

## 2024-2025 Annual Report



*CMHA South Cariboo is an accredited organization through Imagine Canada's Standards Program*

**Agency Profile:** Canadian Mental Health Association, South Cariboo Branch, is an autonomous, non-profit, charitable organization with ethical and legal responsibilities to the National and BC Divisions of CMHA. Our mandate emphasizes the importance of people with lived experience of mental illness being involved in the delivery of service and governance wherever possible.

**Our Vision:** “Mentally Healthy People in a Healthy Society”

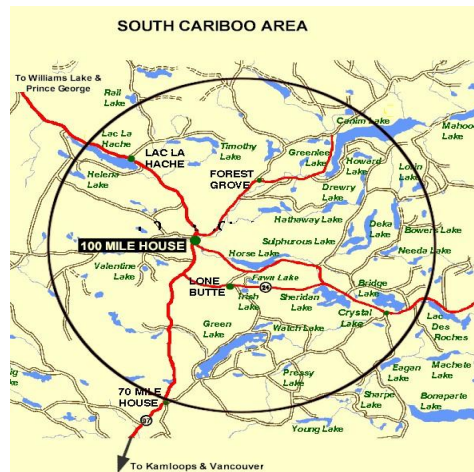
**Our Mission:** “To ensure that all people in Canada experience good mental health and well-being.”

**CMHA South Cariboo Branch believes in:**

- Social justice
- Individual and collective responsibility
- Access to appropriate and adequate resources and supports
- Self-determination
- Maximum community inclusion
- Working collaboratively with our community partners

**Geographic Catchment area:**

The South Cariboo is a sub-region of the Cariboo Regional District in the interior of British Columbia. Its main population center is the Municipality of 100 Mile House, a community of approximately 2,000 residents. An additional 18,000 people live in the South Cariboo. The South Cariboo boundaries are roughly described as 70 Mile House in the South, to Lac la Hache in the North, the Fraser River to the West, and Lac des Roches and Mahood Lake to the East. The region includes 100 Mile House and many smaller communities such as Forest Grove, Buffalo Creek, Lac la Hache, 108 Mile Ranch, Lone Butte, Sheridan Lake, Bridge Lake, Watch Lake and Green Lake.



## **Board Chair Report**

Well, that's it, another year has come and gone. First things first; let's give thanks to our dedicated staff led by Susann and Nicole. Sometimes I forget that we only have about 16 employees when I see all the clients served, programs led, and accomplishments made. With my humblest of gratitude, THANK YOU.

What can I say about my Board colleagues. I thank Rick for attending weekly Climate Action Task Force meetings, in addition to all of the other extra meetings, while also packing up and moving to the Island. Didi made the move with Rick, and I thank her for the minute taking and YEARS of dedication to the organization. I thank Kitten for all the Task Force meetings she attended, for her input and YEARS of dedication. Meagan, Darlene, Debbie are all new members this past year, and boy, did they attend a lot of meetings. I am glad that they are not afraid to share their thoughts and ideas. We have such a fantastic Board; it is one of the best I have ever sat on.

What's the old adage: it takes a village to raise a child. Well, it takes a dedicated team of staff and board members to move an organization forward. No truer than this year.

The board's main goals for this past year:

- Replacing our long-term Executive Director, who is retiring, and attending her last AGM this year (as an employee). This past year was focused on the preliminary work of identifying what we need to do to create a successful outcome through this transition. And we did it. Marnie Jensen, a long-time CMHA South Cariboo employee, will lead the organization into the future.
- Raising the organization's profile in the community. Done: Kristin Buxton has been dedicated to engaging the public on the Task Force objectives, providing a monthly column on mental illness/health in the local paper. She has created a list of events to attend, put on a full art show at the local Art Gallery and organized fundraisers. We have started a campaign to replace our ageing and well utilized van, and to that end we have created a new van donation fund and have started to collect donations. Kristin continues to keep our social media current and relevant. Marnie has been seen around town and at events, assisting Kristin.

BC Housing recently activated development planning on our second stage housing. They continue to meet bi-weekly to move the project to the District permitting stage.

**Respectfully submitting my final report, Marty Norgren, Board Chair**

## **Executive Director Report**

The June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Annual General Meeting provides an opportunity for our members to take a moment to look back upon and celebrate what we have accomplished over this past year.

As Marty, our Board Chair, has already spoken about our accomplishments and goals in his report, I will mainly focus on thanking people.

I am so proud of, and grateful for, the continued hard work and dedication of our awesome staff. It is a joy to see the level of teamwork that exists amongst our staff as they help each other out with whatever is needed, to feel the wonderful atmosphere of team spirit here, and to hear the frequent sound of laughter in the building. While the work we do can certainly be rewarding, it can also be challenging, difficult and even heartbreaking at times. Thank you for all you do every single day; the work you do to support the wellbeing of the people we serve is so important, and it makes all the difference in the world.

