

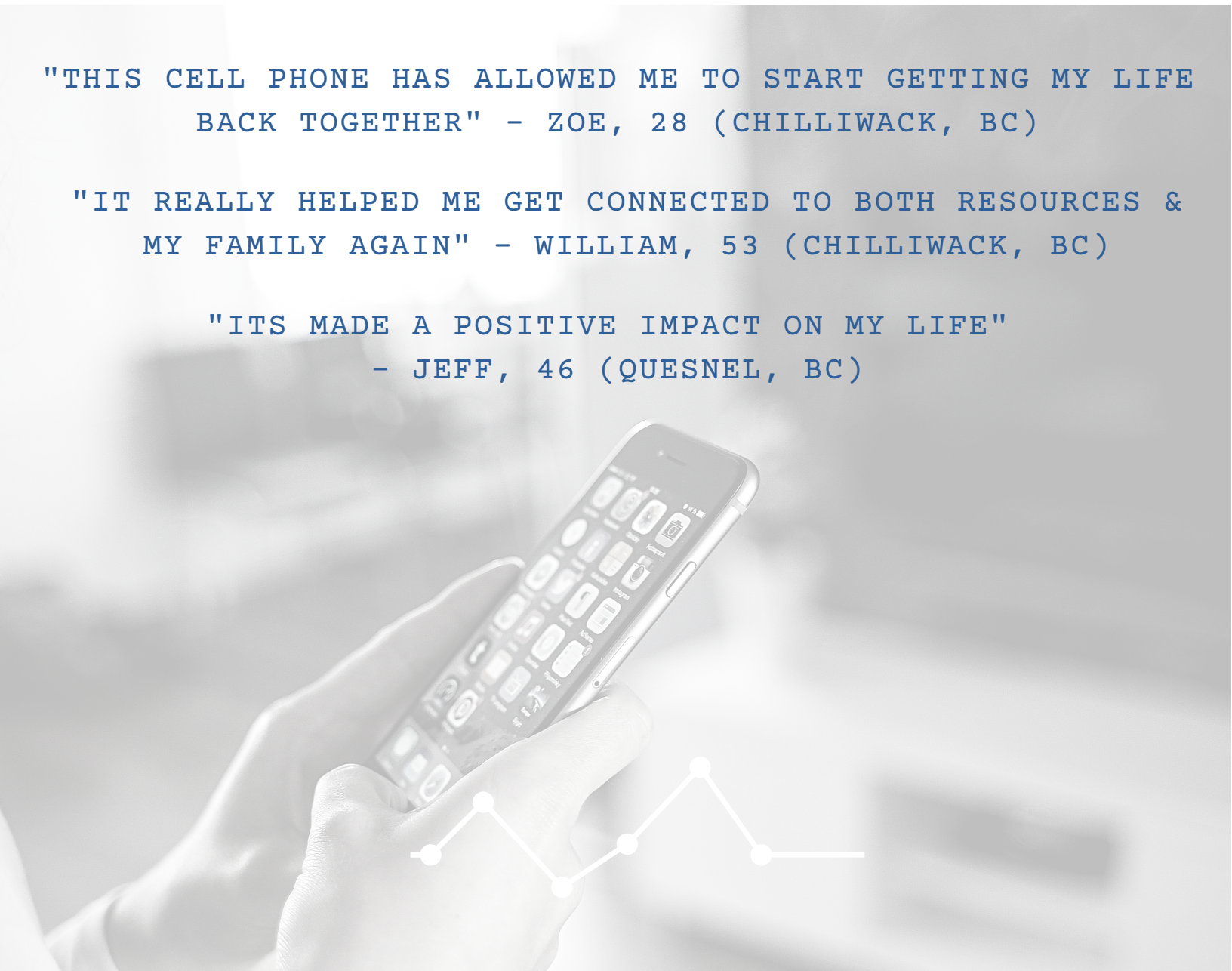
Connect2Care.BC

PROVINCIAL PEER NETWORK, CELL PHONE PROGRAM

"THIS CELL PHONE HAS ALLOWED ME TO START GETTING MY LIFE BACK TOGETHER" - ZOE, 28 (CHILLIWACK, BC)

