



# Annual Report

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR 2022-23 YEAR

# Who We Are

Connective is a community-based social services nonprofit working to create safe, healthy, and inclusive communities for all.

Our story stretches back almost 90 years, to origins in the Vancouver region. In the time since, we've expanded across BC and into the Yukon, and developed a broad range of person-centered programming.

Today, we're proud to take a leading role in responding to underserved and evolving community needs, through innovative service models that reflect the unique strengths of the people and places we serve.

In doing so, we are here for everyone – at every stage, in any circumstance – including those experiencing poverty, homelessness, mental health challenges, problematic substance use, those with developmental disabilities, those impacted by the criminal justice system, and those experiencing other complex barriers.



## OUR VISION

A safe, healthy, and inclusive community for all

## OUR MISSION

We strengthen communities by supporting people experiencing barriers so they can achieve greater independence

## OUR CORE VALUES

**Inclusive:** We create an environment where everyone can feel welcome and respected

**Accountable:** We are responsive, take responsibility for our actions, and honour our commitments

**Person-Centered:** We adapt our approach to the individual and use empathy and compassion in all our interactions

**Collaborative:** We engage and work closely with others, both within and outside our organization

**Determined:** We are passionate, do not shy away from challenges, and respond to setbacks with a renewed drive to succeed

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# Land Acknowledgement

Growing from humble beginnings in the lower mainland, it has been an honour to see Connective thrive in communities across BC and in the Yukon.

We are proud to support people and communities on the ancestral, traditional, and unceded Indigenous territories of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əy̓ əm (Musqueam), s<sup>k</sup>wx wú7mesh (Squamish), sel il witulh (Tsleil-Waututh), Kway-quit-lum (Kwikwetlem), Kwantlen, Q'e'yc'ey (Katzie), Matsqui, Sema:th (Sumas), ʃemi'a:mu: (Semiahmoo), Qayqayt, Stó:lō, s<sup>c</sup>əwaθn məsteyəx<sup>w</sup> (Tsawwassen), and other Coast Salish Peoples; on traditional Dakelh territory, home of the Lheidli T'enneh Nation; of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc within Secwépemc'ulucw, the traditional territory of the Secwépemc people; as well as the Snuneymuxw First Nations; and the traditional lands of the Kwanlin Dūn First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and other Yukon First Nations.

We are honoured to work as visitors on these Indigenous lands, and do not take lightly the privilege and responsibility of providing culturally appropriate services.

To uphold our commitment to providing culturally informed and appropriate services, we work to integrate the wisdom, expertise, and knowledge of Elders, Indigenous Leadership, Knowledge Keepers, Indigenous service users, and Indigenous-led community groups in all that we do.

## Our Year in Numbers



### BC/YUKON



### KAMLOOPS



### NANAIMO



To request a copy of Connective's financial statements and to learn more about the investments we've made over the past year, please reach out to [info@connective.ca](mailto:info@connective.ca)

## Serving More People in More Places



- Fraser Valley    Interior Okanagan    Vancouver Island  
Lower Mainland    Northern BC    Yukon
- ### OUR PROGRAMS
- Abbotsford CSO
  - ACES
  - Arrowwood
  - Bedford Manor
  - Code Dental Clinic
  - Community Living Outreach
  - Community Support Initiatives
  - Diversity Flats
  - Dogwood
  - East 3rd Residential
  - Elliott House
  - Elmbrook Supportive Housing
  - Fairview
  - Forensic Housing and Outreach
  - Fraser Apartments
  - Frey Place
  - Georgian Court
  - Guthrie Therapeutic Community
  - Guy Richmond Place
  - Hawthorn
  - Hobden House
  - Home Share
  - Homelessness Prevention Program
  - Housing First Residence
  - IMPS
  - Kingsway Supportive Housing
  - Leyland
  - Lighthouse
  - Meadow House
  - Miller Block
  - Miyáq'elhá:wetawt
  - Nanaimo Housing First
  - North Fraser Reintegration
  - Oasis Housing
  - Prince George Supportive Housing
  - Pyrus House
  - Reaching Home
  - Record Suspension Program
  - Rent Bank
  - Restorative Justice
  - Sage House
  - Samara Community House
  - SHARP
  - Skyview Ridge
  - STOP
  - Teak House
  - Tims Manor
  - Vancouver Apartments
  - Vancouver CSO
  - VITC
  - Victory Inn
  - Whitehorse Emergency Shelter
  - Whitehorse Residential Support

## CONNECTIVE



**Mark Miller**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
OFFICER



**Pat Alexander**  
BOARD CHAIR



We have undergone profound evolution over the past year, but in all the ways that matter most – our commitment to our values, our service users, and to one another – we remain the same.

## A Message from our CEO & Board Chair

In all the ways that matter most – commitment to our values, our service users, and to one another – Connective today remains the same as Connective this time last year. Yet, in so many other, welcome ways, who and what we are have undergone profound evolution. There is nothing that captures this with quite as much clarity as the creation of nearly 200 units of housing, and the addition of almost 250 staff to our Connective community.

More so than any year in recent memory, it seemed each month brought some new milestone, development, or success to celebrate; at times, the pace of change felt breathless. From tenanting our three supportive housing projects, assuming operation of the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, and hosting our long-awaited Leadership Gathering, to receiving the Non-Profit Employer of Choice Award, launching our new website, and welcoming our friends in Nanaimo to the Connective name and brand – there is so much to be proud of from these last twelve months.

Although we count ourselves incredibly lucky to have worked and lived alongside Pam for more than 14 years, and Patricia for 6, it feels entirely too short. In their time with Connective, Pam and Patricia made lasting contributions both large and small, and will forever be a core piece of our organization's identity.

“Each month brought some new milestone, development, or success to celebrate”

As we navigated these profound losses, we were heartened by our community's strength and resolve – in taking care of themselves, being there for one another, and ensuring that those who needed services could continue to receive them.

In a year that saw us grapple with the lingering impacts of COVID-19, a devastating toxic drug crisis, an unpredictable climate, and an unstable economy, this was more important than ever. The speed of

change and the rise in complexity demanded more of us at every turn – more services to reach more people in more places and more ways.

Across our sector and beyond, organizations and governments were called on to adapt to the growing needs of our communities. Connective continued to rise to the occasion in ways that leveraged our unique strengths and expertise. Innovation, flexibility, and responsiveness are second nature to our staff and we are profoundly grateful for the ways they have continued to step up when called upon. Their dedication, compassion, and accountability are truly unmatched.

“We were heartened by our community's strength and resolve”

As our team continued to grow, it also shifted; we welcomed new positions and team members, and said farewell to others. Of particular note this past year was the addition of our DEI Specialist, and Indigenous Advisory Committee, examples of our commitment to reconciliation, to decolonization, and to building a future that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive for all. Though these represent important steps in our journey, we recognize that it is far from complete; there is much work that remains. We are eager to pursue that work in the year ahead, and comfortable in our team's ability to hold us to account and challenge us to improve.

We're honoured to be a part of this organization, and brimming with anticipation for all we will accomplish as we continue to strive toward a safe, healthy, and inclusive community for all. A sincere thank you to our service users, volunteers, staff, partners, donors, funders, and dedicated Board of Directors – this report would not be possible without you. We hope you enjoy it.

## A Message from Our CEO & Board Chair

### CONNECTIVE KAMLOOPS



**Lindsay Lord**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
OFFICER

**Alan Hawkins**  
BOARD CHAIR



As we reflect on the past year, we are humbled and grateful for the unwavering commitment of all those who have stood by our side – from our dedicated staff and Board to our resilient service users, and valued partners. All that we have accomplished together – just a fraction of which is contained within this report – gives testament to the power of collective action, and the strength of our community.

In the face of ongoing challenges, we have continued to demonstrate flexibility and compassion in adapting to evolving

needs. We are proud to have fostered continued growth in our programs, and to find ourselves supporting more people than ever before. This was, in no small part, made possible by a 33% increase in the size of our staff team, and by the conscious steps we've taken to streamline our administrative functions.

