

ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022



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Who we are

Moms Stop the Harm (MSTH) is a network of Canadian families impacted by substance-use related harms and deaths. We advocate to change failed drug policies and provide peer support to grieving families and those with loved ones who use or have used substances.

The organization is governed by a National Board of Directors representing membership from regions across Canada.

MSTH membership is a network of families and allies of all ages and from all walks of life who are making a real and valuable difference in the fight to end substance use related harms and deaths in Canada.

We welcome new members to our network! Consider getting involved as a member and support our advocacy efforts for those who struggle with substance use disorder.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2021 - 2022

National Board of Directors

Leslie McBain, Board Chair
 Petra Schulz, Vice Chair
 Annie Storey, Treasurer
 Deb Bailey, Secretary
 Charlene Vacon, Secretary

Directors at Large

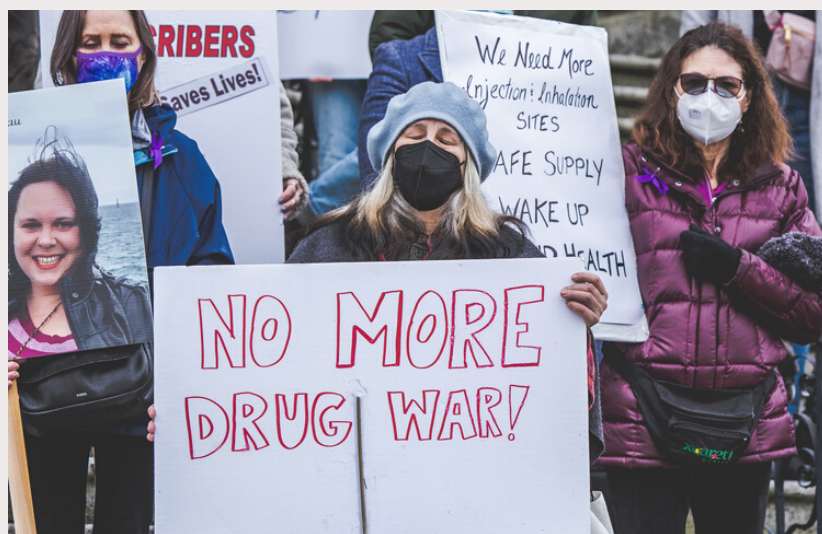
Angela Welz, Alberta
 Marie Agioritis, Saskatchewan
 Willamena McCorriston, Saskatchewan
 Arlene Kolbe, Manitoba
 Christine Wingate, Ontario
 Missy McLean, Ontario
 Isabelle Fortier, Quebec
 Emily Bodechon, New Brunswick

Program Manager

Jennifer Howard



Our Mission & Values



We advocate to end substance use related stigma, harms and death.

The values represent the core beliefs of Moms Stop The Harm. The values serve to inspire and guide us in the work that we do. They represent what Moms Stop the Harm stands for, and they inform future generations of leadership.

1. We commit to fostering a caring community for all. We seek to ensure that all people are treated justly and with compassion. We demonstrate dignity, caring and equality for all.
2. We share our passion and commitment to energize, engage, and inspire members and advocates to share their stories and have their voices heard.
3. We value integrity because it keeps us safe with one another, and within the world. Integrity includes the qualities of honesty, courage, and mutual respect.
4. We value our connections with one another. We aim to give a sense of belonging to all those we support.
5. We believe in inclusion for all, and advocate for the creation of a diverse, and accepting community that is free of prejudice, one that receives others with empathy and understanding.
6. We aim to continually learn and educate. In all that we do, we lead the way to a narrative for change, guided by lived experience and evidence-based knowledge.
7. With courage and respect, we uphold the human rights of persons marginalized and discriminated against because of substance use.
8. We value our partnerships and teamwork with other individuals and organizations, recognizing the united family voice for change as an integral part of a greater movement.



A Word from MSTH Board Chair

As I read last year's message that I wrote for the Annual Report from the Chair, I realized that I could copy and paste some of my words...

Except things have changed; for the most part they have actually become worse! We are fighting the same battles - an epidemic of death from toxic drugs that has grown to epic proportions within the milieu of the COVID pandemic. Governments are still not acting on the devastation of losing a generation of people from toxic drugs. We, as Moms Stop the Harm, must work to stop the deaths. This is the primary goal now. All the recovery beds, all the mental health treatments, even decriminalization, and all the good intentions will not stop the deaths today. We will continue to fight for a safer supply for people who use drugs.

Our membership has grown to over 3000 people. We are glad that every single one of you has found us but we are also sad for the reasons. So many of you have lost loved ones, children, siblings, partners, and friends. Some of you struggle with drug use, many of you are front line workers. Many of you are giving it your all to support loved ones in addiction or problematic drug use.



On the good news side of things, we have grown our support networks across Canada with the help of grants from the Federal government as well as the B.C government. Healing Hearts for those who have lost someone, and Holding Hope for those who have a loved one struggling with substance use. These support groups are offered at no cost and have been a welcoming place to find compassion and understanding. Please get in touch. You are not alone! Advocacy is our main activity to educate and motivate the public. We must turn the tide of stigma with our stories and our facts on the crisis of toxic drug deaths. If you would like to advocate in your region, we welcome you! Please let us know by emailing:
info@momsstoptheharm.com

Leslie McBain, Retired Board Chair



Why We Are Here

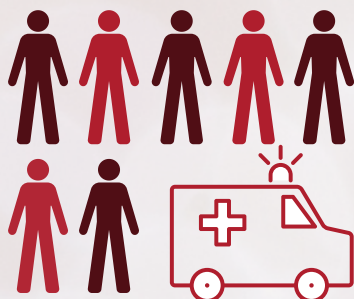
In 2016 three Moms, Leslie McBain, Lorna Thomas and Petra Schulz came together after the tragic loss of their sons. With a commitment to change drug policies and advocate for effective health supports for those who struggle, they started an organization called Moms Stop The Harm. MSTH is a member-driven organization comprised of Mothers, Fathers, Siblings, extended families, allies and people who use drugs. We stand together united in changing drug policy and represent the voice of people who use drugs.