Thank you to the people we serve; you are the heart of our organization, and it is our honour to serve you.

Thank you as well to our members; your ongoing support is very important to us, as we work toward our goals of increasing mental health and wellbeing in the South Cariboo.

I gratefully thank our Board of Directors for their ongoing dedication to the governance of our CMHA Branch. They volunteer so much of their time throughout the year, behind the scenes, guiding the work we do, always with an eye to the future. This past year, with my retirement approaching quickly, they dedicated so much more of their time to succession planning in order to ensure a smooth leadership transition for our branch. Thank you very much.

Marty Norgen, our keenly dedicated Board Chair extraordinaire (and maker of things happening), and Didi Henderson, long-time and unwaveringly supportive Board member (especially when we needed her most), are both retiring from the Board. We are sad to see them go, but we are so very grateful for the time we had with them. Best wishes for your next chapters.

It has been an honour to work at CMHA South Cariboo branch for the past 25 years. I started here as a casual employee, then moved into the Homeless Outreach worker role for many years, and for the past 11 years as executive director. So much has happened during my 11 years as executive director, including becoming an accredited organization (accreditation status is only granted to organizations that meet and maintain a high standard of excellence); reducing some of the local gaps in services through acquiring funding for additional programs; taking on the management of the Women's Centre, and later bringing those programs over to CMHA to ensure they remained in our community; supporting the people of the South Cariboo through the challenges and ongoing impacts of the wildfires and the pandemic; and, finally, after years of delay, there is forward movement with the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage housing project.

I am delighted that Marnie Jensen will be taking on the Executive Director's role upon my retirement. I know that I am leaving this branch in very capable hands, and I look forward to seeing the great things that that will happen under her leadership.

**Susann Collins, Executive Director**

### **Incoming Executive Director's Report**

After 7 years as CMHA South Cariboo's Homeless Outreach Worker, I was excited when, towards the end of 2024, the board offered me the opportunity to apply for the Executive Director position, as Susann would be retiring in June. In February, the board announced that I would be taking over as Executive Director when Susann retires, and we made plans for me to transition out of the Homeless Outreach program and train to be the Executive Director.

In May, I trained Rick McKinney to take over as the Homeless Outreach Worker, and then I started training with Susann full-time. We have had a lot of information to go over, and there have been a few overwhelming days. I have had great opportunities to gain experience organically as I applied for grants and, with Susann, created a new program for seniors, and hired an employee for that program. We have also gone through the process of hiring new two new casual workers, and we met with a potential new board member. I started taking a course in Simon Fraser University's New Approaches to Non-Profit Management for the Canadian Context certificate program, and plan to continue taking more courses as they are offered.

We met virtually with our Climate Change and Mental Health Task Force, the auditor, and potential funders. In May, we attended the BC CMHA Provincial Leadership Team meeting in Prince George where I met other BC CMHA branch Executive Directors and gained insight into what other CMHAs in BC offer.

As we wind down our training and prepare for Susann's last day on June 30th, I remain excited for this new role with CMHA and the challenges and opportunities it will bring.

**Marnie Jensen, incoming Executive Director**

# **History of the Canadian Mental Health Association**

## **Canada's Oldest National Mental Health Charity**

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) is one of the oldest national, charitable organizations in Canada and the oldest national mental health charity. Each year, CMHA divisions and branches across Canada provide service to people across Canada through the combined efforts of more than 11,000 volunteers and staff in locally run organizations. Visit CMHA National's website for more information. CMHA was founded in 1918 by Dr. Clarence M. Hincks, Dr. Charles K. Clarke and Clifford W. Beers as the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene. The original goals of the organization centered on war recruits, mental examination of post-war immigrants, prevention, and support for adequate facilities and care for the treatment of mental illness.

CMHA is uniquely positioned in Canada as a charity that brings together community-based experience and expertise on the prevention of mental illness and community supports for the mental well-being of all Canadians.

## **CMHA South Cariboo Branch**

CMHA in the South Cariboo was started by a group of concerned individuals in the late 1980s. The group's early meetings took place in the Rosewood Building on Birch Avenue in 100 Mile House, and included individuals living with mental illness, their friends and family members, mental health service providers and local physicians. As mental health support services in the South Cariboo at that time were very limited, the initial goal for members was to begin to develop resources and a network of support - both for individuals living with a mental illness, and to those who were part of their lives. The branch was incorporated in 1993. The branch's early goals were to be actively involved in the development of psychiatric services to our community, and to find funds to develop a clubhouse or drop-in center where people who live with mental illness could congregate, socialize, and receive the help needed to live successfully in their homes and community. Since its inception, CMHA South Cariboo Branch has grown from a one staff office to a multi-program system. We continue to take pride in our identity as a grassroots organization that adapts to serve the needs of the people of our region.

