

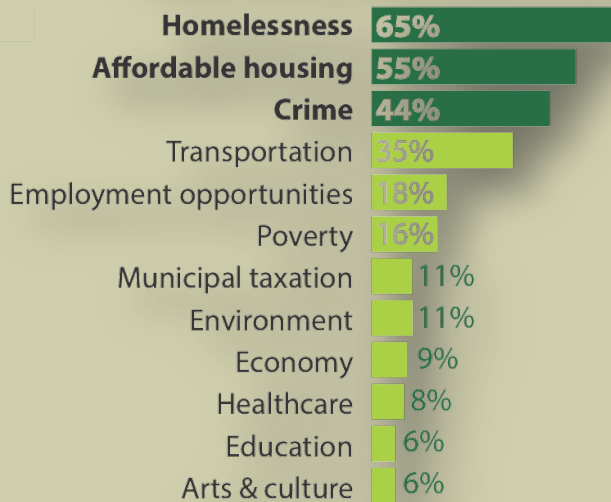
Pop-Up Purpose Academy (PUPA)

Definition of PUPA: An intermediate stage of metamorphosis from the immature (larva) to adult (imago) form, usually enclosed in a cocoon or protective covering while undergoing these internal changes.



In Abbotsford Community Foundation’s “2019 Abbotsford’s Vital Signs” publication, the number one “most important issue facing Abbotsford,” according to surveyed residents was “Homelessness” (65%)... beating out the related “Affordable Housing” (55%), and ten other issues that registered with less than

What are the most important issues facing Abbotsford today?



50% of respondents. This “Pop-Up Purpose Academy” is the “homeless” community’s response to this issue that so many Abbotsford residents feel is of utmost importance.

Why don’t you just call it a “Homelessness Conference” instead?

For one, no one in the so-called “homeless” community in Abbotsford much likes being called “homeless.” Some people have lived in Abbotsford most or all of their lives... they consider themselves “home” because they are in Abbotsford. Some people don’t like how, once applied, the “homeless” label seems to trump every other quality, strength, passion or identity that a person might have or prefer or appreciate about themselves and their lives... friend, artist, father, and on and on.

Why are you calling it a “Purpose Academy”?

One of our members says, “The difference between a functioning addict and a non-functioning addict is whether they have purpose in their lives... something to look forward to and work toward.” We think that definition of “functional” and “non-functional” could apply to just about anyone... be they a so-called “addict” or not.

We know from stigma-busting “Rat Park” research done at Simon Fraser University in the 1970’s that “addiction” isn’t really about drugs... it’s about connection (or lack thereof). And we know from over 50 years of research on resiliency that connection on its own doesn’t spell resiliency... it has to be coupled with meaningful opportunities and purposeful action. So instead of calling this an academy about “homelessness” or “addiction” or “disconnection” ... the problems ... we are calling in a “Purpose Academy” ... the solution! Purpose.

Who is the “Purpose Academy” for?

The Purpose Academy is for anyone who feels or wants part of their purpose in life to be doing their part to tackle what is fast becoming a cornerstone issue of this century... homelessness. But, more than that... homelessness may be the most visible symptom of isolation in our community... but we can all think of someone close to us who experiences isolation in other ways. The purpose academy is to build a stronger community of purpose... and dispel some of these symptoms of isolation.

We think anyone will be able to find a “Purposeful Conversation” that calls to them from the sessions for the day. (There will also be a chill out and art

room, for those that need a break, to reflect, to interact with a counsellor, or engage in other healing activities.) And, because these conversations are designed to treat everyone’s experience, knowledge and ideas as expertise... everyone will have something valuable to contribute, and something valuable to take away from the conversation (though no one is going to force anyone else to get involved any further than they would like to in the conversations – observing is fine).

We are inviting 80 members from Abbotsford’s street community to the event, many of whom have helped to design and put together the day... and who will be helping to facilitate the “purposeful conversations.” We are also inviting 80 members of the broader community to join in on the conversations.

When is it?

Tuesday, March 24, 2020 from 9:00 a.m. to 4 p.m.
(Search “Pop-Up Purpose Academy” on EventBrite)

Where is it?

Central Heights Church
1661 McCallum Rd
Abbotsford BC V2S 3M4

Morning Schedule

- **Welcome:** (9:00 to 11:00)
 - Welcome and Land Acknowledgment
 - Introductions: “What’s your purpose?” Exercise
- **Break-Out Purposeful Conversations:** (11:00 to 12:30)
 1. **Harm reduction—Beyond just needles and naloxone**
 2. **“Addiction” and “treatment.” Reality or fantasy? A real-world alternative**
 3. **Acknowledging reality to grow toward real change**
 4. **Breaking down labels to build up meaningful connections**

Afternoon Schedule

- **Lunch** – Bag lunch provided (12:30 to 1:00)
- **From an Isolated Past Toward a Common Future:** (1:00 to 3:30)
 - **Remembering Barry Shantz**
 - **Bridging activism and community development**
 - **What the judge ordered and what has/hasn’t changed**
 - **Communal living that works for everyone**
- **Closing:** (3:30 to 4:00)
 - Reflecting circle with select participants from the purposeful conversations
 - Open mic

