

Decisive action needed on drugs

CARY WALTER
DAILY NEWS

The turnout would in all likelihood have been much higher had it not been for the dump of snow that rendered local schools absent of bus students on Nov. 21.

However the two days of drug awareness seminars hosted by the Nawican Friendship Centre featuring Lee Mason of the Young Warriors Network still saw more than 20 young people and additional educational support staff brave the weather to attend.

Tuesday was reserved for youth and educators, with the following day open to the public. Even with the weather hindering attendance, Mason was pleased with the group of youth that attended.

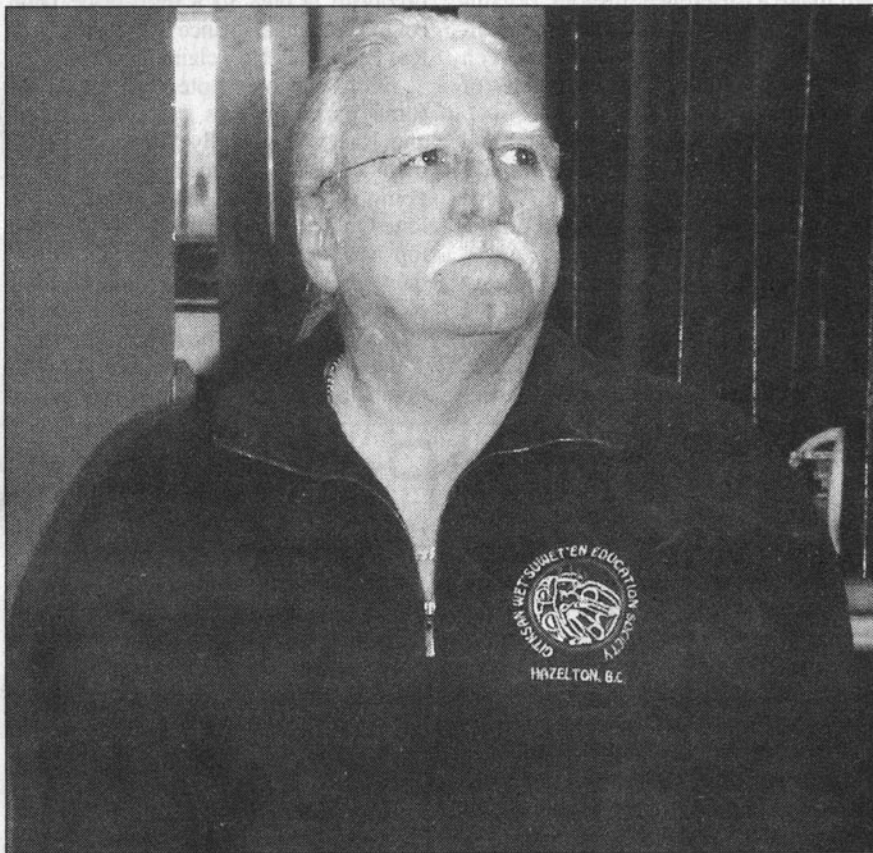
"Those that did come learned a lot and I've asked them to share that with their friends," he said.

Mason's Vancouver based network focuses on encouraging youth to live drug and alcohol free lives through empowerment versus what most youth see as the stereotypical preaching methods of many adults.

"I think young kids everywhere are going through a lot of the same experiences. Young people are being exposed to way more drugs than they should be being exposed to. There are some pretty dangerous drugs floating around the community that people don't care that they're getting kids involved in," Mason said.

And Mason is seeing this on all levels right now.

"Dope dealers care about how much



Cary Walter photo

Lee Mason of Vancouver brought a hard-hitting message on crystal meth and other drugs to a two-day seminar at the Nawican Friendship Centre last week.

money is going into their pockets not how many lives they're going to destroy," he said.

You may think you'd recognize a drug dealer if you saw one.

But images of greasy haired individuals with dirty, torn clothes are just movie imagery.

Today's drug dealer comes in all shapes and sizes from all walks of life. In reality, many have more available

income than individuals working a 60-hour week.

"There's people that hide their drug dealing activities.... But in most communities everyone knows who the dealers are – they just pretend (they don't).... They don't get involved with stopping them or putting them out of business. In some communities people don't identify the dealers publicly because they're (the dealers) related to someone in power or somebody in authority and so they think 'well I don't want to lose my job'."

Mason was quick to point out his comments are general and based on his experience in various communities, and not directed specifically at anyone in Dawson Creek.

What Mason does see as consistent in the communities he visits is that nearly everyone knows where the crack houses are located, yet little is being done to close them down.

"We have a problem and people are pretending it's not there. It is there. And something has to be done to stop it. Far too many people are dying. We've got young people on the streets prostituting themselves at 12, 13 and 14 years old because they're addicted to drugs."

Mason says he has had many reports from Dawson Creek over the years, and the drug problem branches into additional issues such as prostitution to support the habits being developed.

"I've seen quite a bit going on here," says Mason, who has traveled through this community, staying overnight on his way to other destinations.

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