



## ANNUAL REPORT 2023–2024



**Canadian Mental  
Health Association**  
North and West Vancouver  
*Mental health for all*

[northwestvancouver.cmha.bc.ca](http://northwestvancouver.cmha.bc.ca)

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## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD CHAIR

As we reflect on this past year, a key lesson resonates strongly: It is often the quiet strength of resilience and the enduring promise of hope that propels us forward. At the Canadian Mental Health Association North and West Vancouver Branch (CMHA NWV), these themes have been our steadfast companions, guiding us through another remarkable year of growth, challenges, and transformation.

Hope is an essential element of good mental health. Hope provides resilience around challenges that life brings, along with a host of other benefits. When we consider the programs and services our branch delivers in our community, so much of this relates to providing hope. We think of the Kelty Dennehy Mental Health Resource Centre and how we have harnessed the care and passion of our volunteers, who come with lived experience.

### VOLUNTEERS 2023-24 AT A GLANCE

**18,886**  
volunteer hours contributed

**53**  
active volunteers

The volunteers, resources and staff at the Kelty Centre have connected with people in their most challenging times and provided them with hope for a brighter future.



As the journey continues toward improved mental health, clients, in turn, give back by volunteering their time and caring for others in need. It is this spirit of reciprocity that we find so inspiring.

This year has been a testament to the strength of our North Shore community. In many areas of our work, we see firsthand how hope can ignite change and how resilience can sustain it. Our journey has been one of collective effort, and we are profoundly grateful for the support and dedication of our staff, volunteers, and trusted partners. Together, we have continued to create pathways to mental health and wellbeing for all.

This has also been a year marked by change and transition, most notably, after six and a half years of dedicated service and remarkable leadership, our Executive Director, Julia Kaisla, embarked on a new journey in December.

We witnessed Julia's leadership style that centered on weaving the values of integrity, kindness, and social innovation day-in and day-out. From championing peer-led frameworks to nurturing stronger ties with Indigenous communities, she demonstrated the immeasurable power of continually showing up and engaging meaningfully. Her leadership has translated into building trust in our communities and has created lasting partnerships that, as an organization, we will carry forward and build on. We want to take this moment to express our deepest gratitude for Julia's commitment, vision, and tireless efforts in guiding our branch.

One of CMHA NWV's strengths is our responsiveness in tailoring programs and services to meet the needs of our diverse North Shore community. We have expanded our offerings by providing support in both English and Farsi within our PACT, Outreach, Peer Navigation and Counselling programs.

To further enhance responsiveness and accessibility, we launched a brand-new website, through funding provided by the North Shore Community Foundation, that provides another avenue for clients to reach out to us. The website showcases photography representing the diversity of our staff and the clients we support, while also incorporating a visual identity that connects us to our North Shore nature roots. It also offers many features, including a comprehensive, searchable North Shore resource guide that compiles vital resources in one place, making it easier for clients to access important information.

Hope and resilience are prevalent in many areas of CMHA NWV. Looking ahead, there are countless reasons to be hopeful for the future. Many of our programs have stable funding into the next fiscal year, and we continue to see the profound impact our programs and services are making in the community. We have been fortunate to cultivate a team of staff, volunteers and partnerships that embodies our values of integrity, kindness, social innovation, agency, and connection.

We would like to thank all CMHA NWV staff and volunteers for their care and attention to our clients; it is clear our people are passionate about serving others.

We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to our departing Board members:

- Jas Dhillon-Gupta (6 years, served as Chair)
- Julie Menten (8 years, served as a Director with legal expertise)
- Josh Radcliffe (9 years, served as Chair)
- Nick Argue (6 years, served as Treasurer)

We have been so fortunate to have their time and expertise governing our organization. It speaks volumes about them and also about our organization as we have been able to attract such talented people and we look forward to working with our newly elected board members in the coming year.

To our staff, volunteers, partners, donors, and community members—thank you for your unwavering support and dedication. Your belief in our mission and your contributions to our work inspire us every day. We look forward to continuing this journey with you, guided by hope and resilience, toward a future where mental health is prioritized and where everyone can access the support they need.



**Anne Kinvig**  
Chair, Board of Directors



**Talayeh Jamshidi**  
Interim Executive Director

# COUNSELLING

Throughout the past year, our Counselling Department has continued to expand and enhance its mental health services, ensuring accessibility and effectiveness for all members of our community. We remain dedicated to offering a wide range of therapeutic modalities and support systems to meet the diverse needs of our clients.

We are pleased to report that we provided a total of 1,597 counselling sessions this past year, accommodating clients through in-person, virtual, phone, and walking therapy sessions. This flexibility ensures that our services are accessible to everyone, regardless of their circumstances.

Notably, more than 80 counselling sessions were conducted in Farsi. Moving forward, we are committed to expanding our language offerings, with plans to include French, thereby fostering inclusivity and meeting the linguistic needs of our diverse community.