Purposeful Conversation Starting Points

Harm reduction—Beyond just needles and naloxone: Abbotsford’s street community has helped push forward the idea that people with lived experience of drug use will have the most useful information, experience and skills to help reduce drug use-related harms. Most people who have substance use needs (for reasons such as experiencing trauma and loss without strong social support) have learned... or have been taught... to be ashamed of this need. They often suspect that people who haven’t experienced substance use as a need may have no basis to do anything but judge them... potentially causing more pain. Being a “peer” engaged in harm reduction is much more than just handing out needles and naloxone. It’s about gaining and keeping trust, helping people see the positive qualities in themselves that others miss by being so focused on substance use. In a way, harm reduction is an afterthought. “You’re a wonderful, unique person... I’m looking forward to continuing to see you around.”

“Addiction” and “Treatment” Reality or Fantasy? A Real-World Alternative: When you have a compound fracture, you need an expert! What do you need when you have “addiction”? The fact is that MOST people who would, at one point or another in their lives, meet the diagnostic criteria for a substance use disorder actually has what is called “spontaneous remission.” In other words, they are able to navigate out of the behaviours that qualify them for a diagnosis without any “expert” intervention (or even a formalized peer-based intervention, like Alcoholics Anonymous). This is in no way to say that *anyone* who is “addicted” (or whose life challenges have gotten tangled up in substance

use) just has to pull themselves up by their bootstraps! Not only is the journey of each “addict” different, but even every episode of substance use has its own unique contributors and qualities (that could render it into what might be experienced by the person using substances as tragic, neutral or even beneficial).

Acknowledging reality to grow toward real change: Google “chicken manure Abbotsford” and you could read for days about the planning, execution, cover up and exposure of the horrors behind one day in the lives of Abbotsford’s street community. Thankfully, no disturbingly official manure has been dumped since. People can now (after a court battle) legally camp overnight in parks. But, despite clear court direction, “manure” problems persist due to lack of access to facilities. What would be the harm in acknowledging that all people need to pee and pooh—even if we don’t yet have a place for everyone to do it? What would be the harm in acknowledging it’s impossible to go where members of the street community are told to go everyday: “Anywhere but here”? It can be hard for people to move forward in a way that might be “acceptable” to a society that seems not just out of touch with reality, but unwilling to even acknowledge it... especially if moving forward yourself means leaving friends behind to deal with reality alone.

Breaking Down Labels to Build Up Meaningful Connections: 23-year-old Herman Mann first got introduced to Abbotsford’s “Drug War Survivors” over two years ago through a UFV Criminology practicum opportunity. With no personal experience with either substance use

or homelessness, he wondered how and if he might be able to connect with members of the group. In 2019, the group presented him with their 2nd Annual “Drug War Survivors Humanitarian Award.” Now doing a second practicum with the Drug War Survivors, one of his major projects has been to reflect upon what the experience has meant to him and what it has made him think about the group, about himself, about the community of Abbotsford, and about life.



Remembering Barry Shantz:

Charismatic. Warrior.
Hero. Narcissist.
Nature-lover.
Genuine. Disturbed.
Shit-disturber.
Friend. For all who
knew Barry Shantz

well, all of these words would have, at least once, crossed their minds. Barry was perhaps a reflection of the tangled and often infuriating complexity that he found himself continually drawn to confront in Abbotsford and beyond. The strong feelings he aroused in others might be accounted for both by exasperation and envy of a man who wasn't afraid to say the right thing in the wrong place... over and over and over again... for as long as it takes.

Bridging activism and community

development: How is an activist born? Usually by witnessing those who have been ground down by unfortunate life circumstance being further ground up by systems with inflexible and uninformed policies and procedures. Activism can bring much-needed light to circumstances that might otherwise cause untold and unending suffering in the dark. One could say that activism also inevitably produces at least the impression of there being an “us”

and a “them” ... often pushing apart and entrenching the very parties who might otherwise work together to create a better and more supportive future and community for everyone.

What the Judge Ordered and What Has/Hasn't Changed:

In 2015 the Abbotsford Drug War Survivors won a landmark ruling from the BC Supreme Court that found two of Abbotsford's city bylaws in violation of section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Though those were the “headline” findings, Honourable Chief Justice Hinkson provided other more-nuanced directions. Coming up on 5 years since this court case's resolution, where do we stand? First off, only one of the two bylaws deemed “of no force or effect” has been changed by the Abbotsford City Council. And, from the perspective of most of Abbotsford's street community, nearly all of the more nuanced (but critical) details remain unaddressed, rendering the real-life trajectory change (for the many who still live unsheltered in Abbotsford) ushered in by the ruling at nearly nil.

Communal living that works for everyone:

Communal living is nothing new. One could say our current “homelessness crisis” exists because of how our society has come to define a “home” and everyone's need to possess one (along with their own lawn, lawn mower, hot tub, and tool box). It is therefore unlikely we'll build our way out of “homelessness” (though the prospect of trying to do so might excite developers and their shareholders). But communal living, where inhabitants are peers—not landlords, tenants or neighbours—has taken hold in many places as a response to the needs that arise when people are rendered “homeless.” It was even called for by the BC Supreme Court.