26,690

Opioid Toxicity Deaths

In Canada, between Jan 2016 and Sep 2021



More than

30,600

EMS Responses

to suspected opioid-related overdoses
between Jan 2021 and Sept 2021



29,228

Hospitalizations

opioid-related hospitalizations between
Jan 2016 and Sept 2021

**"SOMEBODY HAS TO STAND WHEN OTHER PEOPLE ARE SITTING.
SOMEBODY HAS TO SPEAK WHEN EVERYONE ELSE IS QUIET."**

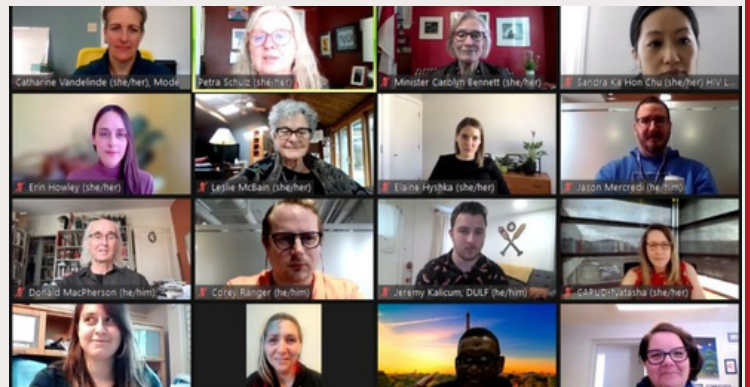
Bryan Stevenson

MORE HIGHLIGHTS



Campaigns & Actions

- Support the Bill to Decriminalize People Who Use Drugs
- Call For Urgent Action On The Drug Poisoning Crisis In Edmonton!
- Rally for Change, Victoria BC
- Say Yes to SCS! Actions in Calgary and Edmonton, AB
- MSTH calls on federal party leaders for positions on overdose crisis (City Council Petition)
- Tell Jason Kenney how you feel about his decision to cut #HarmReduction while four Albertans die from #DrugPoisoning every day!



Educational Webinars

1. Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth, BC Bill 22: The risks of involuntary care for youths (June 2021)
2. International Overdose Awareness Day: How to plan an event in your community (July 2021)
3. Drug Users Liberation Front of BC (November 2021)

**"JUSTICE WILL NOT BE SERVED
UNTIL THOSE WHO ARE
UNAFFECTED ARE AS OUTRAGED
AS THOSE WHO ARE."**

Benjamin Franklin

Holding Hope Connects Learning Series

1. The Weight of Air, David Poses (September 2021)
2. The Fundamentals of Safe Supply (November 2021)
3. Human Connection Can Change People's Lives (January 2022)





2021-22 At a Glance



BLACK BALLOON DAY



*In memory of all those
we lost to overdose
Somebody's someone*



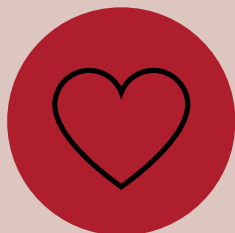
2021-22 At a Glance



2021-2024

Strategic Planning Goals

SUPPORT



Goal: We will support grieving families and those who struggle with substance use so that they understand their options and opportunities, which results in a sense of belonging, hope, resilience and connections.

1. Design a nationwide framework for support programs.
2. Expand support to diverse and rural communities.
3. Ensure access to all evidence-based treatment options and multiple pathways to recovery and wellness as they are defined by the person.
4. Support families and friends of loved ones affected by substance use to help them understand and navigate the existing system, including existing treatment options and individual pathways to wellness.

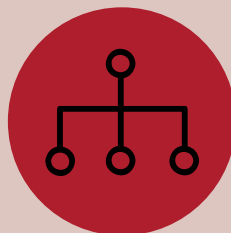
NATIONAL DRUG STRATEGY



Goal: We will use our voices to advocate and influence policy makers so that a revised and equitable, effective, evidence-based national drug strategy is implemented by December, 2022.

1. We will add our voices and voices of people with lived experiences through partnerships and alliances with other like minded organizations, government bodies, community groups and associations.
2. As an organization we will speak with one voice to government on particular issues.
3. Ensure all levels of government work together to ensure access to a safe supply of pharmaceutical grade substances and the decriminalization of people who possess illicit substances for personal use.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



Goal: We will define, develop, and implement regional and national structures so that our staff, volunteers and members understand the organization's governance and operational systems and guidelines, which results in common purposes, connections and focus.

1. Develop on going annual board development training.
2. Develop a "Chapter" model of advocacy groups throughout Canada.
3. Diversify successful funding streams.

