



August 2004.

#1 Newsletter.

. **The Rock User** group formed through VANDU, is organizing to educate our members on the hazards of using crack cocaine, to promote harm reduction by distributing crack smoking kits, and to establish a safe inhalation site.

Safe Sites Save Lives.

The Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users has recently formed a new peer group called: **the Rock Users Groups (RUG)**

We both represent many of the crack cocaine users here in Vancouver; and strive to bring a voice to the issues of crack cocaine users.

Our goals are to:

- 1) Educate our members on the harm associated with using crack cocaine.
- 2) To promote harm reduction, and health promoting tools. For example: Crack Kits (pipes, mouth pieces, screens.) Harm reduction material, newsletter.
- 3) To establish a safe inhalation site.

At this time we are organizing to secure funding for the distribution of safer crack smoking kits as a form of health promotion material for crack cocaine smokers. Our goals as a peer group are to form a coalition committed to fighting for the health of crack cocaine users and all drug users, and to end the stigmas and systemic abuse and

mistreatment directed to all drug users.

Due to the illegal nature and social stigma of crack user, it is difficult to obtain reliable information on the prevalence of crack user. What we know is there are drug users that live in the DTES, and that a high percentage of these people use crack cocaine.

What is crack?

Crack is the street name for a crystallized form of cocaine made into small lumps or rocks. Cocaine hydrochloride is processed with ammonia or sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) and water and heated to remove the hydrochloride, thus producing a free base form of cocaine that can be smoked. The term crack refers to the crackling sound heard when the mixture is smoked.

Crack, like other stimulants, lowers a user's immune system; this is especially worrisome for users living with HIV/AIDS. Smoking crack appears to weaken the crack smoker's natural resistance to infection in the lungs. Many users experience respiratory problems, such as shortness of breath, chronic cough, chest pains, asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia.. Many users use brillo pad as a screen for their glass stem. Unfortunately metal used for screens (i.e. brillo pads, hash pipe

screens, etc.) breaks apart due to the high that is used when smoking crack and can be inhaled by the smoker. These bits of metal can cause damage and bleeding.

What is a Crack Kit?

A safer crack user kit contains a pipe made from tempered glass, screens to act as filters in the pipe, a pipe cleaner, and a mouth piece made from medical tubing.

The kit also includes a leaflet on how to smoke safe, how to use all the material effectively. These kits are a health promotion device. This is an outreach tool that enables peer workers to provide education and connect marginalized crack users to appropriate health and social services.

One crack kit can be assembled for less than 5\$.

We are asking all those who support us in our efforts to provide health promotion tools and information to drug users to help us with fundraising for these kits. You can mail or drop off a donation to **50 E. Hastings St. Vancouver, BC V6 A1N1.**

Please make your cheque or money order out to **Safe Sites Save Lives.**

August 24, 2004

For Immediate Release.

**Demonstration. August 24/ 2004
2pm. 50 E. Hastings. Safe Inhalation
Sites for Crack Cocaine Smokers.**

The Rock Users Group (RUG) formed through Vancouver Area Network of Drug User is calling out to all supporters and harm reduction activists to take a stand with drug users against police brutality and to demand safe spaces for all drug users. Due to the illegal nature and social stigma attached with drug use it is difficult for crack cocaine users to obtain adequate health services, which leaves drug users open to profiling and brutality by the Vancouver police department.

The Rock Users Group demands:

- 1. That the police immediately stop harassing, and smashing the pipes belonging to crack cocaine drug users.**
- 2. Health Canada under exemption 56 allow for the opening of a Safe Inhalation Room at INSITE.
(supervised injection facilities)**

It is an every day occurrence if you a crack user to have your pipe smashed to the ground, your mouth piece confiscated, forcing you to share a pipe and mouth piece with another person. -
RUG member.

The police are targeting some of the most vulnerable of drug users, by destroying the pipe of a sex trade worker, you are forcing him or her to share a pipe, and mouth piece, increasing the risk of exposure to Hepatitis A, B, C, or potentially HIV. - **RUG member**

The pipes that people are using right now, are often cracked, with jagged mouth pieces, or without a mouth piece, people often find themselves with cuts and burns on their lips, and inside of their mouths and these sores and blisters can be the means for people to be exposed to Hep B, C, A, and potentially HIV. -**RUG member**

Look for our next issue on safe smoking tips, safe smoking kits and the fight for safe spaces for all drug users.