



## FORGING DEEP COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



Are you interested in starting up a compassionate community initiative to support people who are affected by a serious illness, end of life, or grieving experience?

Visit our website for resources:

[www.bc-cpc.ca/all-resources/community-organizations/](http://www.bc-cpc.ca/all-resources/community-organizations/)

Contact us:

[conversations@bc-cpc.ca](mailto:conversations@bc-cpc.ca)



Building compassionate communities often takes creative community engagement strategies. The Sea to Sky Hospice Society in Squamish, BC, has implemented some unique ways to connect with community members. From book clubs and author talks to bereavement morning walks, the organization empowers citizens to take an active role in designing programs that work for them. After receiving a grant to support caregivers in their community, the society began promoting the compassionate communities movement this Spring.

A charitable organization supported by two part-time staff, and one part-time clinical counsellor, the [Sea to Sky Hospice Society](#) also works with over 60 dedicated and trained volunteers. These volunteers were instrumental in coordinating a successful Compassionate Community Seasonal Hospice Book Circle. A second Caregiver book circle meet-up was held at the Little Bookshop in Squamish, who gifted their space and assisted with book purchases. The next one will take place on December 21.

“We’re always looking to grow the number of volunteers we have,” says Diana Gunstone, the Sea to Sky Hospice Society’s Volunteer and Program Coordinator. “Partnering with our hospice volunteer team and other organizations to help with program delivery, communications, space and capacity has been fundamental to our ability to deliver our programs.”

With the support of hospice volunteers and partnership with the District of Squamish’s 55 Centre, the society hosts monthly Compassionate Community Caregiver support group gatherings. They also offer a weekly Lunch Break yoga and will deliver Monday evening meditation sessions for caregivers in November. At the recent compassionate communities roundtable hosted by the BC Centre for Palliative Care, Diana explained they are always exploring new ways to engage local and surrounding communities.

**“Compassion is at the heart of all we do for the community we serve,”** Diana says. **“We’re growing our community by listening to individual needs and keeping them front of mind at all times.”**

*We can look forward to the Sea to Sky Hospice Society continuing to collaborate with community partners and healthcare professionals in meaningful ways that support residents and families on their journey at the end of life. They truly understand that creating compassionate communities requires partnerships with individuals, groups, organizations, local government, businesses, and more. It’s through this productive networking that their vision is spreading, and their social movement is growing every day.*