ADVOCACY



Goal: We will take the lead in knowledge translation and the reframing of an understanding of substance use so that there is a shift in public opinion, which results in people who have the power in making decisions to reduce stigma and discrimination. Key strategies to make this happen -

- Decriminalization done right & making safe regulated substances available**
1. Increase our media and public presence.
 2. Support MSTH staff and advocates to be actively involved in media relations.
 3. Develop education and awareness building in universities and communities.
 4. Educate the public on current research and evidence-based approaches to substance use.

Directors Reports

PETRA SCHULZ

VICE CHAIR & ACTING BOARD CHAIR

For many of us, the past year was a difficult one, both personally and in our advocacy work. I started the first 6 months in Germany, helping my mom move into a small condo after 60 years in her house and garden. I continued with my advocacy from afar, which worked since we were all on Zoom most of the time, except for the time zone difference and late evenings connecting with MSTH and other allies back home in Canada.

An advocacy activity I enjoy and that I feel has a great impact is giving talks about our work to different audiences. It helps get our message out and I get to speak about my late son, Danny. Highlights in 2021 included presentations to a family physician conference, to public health experts, and to the federal Minister of Health Expert Task Force on Substance Use.

I returned to Canada in July, got a new puppy who brings me much joy (medium Labradoodle Brandy) and have been very busy trying to stop the Alberta government from destroying harm reduction in our province.

We held a successful rally together with many allies and launched our legal action against the government's plan to implement harmful new regulations for consumption services, including the provision of personal health numbers. Fellow Alberta advocate Kym Porter is part of our legal team, as are our co-litigants, the Lethbridge Overdose Prevention Society (LOPS) and our lawyer, Avnish Nanda. So far, we failed to get an injunction but will proceed with our main human rights case.

With all this going on, more people are dying than ever. Our struggle has intensified and we focus on more bold and radical action, including legal action. We know that lives depend on it and we do not want more families grieving.



ANGELA WELZ

DIRECTOR AT LARGE, ALBERTA



2021 continued to be a challenging year for our board as the number of deaths to illicit drug toxicity increased along with the lack of immediate support being available by our provincial and federal governments. This just drove us to be more vocal in our efforts.

In my role, I have worn many hats throughout this past year and helped wherever I was needed: from sitting on committees rolling out the Better Impact database program, along with membership and other policy making and planning committees. I update our website as required and enjoy working on marketing, as well as e-news/newsletters with updates on events and actions.

Because of my experience in social media, I administer and manage many accounts, including MSTH Instagram,

the Facebook public page, and most of our Facebook groups. This year, we streamlined our groups to offer more focused support, including national Healing Hearts and Holding Hope groups; we also created several new provincial advocacy groups. In addition, I oversaw our national International Overdose Awareness Day Billboard event which saw billboards in Victoria, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Regina, Winnipeg, Ottawa, and Montreal.

Healing Hearts Peer Bereavement Support continues to be my passion and my role as a facilitator for the Edmonton group is a priority as we experience an increase in families seeking support in our area. We again organized an International Overdose Awareness Day event held on August 31, 2021, at Victoria Park. It was well attended and raised awareness of the tragic epidemic that is affecting so many families. It was a beautiful evening to pay tribute to our loved ones which ended with a candlelight vigil overlooking the high-level bridge which was lit up in purple.

I feel honoured to stand next to so many MSTH advocates working to bring attention to evidence-based prevention, treatment, and drug policy changes. As I continue to work through my grief journey after losing my daughter Zoe to accidental fentanyl poisoning in 2016, I remain committed to doing what I can to raise awareness so that we may finally see the changes required to end this #drugpoisoning crisis.



MARIE AGIORITIS

DIRECTOR AT LARGE, SASKATCHEWAN



In January, the Saskatchewan's Coroner's office delivered its year to date number of overdose deaths. To date, we have 270 confirmed and 179 suspected deaths for a total of 449.

In 2016, the number of deaths was 109, so this represents an increase of over 300%. With that, I was invited as a keynote speaker at the University of Saskatchewan's School of Medicine's students annual conference.

Other initiatives include a research project with the department of emergency medicine where they are hoping to improve the experience of persons with substance use disorder when visiting a Saskatchewan ER. Another research project that I participated in, they identified the gaps in care and identified barriers for persons with substance use disorder. This is presently winding up its efforts. Anecdotally, we know the current state of affairs; however, without research that proves the status, we will be hard pressed to move the thoughts of the leaders of our province to allow for better funding or their support for much needed change in the direction that support services currently take. Further to the above, I am also working on a national committee that looks at the community standards that exist for Naloxone distribution from the eyes of lived experience. The Regina crew of women of Moms Stop The Harm, including Jenny Churchill and Cheryl Deschene, continue to lend their voices to numerous causes and tirelessly advocate for government oversight into the operations of Raising Hope, which is focused on women's supportive housing.

We have had moms from rural Saskatchewan lend their much needed perspective to this overdose crisis. On another note, we will be looking to work with an organization in Saskatoon that



provides a creative outlet for community youth affected by family trauma and mental health that leads to substance use disorder. The project will serve to create vocal leaders within their communities who understand the issues and with that, find ways to support each other through creativity.

As in every community across this country, we are feeling frustrated. The increase in overdose numbers and overdose deaths is alarming, yet seemingly still not enough to impact the people that currently dictate existing systems of care. Evidence based solutions exist. They have proven track records in other countries - but until our provincial leaders decide to bravely change the narrative that drives the prevalent thinking of the majority of the base, we will continue to see the deaths climb. We will continue to advocate, often tirelessly and with little movement forward. My belief is that we will see the greatest change when today's youth leaders move into roles of influence. That is where our hope lies. For now, we keep the fire burning.