"IT REALLY HELPED ME GET CONNECTED TO BOTH RESOURCES & MY FAMILY AGAIN" - WILLIAM, 53 (CHILLIWACK, BC)

"ITS MADE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON MY LIFE"
- JEFF, 46 (QUESNEL, BC)



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Partnerships with Peer Support Workers & PWUD

Mountainside Harm Reduction Society's take on the Connect2Care program is unique in that they were able to utilize a powerful provincial network of peer support workers who represent numerous non-profit societies and other drug user organizations. This network is exclusively organized by people who use(d) drugs (PWUD) who are active on the front lines of the toxic drug supply crisis. Peer support workers take care of their own in ways that are unparalleled by service providers who do not share experiential expertise. This network is perfectly situated to take on collaborative projects like this and execute them in a manner that is both efficient and effective. The best part of this program was that it embodied the very concept of networking and strengthened the mission, vision and values of the Provincial Peer Network (PPN). MSHRS was able to get 100 cell phones distributed in all 5 health authorities in under 3 months along with micro-budget offerings of cash honoraria into the hands of friends, colleagues and allies working front-line overdose prevention and response for them to facilitate and participate in both the distribution of cell phones and the facilitation of a participatory research survey!

"THIS PROGRAM HAS ALLOWED ME TO CONNECT MORE INTIMATELY WITH TWO OF THE SEX WORKERS THAT I SUPPORT, NOW I CAN GET A HOLD OF THEM WHEN I NEED TO, AND FIND OUT WHERE THEY ARE TO ENGAGE. IT HAS HELPED THEM TO STAY SAFE"

- ANONYMOUS CONNECT2CARE.BC PARTNER

Partnership Contracts & Packages

Each of our partners connected with our Connect2CareBC (C2CBC) Coordinator to go over the step-by-step guide to facilitation this program as a MSHRS partner or contractor. Once the partner had agreed to the terms outlined by MSHRS they signed an agreement. Once the agreement was signed our C2CBC Coordinator would package up 5 cell phones, mail them out and provide the partner with tracking #! When the phones arrived at their destination we would send a budget breakdown along with \$450 to each partner. This mini-grant allowed our partnered peer support worker to be paid \$20/her for 2 hours per phone, 1 hour for distribution and 1 hour for survey facilitation. The other \$250 was 5x \$50 stipend for the recipient of the cell phone to participate in a short paid research survey that basically allowed for structured feedback about our projects' reception progress and outcome!

Making Connections with PWUD

Many of our partners already knew who they had in mind for phone recipients, making the process very easy and quite clearly showcased a common need for basic communication devices in every health authority in BC. Our contracted peer support workers had their recipients fill out basic participant agreements that outlined the protocol. The low barrier option for getting these forms back to our C2C coordinator was to ask our partners to snap photos of the completed form and send them back to us immediately so that we could switch the device onto our monthly plan.

"I WAS ABLE TO USE ONE OF THE PROGRAM PHONES AS MY SUPPORT WORKER PHONE, SO THAT I DON'T HAVE TO GIVE OUT MY PERSONAL PHONE NUMBER WHEN I AM DOING OUTREACH" - PARTNER: BRANDY, BRIDGING THE GAP (PORT ALBERNI, BC)

Peer Support Workers

Some of our contracted partners made the decision to keep one of the devices for themselves. This has been described as a safety and security measure that allows for peer support workers to give a phone number out to a community member in need, when they don't feel completely comfortable giving them their personal number yet.