**"In the face of ongoing challenges, we have continued to demonstrate flexibility and compassion"**

This past year we also redoubled our engagement and advocacy efforts, connecting with various partners and levels of government both locally, and provincially, in concert with Connective teams in other regions. Collaborative efforts have always been at the core of our work and now, more than ever, are instrumental to creating safe, healthy, and inclusive communities for all.

**"Collaborative efforts have always been at the core of our work and now, more than ever, are instrumental"**

Building on the success of Diversity Flats, our team has been actively planning for additional affordable housing projects. At the same time, we've been sure to strengthen existing assets and properties with significant investments in large renovation projects. These have been key to ensuring the sustainability of our essential services for years to come. We want to thank the Province of British Columbia for their generous financial support in these efforts.

Looking to the future, we are both excited and inspired. The challenges facing our community continue to evolve, but so do the tools, knowledge, and resources at our disposal. As we eagerly embark on a new strategic plan, we remain dedicated to continuous improvement, innovation, and most of all, to the members of our community. There is much work to come, but we are more than ready.

## A Message from Our ED & Board Chair

### CONNECTIVE NANAIMO



**John Horn**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Susan Clift**  
BOARD CHAIR



In September of 2022, our organization made the change from Nanaimo Region John Howard Society to Connective. It has been a rewarding and intensive time as we manage this new collaborative framework and identity. Our service users, IAPs, funders, and staff are excited about the new look and feel, and we have received much positive feedback.

Though our name has changed, our work continues apace. With the addition of a 21-bed residential facility, we are now providing affordable housing to independent seniors who were living in emergency shelters, or other precarious situations.

The tremendous interest in this facility speaks to the level of need in the community, especially among those on small, fixed incomes.

**"It has been a rewarding and intensive time as we manage this new collaborative framework"**

In continuing to respond to the housing crisis, we are excited to be adding a 51-unit supportive housing facility, Cornerstone, which we will be tenanting in the fall. All residents have been selected and are currently in modular workforce housing on another site. To be ready for the significant operational requirements that come with 24/7 support services, we are ramping up our HR and Finance capabilities.

Looking forward, we are actively engaged in the dialogue on crime in our community and eager to play a role in responding. Our long history working with those who have criminal justice system involvement, problematic substance use challenges, and other underlying conditions, leaves us well situated to bring innovative solutions to the table. We have and will continue to work with our colleagues and provincial government officials on these issues.

**"In continuing to respond to the housing crisis, we are excited to be adding a 51-unit supported housing facility"**

Our Board of Directors and staff are keen to continue drawing on our expertise to provide services to communities in need across Vancouver Island, and excited to participate in province-wide programs delivered in partnership with Connective staff across BC.

The updates captured in this report would not be possible without the dedication of our service users, staff, and volunteers; together, they enable profound change in our communities, and we cannot wait to see all that we accomplish in the coming year.



## Complex Community Challenges

### INFLATION

Massive inflation has caused the cost of living to skyrocket, hitting hard at the pockets of those already struggling and putting access to daily necessities out of reach for many. Making matters worse, salaries and income assistance rates have not risen to match.

Our programs, too, have felt this pinch:

- **ACES:** Training costs have increased, affecting the level of support we can provide within the same budget.
- **Home Shares:** Cost of living increases have resulted in greater-than-ever demand for Home Shares, while making it harder than ever to secure new providers.
- **Homelessness Prevention Program Abbotsford:** Layoffs, cost of living increases, and funding cuts to support programs are making it harder for service users to get their required medications.

In response, our teams have reached outside the box, cultivated new partnerships, and employed innovative strategies to help meet the needs of our service users.

### OPIOID CRISIS

Although this last year saw us round a corner on the COVID-19 pandemic, the toxic drug crisis has continued to inflict tremendous harm and loss on our communities. At least 2,272 British Columbians and 25 Yukoners lost their lives to toxic drugs in 2022, and in the first few months of 2023 these numbers have continued to climb.

Drug toxicity remains the leading cause of unnatural death in BC, and as the situation has worsened in the Yukon, the territory now has the highest number of per capita illicit drug-related deaths.

Connective continues to practice harm reduction, with increased house checks and Naloxone training for staff. We have also:

- Built safe consumption rooms in our Vancouver and Prince George supportive housing programs, and drafted renovation plans to install the same in Surrey.
- Worked with community partners in Abbotsford to create a satellite site for Narcan kit distribution.
- Made fentanyl test kits available at multiple program locations and arranged accessibility to testing (through partner organizations) at many more.
- Provided Nasal spray naloxone and administration training to Community Inclusion staff and Home Share providers, as an alternative to injection-based delivery.



### HOUSING CRISIS

Acquiring safe, affordable housing continues to prove challenging. This crisis impacts people from all walks of life but has a disproportionate effect on those who are already economically vulnerable, and on those facing compounding barriers, such as the stigma of a criminal record.

In BC, the rate of unaffordable homes is higher than anywhere else in the country; housing prices sit at or near all-time highs and social housing waitlists have ballooned by a whopping 320%. The situation in the Yukon is not much better.

Here are just a few examples of where we see these challenges reflected across our programs and communities:

- Rather than opting for full parole with no available housing options, Community-Based Residential Facility (CRF) residents have extended their stay while staff continue to help them search.
- Many Foreign Nationals do not have income to secure housing, so Community Case Management and Supervision staff have advocated to the Canadian Border Services Agency to allow residents to stay beyond the 90-day limit, reducing the possibility of homelessness.
- To help combat stigma, HPP Vancouver provided RentSmart workshops and supported 11 individuals to complete certification, which can act as a positive housing reference.

## Zeroing in on Inflation

### RESPONSES TO RISING FOOD INSECURITY

While inflation has driven up the cost of goods and services across the board, food prices have risen to their highest levels in decades.

Heading into 2022, researchers predicted a 5-7% price increase. At the time, many considered this alarmist. By September, the rate of increase was at 10.3%.

#### Vancouver Apartments

"We have \$350 a week to spend on groceries—that might sound like a lot, but when you break it down between four people, that's \$75 a week. Then, when you look at the prices, it's like, 'wait a second...' Maybe five years ago that was enough, but now it feels miniscule."

- Meghan, Program Manager

Food price challenges are further exacerbated when residents require specialized diets. "We've had some health challenges in our programs...when people need specific items that are just a bit more expensive, it all adds up."

To respond, the team has been forced to make hard choices, shifting funds from other areas to try and balance out the food budget.

#### Miller Block

Though food banks are an option for those struggling, Meghan has noticed two trends at another program – Miller Block – that paint the reality as less straightforward. "What I've heard is, 'I don't want to be seen getting free food.' So, that tells me we have stigmatization."

In addition, "because Miller Block is extremely low barrier, some residents are actively using." That brings its own challenges when residents "just don't have the energy to go to the food bank." Even without the stigma, they physically can't do it.

In response, staff have instead partnered to bring the food bank to residents. After electronically submitting their requirements, food bank staff package it, and staff pick it up. Back at Miller Block, the office becomes a little store. "They come up and I say, 'Ok, this is our list for this week. What would you like?'"

It has taken the shame away...Massively so. They're more comfortable with it; it's more of a casual interaction."



## Supporting Social Justice & Human Services Education

### PETER ALLIK-PETERSENN EDUCATIONAL BURSARY

For over 32 years, Peter Allik-Petersenn served as an active and dedicated member of Kamloops' Board of Directors, a steadfast advocate of our work and mission, and a staunch champion of our founding values and principles.

Peter provided unwavering support to our programs and services, and played an instrumental role in the development and expansion of the ACES (Acquiring Community-Based Employment Skills) program in Kamloops.

In 2022, Peter retired from his position on the board. In honour of his career and his commitment to the citizens of our community, Connective was honoured to create the Peter Allik-Petersenn Education Bursary. Supporting students pursuing education in the social justice and human services field, this \$2000 educational bursary invests in the future of those who strive to play a part in creating a safe, healthy, and inclusive community for all.