*"I hope you know how incredibly grateful I am for you. I knew therapy would be helpful, but this has been so incredibly eye-opening and has released an excitement and calmness in me I didn't expect. It feels like there is light at the end of the tunnel and that I have been tossed a life preserver after YEARS of treading water in the deep end, alone. Thanks again for everything and thanks for being there for me in the most non-judgmental, kind, authentic way."*

—Counselling client

## Staff and Training

Our services were made possible by the dedication of six counsellors and eight interns, whose expertise and compassion have been instrumental in delivering quality care to our clients.

After 10 years of service leading our counselling department, and supervising the Steps program, Maria Watson has retired. Maria's warmth, dedication and care for her staff, interns and clients provided a foundation for program development that truly reflected our values of agency, kindness, integrity, social innovation, and connection. We are very pleased to have Blair Hackman, who first joined CMHA NWV as a counselling intern, take over as Counselling Manager and look forward to the continued development of the department under her capable direction.

## COUNSELLING 2023-24 AT A GLANCE

**1,597**  
counselling  
sessions

**80**  
counselling sessions  
provided in Farsi

Thanks to the support of the Community Action Initiative Micro-grant, we successfully sent three counsellors for Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) training. EMDR is widely recognized for its efficacy in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression symptoms, further strengthening our ability to provide evidence-based therapies.

## Innovative Therapeutic Approaches

In addition to our established therapeutic modalities, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), Internal Family Systems Therapy, Schema Therapy, Somatic Therapy, and Art Therapy, we have expanded our offerings to include innovative approaches like Sand-Tray Therapy, Nature Based Therapy, and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). This variety enables us to tailor our services to meet the unique needs of each client, supporting them on their individual healing journeys.

## Accessibility and Community Support

Sessions are low-cost and offered on a one-on-one basis, ensuring affordability and personalized attention for every client.

We continue to collaborate closely with other community supports, including our Peer Navigator Program, Recovery College Groups (such as Recovering from Trauma), Peer Assisted Care Team (PACT), and our Outreach team. These partnerships enable us to provide a continuum of care for our clients, strengthening our community impact.

Looking forward, we remain committed to expanding our language services, further diversifying our therapeutic offerings, and deepening our community partnerships. With the support of our dedicated staff and community allies, we will continue to uphold our mission of providing compassionate and effective mental health care to those in need.

# PEER NAVIGATION

With a focus on connection, mental health and wellness, peer navigators are there to listen and provide information and resources. Their expertise comes from their lived experience with mental health challenges.

Over the past year, our Peer Navigation Team has grown to nine volunteers with two of them being practicum students from the Peer Support Training Program. We can now support Farsi speaking peers with two peer navigators who are fluent in Farsi. Some of the most common challenges our team supports include social isolation, anxiety, depression, work or school concerns, grief, transitions, chronic pain, relationships, and self-care.

*“Thank you so much for your presence and conversations. Thank you for the kind words full of love and compassion.”*

—Kelty Peer Navigation client

The program is rooted in the belief that each person is an expert on themselves and the life they want to lead, and peer navigators are there to provide guidance and support throughout the recovery journey. They can support peers to set and work toward goals. The service is free of charge and participants can typically connect with a peer navigator within a week of contacting the program. This is a short-term service with peers typically meeting once a week for 45 minutes to an hour for 10 to 12 sessions.

Drop-in peer navigation sessions are also offered at the Kelty Dennehy Mental Health Resource Centre.



## PEER NAVIGATION 2023-24 AT A GLANCE

**224**

hours of client peer time

**39**

regular participants

**9**

active peer  
navigators

**99**

drop-in peer navigation  
sessions held

## C.H.'s Peer Navigation story

About two months ago, C.H. paid a visit to the Kelty centre and became an inpatient. Since then, he has become a peer navigation client. This is his comment about our program from his recently completed intake form:

*“Simon is a great person to meet with, as a peer navigator. He is doing a great job! I am happy to meet with him and share different experiences as they come. I appreciate him listening and giving feedback to me.”*

In the past month, C.H. has gone back to working full-time, is engaging with his friends and activities, and is working on his own mental health. He is a true inspiration.

*“Priyanka helped me so much! I was sad when our sessions came to an end. She often suggested great resources for me like mindfulness meditation and helped me create a schedule for myself based on my values.”*

—Peer Navigation Client

# FAMILY NAVIGATION

Our family navigator assists parents and caregivers of young individuals aged 12 to 24 in navigating the mental-health system, making referrals to services, and advocating for families during challenging times. They also offer one-on-one peer support to families, aiding them in connecting and communicating with youth who may be experiencing difficulties. The program is conducted through virtual, phone, and in-person sessions. This encompasses drop-in scheduling, outreach, and appointments at the Foundry North Shore campus.