Example Partner Contract

MSHRS - Connect 2 Care.BC - Partner Contract

This document outlines the agreement between Mountainside HRS and any organization or individual that is partnering with us to facilitate both cell phone distribution and the participatory research elements of the Connect2Care program.

By signing below, I ~~-Partnered Support Worker-~~ agree to these terms and conditions, laid out by Mountainside Harm Reduction Society:

- I will provide timely and effective distribution of **(\$5)** smart phones for the Connect2Care.BC program.
- I will provide MTNside HRS with the signed and filled out, participant contract immediately following the distribution of each phone.
- I will connect with program participants, within 1 month of initial distribution, to encourage connection to peer support and help MTNside efficiently facilitate the first \$50 reload of minutes.
- I will connect with program participants, at the same time as or, within 1 month of, this \$50 reload, to facilitate a short, paid, (\$50 cash-from my budget) participatory research interview/survey with the program participant.
- I will communicate the results of this participatory survey with MTNside HRS in an effective and timely manner using the survey sheet provided.
- I will receive from MTNside HRS - then equitably distribute- the funds that I receive along with my package of cell phones. This money is both for my own time as a facilitator of this program and to pay each participant to participate in the research interview. **(\$450)**
- I may use the excess of these funds to pay for additional minutes to be added to these phones for eligible program participants, at my discretion.
- I will remain in close contact with MTNside HRS with any concerns, questions, and recommendations that I have for the purpose of removing barriers to access and improving this program!

NAME: Support Worker SIGN: Squiggle

ORGANIZATION(if applicable): VANDU - BCAPOM (ex.)

DATE: June 7, 2022

Example Participant Contract

Mountainside Harm Reduction Society Connect 2 Care.BC - Participant Contract

This document outlines the agreement between Mountainside Harm Reduction Society and any individual program participant who is the recipient of a brand-new MaxWest smart phone for their personal and/or professional use as an experiential expert.

By signing below, I _____, agree to these simple terms and conditions:

- I will alert my partner (organization) and/or MTNside HRS of my need for any technological assistance with my device, within the first month of owning my new smart phone.
- I will connect with my partner (organization) and/or MTNside HRS within the first month of owning my new smart phone, to receive my included \$50 minutes top-up
- I will connect with my partner (organization), to participate in a short, paid(\$50 cash) research interview about the challenges and benefits of owning and operating my new smart phone.

NAME:

DATE:

Location:

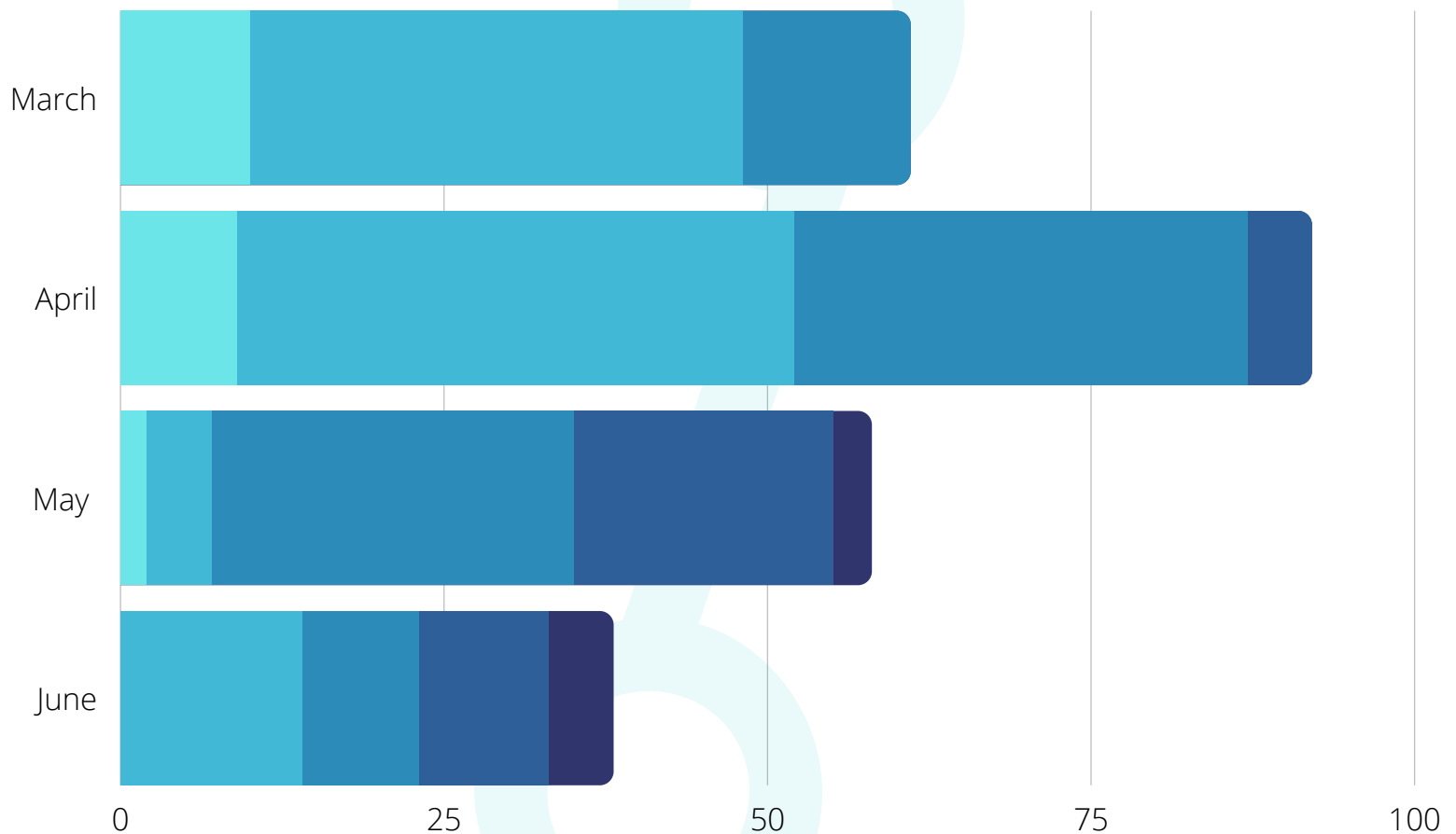
Partner Org:

Phone ID#

PHONE #:

Careful Coordination

Once participant contracts began coming back to us, we devised a system where we added the name and date to a spreadsheet that kept track of the activations that we completed on the 711 SpeakOut account which held the ID# and Phone # of each phone that went out to each partner. This way we would be able to tell when their 1 month plan would be coming to an end, which then allowed us to check in with each participant within that 1 month period to find whether they still had the phone and wanted to continue having their monthly bill paid by MSHRS!



We found that about 40% of participants were available when we checked in after 1 month to top-up their 2nd month on the plan, and after the 2nd month only about 7% of participants responded to continue a 3rd month on the program's plan. Therefore, we decided that the participants who DO continue to engage would be supported by our program indefinitely.



Partnerships Formed



Phones Distributed



Activated on Plan



2nd Month on Plan



3rd Month on Plan

Impacts of the program.

MSHRS has found this project to be a very rewarding experience, mostly due to the enormous impacts that these cell phones are having in the lives of our participants. Partnering with allies accross the province has allowed us to connect with colleagues and offer this program to a wide range of peers in BC. We have heard some incredible positive outcomes from our participants, who are grateful and appreciative!