Applications opened on October 3, and a winner – chosen from a broad pool of applicants, by Kamloops' Board of Directors – was announced at an award ceremony on November 22.

With much excitement, Karen LeCroix – a Kamloops resident and Social Work student from Thompson Rivers University – was selected as the inaugural recipient.

Karen is a great example of what it means to live Connective's values; we were thrilled to present her with this award and support her as she looked to complete her studies.



I was incredibly grateful to be chosen as this generous bursary from Connective helped me to cover the costs of my final semester at Thompson Rivers University. It was not an easy decision for me to return to school as a mature student with a family, including three children who depend on me. It was a very challenging two years, but I am proud to share that I have now earned my Bachelor of Social Work degree. I am looking forward to starting my new career here as a visitor on the ancestral lands of the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc, within Secwepemcul'ecw and giving back to the community that I now call home."

- With gratitude, Karen Lacroix (She/Her)

## Expanding Our Reach

### NEW PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

While continuing to provide our essential services through the operation of existing programs, we've also reached further into our communities and expanded who and how we support. We were honoured to announce or begin operating several new programs last year, just some of which are highlighted here.

#### Arrowwood Place

Arrowwood is a residential program in Coquitlam, serving two individuals. One resident lives in the home full-time and receives 24-hour support with skill development (cooking, cleaning, employment, etc.) and community engagement (fitness and community activities) from Connective staff. The second person served currently resides at the Forensic Psychiatric Hospital but receives staff support Monday-Friday.

'Arrowwood' comes from the big leafy shrub of the same name. In spring it sprouts white flower clusters that resemble clouds, before turning a vibrant red in autumn and producing bright blue berries. The shrub speaks to the beauty of transitional times and the value of persevering through challenges.

Of their journey so far, the team admits that "it's hard to always see the impact when you're in it day to day, but looking back from where we started, we've come a long way." Looking forward, they're "excited to build up more programming tailored to the residents' interests."

#### W-SHARP

In February of 2023, we were thrilled to announce our fifth program in Whitehorse – a supervised housing and reintegration program for up to six women on conditional release from institutions, giving them the opportunity to return home to an environment that is safe and supportive.

We are humbled and grateful for this opportunity to continue partnering with the Council of Yukon First Nations, to expand our support of Yukoners facing barriers, and to fill a longstanding service gap in the territory.

"Re-integrating into the community after being involved in the legal system can be difficult, even more so in a small city like Whitehorse where most people know each other...I am excited to see the program operating in the coming months, and to hear and see impacts on the individuals we will be supporting, and on the broader community."

– Jisna, Program Manager



#### Pyrus House

Pyrus was established on December 1, 2022, and is Connective's first residential program in Langley. It offers 24/7 support to two individuals living with developmental disabilities and mental health challenges. Staff assist residents with day-to-day activities, goal setting, and community inclusion opportunities.

Before welcoming residents, the house was renovated for accessibility upgrades, and to give it a warm, cozy feel. In the time since, the program has also welcomed a cat named Honee, who provides therapeutic support to one of the residents. The name "Pyrus" comes from the Latin word "pirus," which means pear tree. The backyard is full of these luscious trees, and everyone is eagerly awaiting the day they sprout.

Michael, Pyrus' Program Manager, and the team are "especially looking forward to watching the relationship between residents bloom, as we're confident that they'll become an integral part of each other's support system."

#### Record Suspension Program

The process of record suspension – formerly known as a 'pardon' – allows individuals to have their criminal record kept in a separate database, meaning it won't show up on a criminal record check.

Criminal records create barriers to accessing meaningful employment, housing, and education, and so record suspension is a way to help people overcome these barriers and receive a second chance to pursue their goals.

In late 2022, Connective was proud to begin offering a Record Suspension Support program, providing both administrative and financial assistance for individuals across BC and the Yukon attempting to navigate the extensive, often complicated, and potentially triggering record suspension application process.

"The program has received positive feedback from both service users and other organizations... Service users frequently speak of the shame an old criminal record holds over them; with the prospect of a record suspension, they optimistically look forward to moving on with their life and seeing what opportunities will open for them."

– Anna, Program Manager



## Expanding Our Reach



### 405 ALEXANDER

In the fall of 2022, after a competitive selection process led by the Yukon Government, Connective assumed operation of the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter at 405 Alexander.

With 58 beds available for temporary emergency housing, and a range of supportive services, 405 Alexander offers a vital – and for many, a first – step on the road to wellbeing. Upstairs, the program also provides 20 permanent units operating on housing first principles.

Services at 405 Alexander Include:

- **24/7 Support** – minimum of three on-site staff, supported by a full-time manager
- **Emergency Medical Services (EMS)** – on site daily to meet primary care needs
- **Mental Wellness & Substance Use Services** – access to counselling and other supports

- **Referred Care Clinic** – provides twice weekly access to physician, outreach nurse, and social worker
- **Kwanlin Dūn First Nation Health Centre Outreach** – weekly access to sexually transmitted infection testing, foot care, adult immunizations, and referrals to other agencies
- **Full-Time Outreach Worker** – provides 1:1 support to help service users navigate systems, referrals, and goal setting

Recognizing the tremendous responsibility and privilege afforded by this opportunity, we approached this transition with utmost care to minimize disruptions to residents and staff. In the time since, we've been proud to build on the program's existing foundations with our own expertise, shared values, and commitment to person-centered support.

We've also been pleased to continue our close partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) for the provision of culturally informed and appropriate services. Through CYFN, we've facilitated access to a full-time Cultural Support Worker. To date, activities have included beaded feather making and mini button blanket making workshops, with more cultural programming planned for the future.

### Since Connective's Transition

Total Number of Stays  
**7,967**

Harm Reduction  
Supplies Distributed  
**5,095**

Average Nightly  
Occupancy  
**44**

Meals Served  
**48,623**



### 'I JUST LOVE IT HERE'

#### Spotlight On: Kory | Housing Support Worker

Kory worked at 405 Alexander before Connective assumed operation and has remained through our transition. He never planned to work in social services, but after recommendations from friends and an initial trial run, he realized he was a perfect fit.

"It's taken 45 years and a lot of different jobs in a lot of different areas. But yeah, I, I smile when I come to work and I'm smiling when I leave...I love it so much."

Kory's own history has allowed him to build meaningful connections with those accessing the program. "I share some history of homelessness and addiction issues, so it's a very relatable experience." Building these relationships with service users, and seeing its impact on them, is a bright spot in Kory's role at 405 Alexander.

"The absolute joy that some of the clients have when I come to work...they're like, 'Oh, you're here – are you here all night? That's great.' And that just warms my heart, you know."

Kory is excited for the changes that have, and are still, to come. "Through Connective, it's so wonderful to see the things that I wanted to see when I came in initially – a lot of case management, and sort of more singular work with people. Making it easier for them to transition...on to bigger and better things."

We'd like to thank our Whitehorse community for their open and supportive response through our transition process. We're very excited to continue expanding our services in collaboration with local partners.

## Overcoming Barriers to Employment

### HAIR AND MAKEUP ARTISTRY CERTIFICATIONS

The Youth Employment Skills Strategy (YESS) program provides flexible supports to young Canadians facing barriers to employment. Individually tailored services help youth develop the skills and experiences they need to successfully secure meaningful work that suits their strengths and interests.

Barriers could include:

- Youth from visible minority groups
- Youth living with disabilities
- Single parent youth
- Youth experiencing homelessness or precarious housing

Thanks to YESS funding from Employment and Social Development Canada, Connective Kamloops' employment team supported a number of youths to complete Hair and Makeup Artistry Programs through the Cassidy Wyatt Artistry Collective (CWAC).

The first cohort of students completed programming in winter 2023, to great success - every student passed the course, and eight of them were awarded an 'Excellence in Artistry', recognizing them for all their hard work.