*“I have been working with Dana for several years. My daughter is neurodiverse, and there have been many challenges in raising her. Dana has been an amazing support to me. She has offered me invaluable links to resources and ways to navigate challenging parental obstacles. Dana is there for me when no one else is. I am so grateful for the empathic skill set she offers.”*

— Family Navigation client

Our family navigator and a Foundry clinician facilitate Emotional Focused Family Therapy (EFFT) workshops four times a year with follow-up support sessions. Supporting a loved one who is struggling can be challenging and this workshop introduces practical skills to strengthen relationships, increase cooperation and respond to strong emotions. Families learn skills to manage challenging behaviours, process and manage stress and emotions, and help heal wounds from the past. This past year, 40 families have taken the workshop at no cost.

Additionally, the family navigator contributes to community events for parents, such as Let's Talk Shop and the Mental Health Education series, and offers information sessions on other community resources, including Impact North Shore, Pathways, and Parent Advisory Council (PAC) meetings throughout the district.

The family navigator has supported 400+ families this past year.

## FAMILY NAVIGATION 2023-24 AT A GLANCE

40

families took the workshop

400+

families supported



Family Navigation client and the Family Navigator's dog

*“The work I get to do with youth is always enhanced when I get to work with Dana. She provides parents with the tools and skills to not only better understand themselves, but also their children. I often get positive feedback from clients that Dana was able to understand and support them from a different perspective. I highly recommend Dana as her skillset can only enhance a program and the people she works with.”*

—Family Navigation youth clinician



# SOCIAL SUPPORT GROUPS

Our social support groups provide the foundation for a thriving community based on social connection. The success of these groups is rooted in strongly valuing expertise through lived experience. Group leaders consist mainly of volunteers in the community who understand mental health challenges first-hand, providing a non-judgmental space where folks can feel safe, welcome, and understood.

The Kelty Dennehy Mental Health Resource Centre in the HOpe Centre of Lions Gate Hospital continues to play a foundational role and offers a drop-in space for community members to gather and connect. This past year, we provided a large variety of peer-facilitated support groups, both in person and online. These groups included:

- Art Therapy for Wellness
- Guided Meditation with Erin
- Journaling Workshop
- Knitting
- Men Let's Talk
- Memory Book Workshop
- Mindful Art
- Mindful Journaling
- Mindfulness, Meditation and Movement
- Monthly Book Club
- Pet Therapy
- Recovery from Trauma Art Therapy
- Qigong
- SMART (Self Management And Recovery Training)
- Watercolour Painting

## SOCIAL SUPPORT GROUPS 2023-24 AT A GLANCE

**519**  
sessions

**618**  
volunteer hours

*"I feel that the social interaction provided through this group and other groups is vital for my wellbeing and mental health. Thank you for continuing to provide this group."*

—Social support group participant



Participants at the Watercolour Painting group

# SKOOKUM HI-YU' KO-PET'

## A COMMUNITY WELLNESS PROGRAM

The Skookum Hi-Yu' Ko-Pet' ("Strong Enough" in Chinook) program is known as the sub-regional peer support initiative. The program is community-driven, and has a harm-reduction approach to addressing substance use and contributing to First Nations wellness in a sub-region of the Vancouver Coastal area.

### Who Are We?

- Tla'amin Nation (Powell River)
- shíshálh Nation (Sechelt)
- Squamish Nation, (North Vancouver, Vancouver, Gibsons, and Squamish)
- Tsleil-Waututh Nation (North Vancouver)
- Musqueam Nation (Vancouver)

### Program Development

The Skookum Hi-Yu' Ko-Pet' has had multiple sessions of program development with peers in the past year. The Nations drive the program from the community level, and the CMHA NWV then incorporates the recommendations into overall programming. Based on cultural and Indigenous knowledge sharing and gathering, the program has gained substantial development in 2023/24.

The Skookum Hi-Yu' Ko-Pet' program experienced significant growth this past year, with the Re-energizing Wellness training setting a powerful tone for enhanced connections and engagement. The peer retreat emerged as a pivotal opportunity for members to exchange stories and experiences through a community lens, while also brainstorming strategies to prioritize safety and program objectives.

The program had the privilege of engaging with the Musqueam Nation, enriching their understanding of community peer work and program integration. Noteworthy highlights included participating in the Squamish Nation's Addiction Awareness Week, fostering ongoing collaboration and support. Additionally, a program coordinator was honoured with a traditional blanket ceremony by the Nation.

### Program Training

Re-energizing Wellness is foundational training for the program and grounded in culture. Key themes of the training are substance use, mental health overview, Zones of Balance and Indigenous harm reduction.

The program was hosted by the Tla'amin Nation in July and Squamish Nation in December. Re-energizing Wellness featured immersive, full-day training sessions. The sessions were highly effective, equipping everyone with valuable skills and tools to enrich the groups they lead.