Prevention is fundamental to all of the services we provide and is reflected through the work of the branch during Mental Health Week, Mental Illness Awareness Week and at various community events throughout the year. It is also reflected in the services we provide to individuals who live with a serious and persistent mental illness. The South Cariboo Branch is proud to be among the branches that make up Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division, and part of our nation-wide federation.

## **The Framework for Support**

The Framework is the central philosophy guiding the activities of CMHA. This philosophy holds that the person experiencing mental illness is at the center of any supportive mental health system.

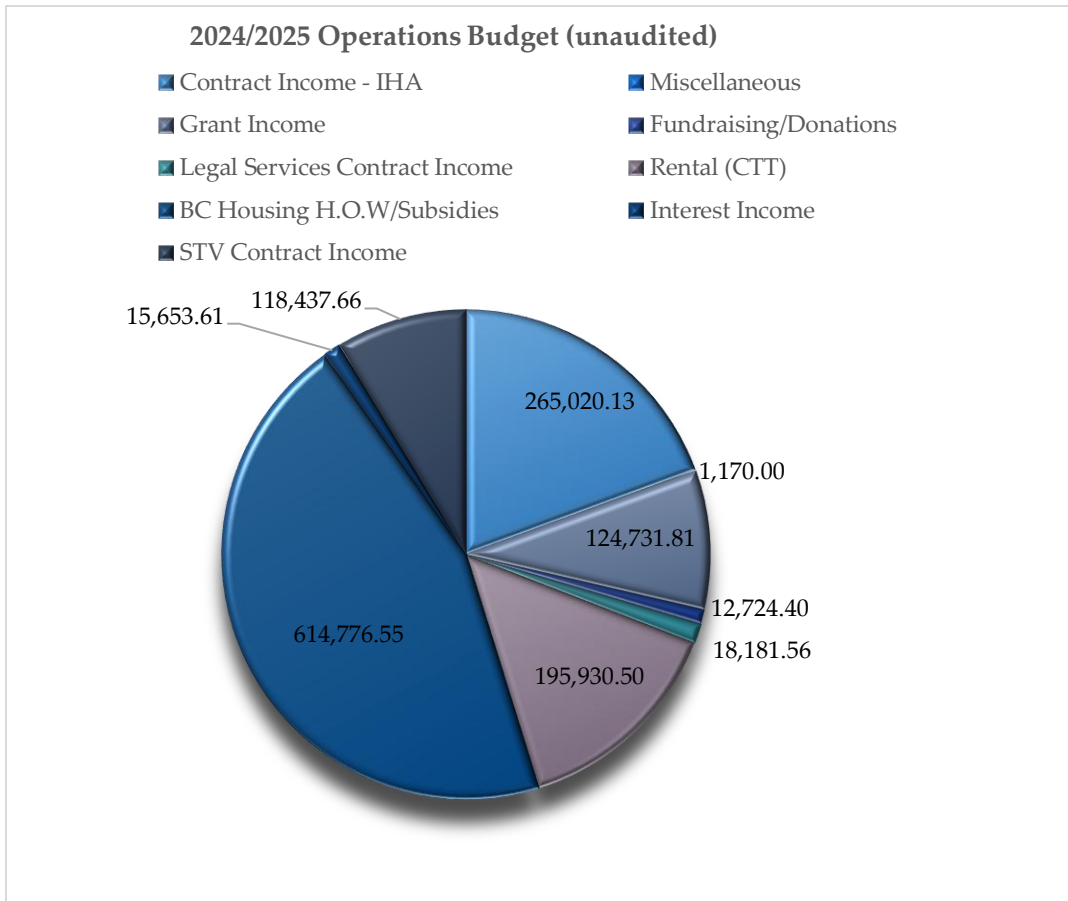
The Community Resource Base outlines a range of possible resources in addition to the formal mental health system which can provide support to a person with mental illness. Housing, income, work and education represent four basic elements of citizenship.

The ultimate goal of the Framework is to ensure that people with serious mental health problems live fulfilling lives in the community. The Framework for Support is referred to as the most comprehensive model for mental health planning by federal and provincial governments, as well as by the Centre for Community Change in the US, and the Government of Ireland.

# Scholarship Report

We provide a \$500 Scholarship to help a local student pursuing a career related to mental health (such as psychiatry or Community Mental Health Worker) when we receive applications that meet this criterion. The scholarship was awarded this year.

## 2024/2025 Operations Budget



**Revenue :**

Contract income - IHA:	\$ 265,020.13
B.C. Housing-H.O.W/Subsidies:	\$ 614,776.55
Grants:	\$ 124,731.81
Fundraising and Donations:	\$ 12,724.40
Rental (CTT):	\$ 195,930.50
Interest Income:	\$ 15,653.61
Legal Service Contract Income:	\$ 18,181.56
Miscellaneous:	\$ 1,170.00
Contract income - STV:	<u>\$ 118,437.66</u>
=====Total:	<b>\$1,366,626.22</b>

**Nicole Bissat - Finance Coordinator**

# Program Reports

## **Community Engagement (various funders)**

The Community Engagement Program had an exciting and impactful year! Since our last AGM, it's been full steam ahead with meaningful connections, successful events, and powerful conversations across the South Cariboo.

