

***The Overdose Crisis
Reflections through
stories***

***Collaborating Across
Cultures***

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South Riverdale
COMMUNITY
HEALTH CENTRE

Presentations....stories

- ***Land acknowledgement***
- ***Frank Crichlow***
- ***Matt Johnson***
- ***Zoe Dodd***
- ***Nick Boyce***
- ***Jason Altenberg***
- ***Lynne Raskin***
- ***Q and A***

The story of one organization.....

- *Telling people what to do never works but sharing experiences can elicit curiosity*
- *Working from a place of Equity, Justice and Human Rights is fundamental*
- *People with lived experience are the experts*

- *Here is our story*



The story of Raffi ...



What Raffi taught us...

1. Make visible the universal humanity of people who use drugs(PWUD)

- **Dad, friend, colleague - more than a person who uses drugs**
- **Gentle, patient man, good listener, visionary, educator**
- **Bore the responsibility of his role with PWLE + invited US in**

2. Systemic and structural marginalization:

- **can prevent full participation in traditional places OR**
- **perfect to seed, nurture, lead and develop meaningful programs**

3. Develop pathways to change through relentless incrementalism

- **Build a system, do not impose one, it needs to take root**

4. Be open to speaking to those who disagree

- **Leadership matters– can either invite in or block initiatives**



Intention and Process

- **Create a culture incrementally and with intention**
- **Design programs with people who are impacted by it**
- **Articulate principles**
- **Offer support**
- **Remain open to learning**
- **Ask more tell less**
- **Be authentic in the dialogue**
- **Recognize potential and contributions of each person**
- **Build and learn to inform the culture of the organization**
- **Balance, model and nurture**
 - **Humility and courage**
 - **Respect and compassion**
 - **Opportunity and responsibility**
 - **Take risks**



Readiness to step into this space

Some did and some didn't....

Why did we?

1. Community Health Centre

- **Advocates, change agents, interdisciplinary approach, partnerships, Social Determinants of Health**
- **Structure and values to challenge the status quo**
- **Embedded in community**
- **Barriers to accessing good health and healthcare**

2. History of Counterfit

- **Created space for drug users, designed, developed and delivered**
- **HR -formalization and professionalization of drug user strategies**
- **Drug Users meaningfully involved as program leaders, developers and evaluators**
- **Others moved to recognize and support the potential**
 - **Researchers, funders, workers**

**Ready to take the risks, step back and let PWUD
lead the work, and support them to do it.**



Connect to HIV/AIDS movement

- *History of acting without support*
- *Relentless incrementalism to make change initially under the radar*

....Taking risks intentionally.....

Risk taking and Activism Reminiscent of HIV/AIDS

Safer crack use

- *MD taking supplies to Ottawa*

Develop resources that matter to people who use drugs

- *needle size (only a drug user would care- study – results that quality matters not about size*

Naloxone distribution and acquisition

Examples of not risk averse but conscious we needed to take the risk where structural barriers were both unethical and contrary to our values of saving lives



Opportunities

- ***What evidence do you act on....***
- ***Whose truths matter and guide your practise***
- ***How do you use privilege and resources to make changes that feel ‘risky’***
- ***How do we define risk – of acting or not acting***
- ***Not easy***
 - ***How to move beyond comfort level and give up control –***
 - ***Face inconvenient truths***

What about Leadership

- *Messy, iterative and not straightforward*
- *You bring yourself + your personal values to each situation*
- *You try to see 360 degrees knowing you cannot*
- *Build connection + learning*
- *Instil and model a reflective team and org environment*
- *Nurture and support the leader in everyone*
- *Find the right questions to look for the answers*
- *Work towards balance and learn when to 'tip the scales'*
- *Lead by example*
- *Build it, don't impose it*
- *Hire complementary skills*
- *Be humble, honest and listen*
- *Work from a place of Equity, Justice and Human Rights*
- *People with lived experience are the experts*



Summary

- ***Know what you know***
- ***Learn what you must***
- ***Reflect as you go***
- ***Bring courage, intelligence, humility, creativity and justice to your role***

THE WAR ON DRUGS



IS A WAR ON US

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