

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Interior Crisis Line Volunteers Celebrates 1.9 Million minutes of Support

Interior, BC – During National Volunteer Appreciation Week, the Interior Crisis Line is celebrating their amazing volunteers for setting another record number of support contacts in 2019/20. This brings the total to 2 million minutes of empowering emotional support, crisis de-escalation and suicide prevention since the collaborative network launched in 2012.

“We often say that Crisis Line Responders don’t just save lives, they change them”, shares Asha Croggon, Program Manager for the Interior Crisis Line Network (ICLN). “Within the Covid-19 environment, this continues to be true and our volunteers are stepping up and showing their deep capacity for caring.”

The Interior Crisis Line Network (ICLN) provides 24/7 crisis support across the Interior Region through an innovative network of local agencies including CMHA branches in Cranbrook, Vernon and Williams Lake, the Kelowna Community Resource in Kelowna and Trail FAIR Society in Trail.

By working together, the crisis line sites were able to double their call volume in the first year the ICLN was launched and expand the service from just their communities to across the Interior Health region. The service has been working collaboratively to set records since. March, 2020 is no exception with over 2,300 support contacts provided. “Volunteers and staff working together across all five satellite sites is really making a difference,” shares Natalie Hake, Manager of ICLN-Cranbrook site. “If any one site had to handle the volume and intensity alone, it would be unmanageable.”

Skilled emotional support and crisis de-escalation is available 24/7 to people across the Interior Health Region through the regional crisis line service 1.888.353.CARE (2273) and Thursday to Sunday 5-9pmPT through the chat service (interiorcrisisline.com). “We are able to maintain the service because of our amazing volunteers,” explains Michelle Nelmes, Coordinator of the ICLN-Kelowna site. “Each training, I am blown away by the calibre of people who are coming forward to take the crisis line responder training.”

Training is 40+ hours including formal learning, roleplays and mentoring. Covid-19 is requiring some innovation around how it is being provided, but the Interior Crisis Line is still moving forward with training in May.

“We are all working within social distancing guidelines and being flexible in how we are training and supporting our people,” shares Sheila Dudek, Coordinator of the ICLN-Trail site. “It takes a special person to take on this role and we hear how it makes a difference in their lives too.”

Research shows that volunteering provides the ‘happiness’ boost equivalent to receiving a \$20,000 raise. In unsettling times, it can also provide an anchor knowing we are doing what we can to support one another. Crisis line training also provides powerful tools that many volunteers reflect are useful in their personal lives as well as their role within the crisis line. Tools include stress-reduction, communication, and shifting from ‘rescuing’ tendencies and into an empowerment model. Setting healthy boundaries is another popular topic.

“At one of our trainings, a participant remarked that everyone should take this training and she wished she’d known some of the skills earlier in her life,” explains Alyssa Christmas, Manager of the ICLN-Vernon site.

Covid-19 has been impacting the Interior Crisis Line Network’s ability to answer the growing call volume as some volunteers are at a higher risk or quarantined, others are able to answer the calls. “We have people who can’t come in to volunteer and we completely understand,” shares Heather Silvester, Manager for ICLN-Williams Lake site. “We know they will return when they are able or will take their crisis line skills out in their families and communities and continue doing good work.”

Over the years, ICLN partner agencies have trained thousands of volunteers across the Interior Region. They have all contributed to the over 157,000 support contacts and close to 2 million minutes of support provided since 2012.

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary caring and that is certainly reflected in the crisis line volunteers past, current and future.

Interior Crisis Line Network can be reached by phone at 1.888.353.2273(CARE), 24/7/365 or by chat at interiorcrisisline.com (Thursday to Sunday 5-9pmPT). It is a network made up of the five local crisis sites in the Interior Region and is funded by the Interior Health Authority. Interested in volunteering or donating, reach out to ICLN partner CMHA-Cariboo Chilcotin Branch at 1.250.398.8220, ext 2031 or 2032.

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