In addition to funding course costs, Connective also supported participants with grocery stipends, day care funding, gas subsidies to cover travel to and from the program, and rent assistance so that students could focus on their studies.

This partnership provided a great opportunity to expand beyond the construction industry, a common focus for employment programs, and cater to a different set of strengths and interests.



### PARTICIPANT PROFILES

#### Kiana

Kiana was looking for a career change and decided to pursue her passion for beauty. She excelled in the Makeup Artistry and Dry Bar Hairstyling Certificate Programs and was hired by the CWAC team before she even graduated! Kiana will be starting her first wedding season as a full-time artist this summer.

"The CWAC Hair and Makeup courses have been life changing. Before taking the courses, I had passion for beauty but lacked the knowledge and skills to turn that passion into a career. I am so grateful...Without this, I never would have had the knowledge and skills to land the dream job I just got offered!"

#### McKenna

Before completing the Makeup Artistry Certificate Program, McKenna was working as a part-time nanny. After graduating with an Excellence in Artistry, she has been hired as a full-time artist on the CWAC team!

"I am so happy that I enrolled into the training academy and that I was able to get funding, otherwise I wouldn't have been able to afford taking this training to help advance my makeup skills and career in the beauty industry."

In March, program participants received their certifications and celebrated their accomplishments with a 'Garden Party' themed graduation ceremony. Six students had already been hired by CWAC, a few more had interviews on the way, and others had begun taking their own freelance bookings.



Photo Credit:  
Shelanne Justice Photography  
@shelannejusticephotography

## A Path to Independent Living

### ROSSTOWN HOUSING

Rosstown Housing provides safe, secure housing and wraparound support to individuals who have been found Not Criminally Responsible due to Mental Disorder (NCRMD), are on conditional discharge, and almost ready to live on their own.

Staff support residents with daily living skills, goal setting, and the transition to fully independent and long-term market housing. This past year, two individuals successfully transitioned from Rosstown, including Ty.

### TY'S STORY

Ty first came to Rosstown Housing from the Forensic Psychiatric Hospital, after spending several years there. At Rosstown, Ty was able to work closely with staff and found a new outlook on life. His willingness to engage with the Forensic Treatment Team increased, and he developed a personal desire to remain clean from substances and create a more holistically enriched living experience.

“I benefited from the housing and observational support of staff at Connective Nanaimo, and the Nanaimo Forensic Psychiatric Clinic.”

“Regarding the Rosstown Housing program, it provided a comfortable and respectful path to market housing and independent living.”

After a year at Rosstown, Ty was ready to live on his own. Access to a housing subsidy helped bring this long-term goal to fruition, and with the support and encouragement of staff, he was even able to adopt two cats – Puzzle and Jenga – whom he cares for a great deal.

“My two cats are great to have around.”

With this goal accomplished, Ty is working hard to continue his journey and make the most of the supports available to him. Looking ahead at what might come next, he has started considering “attaining a short course engineering technologist diploma.”

When asked about his one takeaway from this entire experience, his answer is short and sweet:

“Social workers are likely the most decent and empathetic members of the legal system.”



## Innovative Community Partnerships

### CONNECTIVE AND THE RED FISH HEALING CENTRE

The Red Fish Healing Centre for Mental Health and Addiction is a new, leading-edge centre located on səmiq̓ʷəʔelə, in Coquitlam. This 105-bed facility provides recovery and treatment services to those living with complex substance use and mental health challenges, prioritizing dignity, trauma-informed practice, and therapeutic programs.

This past year, our Tri-Cities Community Living Services (CLS) Outreach team was honoured to begin providing services to Community Living BC (CLBC) funded individuals residing at Red Fish.

Many Red Fish residents come from across the province for services, but in doing so, lose touch with the existing CLBC supports. Others may not have had a support worker at all, but in residing at Red Fish, become eligible for CLBC services.

To help bridge these gaps, Connective's outreach team was asked to step in and provide services to those in need. The result was two Connective staff becoming embedded in the Red Fish team; working out of the Red Fish building; exclusively with Red Fish residents. What started off as a pilot project – two staff at 20 hours a week – has now grown to a total of 60 support hours.

For Chehaila and her team, “it has been super cool. We've had a lot of interest in being involved with it – like, everybody wants to work at redfish.”

“It's a cool experience to be able to make connections with another community partnership – with a different agency, a different type of program, especially one like this, a treatment center.”



For Red Fish residents, the difference has been huge. “If people are connected, and they're able to get out and do things in the community, they're more likely to stay and finish the treatment program,” says Chehaila.

The team is proud of this unique partnership, and excited to see it grow.

## Checking in on Connective's Supportive Housing

### PRINCE GEORGE, VANCOUVER AND SURREY

Stable, safe, and appropriate housing is a critical step in avoiding crisis, and a necessary springboard for accessing additional supports, overcoming barriers, and pursuing personal independence. It's no surprise, then, that housing plays such a large role in our vision of a safe, healthy, and inclusive community for all.

It's why we were so pleased to share the announcements of three new supportive housing programs in our last annual report. Together, these developments – in Prince George, Surrey, and Vancouver – provide a home with 24/7 wraparound support to almost 150 individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Over this past year, we've been thrilled to see these programs come to life, have tenants move in, and each develop their own character and community. We're honoured to share these snippets, stories, and updates from across the three projects.



### Kingsway Supportive Housing

"Staff have treated me better than anywhere else. I don't know how I can say thank you, but I will try and treat other people the same."



Staff and residents at Kingsway Supportive Housing have been excited to welcome a couple unexpected guests – a pair of baby hummingbirds!

"On December 21, 2022, we held our first ever Winter Solstice at Kingsway Supportive Housing in Vancouver. Our Indigenous Liaison invited a Knowledge Keeper to open the ceremony, which featured singing, drumming, and stories. Afterward, residents were invited to join us in traditional beading and share some tasty Bannock."



### Prince George Supportive Housing



At PG Supportive Housing, everyone received a stocking full of goodies and a personalized card in December – even the resident animals!



"Having a room with a key is something I wanted for a long time. I cried my first day here and have been happy since."

### Elmbrook Supportive Housing

"Over the holidays, Elmbrook had tenants and staff come together for an evening of bonding and cookie decorating. We also hosted a turkey dinner and an on-site movie night for all the residents. Several people shared that this was the best holiday season they'd had in years, and some, their best ever."

"I love this place, thank you. Having a safe place of my own and food every day is something I could never imagine."

"During the first overdose we experienced, staff were able to stabilize a resident's guest by providing efficient Naloxone admission, giving paramedics time to arrive. Sometime later, the guest returned to Elmbrook to inform staff that because they had saved his life, he had been able to do the same for someone else."



## PORTRAITS OF RESILIENCE IN WHITEHORSE

It has been a pleasure to see our work in Whitehorse flourish these last few years. As one of our newer communities, we wanted to find a way to shine a light on those who bring it to life, while simultaneously giving them the space to challenge assumptions, rewrite stereotypes, and overcome stigma.

So, in January 2023 – during an uncharacteristically warm winter week – we set out to capture the stories and portraits of some incredible members of our community in Whitehorse.

Together, they represent a tiny fraction of our service users and providers, and offer a reminder that no matter who we are, and no matter where we're at in our personal journey – we are all human, and we are all **Facing Forward**, one step at a time.

### Facing Forward



**Even though I have a hard time, I still like to help people.**



**Everybody's got so many gifts... everybody brings something to the table.**



**I could just see the pain in them... I can tell because I've been there.**



We were proud to partner with GBP Creative for this project. Brianne and Gary Bremner, owners and operators of GBP Creative, strive to align with organizations who "do good" in the world.

"Every time we do a project where people tell their stories, we're struck by just how much they are carrying around every day...The amount of trauma and grief, as well as resilience and strength."

### LEARN MORE

[Read the full stories of our Whitehorse community members here](#)

## Reintegrating Services Post-Pandemic

### NANAIMO'S ACES PROGRAM

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 placed tremendous strain on our social support systems. Connective Nanaimo's ACES team felt this acutely.