WILLAMENA MCCORRISTON

DIRECTOR AT LARGE, SASKATCHEWAN

As a new director with Moms Stop The Harm, much of my year of board involvement was spent “learning the ropes” and listening to the wisdom and experiences of the other board members as they worked to advocate for people who use drugs and the families of those beloved people. The last year, I watched. We (the scarred, and the scared) watched. The pandemic added to the unnecessary (egregious?) harms that come to people who use drugs. The harms of being unhoused, the harms of being unwilling (unable?) to trust the systems that are so often unhelpful (dangerous?) to people who use drugs. These pieces of the glass of our dark systems that shatter into the very souls of those who can least withstand the blasts of injustice, ineptness, incompetence and the relentless sounds of silence in response to thousands(millions?) of screams of pain. It has been a year of learning I know nothing, but also that I know everything about how much these pieces of the dark glass have hurt me and my family (the depth but not yet the ways, or the ways but not yet the depth). I still know nothing about how to fix this soulless place where people who use potentially poisoned drugs are condemned by those who have the luxury of knowing



“their drug” comes pre-bottled, pre-packaged, guaranteed to be free of elephant tranquilizer, stigma, or criminal record (whichever applies first, last, or carries the longest sentence.)

Though my soul has learned that telling the stories of others is not always appropriate, my soul knows that we (I, you, us) are often (at least occasionally) called to witness the tsunami in the fabric of our humanity. In March of 2021,



the horrific, gut wrenching story of Kimberley Squirrel came onto the twisted pages of mainstream media.

Once again, any delusion that the dark systems gave a care to the humans caught in their tentacles was brought to the harsh light where that lie would have to be reassessed like a cigarette that had been thrown away when the pack was half full. Being well acquainted with the truth ends in a heart breaking dance

with the devil, but when you dance with the devil, the devil don't change.

So ends my report from Saskatchewan, written Feb 14, 2022. Love to all of my fellow advocates. Long may we be able to withstand the shards of glass from the darkness, and turn the tides to the light where every human is loved and accepted with grace to be who they came to this planet to be.

ARLENE KOLB

DIRECTOR AT LARGE, MANITOBA

Hello, my name is Arlene Kolb. In 2014, we lost our son Jessie to a fentanyl poisoning. Our son was 24. I have been advocating in Manitoba for many years now and cofounded my own local group, Overdose Awareness Manitoba. I joined Moms Stop The Harm soon after the loss of our son and have combined our local group with many events in Winnipeg to support Harm Reduction and to advocate for change. At the beginning of this new year, I became a board member with Moms Stop The Harm.

We have done many events to highlight our cause and to bring attention to it. I have met with our local political leaders.



I have attended many meetings over the years with government. I have met with our mayor on many occasions and we were honored to receive our request for a Memory Garden in our downtown area to honor those gone too soon.



Moms Stop The Harm supported the first ever Safe Consumption Site last summer in Winnipeg by helping out and being there. This has led to a city councilor putting forward the motion for our city to have Safe Consumption Sites in Manitoba. Hopefully that happens in 2022. Our local police chief has come out and said he supports Decriminalization and Safe Supply and was a part of our white cross picture we did in Winnipeg with The Human Rights Museum in the background. We also had our fire and paramedic chief come out and show

their support at our white cross picture. We have a local paramedic who educates on Harm Reduction in Manitoba and goes out to our schools and educates about the drugs in our communities.

Manitoba has a strong Harm Reduction committee and I attend their monthly meetings. This year will be our second annual Harm Reduction Fair at our Memory Garden. We have local groups, naloxone training, free haircuts and drummers. This event does very well. We held it the day before International Overdose Awareness Day which is August 31st. Then on the 31st, we did pictures of loved ones on the steps of our legislature. That evening, we finished with a candlelight vigil at our garden.

"WHEN YOU BELIEVE THAT IF SOME THINGS WERE CHANGED, THEN LIVES WOULD BE SAVED, YOU SPEAK UP. WHEN IT IS YOUR CHILD THAT YOU SPEAK FOR, YOU ROAR FOR THAT CHANGE."

Arlene Kolb

I have met with one of our Grand Chiefs, Arlen Dumas, to connect with our First Nations People. They have given us their support and I hope to work with them in the future. March 6th is Black Balloon Day. As I write this, it is just getting started and the pictures of loved ones are coming in and will be posted on Facebook. We have a billboard running for three weeks with pictures of our loved ones and our Black Balloon event.

We are in the process of getting our Healing Hearts and our Holding Hope

established and set up in Manitoba. Moms Stop The Harm is planning a National Action that I am involved with. We will be focusing on our Prime Minister for this bereaved Mother's day, so please keep posted. In Manitoba, we have a Conservative government who we have struggled with

to be heard and to get proper resources for substance use. Our numbers doubled in 2021 with now an average of two loved ones dying every day in Manitoba from overdoses or drug related deaths. When our son passed away in 2014, the following year, we lost 136. We know right now that for the first 9 months of 2021, it was over 350. I think that the number of loved ones gone shows clearly that our government does



not care enough to do more. It has not hit home. Or they lack the political will to stand up and do the right thing. We will continue to advocate for our loved ones and for your loved ones until we are heard and listened to.

When you believe that if some things were changed, then lives would be saved, you speak up. When it is your child that you speak for, you roar for that change.

