

White Pony Lodge is a non-profit organization founded in 2016 by a group of dedicated women in our community and under the advice of Elders. We are modelled after the Bear Clan Patrol in Winnipeg and have trained with them. The role of our organization is to support the North Central community by conducting volunteer led patrols that properly collect and dispose of drug paraphernalia including needles, cookers, baggies and sometimes drugs themselves and other items that are used. We also work with our community and report potential dangers to the City of Regina. Our work connects us to the RQHR, Mobile Crisis, Regina Police Service, and many other organizations in our neighbourhood and we respect the demands for their service and limitations that they sometimes face to respond to social issues in our community. During our weekly patrols we find anywhere from 10 to 200 needles each patrol, we offer assistance to those in distress, and we carry naloxone with us in case of overdoses. During our walks and when we open our doors to our community, we provide coffee/tea, warm meals and winter clothing and other personal items. Our community is diverse, strong, and resilient and many people care for each other, however our neighbourhood is disproportionately affected by poverty, lack of stable housing, and low employment. This is often associated with higher rates of crime, drug use, and homelessness and many of the people we meet when offering services suffer from mental health and addiction issues.

We would like to present our experiences trying to find help for people without a place to stay as well as our interactions with someone who is using who needs immediate assistance - with the hope that we can share what it is like navigating the current system. We would also like to illustrate the need for a holistic approach involving coordinated efforts in housing, transitional services, funding for current services (particularly Mobile Crisis), as well as mental health supports. Finally, we would like to use our experiences and available data to make a case for a potential role that the city might play to tackle addictions crises in our city.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Leah O'Malley