"Over COVID, all we were able to offer was virtual training to those in jail," explains Eva, the Employment Services Program Manager. "But they weren't super well attended, for one. There was a lot of technical barriers, but beyond that, you just couldn't build the same relationships, even when you could get a stable internet connection."

Only in the last year has the team been able to continue offering in-person training, and the difference is dramatic.

"Having those in-person relationships again have been very beneficial. We have good success in the follow through – participants are more likely to reach out on release and go forward with their training and career goals." During COVID, with virtual training, this wasn't the case – "The guys would get certificates and then they wouldn't bother to come pick them up."

It hasn't just been a return to the status quo, however. For all its harms, the pandemic also brought opportunity; it forced innovation, made clearer than ever the benefits of collaboration, and presented a platform from which to rethink norms.

For Nanaimo's ACES team, it meant the chance to rethink their long-standing partnership with ABCB First Aid & Safety Training. "It kind of opened the door to say, "Hey, we had this gap, so, now let's meet again and revamp."

The result has been increased communication, which in turn has reduced barriers to training for those with literacy, processing, or physical impairments. "We can give them a heads up if we have any



concerns, or if the clients have any concerns." Together, they can come up with flexible solutions.

"We had a client with bad knees, and they were really acting up during the practical part of a CPR course. Because of this relationship, they let her come back during a different course to finish."

The change is a welcome one, even if it came from a challenging place; "I feel like if we didn't have that break, things would have just continued on, status quo."

## Improv for Interviews

### ACES LOWER MAINLAND

It's common for employment programs to focus on industries like construction, where there's often a wider availability of work. This was initially true of our ACES (Acquiring Community-Based Employment Skills) program as well.

As Lisa, Connective's Community Services Manager, put it, however, "Who are we serving, if that's all we offer?" More and more over the last few years, our ACES staff have been working hard to expand our training opportunities.

While offering culinary, beauty, and other training has proven extremely popular with service users, it hasn't been without challenge. "One of the biggest barriers for our participants has been, once they receive the training and resume help, they still need to apply for jobs and attend interviews. This has been increasingly difficult as we've moved into more diverse training areas," explains Lisa.

People don't always have to interview in the construction industry, but for a lot of other jobs, they do. "If you don't have those skills, if you haven't had a lot of opportunities to practice them...it can be hard."

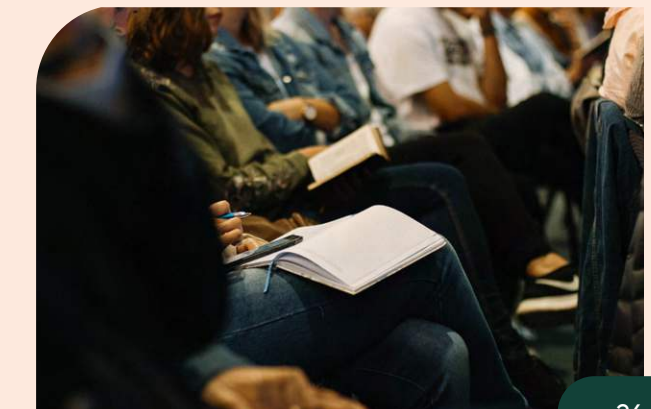
To help address this, ACES partnered with a local improv company – Tightrope Theater – who had developed a curriculum called Improv for Interviews, but until now, hadn't found the right partner. They started the program with Connective as a pilot and kept going from there.

The training sessions cover:

- **Improv Games:** getting used to thinking off-the-cuff and being creative.
- **Body Language:** how do we present ourselves, even if it's not 'real'?
- **Active Listening:** not just waiting for your turn to speak.
- **Narrative Framing:** how do we want to tell our story?
- **Simulated Interviews:** a chance to practice pulling it all together.

In the end, Lisa saw "a huge change in participants' confidence by the end of this training. It's very heartwarming to see. These folks, many who haven't had a lot of experience doing this sort of thing...to see them in that environment and acting confidently."

This partnership has played an important role in supporting individuals with their communication skills and helping them secure work; we're excited to see it continue!



## Meeting Evolving Community Need

### HYBRID AND LIVE-IN HOME SHARE MODELS

To meet rising support needs across our communities, Connective's Home Share program has implemented two innovative responses – Hybrid and Live-In Home Share models.

"We continue to receive profiles of individuals facing multiple barriers, and it continues to be a challenge that there are only two main housing models – traditional Home Shares and 24-hour staffed resources. There's a lot of people who, ideally, would be in a 24-hour staffed resource, but simply don't have the funding."

- Emily, Home Share Manager

Where a typical Home Share will have no support for community inclusion, or very little, Home Share Hybrids pair outreach workers with service users for almost daily support throughout the week. The result is a much greater degree of care and supervision, and a general increase in quality of life.

While Hybrid models are not new, the number has "dramatically gone up. Before this year we had two...now we have eight," says Emily.

The flexibility of this option allows individuals facing mental health and/or substance use challenges, who might struggle in a traditional Home Share, to get the support they need.

Even further along the spectrum of care, and brand new this year, was the Live-In model. As the name suggests, this sees a provider living in the family home and providing direct, daily support.

It's a big ask. "If you think about it, somebody is uprooting their entire life, everything that they're used to, and moving into a space that's not initially their home. It's very different... they're much more hands on, and it's much more interactive."

Recruiting for something like this wasn't easy; Rachel and the team in Vancouver spent over four months searching and screening to find someone who was not just a skilled provider, but also a good fit.

The benefits, however, are clear; "the individual can stay in an environment that they're familiar with, but with an extra layer of support for both them and the parents...It's such a cool option for people, to live relatively independently and still see your family as much as you regularly would."



## Therapeutic Expression Through Art

### VCISO'S OPEN ART STUDIO

In October 2022, Connective's Vancouver Community Service Office (VCISO) was thrilled to form a new partnership with Adler University, to run an Open Art Studio. In sessions running every Thursday between 1:00 and 4:00 PM, three Master of Counselling Psychology: Art Therapy candidates used art and therapeutic practices to work with service users in a group setting.

Rebekah, from Adler University, explained that "the goal was whatever people were most comfortable with. We would bring directives every week, just to have something for people to work on. There were some people that really liked that – they liked coming in and being told, 'We're going to work on this as a group.' And then there were other people that just liked to be there for the community."

The group used art as both medium and tool for expressing and processing experiences that might otherwise be hard to deal with. "Art therapy is cool because it's a lot less daunting than traditional talk therapy; because it's visual, and not as cognitive, it's more palatable for a lot of people," says Rebekah. For service users who might be hesitant to seek counselling through traditional means, it can be incredibly powerful.

Instructors sat within the context of the larger group, but could focus on one person at a time, using their training in counselling techniques to support individual needs. For some, it was helpful to "create art that reflected what they're feeling – to explore what it means to them and how they could move forward. And then for others, having a space where they could come and be around people they were comfortable with, that in itself was therapeutic. It was such a beautiful connection that the group had."

Since starting, an average of five service users per week have attended the studio, coming together to create both art and community. "I just know they are getting quite a lot out of this," says Keaton, our Program Coordinator. "We have a regular group of people that come, and feel they belong there – this is their group."



"What options are out there? We're exploring that question a lot of the time; just looking at different ways to help individuals overcome barriers, in ways that are accessible and beneficial."

- Keaton, Program Coordinator

## Expanding Our Therapeutic Community



### NANAIMO'S VITC PROGRAM

The Vancouver Island Therapeutic Community (VITC) program works with up to 20 adult males, supporting them through a two-phased, community-focused, active recovery process. This past year, the program made a few welcome changes.

#### Room Renovations

As part of VITC's weekly community event, staff and residents came together to complete small repairs – spackling damaged walls and repainting bedrooms. Teams of three were assembled and the program's 10 rooms were divided up. At the end of a busy two days, the house was a little brighter, and the residents' sense of ownership in the program a little stronger.