"MY FAMILY ANSWERS THE PHONE NOW BECAUSE NOW I CALL FROM THE SAME NUMBER EVERY TIME" - AARON 37 CHILLIWACK

"HAVING A PHONE HELPED ME GET INTO TREATMENT, YOU HAVE TO CALL EVERY SINGLE DAY TO STAY ON THE WAITLIST!" ERIK 44 CHILLIWACK

"IT WAS A BLESSING!" RON 49 CHILLIWACK

Diversity of Participants

Our Connect2Care.BC program has been able to distribute 100 cell phones across the province, impacting all 5 health regions. Our participants range in age from 19-53! The majority of our participants accessed phones through their local peer support workers at supportive housing units, harm reduction agencies and drug user groups. Our participants are all vulnerable individuals who are street entrenched.

Plan for Losses

Because we are working with a vulnerable demographic of PWLLE, in both partnership capacity and participants, it was very important to our team to offer this program in a manner that is as low-no barrier as possible. This meant that there would be no punitive action taken if a phone was broken or lost, and instead, we would actually offer a replacement phone for those who come forward with their problems! Also, if participants were going over their data limit and using up their allocated funds, we would offer to bump them up to a higher data plan.

Paid Research Survey

Each cell phone recipient had the opportunity to participate in a short interview with their respective partnered support worker, for which they received a \$50 cash honorarium for their invaluable feedback.

We had an incredible amount of very impactful feedback from our participants.

" I REALLY APPRECIATE THAT YOU WANT TO HEAR ABOUT MY EXPERIENCE AND FEEDBACK, I AM NEW TO THE C2C PROGRAM BUT I SEE LOTS OF POTENTIAL!" DEREK 58 (GIBSONS, BC)

Question #1 from the paid participatory research survey:

How has your new cell phone contributed to your overall wellbeing?

1. Connected with family
2. Found transportation
3. Overdose Prevention
4. Made appointments
5. Other -

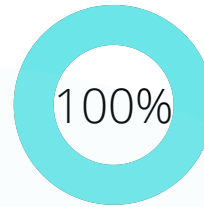
Participants also reported on "other" ways that their cell-phone has supported their overall wellness:

-I was able to receive calls from my probation officer, which allowed me to avoid being breeched and sent back to jail!

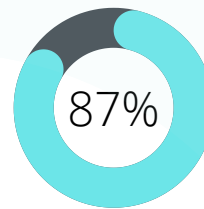
- I was able to call the ministry office and get my income assistance cheque sorted out.

- I was able to listen to music, which I use to self soothe and that helps me get through tough times.

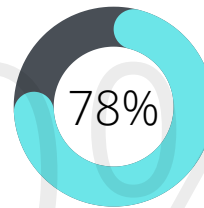
- This phone helps me feel safe and secure when I am walking alone at night



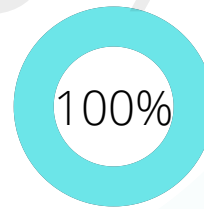
Of Participants reported that they were able to connect more easily with loved ones! <3



Reported that they were able to find transportation more easily



Reported that their phone allowed them to access overdose prevention & response services