### Peer Retreat

The peer retreat was held from October 6 to 8 at the serene Loon Lake Lodge, drawing together 11 peers and three peer coordinators representing four Nations. Over the weekend, participants used land-based healing and fostered meaningful connections to enhance their wellness journey.



Participating in the Squamish Nation's health fair



# HOUSING

Housing can often be the key to mental wellbeing for many of our clients. Our dedicated Housing team meets people where they are at in their mental health journey and helps to define goals and advocate for supports, where necessary. For some, this can mean aging in place and, for others, it can mean building the life skills needed to maintain stable housing.

CMHA NWV has 19 beds in our three licensed, 24-hour staffed homes run in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health. CMHA NWV's homes have seen many positive changes this past year, including the introduction of a new art group and renovations that include a much needed and more environmentally friendly heat pump at Harold House.

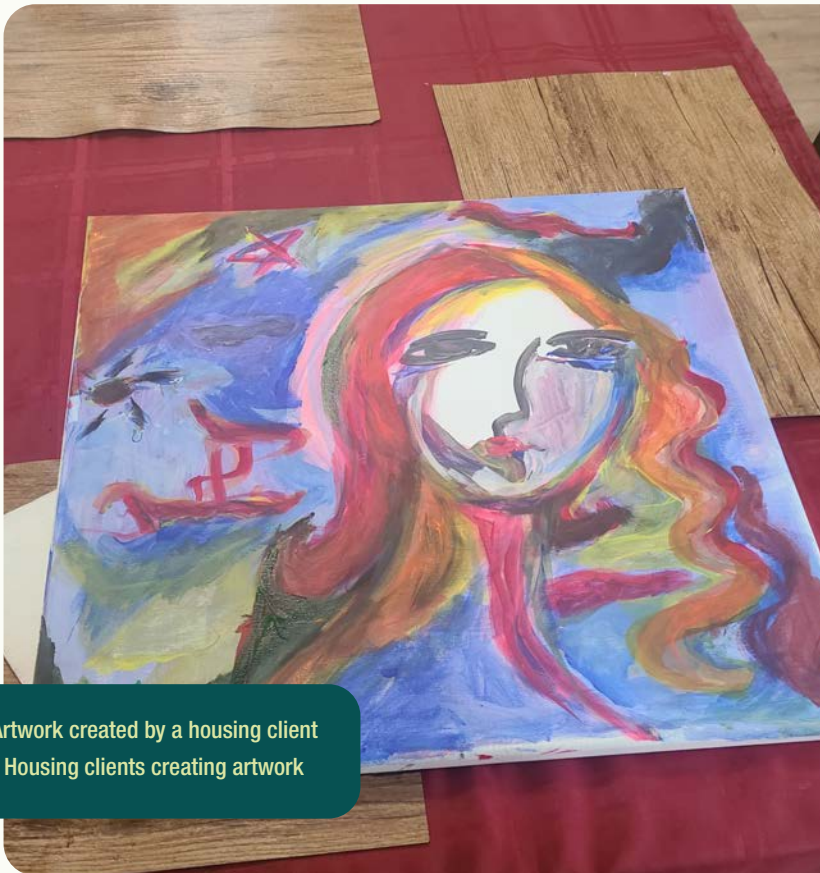
Three of our homes are Circle of Care group homes, which are privately funded. Circle of Care homes are operated by CMHA NWV in partnership with faith communities and

Vancouver Coastal Health's Health Connections Clinic. All Circle of Care clients have a diagnosis of mental illness and have a history of, or are at significant risk, of homelessness.

After clients have housing, we have seen them make remarkable changes, including going back to school, finding employment, joining support groups and reconnecting with their families.



**CLICK HERE** to read the North Shore News article about our Circle of Care clients, *"Loss of group home puts six North Shore residents at risk of homelessness"*



(left) Artwork created by a housing client  
(right) Housing clients creating artwork



## CMHA Housing client spotlight: Emmanuel Lopez

We had the privilege to interview Emmanuel Lopez, a resident of our licensed group home, and hear his impactful story of mental health and wellness.

### **Q: Reflecting on your journey from where you started two years ago at CMHA NWV's group home to where you are now, what stands out the most?**

**A:** I used to fear taking the first steps toward accomplishing the goals I set for myself. I took "the plunge" to move into Arborlynn when I was depressed, anxious and hopeless. I didn't believe I could live a meaningful life because of all the diagnoses I had been given for the last nine years.

I did end up taking that step to pursue a life that I know would not only benefit myself, but others, as well. I was fear-ridden in all aspects of life, and now, although I still have tremendous fear when taking on a new project, I am now able to work through that fear and still go after what I know will be good for me. The ability to live a meaningful and beautiful life, despite having pretty bad anxiety and intense mood swings, I now realize is something I can continue accomplishing.