### **Activities and Events**

Community Engagement Coordinator Kristin, Community Navigator Kim, and RCMP Constable Fraser visited Peter Skene Ogden Secondary in May of 2024, to deliver a presentation on online safety. They also brought a tailored version to the Grade 6 students at 108 Mile Elementary School, adjusting the tone and content for a younger audience. Both visits were met with great engagement and positive feedback.

We proudly attended Pride in the Park in July, showing our support for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and providing mental health resources in a welcoming space.

We hosted a Dinner and Dance Fundraiser in August, with live music by the Markabillies at the 100 Mile House Royal Canadian Legion, raising \$326.84 for our mental health programming.

In December, we joined the festive fun at the 100 Mile House Santa Claus Parade, where our Gold Rush-themed float featured twinkling lights, a Christmas tree, and gold-panning props brought smiles and holiday spirit to all ages.

In 2025, we kicked things off by attending the International Women's Day Celebration on March 8 at the 100 Mile Community Hall, engaging with the community and celebrating the incredible women of the South Cariboo.

On March 23, we partnered with the Williams Lake and District Credit Union for a Movie Day Fundraiser. Despite a heavy snowfall, all 90 seats sold out, and we raised a whopping \$800 for our programs.

In May, we hosted our first-ever art show, Pieces of Me: Healing Through Expression, at Parkside Gallery. The exhibit ran for a month and raised \$980 through the sale of 27 pieces—including paintings, rock art, and handmade magnets. While we operated under a budget of \$1,500 and ended with a \$297.01 shortfall, the awareness raised, and stories shared were priceless. Many artists courageously spoke about their mental health journeys, helping to break down stigma, one conversation at a time. The show also led to our first official van fund donation, with a generous \$2,500 contribution from West Fraser!

During Mental Health Week (May 5–9), we celebrated wellness internally and externally in the following ways:

- Hosting a Desert Hills-themed staff potluck lunch
- Creating a "Sticky Wall of Gratitude" filled with kind messages from staff
- Enjoying a fun and light-hearted drawing session with Jess from Revelry Arts
- Serving over 100 community members at our 3rd Annual Mental Health Week BBQ, featuring pulled pork, hot dogs, punch, and cake!

We also returned to the South Cariboo Women's Fair for the second year running, sharing resources and continuing conversations about mental wellness with attendees.

### **Social Media**

This year we saw our Facebook followers increase from 159 to 222. At the time of our AGM last year, we had just joined Instagram, and we now have 105 followers.

I have been contributing mental health and wellness articles to the 100 Mile Free Press. These articles aim to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and share practical tools to support emotional well-being in our community. It's been a great way to highlight local initiatives, promote CMHA programs, and build stronger community connections through accessible, relatable content—one article at a time.

Click the link below to read some of my recent articles and see how we're bringing mental health conversations into the spotlight. <https://southcariboo.cmha.bc.ca/news/>

#### **Looking Ahead:**

We're excited to continue our community engagement journey this summer with the following events:

Logan Parent Memorial Bulls & Barrels Rodeo – June 13 & 14

Pride in the Park – July 26

Garlic Festival – August 23 & 24

We're proud of everything we've accomplished and deeply grateful for the ongoing community support. Here's to another year of connection, courage, and conversation.

**Kristin Wells - Community Engagement Coordinator**

#### **Supported Independent Living Program (funded by Interior Health Authority)**

The Supported Independent Living Program (SIL) supports clients to live independently in the community by providing emotional support, encouragement and life skills coaching in areas such as budgeting, nutrition, self-care, and wellness. Clients are referred through Interior Health Mental Health and Substance Use Services. A care plan is developed by the client and their Health Team, which can consist of the TSR (Treatment, Support, Recovery) worker, their doctor, psychiatrist, CMHA SIL worker and other health care professionals.

As each client has individual and varying needs, the SIL worker works with the client to meet these needs together, and to help the client master these needs independently. Goals are set out in a care plan that is flexible and realistic, and together the client and worker do their best to achieve success.

During SIL visits, clients may need advocacy during doctor appointments, assistance with shopping, or transportation to the hospital for lab appointments or medication injections. SIL workers also encourage physical activity for the client's health, though activities such as walking around the marsh, going on hikes together, and yoga. Healthy minds and healthy bodies are encouraged. Food bank hampers are also delivered by the SIL worker to clients in need every week.

The SIL program also offers a Work Incentive Program (W.I.P) for some of our clients. This is achieved through businesses or groups in the community offering job training or skills development to the client for 10 hours a month. We in turn pay a fair volunteer wage to the client for their work. A win/win situation. This program is funded by Interior Health and is much appreciated by those who are using it. SIL can also provide much-needed financial subsidies for some of our client's rent and utilities costs.

