

# FIRST NATIONS AND THE TOXIC DRUG POISONING CRISIS IN BC

VANCOUVER ISLAND | JANUARY – JUNE 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

# 28

FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE DIED FROM TOXIC DRUG POISONINGS BETWEEN JAN-JUNE 2025.

# ↓ 37.8%

This is a 37.8% decrease from the 45 deaths during the same period 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 between Jan-June 2025.

## 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.

17.2%

**17.2%** of toxic drug poisoning deaths between Jan-June 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)



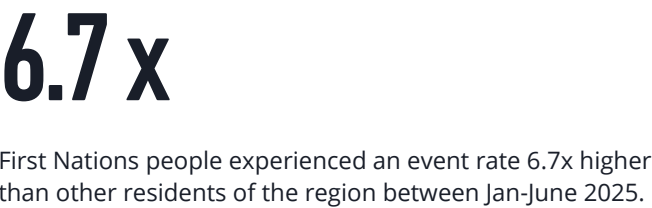
Toxic Drug Poisoning Events  
Involving First Nations People



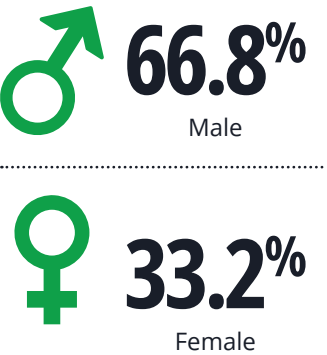
TOXIC DRUG POISONING EVENTS EXPERIENCED  
BY FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE BETWEEN JAN-JUNE 2025.

This is a 20.8% decrease from the 400 events experienced during  
the same period in 2024.

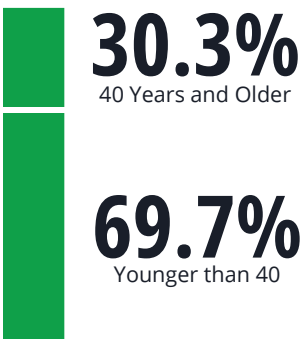
Rate of Toxic Drug Poisoning Events  
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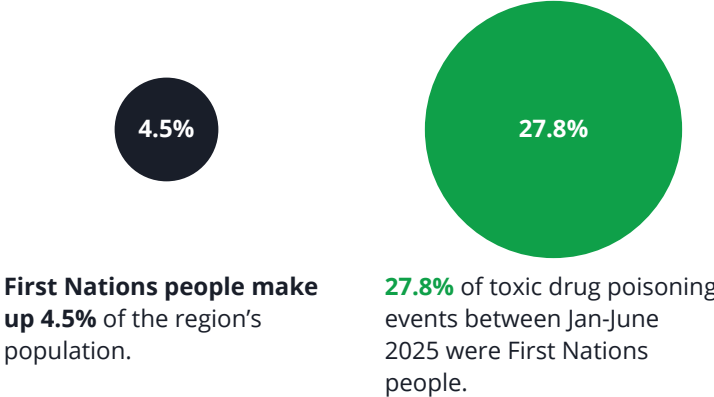
Events of  
First Nations People  
BY SEX



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](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**  
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