### **Q: What motivated you to pursue a practicum with the Older Adult Mental Health team, and how has your own recovery journey influenced your approach to co-facilitating the ladies' group at the HOpe Centre?**

**A:** I now work as a peer support worker practicum student with older adults. I chose to do my practicum with the Older Adult Mental Health team because older adults can at times feel lonely and "forgotten," similar to how I felt when I was isolated from my community after being diagnosed with various mental health issues.

I believe that everyone deserves to live a meaningful life, no matter how old or young you are. I bring my compassionate heart to every group I co-facilitate and every one-on-one client I have. I understand now that if I can humble myself and meet someone exactly where they are on their journey, then I am sure the tremendous suffering I have felt in the past, is being put to good use.

### **Q: Can you share how your experience at CMHA NWV's group home and the support from the staff contributed to your successful recovery journey and ongoing sobriety?**

**A:** The staff at Arborlynn, at times, worked harder than me. They fought harder for my own wellbeing than I was able to do for myself. At Arborlynn, I felt truly cared for, and I felt like I mattered. I am still in awe of how selfless and encouraging the staff were. The housing manager especially supported me through some of my darkest moments. The manager never gave up on me, and continually reminded me that "I was the one driving the bus."

I felt empowered at Arborlynn, and that no matter how dark life can be, we can always change our attitude and see our problems from a place of opportunity, as opposed to a place of hopelessness, despair and suffering. I recently celebrated four years sober, and I am 100% certain that I owe that to the fact that when I didn't have any hope, others, like the staff at Arborlynn, were hopeful for me. It is humbling to realize that recovery and sobriety are never an "individual project" that one embarks on, but rather a team effort. At Arborlynn, I knew I was on the winning team.

*"I recently celebrated four years sober, and I am 100% certain that I owe that to the fact that when I didn't have any hope, others, like the staff at Arborlynn, were hopeful for me."*

— Emmanuel Lopez, CMHA Housing client





# PEER ASSISTED CARE TEAM (PACT)

PACT is a mobile, community-led team that serves as an alternative emergency response service for crisis calls related to mental health and/or substance use in North and West Vancouver.

Within the last year, PACT conducted 22 presentations for service providers on the North Shore. These presentations aimed to educate and inform various stakeholders about PACT services, including local government, municipal emergency response teams, First Nations staff, school districts, health representatives, cultural organizations, community organizations, social service associations, and private businesses.

PACT pairs a trained mental health professional with a peer support worker to provide trauma-informed and culturally safe support through phone calls, texts, and in-person visits. We serve individuals and families ages 13+ in both English and Farsi. In response to the program's success and community needs, we expanded our operating hours in September 2023 from an 8-hour, 5-days-a-week model to a 16-hour, 7-days-a-week model. Our current hours of operation are 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., seven days a week.

A crisis can happen to anyone at any time, and can manifest differently across various communities, demographics, and cultures. Within the context of North Shore PACT, a crisis is a behavioral, emotional, or psychiatric situation perceived by the individual, family, friend, or bystander that requires intervention and support. It may also refer to a third party's concern for someone's wellbeing, necessitating assessment and support without involving police and emergency services.

## PACT 2023-24 AT A GLANCE

**22**  
presentations  
conducted  
for service  
providers

**19**  
community  
events

**112**  
service hours  
provided per  
week

North Shore PACT also provides support to family members, caregivers, and bystanders affected by a mental health or substance use crisis. With consent, service users will receive short-term follow-up from PACT staff. This follow-up offers an opportunity to refer to further services, discuss safety and recovery plans, and assess ongoing wellbeing.

## Community Events

CMHA NWV participated in 19 community events this past year, where display tables were set up to raise awareness about CMHA programs and services, promote mental health in the community, and encourage help-seeking behaviours. These events included local fairs, resource hubs, community centres, health fairs, and cultural festivals. Through these engagements, our branch reached diverse groups of people and fostered meaningful connections within the community.



CMHA staff at  
community events





# OUTREACH SERVICES

At CMHA NWV, our Outreach Services have evolved to meet the growing needs of our community through a case management-focused approach, centered on client needs. This year, we proudly served 293 new clients and provided services to a total of 655 clients, highlighting our commitment to supporting individuals in our community.

Our dedicated outreach workers conduct thorough assessments to understand each client's specific needs, including psychosocial limitations, economic challenges, and other barriers they may face. Working collaboratively with clients, our outreach workers develop individualized care plans based on available services and the clients' short- and long-term goals. This approach enhances our ability to provide ongoing support, ensuring clients maintain stable housing and achieve greater independence.

In response to the growing housing crisis, we have made strategic changes to better support our community. At the end of May, we closed our food program to allow our Outreach team to focus more effectively on supporting individuals through housing supplements and homelessness prevention within the community.

