

# ANNUAL REPORT

## Peak House Pacific Youth & Family Services Society

2018/19



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[www.peakhouse.ca](http://www.peakhouse.ca)

## **Board of Director's Report**

This was an exciting year for Peak House, as the board began a fundraising campaign, which included commencing production of a video about the program. The board saw Jennifer Gregg leave after a number of years of service and her ideas and wisdom will be missed. We also had the pleasure of adding Stephanie Fitzsimmons and Marc Goffaux to the board and welcome their diverse talents and new energy. Peak House continues to be inspired by our youth and the amazing work done could not happen without the staff and the leadership of our executive director, James Kelly, and our program director, Wendy Wittmack.

Patrick Grayer  
President, Board of Directors

## **Executive Director's Report**

As a community we continue to battle against, prevent, and mourn the devastating effects of the overdose crisis. Collectively we have lost children, community members, loved ones, friends, family, and undeniably we have also lost parts of ourselves. It has been a solidifying reminder of the important role we play in the continuum of care required to support young people in getting their lives back from the grip of drug and alcohol use.

Last year we, along with many in the sector, struggled with staffing shortages, lower bed occupancy rates, high levels of homelessness and navigated new intake regulations and changes within our sector. During these challenges, we engaged media to highlight our services, reached out to extend our networks to ensure our program was widely known, shortened our referral package to reduce wait times and barriers and came together as both a team and an extended network of service providers to try to meet the needs of our community and province. I am incredibly proud of our amazing staff team, our community of allied service providers, and the resilience and strength of the young people and their families that allowed us to be a part of their journey.

Peak House is for many, the calm in the storm. A place for families to rest, and for young people to embark on a new chapter. A place of inclusion and belonging. A place where young people reconnect to their gifts, get to be kids again and learn both the power of boundaries and the power to make change in the midst of a storm that made the prospects of joy seem unattainable.

I have said this before, today more than ever we are reminded of how important it is that we continue to create more opportunities for youth, that the door is open, the lights on, and a safe place is waiting for young people when they are ready and in need of our care.

James Kelly  
Executive Director

## School Report

With the increase of the teaching position to full-time last school year, the Peak House School Program has continued to expand and further develop program offerings, supports, and services. There have been many student success stories from their time at Peak House, and we often hear positive news about our students post-program. The goals of the school program continue to be focussed on supporting students' success, and ensuring that they have the opportunity to have choice and flexibility in their education. BC's new curriculum allows students to explore and learn in areas of interest and recognizes their strengths, not only academically, but in the areas of personal and cultural identity, social responsibility, creative and critical thinking, and communication. The new curriculum not only supports the students to be prepared for post-secondary life, but also lends itself well to the therapeutic work they are doing at Peak House. The framework of the new competency-based education plans serves as an effective framework for communicating the students learning profile to their community school.

The three goals of the school program remain consistent. The first is to provide academic re-engagement opportunities and/or academic continuity in their current educational plan from their home school. As in previous years, there is a large range in students' educational experience and grade level when they arrive at Peak House. Some students are highly motivated and engaged in their learning, and are taking honours English or statistics, while others are stepping foot in a school after years of non-engagement. Each student is provided with an individualized learning experience, some beginning with foundational numeracy and literacy work from elementary/middle year grades, while others are completing high school courses, working towards graduation or completing employment training certifications. The school program ensures that every student is optimally challenged and pursuing their own personal and educational goals.

The second goal is to support students to develop a transition and after-care plan for their education, employment, or post-secondary life. This is achieved by supporting the students to develop or strengthen the skills they need to be successful in at school. When they are at Peak House their education program is individualized, strength-based, and provides opportunity for choice. It is beneficial if their community school can provide the accommodations and adaptations that they found success with at Peak House. It's also beneficial if the education program in the community is continued in the Peak House classroom so they are prepared for a successful return to school. Peak House school porgram supports the students to recognize their strengths, develop a positive association with school, and catch up on coursework. Although the central focus remains on their therapeutic work, the school program provides balance and structure to pursue their career and educational goals. Balance and consistency are pillars of the program, specifically during times of transition and change in their lives.

