

August 31, 2020 was International Overdose Awareness Day and three separate events were held in Regina:

- Moms Stop the Harm unveiled their Regina City Transit and billboard campaign showing the powerful image of mothers who have lost a child to drugs holding crosses on the steps of the legislature;
- Family members tying purple ribbons on the Albert Street bridge; and
- Events at Mamaweyatitan Centre and on the lawns of the legislative buildings with stakeholders providing information booths including naloxone training (58 people were trained that day); harm reduction supplies provided; and speakers including:
  - o Tracy Zambory, President Saskatchewan Union of Nurses
  - o Chief Evan Bray, Regina Police Service
  - o The MacDonald Family and Kelly Csada speaking for families who have lost loved ones to drugs
  - o Megan Poole telling her personal story of being an overdose survivor and being in recovery
  - o Angela Singer sang two songs she wrote the first in memory of her friend Brad who died of overdose and the second being a song of her personal Recovery

Chief Bray indicated that by August 31<sup>st</sup> there had been over 700 overdose calls to the Regina Police Service. The number of deaths from overdose is increasing daily and is more than triple the 2019 number – the crisis is real and the crisis is here in Regina.

Good work is being done in Regina regarding Recovery and Harm Reduction – but far too often the two are being spoke of in isolation rather than as part of the recovery continuum.

The best definition of “Recovery” that I have heard came from a front line worker in Regina: “Recovery is the process of receiving the treatment and support the individual needs to learn to deal with the issues that are causing them to use without using”.

The definition of “harm reduction” that is the most accurate to my mind is from All Nations Hope Network: “...refers to policies, programs and projects that aim to reduce the health, social and economic harms associated with the use of drugs. It does not exclude abstinence as a goal for individuals but provides people with more pragmatic choice such as limiting their substance intake. ...”

While I may have a goal of abstinence based Recovery that does not mean the same is appropriate, or attainable, for everyone but that does not mean everyone does not fit within the recovery continuum.

We need to quit using a measure that does not meet people where they are at and provide support, options and treatment that starts wherever the particular individual is at and allows for movement along the recovery continuum.

Harm reduction is a part of the recovery continuum and we must start with the realization that dead people can not recover.

The City of Regina can lead the way and I fully support MN-20-24.

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