## OUTREACH SERVICES 2023-24 AT A GLANCE

**293**  
new clients

**655**  
clients supported

As we move forward, the outreach team plans to shift from scheduled appointments and "in-reach" with clients from our office to community engagement and meeting folks where they are in the community. This new approach will involve collaborating with other organizations to better support our clients and ensure they receive comprehensive care.

This year has been a testament to our resilience and hope, as we adapt to meet the evolving needs of our clients. The dedication and hard work of our Outreach team have ensured that even amid challenges, we continue to provide essential support and build a foundation of stability and hope for those we serve.

*In slumber's realm, I find my way  
To a world where dreams come out to play  
A place where hope and magic reign  
Where the heart's deepest desires remain*

*With CMHA's gentle hand in mine  
Guiding me through life's troubled vine  
Their kindness shines like a beacon bright  
Illuminating the darkest of nights*

*In this realm of wonder, I am free  
To soar on eagle's wings, to be me  
To dance with stars, to sing with the moon  
To live a life where love is in tune*

*Their compassion and care, a steady stream  
Helping me heal, helping me dream  
A safe haven from life's stormy sea  
A place to find peace, where I can be me*

*In this dream world, I find my peace  
A place where joy and love release  
All the fears, all the doubts, all the pain  
Washed away, like summer rain*

*So let me sleep, let me dream  
For in this world, my heart can beam  
With hope and love, with joy and light  
Thanks to CMHA, shining so bright.*

—poem by outreach client, dedicated to CMHA



# RECOVERY COLLEGE YVR

Recovery College YVR (RC YVR) was established in May 2023 with one-time funding from the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions and has flourished under the collaborative efforts of the CMHA NWV and Vancouver Coastal Health's (VCH) Consumer Involvement and Initiatives program.

Over the past year, the college has demonstrated significant strides, delivering 633 course and group sessions and registering 2,631 individuals. The introduction of two new courses, several new social support groups and the transition of two in-person courses to online formats has enhanced accessibility and engagement.

*“Love the group, great facilitators. I’m a mental health clinician as well as a consumer, and I have been super impressed with the clinical skills of the facilitators!”*

*“This group lets me be energized, yet calm. I enjoy the sharing of positive energy. Attending regularly makes me feel more balanced and happy.”*

—RC YVR Group participants

Feedback from participants underscores the program's efficacy, with 94% expressing high satisfaction with the social support groups . Participants say they entered these groups with mild distress, on average, and departed with no distress, highlighting the program's positive impact.

Looking ahead, RC YVR aims to expand its offerings and reach. In collaboration with the Recovery College of Central Alberta, a course on Grieving the Lost Healthy Self is being codeveloped and will be piloted in September. Additionally, the adaptation of a series of "insight" courses from the Well-being Learning Centre in Winnipeg will enrich our course catalogue, covering topics such as stress management and boundaries. Locally developed content will focus on fostering compassion and practical self-care strategies.

## RC YVR 2023-24 AT A GLANCE

**633**  
course and group  
sessions

**2,631**  
individuals  
registered

**94%**  
of participants  
expressed high  
satisfaction with social  
support groups

**700**  
additional people  
projected to be  
reached by March  
2025

Through these initiatives, RC YVR is projecting to reach an additional 700 individuals by March 2025 , furthering its mission to provide accessible and impactful mental health education and support within the community. Using this momentum, we plan to continue to explore expansion into the Fraser Health Authority as well as rural and remote communities within VCH.

*“Facilitating workshops and groups for RC YVR has helped give me meaning and purpose in my life. It enables me to give back to my community and help others in their recovery journeys while also helping me in my recovery journey. My involvement in the operations committee and the working group lets my voice be heard to make a difference and contribute to RC YVR in a meaningful way.”*

—RC YVR Workshop facilitator

# YOUTH PROGRAMS: STEPS

Steps is a recreational program designed for North Shore youth dealing with mental health challenges, focusing on nature-based activities to alleviate anxiety and depression, combat isolation, and support recovery through free, weekly physical activity and nature experiences.

The program includes two cohorts: one for ages 13 to 18 and another for ages 19 to 29, managed by CMHA NWV. Participants also benefit from one-on-one support from a Steps Peer Support Worker.

Steps has been running successfully for eight years and is provided free of charge to all participants.

Funding for Steps relies on a combination of fundraising efforts and grants, including a \$25,000 private donation and events such as Run Like a Girl.

Steps currently serves 48 registered participants with 20 in the Steps program and 28 in the Steps+ program.

Partners we have collaborated with include The Woods Arts&Wellness, Bare Refillery, North Vancouver Recreation and Culture Commission, Climb Base 5, Grouse Mountain, Red Cedar Women Weaving, Takaya Tours and Bella Ceramica Studio.