The third goal of the school program is to provide educational transition services to the student, their family, and school/district team. This year, several students returned to the same school and many transferred to a new school. Either

way, the school team benefits from information on how to best support the students at their community school. The school program provides the link between Peak House and the community school. Communication with the school typically includes information about the students' strengths, stretches , or needs, and recommendations for support strategies. The framework for this information is broken down into the categories of personal, social, and intellectual. The goal is to ensure that the school knows about all of the hard work they did at Peak House, how to support them to build on their successes, and to make space for their return by putting resources and supports in place. Every transition is very different and can be extremely time sensitive if they leave Peak House early. Transition support has increased to become a primary service of the school program in recent years.

There were some new elements added to the school programming this past year. The students participated in art workshops led by indigenous artists from the community, as well as Reframing Indigenous Relations facilitators from the Community Arts Council of Vancouver. We had Skills Canada host Trades & Technology presentations for the students, and we visited local post-secondary institutions including BCIT, VCC and Emily Carr University of Art + Design. We continued regular classes at the Sarah McLachlan School of Music, where students can learn to play instruments, create music, write lyrics, record songs, learn DJ turntable basics, and participate in therapeutic music activities. We also continued to have African djembe drumming sessions with an instructor and regular visits from Mike's Critters, where the students engaged with and learned about exotic animals. This year the school program contracted an outdoor education specialist to facilitate an introductory backcountry skills day for the students at Lighthouse Park, a local old growth forest.

The students this year have accomplished so much, both personally and academically. School continues to be an integral part of their lives, and has a tremendous impact on their self image and their self efficacy. In a year full of triumphs, there are a few success stories worth mentioning. One student arrived at Peak House having already graduated and had his hopes set on studying psychology in post-secondary. He successfully upgraded one of his courses at Peak House and rewrote the provincial exam. A few months later, he shared with us the exciting news that he was accepted to a post-secondary psychology program for this fall. Two other students reached out to let us know that they had graduated since leaving Peak House. Despite very challenging life circumstances, another student completed grade 12 during their time at Peak House. She was able to participate in all of her graduation events, and honour her time, work, and commitment in the classroom.

In closing, I would like to thank the team at Peak House for their incredible work that never fails to inspire and inform my practice as the teacher in the program. It's an honour to be a part of the team and to collectively support the youth. Looking forward to continuing to grow and improve the program every year.

Michelle Davis  
Resource Teacher  
Peak House Provincial Educational Resource Program

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Michelle Davis  
Resource Teacher  
Peak House Provincial Educational Resource Program

# Peak House Team

## Board of Directors

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### Chair

Patrick Grayer

### Secretary

Christine Smith

### Directors

Emily Coates

Marc Goffaux

### Vice Chair

Caitlin Grisack

### Treasurer

Stephanie Fitzsimmons

## Staff Team

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### Management

James Kelly, Executive Director

Wendy Wittmack, Program Manager

### Clinical Supervisor

Vikki Reynolds

### Intake & Assessment Counsellor

Lina Silano

### Administration (part time)

Karan Sood

### Mental Health & Addiction

#### Clinical Counsellors

Stefanie Krasnow

Graeme Sampson

### VSB Teacher

Michelle Davis

### Nurse Practitioner

Megan Ireland & Kristen Aikman

### Acupuncturist

Louise Fenwick

### Yoga Instructor

Amanda De Ciccio

### Cook

Terry Jeon

### Youth Counsellors

Rebeka Allen

Carly Whitaker-Wilson

Cynthia Paul

Kailee Bochke

Navneet Bindra

### Night Attendants

Laila Biergans

Yolanda Trianna

### On-Call Relief

Joe Pingitore

Amber Del Pupo

Wynne Pruden

Heba Khalid

Mayra Gonzalez

Shauna Gammon

Josh Morabito

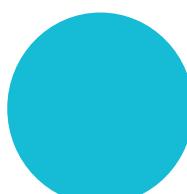
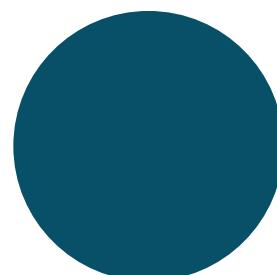
Jacqueline Krestinski

