for this population group over the past few years. We are incredibly grateful to have been selected as one of the recipients of the Community Action Initiative Youth Wellness Grant. We will use this funding to assist us in delivering critical emotional support and life-changing group programs for youth who might otherwise lack support for their grief - leaving them vulnerable to intergenerational cycles of trauma, mental health, and addiction struggles.”

Pablita Thomas, Executive Director, BC Hospice Palliative Care Association:

“In communities throughout the province, hospice societies have been offering over 40 years of low-barrier, accessible grief and bereavement care to those who have lost someone, including due to toxic drug use. An opportunity to receive multi-year funding allows awarded hospices to better support communities with sustainable supports that make a lasting impact and increase capacity to serve a greater number of youth. The BCHPCA welcomes this significant funding and thanks CAI for including our sector in an unseen and financially under supported service such as grief and bereavement support.”

Grant recipient – Mary Teegee-Gray, Executive Director, Carrier Sekani Family Services:

“Thousands of families across British Columbia have suffered the loss of a loved one to toxic drug poisoning. The grief and loss felt by children and adolescents who've lost loved ones is overwhelming and heartbreaking. Carrier Sekani Family Services plans to support children and youth impacted by the opioid crisis by offering culturally sensitive, trauma-informed grief and loss programming, with funding provided by Community Action Initiative.”

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