Decolonizing Addiction and Indigenous Harm Reduction

Andrea Medley, Indigenous Wellness Educator
Len Pierre, Indigenous Wellness Cultural Designer
Overview

1. Why We’re Here

2. Decolonizing Addiction

3. Indigenous Harm Reduction

4. Sneak Preview
Background

- 86+ communities distributing Naloxone
- 100+ workshops since May 2016
- Beyond the crisis: looking at transformation
- Working together
Provincial Emergency Update

Illicit Drug Overdose Death Rates by Health Authority, 2007-2016

- Rate per 100,000
- 2007 to 2016
- Interior, Fraser, Vancouver Coastal, Vancouver Island, Northern, BC
SYSTEM-WIDE OPIOID PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE FOR FIRST NATIONS IN BC

ACTION AREAS

1. Prevent people who overdose from dying
2. Keep people safe when using substances
3. Create an accessible range of treatment options
4. Support people on their healing journeys
How do you define addiction?
Definition of Addiction

- Medical?
- Criminal?
- Social?
- Individual?
- ________?
Decolonizing Addiction: Why?
Decolonizing Addiction: Myths

Myth 1:
“Addiction is a choice, and if you loved me you would stop using substances”
Decolonizing Addiction: Myths

Myth 2:
“We need to kick out people who sell drugs out of the community to stop the problem”

First Nations should reconsider banishment, says Indigenous physician

Doctor cautions communities to focus on harm reduction rather than barring drug dealers

By Lenard Monkmann, CBC News  Posted: Nov 03, 2017 6:00 AM ET  |  Last Updated: Nov 03, 2017 9:30 AM ET
Decolonizing Addiction: Myths

Myth 3: “Rock-bottom factor”
Decolonizing Addiction: Myths

Myth 4:
“All people who use substances are addicted”
What about Prescription Drugs?
ADDICTION

Trauma/ Grief/ Loss/ Stress

Fear & Shame
Isolation
Helplessness

Detachment
Loss of Identity
Loss of Rights

Poverty
Lack of Housing
Loss of Freedom

Residential Schools
The 60's Scoop
Land Theft

Colonization

DRUGS
ALCOHOL
PAIN
GAMBLING
SEX
EXERCISE
FOOD
WORK
CAFFEINE
PHONE/TECH
Connection

Healing / Joy / Bonding / Peace

Love
Inclusion
Purpose

Identity
Power
Attachment

Stability
Relationships
Autonomy

Family & Friends
Culture & Tradition
Nation & Territory

Community

Safety
Love
Creativity
Empowerment
Contribution

Purpose
Responsibility
Generosity
Emotions
Integrity
Harm Reduction

Needle Distribution, Condoms, Outreach, Relationships, Support, Education, Dignity Human Rights

Culture & Tradition

Fishing, Hunting, Storytelling, Language, Gathering, Artwork, Canoeing, Singing, Dancing, Ceremony, Spending Time With Each Other

Compassion, Mindful Judgmental, Relationships, Inclusion, Patience, Care, Positive Communication, Meeting People Where They Are At
Indigenous Harm Reduction Principles & Practice

**Relationships and Care**
Healing requires working together as one heart and one mind

**Strength and Protection**
Healing is embedded in culture and tradition

**Knowledge and Wisdom**
Healing requires time, patience and reflection

**Identity and Transformation**
Healing involves finding out who you are and accepting who you were
This looks like:
• Forming relationships and providing outreach to people who seek support

This sounds like:
• Connecting with people who use substances over something other than their substance use

Relationships and Care
This looks like:
• Recognizing that culture and tradition are intergenerational strengths and keep communities resilient

This sounds like:
• Practicing culture and tradition and maintaining connection and relationships
This looks like:
• Meeting people where they are at on their healing journey and being mindful of where we are at on our healing journey

This sounds like:
• Providing good information and resources, actively working to reduce stigma, and being mindful of the way we talk about substance use
This looks like:
• Providing ongoing opportunities for compassion and inclusion along the healing journey

This sounds like:
• Acknowledging that substance use is a journey, with abstinence not always as the end goal
Sneak Preview
Lessons Learned
Questions/Comments

Indigenous Wellness Team: stbbi@fnha.ca

http://www.fnha.ca/overdose

http://towardtheheart.com/