This year in SIL, the clients planted the gardens at CMHA with enthusiasm, and one of our clients has his W.I.P. taking care of the beautiful flower gardens in front of our building and watering our vegetable garden all season. He takes immense pride in this volunteer work. We also have a CMHA garden plot at the Community Garden in town that one of our clients plants and maintains to feed the community.

We have partnered with the Clubhouse program to offer a meeting with a representative from Fire Smart to give a talk on wildfire preparedness and have all of the client emergency contact information in case of a natural disaster. We are moving forward in 2025 with a safe and healthy program.

**Kathy Provost - SIL Outreach Worker**

### **Clubhouse/Activity Program (funded by Interior Health Authority)**

The Clubhouse program provides a safe space where individuals with a mental illness can come Monday through Friday from 12 pm until 3:45 pm. The focus of the Clubhouse program is to encourage social connection and peer support through preparing and sharing a meal together, and recreational activities such as outings, picnics, gardening, etc. Members are encouraged to participate in all areas of the program, such as planning, preparing and cleanup of the lunches, planning and planting the garden, as well as what outings and activities are chosen.

In keeping with our commitment to recognize and share major holidays such as Thanksgiving, Easter and Christmas, a full course hot meal was prepared for our clients on these occasions. These events brought on much pride as all the vegetables (potatoes, carrots, brussels sprouts and peas) for our meals were grown ourselves in the CMHA garden. The turkeys were donated, and for the Christmas luncheon we served over 24 meals.

Interior Health has sent several new referrals to the Clubhouse program, mostly due to social isolation and/or anxiety. It has been heartwarming to see these new members join in on conversation, helping others with their tea and coffee, being the first to come and the last to leave. Many of them say it is their only “real” meal in their day.

Budgeting for Clubhouse meals can be a challenge as the cost of groceries is ever rising.

Some of our adventures/activities include trips to Desert Hills in Cache Creek, Clinton for coffee, Williams Lake Walmart, as well as putting together picture puzzles, and community clean ups. We recently participated in an Art Show where clients painted bottles and rocks as well as paintings, and made tie died shirts. The gratification on their faces when they viewed their arts on display was priceless. In Spring we go fishing every other Friday to the local lakes and our van is nearly full every time. **Lisa Higgins - Clubhouse/Activity Worker**

### **Homeless Outreach Program (funded by BC Housing)**

The Homeless Outreach Program helps break the cycle of homelessness by assisting people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness.

In the 2024/2025 fiscal year, the Homeless Outreach Program provided 4390 services to more than 1830 individuals, a slight decrease over the previous year. Many of these individuals were returning clients, and 148 were new to our program. We distributed 42 grocery gift cards, 25 laundry/shower vouchers, 19 share a meal program vouchers, and we are currently providing 33 ongoing CBCHB/HOW rental supplements.

The Homeless Outreach Program provided 978 bed stays for homeless individuals. While having shelter options is helpful, an increasing number of people are unable to meet the requirements to stay in our high-barrier motel room shelter spaces. At least 29 hard-to-house individuals were turned away from our shelters or had their shelter stay terminated because their needs exceeded what we can provide.

BC Housing shelter funding has allowed us to continue to provide after-hours emergency supports to individuals throughout the year. **Rick McKinney - Homeless Outreach Worker**

### **Cariboo Trail Terrace - Housing (funded by BC Housing)**

Cariboo Trail Terrace is our 25-unit subsidized family housing development, located at 910 Cariboo Trail. Currently, all units are occupied, with a combination of 4 Low-End Market Units and 21 Rent Geared to Income Units. There is still a housing crisis in this area, and we are receiving housing applications on a daily basis.

Things are going well at Cariboo Trail Terrace; we have good tenants who all take care of their units, although we did have a very costly year with repairs. One unit was discovered to have a great deal of damage and needed to be gutted and renovated. The prior tenant had received an eviction notice and retaliated by destroying their unit.

There was also a pin hole size leak in a boiler room pipe, which caused some water damage to a few units.

Maintenance for general upkeep of the units and property is continuous.

**Lisa Higgins - Caretaker, Cariboo Trail Terrace**

### **Acquired Brain Injury Program (funded by Interior Health Authority)**

The Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Program provides critical support and rehabilitation services to survivors of traumatic brain injuries (TBI), including those caused by strokes, accidents, assaults, and other incidents that impair an individual's ability to live independently. The primary goal of the program is to foster recovery and personal growth by helping individuals relearn and develop life skills essential for daily living.