CHRISTINE WINGATE

DIRECTOR AT LARGE, ONTARIO



This has been a challenging year for many communities throughout Ontario. The ongoing deaths in our communities demonstrate that the current responses

Change is coming. And I am proud to be a part of a group that roars. If we want to save lives, then we need Safe Supply.

Thank you.

Advocate Like A Mother

to the overdose crisis, which is really a toxic drug poisoning, are insufficient as they fail to address inequities among people who use drugs. Many are impacted by poverty, racism, trauma, criminalization, incarceration and a lack of safe supply.

In light of this, I joined the National Safer Supply Community of Practice group and attend weekly meetings and webinars. This group is comprised of community practitioners, advocates and people who use drugs (PWUD) who share information about safer supply and how it fits along the continuum of care for people who use drugs.

I also continued to manage and post relevant national and provincial information in the Moms Stop The Harm Ontario (MSTH) Advocacy Facebook group. The purpose of this group is to better facilitate conversations in all regions, and with our collective voices, effect positive change to address the ongoing failed drug policies.



Ontario advocates continue to work diligently on various projects and initiatives at the community, provincial and federal level. Some of these include: federal efforts via petitions, municipal resolutions, presenting before councils, publishing a book that looks at the intergenerational impact of mental illness and addiction, writing in a family medicine journal, giving lectures to university students, working with businesses to source naloxone kits, sitting on various family and drug strategy and advisory committees, leading clothes drives for people in need, and reaching out to families impacted by loss and substance use. Many advocates also organized successful IOAD 2021 events in their respective cities and towns.

I am one of many who is mourning the loss of a loved one. Families in Ontario are deeply affected by the ongoing toxic drug poisoning and many continue to share their stories and advocate tirelessly to address the ongoing failed drug policies.

Highlights from this year:

- Met virtually with the Ontario Associate Minister for Mental Health and Addictions in July 2021 and talked about safe supply, decriminalization and the scaling up of harm reduction services and programs.

- Presented at the Meta Phi annual conference "From Grief to Advocacy; Family journeys demanding safe supply, decriminalization and harm reduction. The presentation highlighted the fact that the drug poisoning crisis is driving bereaved and impacted families to demand drug policy reforms.

- Participated in the Getting To Tomorrow initiative "The Ottawa Dialogue on Decriminalization and Legal Regulation"; a municipal dialogue on a public health and human rights approach to ending the overdose crisis.

- The 2021 International Overdose Awareness Day event in Ottawa was a huge success; For the 1st time, an IOAD flag was flown at half mast at City Hall and the Ottawa sign was lit up in purple. Mayor Jim Watson and Councilwoman McKenney presented me with a signed proclamation. I talked at the event about safe supply, decriminalization and my son Shane's journey.

- Participated in a virtual interview with CBC reporter Celeste Decarie for an online article and video re "Moms Stop the Harm lobbies federal government on opioid crisis ahead of election". I was also on the Ottawa morning CBC radio show, the focus of the interview was "Why a group of mothers want the opioid epidemic to be seen as a national health emergency".



We would also like to thank the following board members for their work in 2021.

Missy McLean continues to work on MSTH advocacy in ON together with Christine Wingate. She also leads a Holding Hope family support group through our Stronger Together Canada program.

Isabelle Fortier is our voice in Quebec and with Franco-Canada. She continues to ensure that vital communications and materials are available in both official languages, she has participated in panel discussions and she administers French private Facebook group. Due to work and family responsibilities Isabelle had to step down from the board at the end of 2021 and she has since joined the Stronger Together Canada team as the French Liaison person.

Emily Bodechon is our most eastern board member, based in New Brunswick and responsible for Atlantic Canada. She has been successful in connecting other advocates in the region in an advocacy group and she too leads a Stronger Together Canada Holding Hope Group.

Our heartfelt thanks to our outgoing board members **Deb, Angela, Andy, Isabelle, Leslie, and Christine**. They all played instrumental roles in guiding our mission with their insights, commitment and tireless advocacy work. Their input has been integral to the growth and development of Moms Stop the Harm.



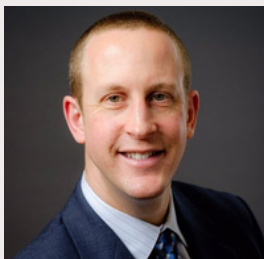
DEB BAILEY
four years



ANGELA WELZ
four years



LESLIE MCBAIN
five years



ANDY WATSON
one year



ISABELLE FORTIER
two years



CHRISTINE WINGATE
two years

MSTH Takes Action

Our Federal Work Continues

MSTH wants federal representatives, especially government MPs, to make the overdose and drug poisoning crisis more a priority!