Rick Russell

Bryan MacAlpine

### Practicum Students

Shawna Gammon



# Peak House

## 2018/19 Highlights



### media exposure

we shared the Peak House story with over 5 major media networks

### shorter referral package

we cut it in half to reduce barriers to intake

### alumni

groups and participation

### inclusive

creating belonging for all young people

### PADS

Assistant dogs visit the house twice a month

supporting families & community of care teams

aftercare

website & logo refresh

# Annual Report 2018/19

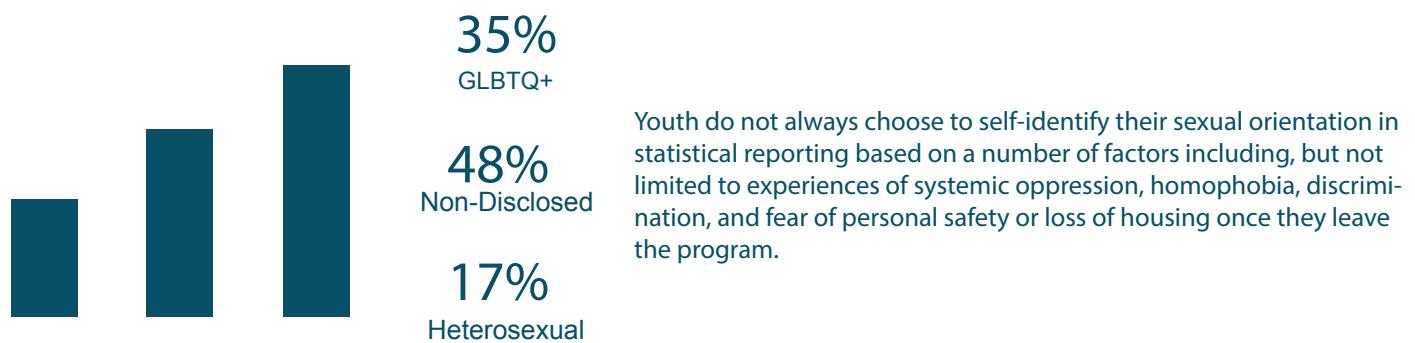
## Ethnicity



Please note youth may report in more than one category.

Peak House recognizes the limitations of the ethnicity categories based on our reporting requirements. We are also aware that not all youth choose, or are not able to self-report based on a number of factors including but not limited to racialized systemic oppression, discrimination, and/or a lack of knowledge of ethnic background. As a result, the full diversity of the youth at Peak House is not accurately reported. We are working on ways to better reflect this data in the upcoming year.

## Sexual Orientation



## Gender Identity

Youth do not always choose to self-identify their gender identity (particularly in cases where their gender identity/expression falls outside of the binary) in statistical reporting based on a number of factors including but not limited to experiences of systemic oppression, resistance against gender categories, transphobia, discrimination, and fear for personal safety or loss of housing once they leave the program.