#### **Role of the ABI Life Skills Worker**

The ABI Life Skills Worker plays a key role in supporting clients through one-on-one assistance aimed at helping them regain independence and confidence. The support is tailored to each client's needs, and includes:

- Attending and managing personal and medical appointments
- Grocery shopping and budgeting
- Accessing government and community services
- Relearning essential life skills, such as cooking, managing stress, social interaction, and decision-making

Despite challenges in accessing healthcare professionals, such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and physicians in rural areas, the program has recorded notable successes. An example of successes are clients with apraxia who have made significant progress through consistent speech therapy exercises that were facilitated by the ABI Life Skills Worker.

#### **Service Area and Caseload**

The program is based out of Kamloops and Kelowna through Interior Health but operates throughout the South Cariboo region, covering communities such as 100 Mile House, Cache Creek, Clinton, Forest Grove, and Lac La Hache.

- Current active caseload: 8 clients
- Pending referrals: 3 clients
- Previous caseload: 13 clients

Due to transportation limitations experienced by some ABI clients, ABI Life Skills Workers often travel to their clients, ensuring continued support even in remote areas. Most ABI clients rely heavily on program provided transportation for their essential appointments and community reintegration.

#### **Community Integration and Extended Support**

Several clients have achieved personal milestones, such as returning to part-time employment or engaging in volunteer work and other community activities.

#### **Cariboo Brain Injury Association (CBIA)**

To address service access gaps and support individuals who fall outside Interior Health's eligibility criteria (due to age, documentation issues, or insufficient injury evidence), the ABI Life Skills Worker helped establish a support group; the Cariboo Brain Injury Association (CBIA).

The CBIA was formed as an inclusive community support initiative to serve those unable to access the ABI Program directly, but still in need of assistance related to brain injury. The group offers encouragement, peer support, and guidance in navigating life after brain injury.

### **Tshidi Machete - Acquired Brain Injury Support Worker**

#### **Receptionist/Scheduler (various funders)**

The key responsibilities of the receptionist's role are to:

- Receive visitors
- Provide information and support in crisis situations by connecting people to appropriate staff
- Act as a safety check-in person for staff working in the community
- Answer the telephone, take messages, or direct them to an appropriate program
- Type and create documents, reports, and minutes
- Receive rent payments and issue receipts
- Update staff outlook calendar
- Maintain records and prepare summary reports
- Schedule shift coverage when required for staff who are absent
- Other duties as assigned

The receptionist is the first voice and the first face the public sees when accessing our services. We must always remain professional, no matter the circumstances, and maintain a calm, supportive environment. We also support other staff members during challenging moments of our day. Between April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, approximately 1645 front desk calls were received, and the door was answered 1732 times.

We followed all Interior Health protocols to ensure our staff and clients were safe and ensured all PPE supplies were on hand for all departments. **Natesha Hayes - Receptionist/Scheduler**

### **Community Navigator Program (funded by BC Gaming Commission) and the Legal Aid BC Community Partner Program (funded by Legal Aid BC)**

The Community Navigator Program, introduced in May 2018 in the South Cariboo region following the 2017 wildfires, continues to serve as a critical support system for rural residents facing a complex array of social, health, and economic challenges. Spanning over 8,300 square kilometers and supporting a diverse and dispersed population, the program provides essential services in healthcare access, legal aid, housing, mental health, food security, and more. With only one dedicated Community Navigator and assistance from our Community Engagement Coordinator, the program facilitated over 1,200 client contacts in the 2024/2025 fiscal year, demonstrating its profound impact and ongoing necessity.

#### **Program Overview**

Established in response to the aftermath of devastating wildfires, the Community Navigator Program was designed to address systemic gaps in service accessibility for South Cariboo residents. The region continues to face ongoing disruptions due to mill closures and layoffs, wildfires, flooding, which is increasing the demand for coordinated community supports.

#### **Services Offered**

The Community Navigator provides individualized support to residents in accessing:

- Medical care
- Income assistance, Old Age Security Applications/Government Applications
- Federal and Provincial programs
- Food security
- Housing, Rental subsidies, SAFER
- Mental health and substance use services

- Transportation and seniors' services
- Legal aid resources and referrals

### **Systemic Barriers**

Barriers such as lack of reliable internet, limited transportation, and geographic isolation hinder residents access to essential services. Many clients lack digital literacy or access to devices, making in-person, face-to-face assistance vital. The Navigator helps bridge these gaps with personalized, empathetic support.

### **Community Engagement and Events:**

April 2024: Participated in the inaugural Canadian Mental Health Hearts for Minds Gala.

June 2024: Hosted an "Is That Legal?" presentation for Grades 6 and 7 on topics including online safety, consent, sharing of intimate images, and cyberbullying.

July 2024: Attended Pride in the Park, promoting inclusivity and providing resources.

November 2024: Entered a CMHA-themed float in the Annual Christmas Parade.