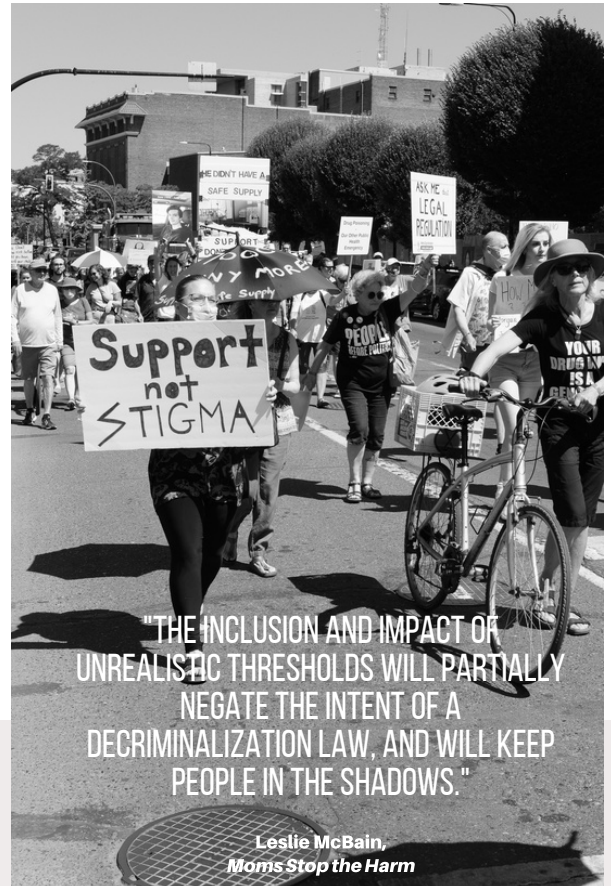
We believe changes at the federal level are key to ending this crisis. The Liberal government has the power to decriminalize drug use and make drugs safer through legal regulation, exemptions or projects. It also has the power of the purse, which it could use to help provinces scale-up prevention, harm reduction, and treatment services. In addition, all MPs have the capacity to speak up and hold the government or their respective parties accountable.

Bill C-216

Since February 2022, MSTH has been campaigning in support of an NDP private member's bill known as C-216. This bill would decriminalize personal drug possession. It also calls for a much-needed plan to end the overdose crisis.

Federal Election

In 2021, we sent an email to party leaders, the health minister and health critics requesting positions on six overdose crisis-related matters. All parties responded. This information, along with party platforms, was used to produce the MSTH report card on the overdose and drug poisoning crisis.



Federal Round Table

With the help of the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition, MSTH organized a round table on safe supply with Minister Bennett and Deputy Minister Stephen Lukas. The expert panel was led by people who use drugs and included organizations involved in national drug policy advocacy. The meeting explored models for non-medicalized safe supply.



Municipal Resolutions

MSTH continued to encourage municipalities to pass its resolution requesting that the federal government declare the overdose crisis to be a national public health emergency and develop a pan-Canadian overdose action plan that gives full consideration to decriminalization and legal regulation of drugs. At press time, 60 communities had passed all or part of our resolution, up from 48 in our previous report.



Social Media

MSTH created hundreds of posts and memes for Facebook, Instagram and Twitter highlighting our work and the inadequacy of federal government efforts.

Federal Petitions

MSTH members also continued to collect signatures on petitions, which call on the federal government to take the same actions outlined in the municipal resolution. At press time, 20 MSTH petitions have been presented in the House of Commons, up from 10 in our last report.

Meetings with Government

MSTH met with the new Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and a number of MPs. We also participated in a safe supply roundtable.



Thank you to MSTH Member, Katherine Steinhoff for her leadership in regards to the Federal and municipal petitions.



International Overdose Awareness Day

International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) is a global event observed on August 31st of each year. It is a time to remember people lost to drug related harms and it is an opportunity to take action to end toxic drug related deaths. It aims to raise awareness and reduce the stigma related to substance use. It also acknowledges the grief felt by families and friends remembering those who have met with death or permanent injury as a result of drug related harms. Moms Stop the Harm has actively participated in IOAD events over the past six years. In 2021, over 15 communities across Canada held International Overdose Awareness Day events hosted by Moms Stop the Harm Advocates. Thank you to all our members who have made an impact in their community in raising public awareness and education on this global day of remembrance.



IL EST TEMPS DE SE SOUVENIR. IL EST TEMPS D'AGIR.

31 AOÛT - JOURNÉE INTERNATIONALE DE SENSIBILISATION À L'OVERDOSE

L'OVERDOSE PEUT AFFECTER N'IMPORTE QUI.