Activities this year included a ropes course, a cedar-weaving workshop, nature walks, a sourdough bread workshop, laser tag, mindfulness, disc golf, and various other arts and crafts groups.

## STEPS 2023-24 AT A GLANCE

**48**

participants  
registered

**100%**

of participants surveyed reported  
an improvement in their mood after  
attending the group

Emma Duggan and Spencer Curran have joined as the new program coordinator and assistant, respectively, and are implementing a co-facilitator model that incorporates their peer-support training.

### Impact on Participants

Participants reported increased feelings of social connection and support, as well as a reduction in distress and shame typically associated with seeking mental health support.

Engagement with Steps activities have notably enhanced participants' comfort in engaging with nature settings.

These updates reflect the ongoing success and growth of Steps in supporting youth mental health through accessible, nature-based programming and supportive community initiatives.



(left) STEPS participants in a breadmaking workshop  
(right) STEPS participants at the Run Like a Girl event





# EMPLOYMENT

The employment service at CMHA NWV is offered in partnership with YWCA Metro Vancouver and the WorkBC Centre – North Vancouver. It provides services, programs, and support to help North Shore residents find meaningful employment.

Our team of four WorkBC service providers includes two Case Managers, a Customized Employment Specialist and a Counsellor to help ensure that the needs of community members are met in a professional and supportive manner.

## Sophia's WorkBC story

Sophia had a learning disability, called Dyscalculia. This disability affects a person's ability to understand number-based information and math. As a result of this disability, the client reported that it also impacted her reading skills and sometimes her concentration and focusing abilities.

She had emigrated from another country. She completed high school in B.C. and, thereafter, a three-year diploma in nutrition.

She registered as a client during the pandemic. Jobs at that time were scarce.

After the customized employment specialist (CE) and Sophia completed the Discovery Assessment, it was evident that health, wellness and nutrition were her main themes.

Sophia showed a keenness in working at a health store. However, with the onset of the pandemic and various businesses shutting down, this was almost impossible.

Using her transferrable skills, the CE marketed her potential to the Supportive Transition Adult Group Education (STAGE) program. STAGE is part of a community-based program with the North Shore Disability Resource Centre, and requested that Sophia be given a chance to teach health and nutrition.

The management were empathetic and inclusive, and showed a willingness to give her an opportunity. They interviewed Sophia and offered her a part-time position to teach a small group of participants about health and wellness via Zoom.

With sufficient and consistent training, this eventually led to more hours and a full-time position.

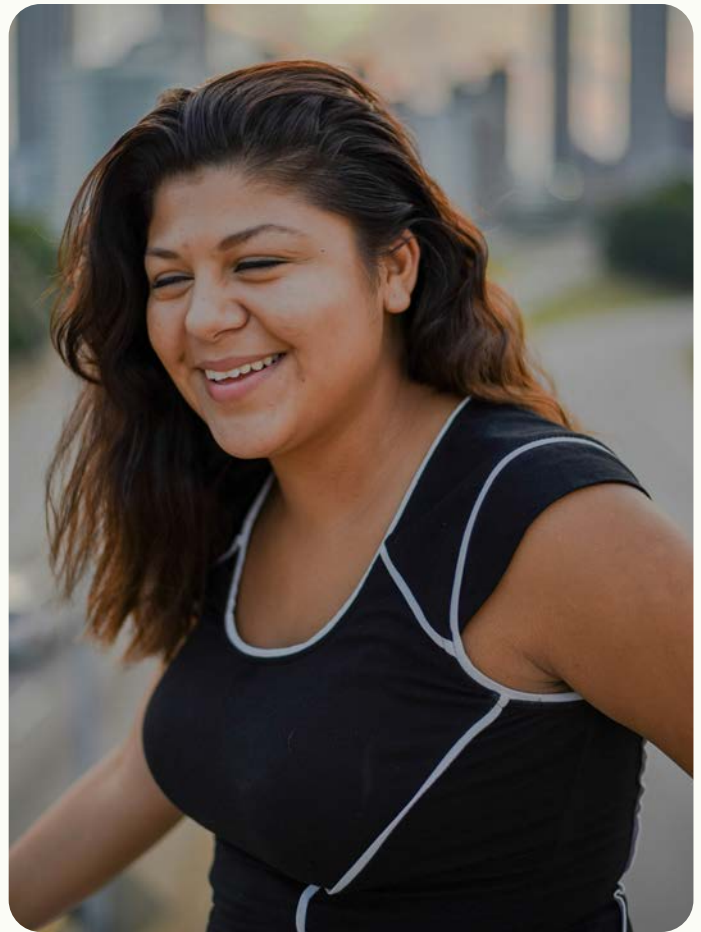
Sophia now engages with clients in-person and also supports the participants with community outreach programs.

The management, together with the CE, provided re-training when required. This was followed by moderate and empathetic supervision.