#### Facility Expansion

VITC was also lucky enough to acquire a new property this year – an old care facility with 16 beds on the bottom floor and two semi-attached apartments.

It became available through a VITC alumni, and as soon as staff saw it, "We were like, 'Oh my gosh. We don't want to lose this building.' Very quickly, we came up with a plan of how to use it to help individuals."

The apartments now house program alumni who had been looking to transition to independent living and its proximity makes it easy for staff to continue supporting them with their recovery, employment, and educational goals. Through partnerships with other programs, the remaining 16 beds house seniors at risk of homelessness.

|| "The house was a little brighter, and the residents' sense of ownership in the program a little stronger."

#### Addictions Counsellor

Finally, the team at VITC was pleased to merge the interests of staff and the needs of residents, by transitioning the Program Coordinator into an Addictions Counsellor role.

As waitlists for community counsellors continue to grow, this has allowed access to one-on-one counselling on site, especially beneficial for residents who have trauma or who don't yet feel comfortable sharing in the program's group setting.

"One of the things that our residents say is that it's hard for them to start sharing their story with one person, and then have to go with someone else." Having an existing relationship with the counsellor means they "don't feel like they're constantly having to start their story from the beginning."

## Providing Flexible Employment Opportunities

### KAMLOOPS' PEER PROGRAM

Connective Kamloops' PEER program provides flexible employment opportunities to those living with substance use or mental health challenges. Participants are hired to do a wide range of work within the community – everything from painting and volunteering at thrift stores, to cooking for community programs, landscaping, or most recently, doing graffiti removal.

The goal is to cater to the needs of individuals who can't work full-time or commit to consistent hours. By meeting people where they're at and remaining flexible, PEER participants can go at their own pace and use the program as a steppingstone to build the skills and routines needed to secure part-time or full-time work down the line.



### ANDREW'S STORY\*

Andrew's story demonstrates just how quickly things can change. Before becoming involved with Connective, Andrew was happily self-employed, running a landscaping business alongside his wife, Shauna.

When Shauna passed away suddenly, Andrew was grief-stricken. While attempting to navigate this devastating loss, he struggled to manage the complex details and arrangements that come with losing a loved one, while also keeping his own affairs in order.

Andrew wasn't working steadily, became late with monthly rent payments, and eventually, was forced to leave his home. All the stressors that come with eviction and moving piled on, adding to an already challenging situation.

Without a permanent place to go, Andrew lived on the streets for nine months – through multiple seasons and all manner of inclement weather. On the day that he met Kamloops' Employment Coordinator, Heather, in the lobby of a hotel, Andrew was suffering from frostbite.

From Heather, Andrew learned about a widower's program available in the community. This allowed him to process some of what he had been experiencing and helped him get back on his feet. When he joined the PEER program and started working, it gave him just the boost he needed.

"I went from losing everything to getting back on my feet again." These days, he speaks very highly of the PEER program, "It turns lives around...Now, daily life is quiet, I like it. Go to work, come home, eat dinner, TV, bed, and repeat."

\*Names and personal details have been changed to protect the privacy of our service users.



## Contributing to Thought Leadership



### CONNECTIVE'S LEADERSHIP GATHERING

Creating space for collaboration, thought leadership, and systems change is just one component of Connective's ambitious strategic plan, and just one of the many ways we are leveraging our expertise to anticipate and respond to evolving community needs. It's also part of why we were so excited to host the inaugural Leadership Gathering.

#### Setting the Context

As a long-standing nonprofit service provider, we've seen firsthand the range of innovative, important, and inspiring work being done in our communities. But we've also witnessed plenty of untapped opportunity – to evolve service delivery models, to better coordinate efforts across sectors, and ultimately, to improve the experience of those facing complex challenges.

In attempting to tap into this opportunity, the Leadership Gathering was born. The event would bring decision-makers, thought leaders and service providers across the health, justice, social and nonprofit sectors together on equal footing for candid, constructive dialogue on how best to serve BC's most vulnerable.

#### Convening the Gathering

Though the Leadership Gathering took place over two days, the journey that led us there was closer to two years. Originally scheduled for May 2020 but delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the inability to hold an in-person event instead gave space for a series of eight virtual panel presentations. These digital discussions kept momentum high throughout lockdowns, provided an opportunity to explore related topics, and helped set the stage and revised agenda for our rescheduled in-person event.

Finally, in late October 2022, 85+ thought leaders and voices with lived experience came together for a day of critical dialogue. After two long years of lockdown and online collaboration, there was palpable energy in the room as we dug into these important issues in person. Participants were asked to break down silos, reach across sector lines, and inspire discussion and action around our guiding question:

**How do we improve service delivery to those facing complex challenges?**

#### Moving Forward

Exiting the event, participants felt inspired by the discussions we had, the thoughts that were shared, and the perspectives exchanged.

We also knew, however, that the discussion around complex service delivery was much larger than just those we were lucky enough to convene in the room that day. Ultimately, the promise of the Gathering, and our ability to make good on its aims, would require a broadening of the conversation.

It's with this in mind that we published our Leadership Gathering Report – an accessible summary of the event's proceedings and discussions, and necessary context.

#### [READ THE REPORT](#)



Pictured left to right: Grace Dembaremba, Beth Stupple, Juanita Tait

#### Restorative Justice Symposium

In November 2022, our Restorative Justice team took part in the National Restorative Justice Symposium. Their skills workshop and group collaboration – **Promoting Social Change through Restorative Practices** – was an experiment in using arts-based processes and talking circles to explore themes and practice the facilitation of social change within the ways we work together.

Through this emergent group process, participants brainstormed on how to begin the deconstruction and decolonization of systems of power.

For Beth, Restorative Justice Program Manager, and her team taking part in opportunities like this is crucial.

"It's a field that is continuously growing and shifting its focus. We need to have these ongoing conversations because restorative justice is not one-size-fits-all, and that can be very difficult.

Basically, we need each other. We need each other to think through things. We need to hear about other people's experiences. We need to be present inside of the growing field to keep our practices up to date."

## Celebrating & Supporting Our Staff Teams

### Highlights from the Last Year

**240** New employees added to our BC/Yukon team

**61** Employees in BC/Yukon received a promotion

**\$309K** Invested in merit increases for exempt staff

**427** High Fives given through our employee recognition program

Connective staff lead the way in creating safe, healthy, and inclusive communities for all. They give life to our programs, provide direct support to our service users and communities, and challenge one another to continually grow.

While navigating a challenging economic environment, mitigating the impacts of the ongoing opioid crisis, and providing outstanding continuity of care to our service users this past year, our teams also assumed operation of the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, welcomed our friends in Nanaimo to Connective, strengthened our internal capacity to continue moving forward, and so much more.

The efforts of our staff are fundamental to the impact we have on our service users. It's why it is so important to us that they feel seen, heard, and above all, be given the resources, support, and opportunities to thrive.



### NON-PROFIT EMPLOYER OF CHOICE AWARD

Connective was one of 16 organizations across the country to receive the Nonprofit Employer of Choice (NEOC) award in 2022. The award "recognizes nonprofits whose exemplary talent management practices support successful mission delivery in the communities they serve," and is a welcome acknowledgement of the emphasis we continue to place on supporting our staff teams.

### ENHANCING CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Our goal is to provide a harmonious work environment for all, but we also acknowledge that disputes can arise between staff. New to Connective's complaint process is the addition of a third-party confidential complaints line – ConfidenceLine. This tool – available 24/7, 365 – ensures all staff have a place to go if they are facing any concerns.

### FACILITATING INTERNAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

To standardize training across staff teams and programs, and to offer our staff additional opportunities for personal and professional development, we launched the Connective Learning Hub. Getting this internal learning management system up and running touched on individuals from across the organization – a true demonstration of our collaborative spirit.

### OFFERING PERKS AND REWARDS

At the start of this year, Connective began partnering with Canada's leading provider of perk programs – Perkopolis. This partnership brings employee-preferred pricing (on major brands, hotels, and car rentals); exclusive discount, reward, and benefits programs; enhanced insurance benefits, and other value-added perks, to all Connective staff.

