

LOCAL NEWS

Crystal meth: a looming threat

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Observer Reporter

Crystal meth is coming to a town near you.

In fact, indications are it has already arrived.

Lee Mason recently presented a workshop designed to bring the brutal truth about crystal meth-amphetamine to students and resource workers in an effort to stop the use of this deadly drug before it grips the community.

Mason, of the Young Warriors Network, received a grant from Union of B.C. Municipalities to bring this message to 20 northern communities.

With the aid of a very graphic video, which chronicles the effects of the drug on several young people, an array of potentially deadly household chemicals that are used in the production of crystal meth, and a mes-

sage of hope, self-esteem and value, Mason sat comfortably in front of a circle of teenagers.

He said his decision to reach out to young people came to him during an AA meeting.

"I thought it would be good for me to do this.

"We have to educate the kids before they get mixed up with these drugs. The whole community needs to get educated."

The video has a powerful message that is reinforced by the information Mason presents.

"This drug is so cheap, \$150 worth of ingredients makes \$10,000 worth of product.

"A \$10 point can get a user high for about eight hours."

Street nurse Cathy Wrath attended the second day which targeted resource professionals.

Although she isn't seeing a lot of crystal meth users on the streets of Quesnel, Wrath said when people really get into crystal meth, they often leave town.

"People think pot is a big problem, but we think crystal meth is up and coming. We don't want our kids on that"

Bal Sekhon

"It begins here but then they leave. We can be quite smug because we don't have a problem, but often it starts here and then they are lured out of town."

Wrath agrees with Cst. Gord Gill who says crack cocaine is a problem in the community.

"We are seeing it on an

occasional basis," Gill said.

"Our policing priorities are to disrupt and dismantle the use and distribution of cocaine and crystal meth-amphetamine within the detachment area."

He added crystal meth was introduced in Quesnel about three years ago.

"We were able to dismantle the use and distribution of crystal meth right away.

"Our eyes and ears are to the ground identifying any potential labs, but we haven't found any."

Mason left a copy of the video at the Friendship Centre and encourages schools and community groups to show it.

School board chair Caroline Nielson said they were always looking for new programs or new strategies to immunize the students against drug use.

However, she added, they are careful about language

and age-appropriate material.

"What's age-appropriate here is different from what is age-appropriate on the coast."

QSS student Brianna Wilkinson said viewing the video changed how she thought about crystal meth.

"More kids my age at my school should watch it."

The provincial government has devised a crystal-meth strategy that has funding for treatment options and youth addictions services. It includes increasing bed capacity for youth with addictions and building treatment programs and supports for crystal-meth users.

Northern Health is slated to receive \$426,662 which will create an additional 10.6 youth case managers, one youth outreach and early intervention professional and 1.2 full-time equivalents dedicated for assessment and treatment for crystal-meth users. These positions will service the northeast, northwest, and northern Interior Health service delivery areas.

Bal Sekhon, co-principal of McNaughton Centre, said his biggest concern is having awareness for his staff so they can identify users.

They want to equip their staff and youth-care workers to know what they are looking for.

"Guest speakers come in on a regular basis to talk about drug use, including crystal meth.

"Having the real people come in off the street is a real eye-opener. People think pot is a big problem, but we think crystal meth is up and coming. We don't want our kids on that."

Time-after-time, Wrath said, the kids they talk to who are getting into extreme use have big problems that haven't been recognized or dealt with.

"We need to get to the core of why people are using."



Lee Mason, addictions recovery specialist with the Young Warriors Network, presented a look at the reality of crystal-meth addiction to youth and resource workers at the Friendship Centre last week.

Annie Gallant photo