WWW.MOMSSTOPTHEHARM.COM



International Overdose Awareness Day

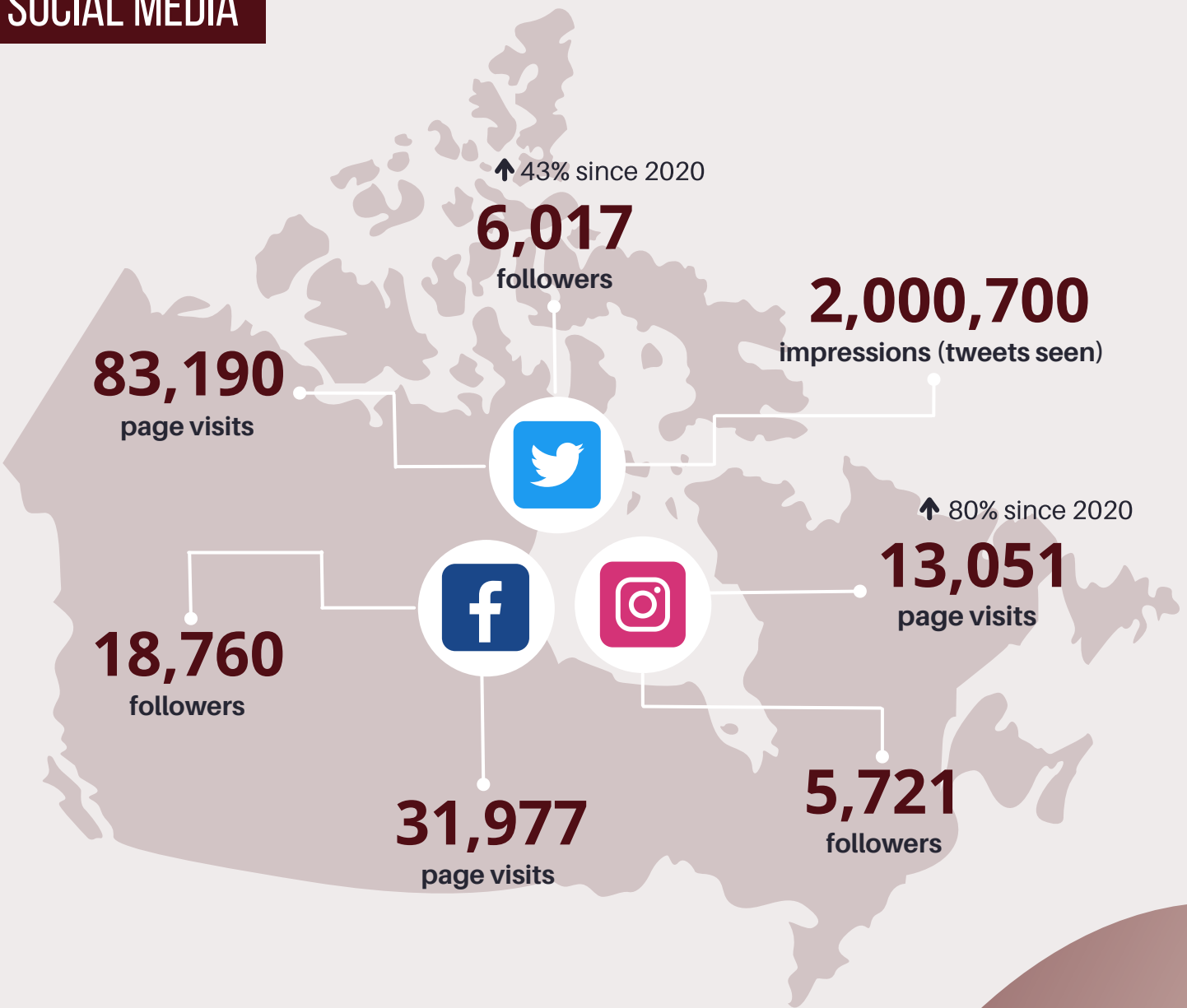


International Overdose Awareness Day

2021 Communications

In addition to the MSTH website and social media platforms, MSTH was in the media more than 52 times last year - including print, online articles, TV, radio and more!

SOCIAL MEDIA



MOMSSTOPTHEHARM.COM



60,403
website visits



more than
111,000
page views

Stronger Together Canada

Stronger Together Canada is entering its second year of a two-year grant from our partner Health Canada, through the Substance Use and Addictions program (SUAP). We have had an amazing first year in attaining connection with a wide variety of communities across Canada for both Healing Hearts and Holding Hope. We are a small but mighty team with our Program Coordinator, Indigenous Liaison, Francophone Liaison and Program Manager, and are so thankful for all our volunteer Facilitators, they definitely add strength to our team.

♥ **Healing Hearts** are peer-led support groups for those who have lost a loved one to substance use harms. We now have groups in: Alberta (6), Saskatchewan (3), Manitoba (2), Ontario (9), Yukon and New Brunswick. We have also started a virtual Hearts group for those coming from communities without a group, have had an average of 30 in attendance. We've also launched First Nation communities' virtual meetings and attendance is growing.

To connect with a group near you or to express your interest in starting a group in your community please go to www.HealingHeartsCanada.org.

♥ **Holding Hope** are peer-led support groups for those who have a loved one struggling with substance use or working on their recovery. We now have groups in: New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario (5), Manitoba (2), Saskatchewan (2), Alberta (4). Have also launched a Virtual group for those where there is no group in their community and have a list of 35 attendees.

To connect with a group near you or to express your interest in starting a group in your community please go to www.HoldingHopeCanada.org.

The goal for our first year was to have 15 of each group type in place, as you can see, we have achieved that goal and are off to a great start to year two. We offer initial and ongoing training and support for all facilitators. We work with each community and group to raise awareness and build capacity to improve community connection and outcomes for individuals and families within Healing Hearts and Holding Hope. We assist in sharing evidence-based resources to navigate systems and access health and treatment services. In addition, we also work with Indigenous communities to learn from one another and enrich their healing journey with cultural practices and community connection. Please check out the above listed websites for more information or email us at:

StrongerTogetherCanada@MomsStopTheHarm.com.



“ My son, Kevin, died July 10, 2017 from drugs at age 50. He had been using substances since he was a teenager and had been to Hell and back. During the last 10 years of his life, he had found recovery, graduated from Camosun and then went on to the University of Victoria. He was 2 credits away from earning his BA.

Throughout his life, everyone looked at Kevin as a bad kid and he lived with that label for most of his life. But along with that he was street smart and I never thought that fentanyl would get him. It was a shock!

About a year after Kevin had passed, I heard about Healing Hearts at a TCF (The Compassionate Friends) meeting. Healing Hearts is a group for parents who had lost their children to drug use, run by Jenny, a very compassionate facilitator who lost her own son to drugs, and I decided to give it a try. They meet in person once a month and it has been a Godsend. Here I don't have to feel ashamed of my son. Here I can open up about what I have gone through. Here I can talk about what some of the things drugs had driven my son to do and here I can talk about my guilt.