### EXTENDING LIFESTYLE SPENDING ACCOUNTS

In January 2022, we started offering permanent and unionized staff a \$300 Lifestyle Spending Account (LSA). Designed to support the work-life balance of our teams, these accounts covered fitness and health related services, wellness products, childcare, and more. This year, we were proud to extend LSA's to our casual staff, in recognition of their essential role in making our supports available to those who need them the most.

### NEW COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

After extensive collective bargaining – made uniquely challenging by COVID-19 and the unprecedented rise of inflation – the Union successfully negotiated for increases to the wages of our frontline staff. Backdated to April 2022, these increases will see wages rise by 17% over three years. We are thrilled to see this outcome for our hard-working staff teams.





## Advancing Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

At Connective, we believe that the diverse characteristics of individuals enrich our communities, and we strive to create spaces where those differences are welcomed, valued, and celebrated. We recognize this process is ongoing, and we are committed to continuously improving.

This past year, we were excited to continue integrating a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) lens into all that we do, facilitated in no small part by the hiring of our DEI Specialist, Tanya.

In this new role, Tanya works with all of Connective's departments, teams, and regions, to help integrate a DEI perspective into our existing goals and initiatives. Using our newly launched internal communications platform, Workvivo, Tanya has encouraged discussion and understanding of Connective's diverse workplace through cultural awareness, shared stories, and open-minded learning, and in doing so, has helped foster an inclusive space that welcomes everyone's true authentic self.

"Diversity, equity, and inclusion are important to me because we all have stories of our own, or from our parents, grandparents, etc. I believe it's important to value and respect the lived experiences we have through our stories and perspectives, and how together we can build up our teams, our organizations, and our societies."

- Tanya, DEI Specialist

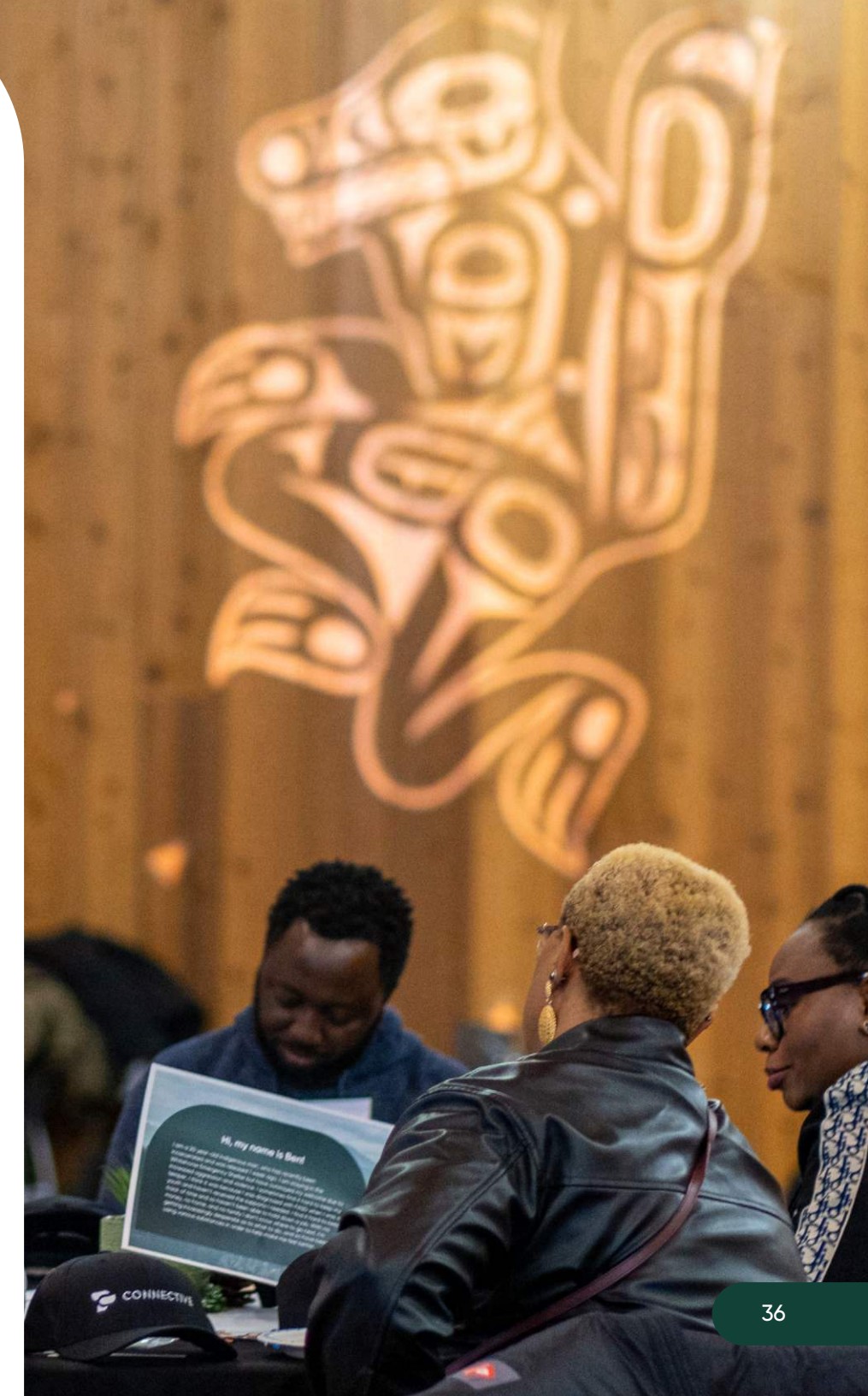
## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS PAST YEAR

### Org-Wide Updates

- Expanded our DEI Committee to 16 representatives from all departments and service regions, better reflecting the lived experiences and perspectives of Connective staff.
- Conducted a review of job descriptions, interview questions, and org policies, updating for accessibility, gender and culturally inclusive language, and alignment with DEI principles.
- Increased the accessibility of our casual staff positions by introducing online applications and removing the barrier of mandatory resume submission.
- Expanded the options for email signature pronouns to reflect a greater diversity of employee identities, including She/They, He/They, They/She, and They/He.

### Program Updates

- **Home Share:** to offer more inclusive support to deaf service users, our Program Coordinator enrolled in Americal Sign Language (ASL) classes.
- **Guy Richmond Place:** an outdoor drumming circle was hosted to celebrate one resident's birthday, and to support them to connect with their heritage and its cultural practices. The drumming was so powerful that neighboring community members came out to enjoy it.
- **Vancouver Community Service Office:** our commitment to diverse volunteer and practicum student teams, has meant could serve drop-in service users in 16 different languages: Bisaya, English, Farsi, French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean Mandarin, Nepali, Portuguese, Punjabi, Spanish, and Tagalog.
- **Miyáq 'elhá:wetawt:** to broaden our cultural understanding and experience, many staff attended sweats and teachings with Elder Mary, and took part in external cultural competency training.



## Advancing Truth & Reconciliation

### CONNECTIVE'S INDIGENOUS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

As part of Connective's commitment to truth & reconciliation with Indigenous people in Canada, we recognize that it is our duty – as individuals, as an organization, and as a community – to engage with our true history through a process of ongoing learning and unlearning, and to take an active role in decolonization.

The road to reconciliation is a long one, with many steps along the way – it's with this in mind that we were so pleased to form our Indigenous Advisory Committee this past year.

Complementing our Board of Director's own knowledge and experience, the committee brings unique perspectives on the history and impacts of colonization, in addition to being experts and leaders in their field.

Together, they will provide critical and historical input to guide and support our Board as they plan activities or develop policies and procedures that impact Indigenous service users and communities.

The volunteer committee is currently comprised of eight members, reflecting the diversity of communities that Connective serves across British Columbia & Yukon. Acknowledging that our volunteers lead full and busy lives, our recruitment process remains ongoing, to decrease the overall workload and allow members the space to dictate their involvement based on capacity.