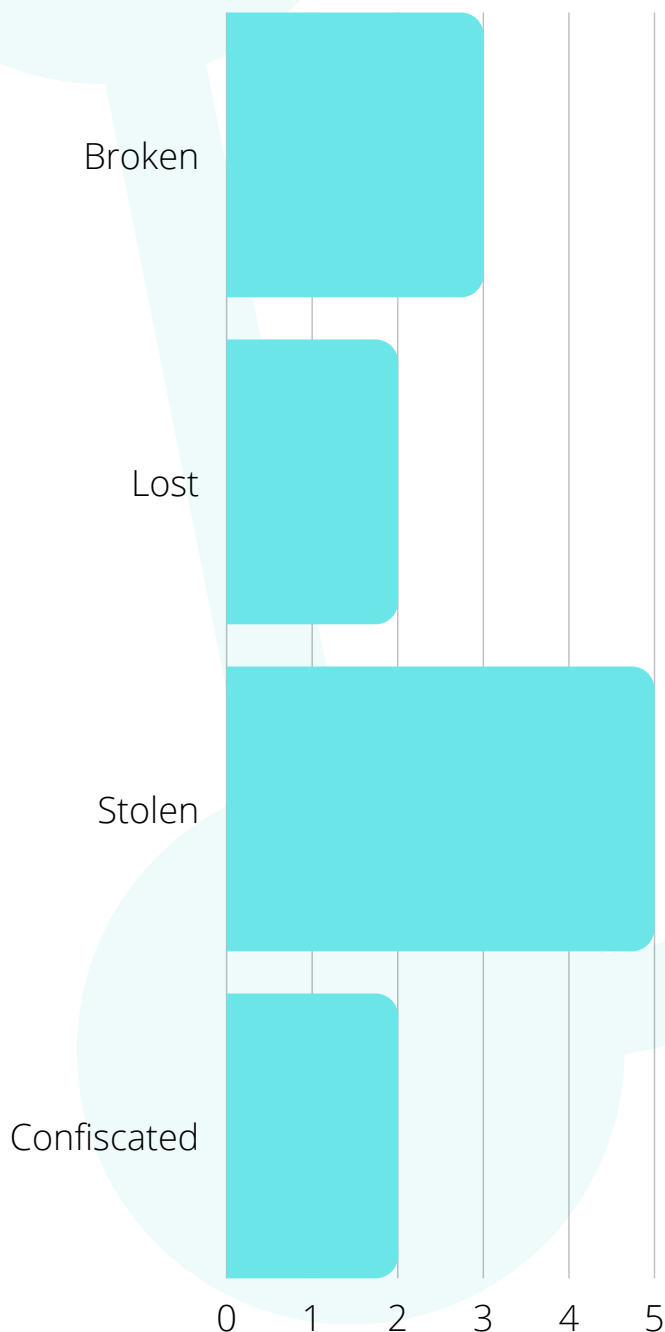
Reported that they were easily able to both make appointments and receive appointment reminders.

"YOU NEED A PHONE FOR EVERYTHING THESE DAYS, ITS A HUGE HELP"

- CORRINE 44 (QUESNEL, BC)

Although the majority of our feedback responses were overwhelmingly positive, there were a few caveats

"THE PHONE IS TOO SLOW, VERY FRUSTRATING TO USE"
- RONALD, 59, CHILLIWACK)



Some of the participants would have appreciated a more durable or technologically advanced phone, particularly younger recipients. A few phones were broken accidentally, five were stolen, and two were confiscated by the police, one of which was after the participant suffered a fatal overdose.

A few (<200) dollars were wasted because of the intricacies of the SpeakOut program legalese, the way they structure their buying of minutes and implementation of plans, and charge for overages of data.

But overall, the majority of participants reported a noticeable increase in their quality of life with a free smartphone, that there's no question the program can be counted a success. Several participants even got into detox and treatment, built or mended relations with family members, acquired employment, scheduled counselling, doctor's appointments, and in at least one case avoided jail time because their probation officer could reach them by phone!

"THE PROGRAM IS AWESOME, THE SERVICE PROVIDED IS EXCELLENT, THE PHONE ITSELF IS OUTDATED AND SLOW. IT WON'T RUN ON CURRENT O/S SO...BETTER PHONE UNIT WOULD BE THE ONLY WAY TO IMPROVE."

JAYSON, 47, DAWSON CREEK

"MAYBE A BETTER QUALITY PHONE WITH MORE DATA"

- AARON, 32, ABBOTSFORD)

Summary of Spending

We were able to get phones and cash into the hands of our 20 partners and about 90 participants within the course of 3 months! Our part-time project coordinator is also Vice-President of MSHRS board of directors and someone with lived and living experience, this income has helped him to flourish this spring! Most of our budget went to our partners, with the next highest spending to our coordinator, other expenses included topping up with SpeakOut, travel for delivering phones locally, and charges from Canada post for mailing packages across the province!