Since attending Healing Hearts I have learned a great deal about addiction and I am no longer ashamed of Kevin. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Since learning and understanding what addiction is all about, I am very proud of his accomplishments. I realize the huge effort it must have taken my son to quit the drugs, work part time and get his education.

Luckily, I told Kevin how proud I was of him, but many other parents may not have had that opportunity. Toxic drug death is immediate and traumatic for those left behind. Through telling my own story, listening to others and receiving pamphlets and talks, I have learned so much that I didn't understand before. After almost 5 years, I keep going to the meetings to continue my own healing journey but also to let new people, fresh in their grief, know that there is hope for living after this type of loss.

I am very grateful to Jennifer for facilitating Healing Hearts. Its strong affiliation with Moms Stop the Harm has put it in the forefront and will help many other parents like me. ”

- Kevin's Mom, Marilyn.



HOLDING HOPE

A TESTIMONIAL

“ I felt alone and afraid. Pandemic isolation was taking its toll, and I felt like I was falling apart. I heard about Holding Hope through an addictions services agency I reached out to for help for my loved one. My anxiety prevented me from connecting at first, until Emily, one of my region's facilitators, suggested we talk one on one so I could get an idea of what to expect at a Holding Hope meeting. Just having her kindness, warmth, genuine empathy and willingness to give her time made all the difference! I felt understood. Usually I'd feel cautious to disclose our family troubles, but here stigma was absent. Holding Hope facilitators are peers; they too have lived experience with the same issues.

I've since attended several Holding Hope meetings. They have made a huge difference to my mental health and sense of "not being alone" in this painful, often heartbreaking situation. Participation in group meetings gives me a source of comfort and guidance to look forward to. Sharing our stories in a non-judgmental, safe and caring setting helps relieve the stigma and shame that silence and secrets breed. We have been introduced to some brilliant research and solution based material. This helps change thinking, and feeling, about how we can best support ourselves and our loved ones. It's also great for stimulating meaningful conversations and self-reflection. I've learned so much from listening to other families share their struggles, and their triumphs. I encourage anyone who loves someone who is actively using or in recovery, who wants to maintain their sanity and ability to love and support that person(s), to join Holding Hope- it's a gift to yourself, and your loved ones. ”

- Alexis S., NB

**"I COULD WALK A MILE IN YOUR SHOES, BUT I ALREADY
KNOW THEY'RE JUST AS UNCOMFORTABLE AS MINE.
LET'S WALK NEXT TO EACH OTHER INSTEAD."**

Lynda Meyers



To find a group near you visit: holdinghopecanada.org

STRONGER TOGETHER BC

The Stronger Together BC (STBC) Project has now been up and running for 2.5 years. We are grateful to the Province of BC as they renewed our funding in January 2022.

Holding Hope groups continue to meet the needs of families who are impacted by a loved one's substance use. As of this publication, Holding Hope's original pilot project in Victoria BC grew from one support group to 16 groups throughout the province. Our groups provide an environment where families can find mutual support and healing as they come together to share stories, resources and provide invaluable support to each other.

Families facing the unimaginable, are connecting with our **Healing Hearts** Support groups. To date, we have 15 support groups in BC. Healing Hearts understands the trauma families experience related to a toxic drug passing. The grief that follows can be especially painful and challenging. Families often feel it is not survivable. Healing Hearts assists families in building resilience and supports them in moving through their loss.

STBC recognizes the critical support needed for our First Nations communities impacted by the Drug Poisoning Crisis. "The number of deaths due to toxic drug poisonings for 2021 translates to devastating losses of First Nations people: daughters and sons, aunts and uncles, mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, and grandfathers and grandmothers.

These are people who loved and were loved." (Dr. Nel Wieman, Chief Medical Officer, First Nations Health Authority). Our provincial funding supported the hiring of an Indigenous Lead in March 2022. This new position will be connecting with Indigenous communities, building partnerships and creating culturally safe healing circles for Indigenous families impacted by this public health crisis.

The essence of these support groups lies in the value of peer support. All of our facilitators have lived experience. Our Peer Facilitators offer a sense of safety, and remind families that you are not alone. The groups offer hope and resilience as families come together to connect with others walking the same journey. Families feel validated and there is a sense of belonging which assists in removing the isolation that families often experience.

Our support groups would not be possible without the dedication of our facilitators. Each of them have walked a similar path. They have known the isolation, the pain, the stress and the devastation. However, each facilitator has found resilience through Moms Stop the Harm and stepped up to offer support to another family. We can't thank them enough for their companionship of families and being present to help them on their journey.



Your Contributions Make a Difference!

MSTH would like to acknowledge and thank all individuals who donated in support of our organization and in memorial of loved ones lost.

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of:

- The Province of BC
- Health Canada's Substance Use & Addictions Program

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Moms Stop the Harm (MSTH) is a network of Canadian families impacted by substance-use-related harms and deaths. We advocate for the change of failed drug policies, provide peer support to grieving families, and assist those with loved ones who use or have

used substances.
✉ info@momsstoptheharm.com



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Support Group Information

- **BC Holding Hope:** canadaholdinghopenational@gmail.com
- **BC Healing Hearts:** canadahealinghearts@gmail.com
- **Stronger Together Canada:** strongertogethercanada@momsstoptheharm.com

To find a Bereavement group near you, visit: healingheartscanada.org

To find a Holding Hope support group near you visit: holdinghopecanada.org

We welcome new members! Please join this movement for change by visiting:

WWW.MOMSSTOPTHEHARM.COM