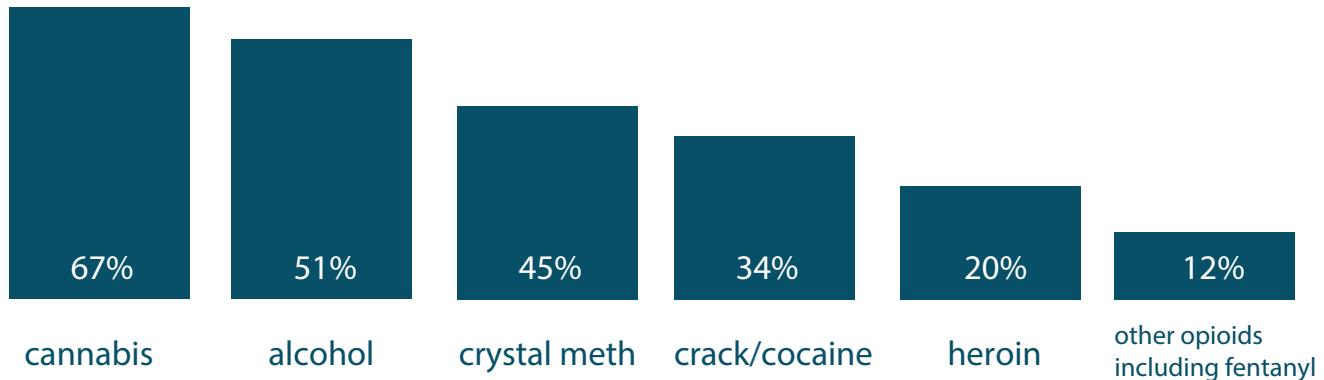


**fostering success, healing and hope for over 30 years**

# Annual Report 2018/19

## Substance Use

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## Poly Drug Use

*98% of youth self-report using more than one substance on a regular basis.*

It is important to note that while the popular drugs of choice remain consistent from past recent fiscal years, the amount of fentanyl found in many of these substances continues to climb. Youth intending to use one substance may find themselves unintendedly also consuming fentanyl. This has had deadly consequences. We, as a community are deeply concerned about the increased lack of safety amongst those consuming non prescribed drugs.

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Peak House is a provincial resource, we serve youth and their families across the province of British Columbia.

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# Annual Report 2018/19

Young people and their families reported an increase in positive outcomes as a result of their involvement with our program.



**physical health  
emotional/mental health  
family/home situation  
educational status**

**overdose risk  
criminal justice system involvement  
problematic substance use  
homelessness**

## Testimonials

We receive lots of amazing letters from our former alumni and their families. Here is a couple from this last fiscal. Thank you for letting us know how you are doing and for your feedback!!

The staff at PH are outstanding. They were patient, flexible, thoughtful, respectful and kind, both to my daughter and myself. From the intake process to the daily support , we both felt supported and most of all , like there was hope, in what felt like a hopeless situation. I'm sure you have been in this industry long enough to realize that when there is hope , it changes people's worlds. It changed my daughter's world, and it changed mine.

I think for me , as a mom, the most significant moment was our first visit together after her first admission. I saw her and couldn't believe the difference in her appearance and demeanor within such a short time. I saw parts of her that I hadn't seen for a very long time. In addition to her staying clear of hard drugs since then , she started eating again , and eating more healthy. Had a bit of her whitty sense of humour back and her eyes looked like there was some life in them again. She was clean and looked well and healthy....she has maintained most of these things since she left PH which makes me know there is hope for her to get her life back on track at some point.

I just wanted to write to say thank you for everything your organization does for youth and families . It is truly an amazing place and program.

-parent

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Thank you all very much for welcoming int the door of Peak House. I am doing great, still staying sober and enjoying life, I have also encouraged my family to stay sober too my mom is a week clean and so is my step dan my two cousins.

I am keeping busy and going to the YMCA a couple times a week to keep up my daily exercise. I miss all you, you made such a good impact on me and it helped me to find myself which I truly appreciated.  
-youth

# Thank You!



On behalf of the entire Peak House team, we would like to thank our funders, donors, and community partners. Together, we have supported BC youth and their families for over 31 years.

We would like to acknowledge the strength and wisdom of the young people and their families for their courage to make, support and maintain the profound changes and growth we witness every day.

As a team, we are proud to be an award-winning program, delivering innovative and inclusive services to support youth, families, and our community.

