

FIRST NATIONS AND THE TOXIC DRUG POISONING CRISIS IN BC

VANCOUVER ISLAND | JANUARY – DECEMBER 2024



Harm reduction efforts are helping to lower toxic drug poisoning events and deaths, but drug toxicity continues to disproportionately impact First Nations families and communities across BC.

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

Toxic Drug Poisoning Deaths Of First Nations People

83



FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE DIED FROM TOXIC DRUG POISONINGS IN 2024.

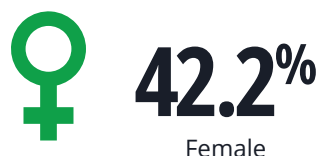
This is a 3.5% decrease from the 86 deaths in 2023.

Rate of Toxic Drug Poisoning Deaths Involving First Nations People

4.6x

First Nations people experienced a death rate 4.6x higher than other residents of the region in 2024.

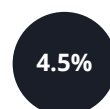
Deaths of First Nations People BY SEX



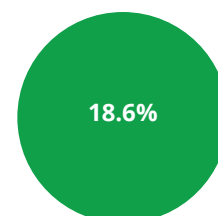
Deaths of First Nations People BY AGE



First Nations People are Disproportionately Represented in Toxic Drug Poisoning Deaths



First Nations people make up 4.5% of the region's population.



18.6% of toxic drug poisoning deaths in 2024 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. Surveillance data is dynamic and subject to change with new information and historical corrections..

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



TOXIC DRUG POISONING EVENTS EXPERIENCED
BY FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE IN 2024.

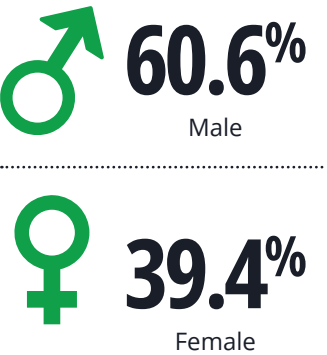
This is a 15.4% decrease from the 849 events experienced in 2023.

Rate of Toxic Drug Poisoning Events
Involving First Nations People

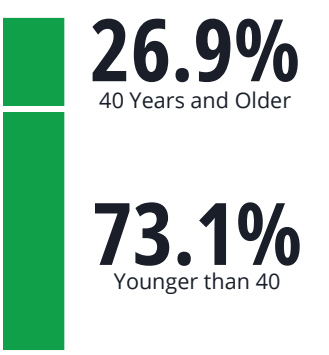


First Nations people experienced an event rate 7.6x higher than other residents of the region in 2024.

Events of
First Nations People
BY SEX



Events of
First Nations People
BY AGE



First Nations People are Disproportionately Represented in
Toxic Drug Poisoning Events



NOTES

- Most toxic drug poisoning events are non-fatal and represent instances where 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

- Drug Alerts** –Text JOIN to ALERTS (253787)
- Fentanyl Test Strips** – Available at all OPS and SCS sites in BC. The FNHA will reimburse costs for up to 100 testing strips.
- 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) for an immediate response. 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

- Hope for Wellness Help Line**
Call toll-free 1-855-242-3310 or start a confidential chat at www.hopeforwellness.ca
- Regional supports**
VIMHW@fnha.ca
- Our regional team can assist with response, including trainings and workshops related to naloxone use, Not Just Naloxone, stigma and language, grief and loss, Opioid Agonist Therapy, and harm reduction
- Regional FNHA staff Addictions Specialists**
Roxy Jones
Sara Daigle-Stevens

- Indigenous Harm Reduction Educators**
Marlene Stevens
Edward Joe
Sarah Cubbage
- Mental Health and Wellness Team Lead**
Hannah Watler
- Mental Health and Wellness Manager**
Alexis Stuart
- Regional Nurse Practice Consultant for Harm Reduction**
Shela Ratcliffe
- Toxic Drug Response Manager**
Jenny Peters