### **Legal Aid & Justice Access**

As a Legal Aid BC Community Partner, the Navigator also assists with:

- Legal Aid applications
- Resources for intimate partner violence survivors
- Support for parents with child protection involvement
- Referrals to legal and non-profit organizations
- Liaison with lawyers and Legal Aid intake offices
- The Navigator also attends First Appearances at the 100 Mile House courthouse monthly to provide in-person Legal Aid access and resources

### **New Initiative: Senior Support Program (March 2025)**

- Launched for seniors 60+ with limited government support
- Offers grocery and gas cards, prescription cost assistance, emergency heating support, and food security options through CMHA programs
- Promoted through pharmacies, doctors, and first responders
- Assistance in applications for SAFER Program

### **Program Impact (2024/2025)**

- 1,241 client contacts
- 650+ unique clients assisted
- 1,045 referrals provided
- 31 new clients enrolled

### **Ongoing Challenges**

- Hospital closures in nearby communities
- Physician shortages
- Rising rates of mental health and substance use crises
- Increasing housing insecurity and food bank dependency
- Transportation and digital access barriers

### **Conclusion**

Residents of the South Cariboo face unequal access to essential services due to geographic isolation, limited infrastructure, and economic hardship. The Community Navigator Program remains a vital lifeline, promoting equity and ensuring residents receive the care and support they deserve. The Community Navigator's mission at the Canadian Mental Health Association is to strengthen community connections and foster equitable access to support services for all South Cariboo residents, regardless of their circumstances.

**Kim Fraser - Community Navigator and Community Partner for Legal Aid**  
**Kristin Buxton - Community Engagement Coordinator**

### **Safe House Program (funded by BC Housing)**

The Safe House Program continues to help break the cycle of domestic violence by assisting women and children who are fleeing abuse. The Safe House program provides emergency safe housing, groceries, emotional support, safety planning, referrals and transportation to longer term transition houses, and referrals to counselling services, legal aid and other community resources, according to the individual needs of each woman. A Safe House Coordinator is available 24 hours per day, seven days a week. Back up Safe House Coordinator services have been provided by Tshidi Machete.

Safe House Coordinators offer women the information they need to make informed decisions. In the 2024/2025 fiscal year, fewer women stayed in Safe House than the previous year, but most stays were of longer duration as clients sought longer term housing. 15 women were sheltered for a total of 46 nights. The majority of clients have been older than in past years with more in the 40 -49 age bracket and some have been seniors over 65. Pets, including emotional support animals, were regularly accommodated, with more clients bringing their pet with them than clients who did not. All clients that stayed in the Safe House were provided with safety planning, and an additional 16 women who did not stay overnight were also provided with safety planning and made aware of STV counselling options and other community resources.

It has become increasingly difficult to accommodate incoming clients during the summer months in Safe House as the motels in the area are often fully booked. The Safe House Coordinator has had to rely on using the dedicated Homeless Outreach shelter room on several occasions when it is available. The lack of rental accommodation in 100 Mile House and vicinity makes finding housing for clients extremely challenging and the Safe House Coordinator has often depended on the Homeless Outreach Program to assist in this area as well, reflecting the need for second stage and long-term housing for Safe House clients in the 100 Mile area.

4 women who chose to leave the community were provided with transportation by bus or assistance with gas for their own vehicle to get to longer term accommodation in transition houses in other areas.

The majority of Safe House referrals this past fiscal year have been self-referrals or referrals from law enforcement, and a good working relationship continues between Safe House and the 100 Mile House RCMP and Victims Assistance. Officers can call the Safe House Coordinator directly instead of going through Victimlink. This allows for faster communications in emergency situations.

**Roxanne Salinas - Safe House Coordinator**

### **Stopping the Violence Counselling Program (funded by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General)**

The Stopping the Violence Counselling (S.T.V.) program offers essential services to women that have experienced violence and abuse, childhood abuse and sexual assault. The S.T.V. Counsellor and S.T.V. Assistant (decreased hours) continue to work very closely for client management. The S.T.V. Counselling program offers counselling services for scheduled, unscheduled, support, follow-up, and emergency appointments for individual women, as well as group services. The S.T.V. Counselling Assistant offers intake support and reception services. The S.T.V. Outreach Worker provides outreach support services.

Trends this year have been complex mental health issues, PTSD and complex PTSD, psychiatric and dementia related, crisis fleeing, historical abuse and violence.

During the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the S.T.V. Counselling Program had 617 contacts (down from 858 in 2023-2024); 286 individual scheduled sessions (down from 260 in 2023-2024); 29 group participants (up from 0 in 2023-2024); 218 support follow-up contacts (down from 388 in 2023-2024).

The STV Counselling Assistant had 61 new intakes. The STV Outreach Worker had 11 clients.

**Kalika Moody - S.T.V. Counsellor**

**Tshidi Machete - S.T.V. Counselling Assistant and S.T.V. Outreach Worker**

### **Soupe de Tour (funded by BC Gaming):**

During the 2024-2025 fiscal year, we were thrilled to receive 592 litres of soup from the amazing crew at the Chartreuse Moose Café. Flavours like Beef Barley, Carrot Ginger, Minestrone, Tomato Basil, and Autumn Harvest kept things cozy and delicious all year long.

