

FIRST NATIONS AND THE TOXIC DRUG POISONING CRISIS IN BC

VANCOUVER COASTAL | JANUARY – DECEMBER 2023



Harm reduction efforts are saving lives but drug toxicity continues at record high levels affecting First Nations families and communities across BC.

The data presented here is specific to the Vancouver Coastal Region.

Toxic Drug Poisoning Deaths
Of First Nations People

150

↑ 12.8%
Increase over 2022

FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE DIED FROM TOXIC DRUG POISONINGS IN 2023.

This is a 12.8% increase from the 133 deaths in 2022.

Deaths of
First Nations People
BY GENDER

♂ 66.0%
Male

♀ 34.0%
Female

Deaths of
First Nations People
BY AGE

60.0%
40 Years and Older

40.0%
Younger than 40

Rate of
Toxic Drug Poisoning Death

12.6x

First Nations people experienced a death rate 12.6x higher than other residents of the region.

First Nations People are Disproportionately Represented in
Toxic Drug Poisoning Deaths

2.1%

First Nations people
make up 2.1% of the
region's population.

20.7%

20.7% of toxic drug
poisoning deaths in 2023
were First Nations people.



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

This data includes only Status First Nations people and their status-eligible descendants. Additionally, our data is limited to biological sex at birth, which may misidentify two-spirit, transgender, non-binary, intersex, and gender diverse people. Data are collected as of February 2024, and are subject to change.

The FNHA gratefully acknowledges the health partners that make this data available: BC Centre for Disease Control, BC Coroners Service, BC Emergency Health Services, and the BC Ministry of Health.

You may find this information distressing. Cultural support is available at Tsow Tun Le Lum Society. Call 1-888-403-3123 (toll-free) or visit www.tsowtunlelum.org



Toxic Drug Poisoning Events
involving First Nations People

940

↑ 17.5%
Increase over 2022

TOXIC DRUG POISONING EVENTS EXPERIENCED
BY FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE IN 2023

This is an increase of 17.5% from 800 events experienced in 2022.

13.0x First Nations people experienced an event rate
13.0x higher than other residents of the region.

Events of
First Nations People
BY GENDER

♂ 62.2%
Male

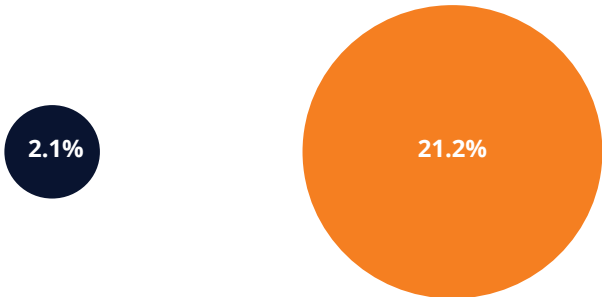
♀ 37.8%
Female

Events of
First Nations People
BY AGE

48.7%
40 Years and Older

51.3%
Younger than 40

First Nations People are Disproportionately Represented in
Toxic Drug Poisoning events



First Nations people make
up 2.1% of the region's
population.

21.2% of toxic drug poisoning
events in 2023 were First
Nations people.

NOTES

- Most toxic drug poisoning events are non-fatal and represent when paramedics were called and responded to a poisoning. Events that were treated successfully in community and events where 9-1-1 was not called are not captured in this data
- Event data is only collected for people with documented BC Personal Health Numbers (PHNs), and is therefore likely an underestimate, due to missing PHNs for some events

REGIONAL WELLNESS AND CULTURAL SUPPORTS

Regional FNHA Staff

Acting Manager, Mental
Health and Wellness

Jen Smith

Traditional Wellness
Coordinator

Eileen Joe

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Dimicia Speck

Indigenous Harm Reduction
Educator

Mackenzie Leslie

Addictions Specialist

Damian Clarke

Mental Health and Wellness
Liaison

Melanie Vivier

Project Manager - FNHA VCR
Treatment & Wellness Centre

Michelle Doo

Emotional and Cultural
Support

Tsow Tun Le Lum Society –
Call 1-888-403-3123 (toll-free)
or visit www.tsowtunlelum.org

**Indian Residential School
Crisis Line** Call toll-free 1-866-
925-4419.

KUU-US Crisis Service – Call
1-800-KUU-US17 (588-8717).
24-hours a day, seven days a
week.

**Hope for Wellness Help
Line** offers immediate mental
health counselling and crisis
intervention. Call toll-free
1-855-242-3310 or start a
confidential chat at
www.hopeforwellness.ca

Kids Help Phone
1-800-668-6868 or text 686868

KUU-US Youth Crisis Line
250-723-2040