Even with this committee established, we know we have much more to do as an organization, and are looking forward to the committee's leadership as we continue our journey.



"This has been an exciting year of Connective's response to advancing the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations throughout the entire organization. The creation/implementation of the Indigenous Advisory Committee has brought together a diverse view of Indigenous perspectives that are shared in Connective's delivery of programs and services, developing and revising policies, as well as advancing relationships and partnerships with other organizations in order to help Connective better meet the needs of those whom we serve."

- Mavis Boucher, Connective Board Member

## Remembering our Dear Friends & Colleagues

### THE PASSING OF PAM FLEGEL AND PATRICIA HUGHES

For all the positive, exciting, and inspiring updates captured within this report, the past year has not been without incredible challenge and heartache. In July, and then August, we suffered the sudden and shocking loss of our dear friends and colleagues, Pam Flegel and Patricia Hughes. Almost a year on, it still feels incomprehensible.

#### Pam Flegel

Pam had been a cornerstone of our Connective community for over 14 years, a journey she began back in 2008, as a Residence Worker. We were lucky enough to witness her flourish in life and career as she moved through different roles, regions, and focus areas, serving most recently as the Director of Connective's Vancouver region.

Through the years, she contributed to the development of our organization in more ways than words could ever possibly convey. So much of what, and who, Connective is today can be tied back to Pam's influence, determination, and dedication. She was a brilliant, compassionate example of what it means to truly embody Connective's values, and encouraged us all to reach further.



#### Patricia Hughes

Staff lucky enough to work alongside Patricia over the years will know just how bright a light she was. In her six years and 5000+ hours with Connective, Patricia impacted countless service users and staff across multiple program locations. She had a unique gift for fostering meaningful connections and practiced it frequently.

Throughout her journey with us, Patricia brought her infectious, enthusiastic, and passionate personality to bear across five different programs, leaving imprints both big and small, and exemplifying Connective's values in everything she did. Patricia also lived those values in her daily life, where she opened her home to support two CLBC eligible individuals.

Experiencing grief can take a heavy toll, and the compounding impact of these losses stretched even the best of our coping skills. Ultimately, what kept us going was one another.

## Looking Forward

As our Connective community has continued to grow these last few years, we have been honoured to serve more people, through increasingly varied programs and service offerings, in more regions across BC and Yukon, than ever before.

We're proud to play a leading role in responding to underserved and evolving community needs, and our ambitious strategic plan ensures that we will remain at the forefront of innovative social service delivery. Moving forward, we will continue leveraging our resources and expertise; creating space for collaboration and thought leadership; and advocating on behalf of our service users to create positive social change, for all.

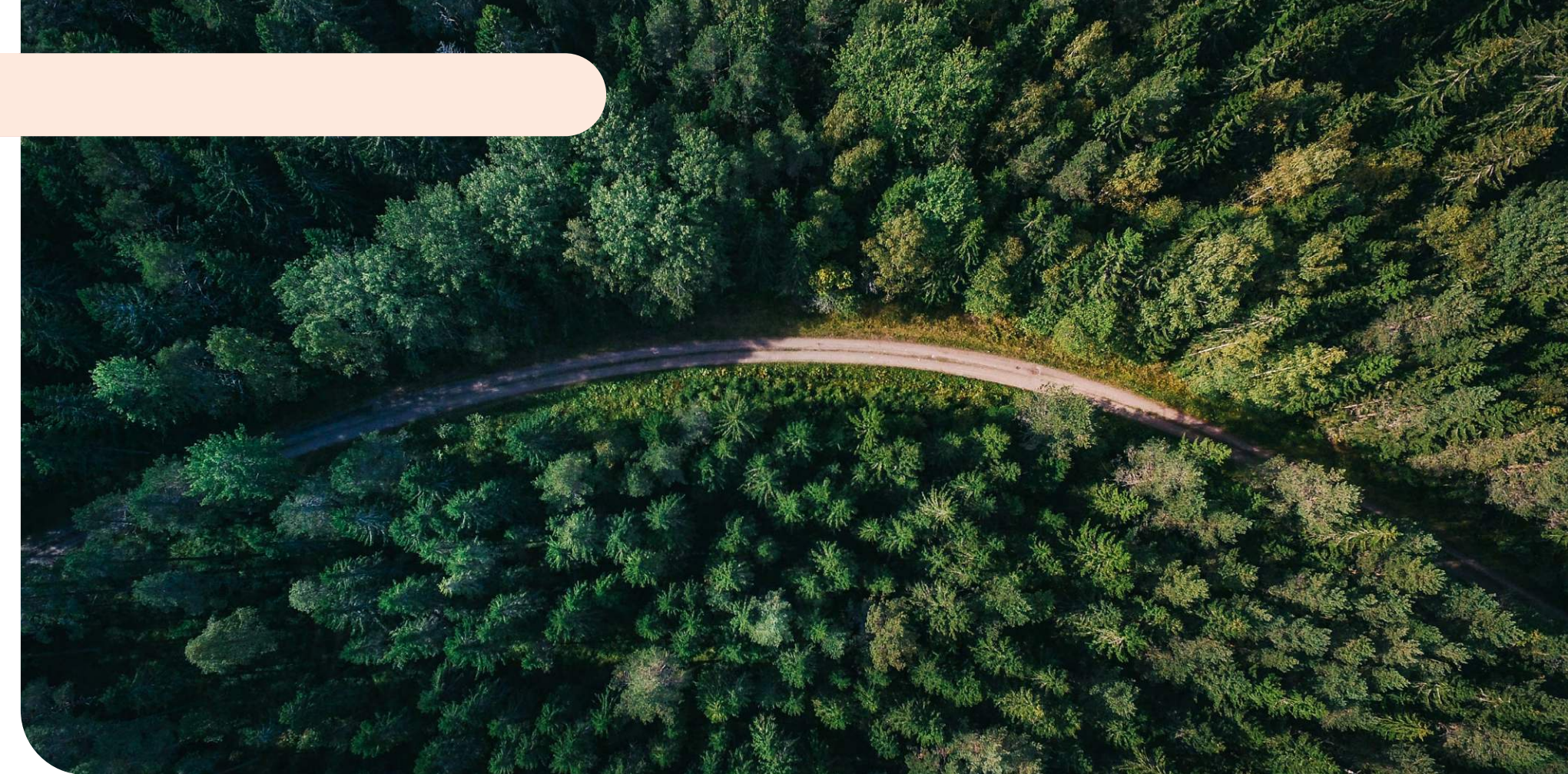
### In 2023-24, our teams are excited to:

- Continue researching and begin offering leading-edge service models to communities struggling with complex challenges, including an Alternate Level of Care model and responses to increasing climate emergencies
- Develop and implement organization-wide program monitoring & evaluation processes, to contribute to data-informed decision making
- Complete renovations at Hawthorn – to add capacity for a 7th resident – and at Elmbrook – to reconfigure the lobby and create an Overdose Prevention Site (OPS) room
- Implement a Managed Alcohol Program, in collaboration with the Government of Yukon's Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, for residents and service users at 405 Alexander
- Build a respite program to support our Home Share providers, and secure an emergency Home Share for short term placement of residents

- Develop a partnership with University of the Fraser Valley to provide wellness and hygiene clinics at the Abbotsford Community Service Office
- Implement Salesforce's case management module and further streamline our information systems, bringing contract, financial, and case management data into one unified platform
- Launch a Peer Stewardship program in Mount Pleasant in partnership with the City of Vancouver


The achievements and updates shared throughout this report, just a small fraction of the many we had the pleasure of being part of this past year, would not be possible without the collective efforts of our service users, staff teams, Board of Directors, Home Share providers, volunteers, community partners, and funders. Thanks to each and every one of you for the role you've played in working toward our vision of a safe, healthy, and inclusive community for all.


We know that on this journey, there is much work left to be done. But we also know that we are more than ready. We cannot wait to see what this next year brings!






## Connect with us

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