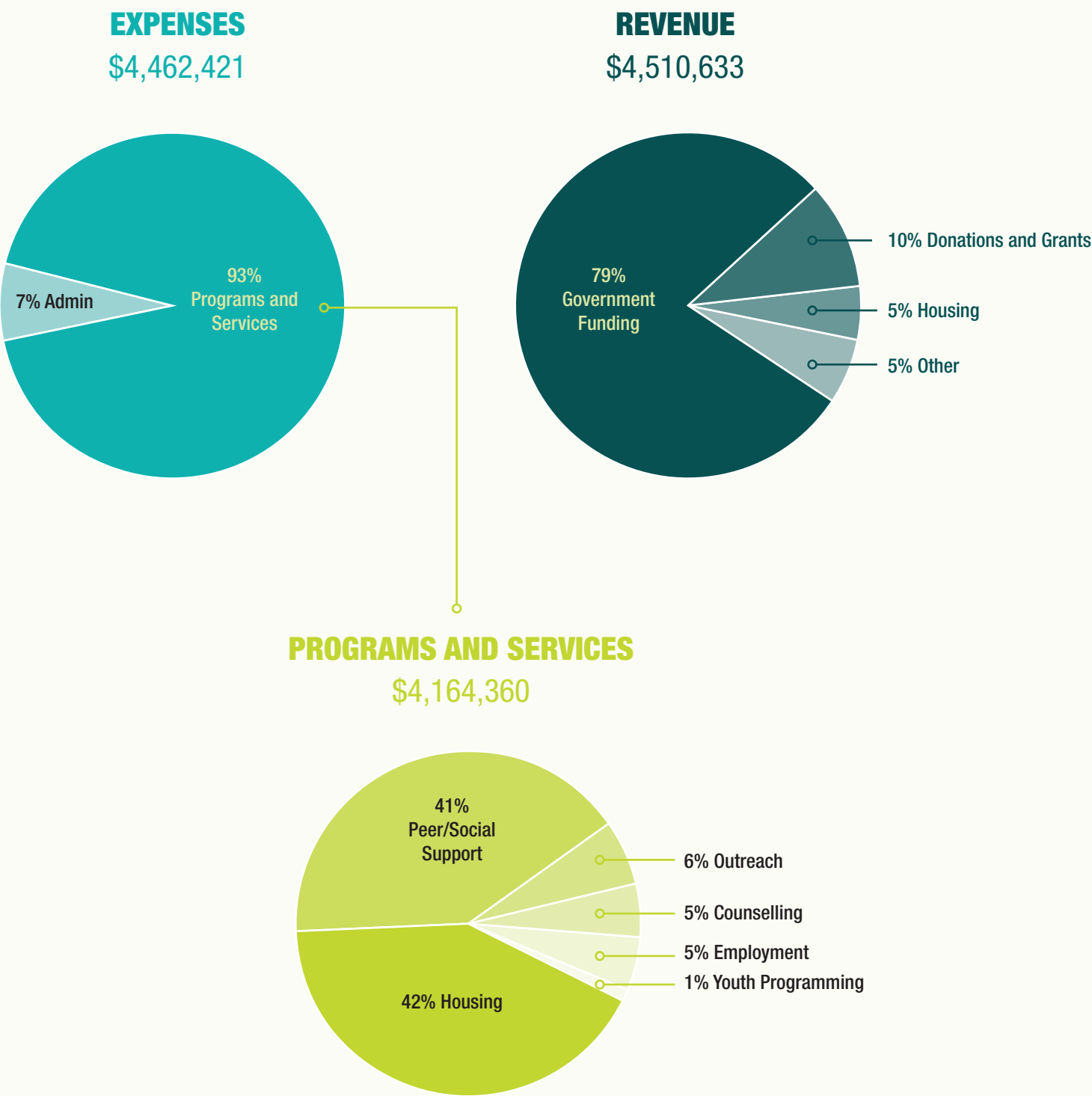
Sophia reports that the opportunity given to her was empowering and positively impacted her self-confidence.

Sophia was part of the panel at the job fair that was held in February. She spoke eloquently about her success with both the employer and the WorkBC team, and she was seen as an advocate for people with diverse abilities.

Bravo to Sophia!



# FINANCIAL BREAKDOWN



# THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

The work we do at CHMA NWV would not be possible without help from our donors, who are a beacon of hope, creating positive change in our communities. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to those who provide funding and sponsorship so our programs not only continue, but also thrive and improve the mental health of thousands of people across the North Shore. Their kindness and generosity provide crucial support to those in need and strengthen the bonds that keep our diverse array of clients connected to others, ensuring they are more resilient to struggles that may come their way. We would like to recognize their support as invaluable to our clients, who have been able to find moments of light with us. Those moments can often be the spark that helps them find their path to mental wellness.

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North and West Vancouver  
*Mental health for all*

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