We've been able to share this soup with several local programs and community groups, including:

- CMHA Clubhouse
- CMHA Homeless Outreach
- CMHA Seniors Program
- Loaves and Fishes
- Cariboo Family Enrichment Centre
- The Free Store

It's been a simple but powerful way to offer comfort, nutrition, and a sense of community. We're so grateful for the continued support of this program—and for everyone helping us get soup into the hands (and bellies!) of those who need it most.

**Kristin Buxton - Soupe de Tour Coordinator**

## **Our Board of Directors for 2024-2025**

**President/Chair:** Marty Norgren

**Co-Vice Chairs:** Kathy (Kitten) Cadrin and Rick Meyer

**Treasurer:** Darlene Stevens

**Secretary:** Didi Henderson/Debbie Dengel

**Fundraising Committee:** Kathy (Kitten) Cadrin and Didi Henderson

**Directors:** Marion Fallding and Meagan Reid-Wolfe

**Climate Change and Mental Health Task Force:** Rick Meyer, chair, Kathie (Kitten) Cadrin, and Howard Kirkham (non-board member)

### **Climate Change and Mental Health Task Force Report**

Our Task Force committee met regularly throughout the 2024-2025 fiscal year in our mission to explore and address the mental health impacts of climate related events in the South Cariboo region, with the following initiatives and activity to report:

#### **South Cariboo Severe Weather Impacts Survey**

Our Task Force has created a survey designed to assess the mental health effects of severe weather events and patterns in the South Cariboo, and to provide us with guidance in strategic planning for responses to those effects, as well as in offering essential data in support of our pursuit of funding for them. We anticipate launching this impacts survey in July of 2025. We will be affiliating our survey with the University of Victoria Climate Disaster Project. Professor Sean Holman, director of that project, has offered its support in further interviewing and documenting the stories of South Cariboo residents who would wish to volunteer for that. Several people have been essential to the creation of our survey including Kristin Buxton, South Cariboo CMHA staff member; Howard Kirkham, Task Force member; and Emily Pletsch, BC CMHA Climate Mental Health Advisor.

#### **Climate Distress Resources List**

We have developed a comprehensive inventory of vital resources devoted to information about, care for, and interventions in response to, the large spectrum of climate related mental health effects. We are now working on a First Aid Kit appendix to that document, designed to be a more readily accessible resource offering information and interventions devoted to immediate, acute crisis needs resulting from severe weather events. Howard Kirkham, Task Force member, has been instrumental in developing these documents, along with Kristin Buxton who has worked to format them and post them on our CMHA South Cariboo website.

#### **Climate Community Mental Health Coordinator staff position**

Our Task Force has developed a funding proposal framework and a job description for this staff position. The intent of the Climate Mental Health Community Development Coordinator position is to provide support to community organizations, families, children and youth who are experiencing climate related mental health distress. The coordinator will utilize a community-wide, public health systems approach that employs information, prevention and intervention strategies designed to help others manage climate mental health distress. We are in a continuing pursuit of funding for this position.

#### **Asset Based Community Development Project**

Via the guidance and training of our Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) consultant Joe Erpenbeck, we initiated a project utilizing the strategies of ABCD devoted to the enhancement of community health and resilience within the South Cariboo. Our South Cariboo CMHA staff member, Kristin Buxton, has been remarkable in facilitating the formation of a core committee of South Cariboo residents who are now well underway in recruiting the participation of South Cariboo residents in creating several collaborative community development projects. Kitten Cadrin, one of our Task Force members, has been active throughout in support of bringing this initiative to life.

#### **Documents**

We have archived a package of documents that articulate the scope and detail of the above initiatives. They can be found in a folder in the files of our new Executive Director, Marnie Jensen.

#### **Recognition**

Needless to say, this Task Force endeavor has been a collaborative learning curve along several different trails, counting on the support of many. Special thanks to Susann Collins, as her remarkable tenure of service with the South Cariboo CMHA comes to an end, for her abiding, very active support, in multiple ways, from the outset of our Task Force mission. Thanks, also, to Marty Norgren, as he departs, for his inspiration in the initiation of the Task Force. Kristin Buxton has been essential, in so many ways, to our bringing ideas and intentions to life. Emily Pletsch and Joe Erpenbeck arrived midstream to become shepherds for us in this endeavor. Our achievements have been notably dependent upon their expertise. And above all, Kitten Cadrin and Howard Kirkham, as Task Force members, have been wonderful, contributing, partners in what continues to be the journey of our effort. Community, and community building, are at the heart of this effort and the collaboration of all of these, among numerous unnamed others, represent the best of community at work. More to come!

#### **Rick Meyer - Task Force Chair**