

# FIRST NATIONS AND THE TOXIC DRUG POISONING CRISIS IN BC

VANCOUVER ISLAND | JANUARY - DECEMBER 2025



The unregulated drug supply in BC remains highly potent, unpredictable, and dangerous. First Nations individuals, families, and communities continue to be disproportionately affected by the toxic drug crisis. Harm reduction is saving lives by offering compassionate, accessible health services to people who use substances, wherever they are on their healing journey. A First Nations approach strengthens conventional harm reduction by weaving in culture, teachings, community, and connections to the land and one another.

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

## Toxic Drug Poisoning Deaths Of First Nations People

57

↓ 32.9%  
Decrease from 2024

FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE DIED FROM TOXIC DRUG POISONINGS IN 2025.

This is a 32.9% decrease from the 85 deaths in 2024.

## Rate of Toxic Drug Poisoning Deaths Involving First Nations People

4.1x

First Nations people experienced a death rate 4.1x higher than other residents of the region in 2025.

## Deaths of First Nations People BY SEX

♂ 68.4%  
Male

♀ 31.6%  
Female

## Deaths of First Nations People BY AGE

38.6%  
40 Years and Older

61.4%  
Younger than 40

## First Nations People are Disproportionately Represented in Toxic Drug Poisoning Deaths

4.5%

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

16.6%

16.6% of toxic drug poisoning deaths in 2025 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](http://www.tsowtunlelum.org)



**Toxic Drug Poisoning Events Involving First Nations People**

**645**



**TOXIC DRUG POISONING EVENTS EXPERIENCED BY FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE IN 2025.**

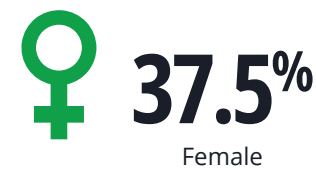
**This is an 11.0% decrease from the 725 events experienced in 2024.**

**Rate of Toxic Drug Poisoning Events Involving First Nations People**

**6.1x**

First Nations people experienced an event rate 6.1x higher than other residents of the region in 2025.

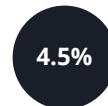
**Events of First Nations People BY SEX**



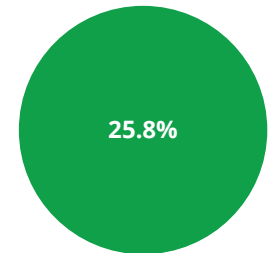
**Events of First Nations People BY AGE**



**First Nations People are Disproportionately Represented in Toxic Drug Poisoning Events**



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



**25.8%** of toxic drug poisoning events in 2025 were First Nations people.

**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](http://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](http://www.hopeforwellness.ca)

**Regional supports**  
[vi.mhw2@fnha.ca](mailto:vi.mhw2@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 Advisor, Substance Use and Community Wellness**  
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**Addictions Specialist**  
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**Indigenous Harm Reduction Educators**  
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Edward Joe

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**Toxic Drug Response Manager**  
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**Youth Wellness Navigator**  
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