**Facilitator**: Cassandra Smith, DPC Staff

**Presenters:**Garth Mullens, Host/ Producer of Crack down podcast. Activist, and musician.

Stephanie Arlt, Research Coordinator at Urban Health and evaluates harm reduction services in TO.

Natasha Touesnard, executive director of the Canadian Association for PWOD.

**Introductions and Welcoming Presenters**

Land Acknowledgement

**Natasha T. & Patrick M.**

Presented is an articulated animated video of Matts journey as somebody who uses drugs and their journey. Matt created the script and led the process around creating this video. The video focuses on stigma around drug use and the term addict, being seen as a human and that leading to activism in their community for PWOD/ PWLLE, and their current policy work/ journalism.

**Reflection words/ feedback**: Beautiful, Powerful, Incredible

**Garth M.**

Gonzo journalism and the drug war. Discussed journalism where the reporter isn't involved and its objective journalism. Discusses how the project is a drug war and creates documentaries like you would from war correspondents from the forefront. Crackdown talks about drug use with a bias, to help save lives and fighting to decriminalize drug use. This has resulted in a large push back through the public media.

Discusses the topic of waiting and telling stories which led to journalism and spreading awareness and activism. Narrative tension and documentaries to help interest versus podcasts/ research due to lack of attention spans. When talking to drug users it is typically non bias and the PWOD choose what is used etc. and using structure to help with agency. Self- determination being ripped out from below due to the health system, stigma etc. and the agency is the individual. We are in constant push pull.

This came from seeing a need due to media being demeaning and undermining previously. PWOD and PWLLE often revise the videos and information beforehand due to the drug war being a constant "wrecking ball". We are a movement of drug users and are on one side of it until the war is over".

**Comments in the chat:** Tired of not being believed, tired of seeing drug users in such a negative light,

**Stephanie Arlt**

Drug user led journalism. Low barrier print media opportunities as a form of innovation. Saw a need in the community for published work by PWUD/ PWLLE.A collaborative process while imbedding feedback, with a priority of preserving the voice of the speaker/ writer. Empathizing that it is not "our" stories to be told. Low barrier opportunity for resumes and CVs to include and just need assisting with facilitation and guidance due to unfamiliarity.

Combat popular media sources , harsh lens of prohibition.

**Question Section**

**For Garth**: What are some upcoming episodes.. Answer: Backlash on harm reduction and facing the challenges from the right. Talking about drug use in the trades, never-ending grief and loss, how to memorialize the community due to its disappearance.

Discussion around supporting Matt with the backlash after/ if it is published.