

# FIRST NATIONS IN BC AND THE TOXIC DRUG CRISIS

JANUARY - DECEMBER 2020

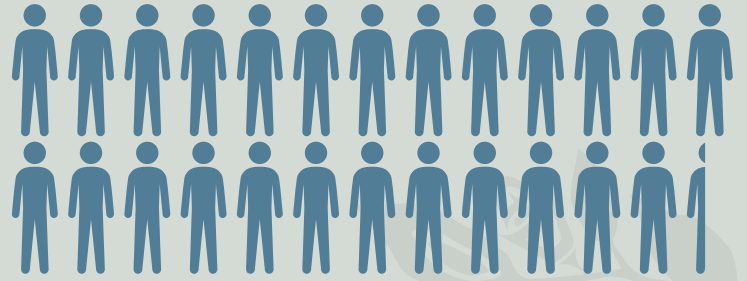


## COVID-19 Pandemic Results in a Dramatic Increase in Toxic Drug Deaths



**2020:** 254 First Nations people died

*The highest number of toxic drug deaths since 2015*



**2019:** 116 First Nations people died



EQUALS 10 DEATHS

First Nations people are **DISPROPORTIONATELY REPRESENTED** IN TOXIC DRUG DEATHS



**3.3%**

of BC's Population

First Nations represent only **3.3%** of BC's population.



**11.8%**

IN 2019

**14.7%** of all toxic drug deaths in 2020 were First Nations people. This number was **11.8%** in 2019.



**14.7%**

IN 2020



**THE GAP IS WIDENING DRAMATICALLY**

between

First Nations and other BC residents.



**5.3x**

First Nations people died at 5.3 times the rate of other BC residents in **2020**

**3.9x**

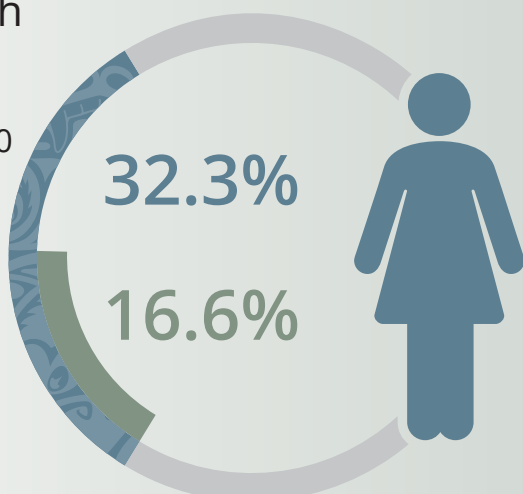
First Nations people died at 3.9 times the rate of other BC residents in **2019**

### FIRST NATIONS WOMEN

experience very high rates of toxic drug death

**32.3%** of First Nations people who died in 2020 were women

**16.6%** of other BC residents who died were women



### 2020 RECORDED THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF DEATHS AMONG BOTH MEN AND WOMEN



**9.9x** First Nations **women** died at **9.9 times** the rate of other female BC residents

**4.3x** First Nations **men** died at **4.3 times** the rate of other male BC residents



# ACTIONS TAKEN BY FNHA TO PREVENT TOXIC DRUG DEATH



## PREVENT PEOPLE FROM DYING



- **Distribution of naloxone (nasal spray and injectable):** The FNHA dispensed 18,484 doses of nasal naloxone spray to individuals through community pharmacies, and 4,215 nasal naloxone kits to 90+ First Nations communities through bulk ordering in 2020 (each kit contains two doses); worked with health system partners to distribute 7,943 injectable naloxone kits to 159 FNHA take-home naloxone sites from April to Dec. 2020 (each kit contains three doses).
- **Grants to harm reduction champions:** distributed 17 community grants of \$2,500 each

## KEEP PEOPLE SAFE WHEN USING



- **Harm Reduction Policy:** Approved Policy in January 2021 with five key action areas, including provision of Indigenous harm reduction services, expansion of substitution therapies, and support of pharmaceutical alternatives to toxic street drugs
- **Not Just Naloxone training:** More than 100 people completed two-day virtual NJN training sessions
- **Commitment in place to hire** 10 Indigenous Harm Reduction Educators and 10 Peer Coordinators to serve First Nations communities across the province

## CREATE AN ACCESSIBLE RANGE OF TREATMENT OPTIONS



- **Opioid agonist therapy (OAT):** FNHA has supported 21 rural and remote First Nations communities to improve access to treatment options for opioid use disorder, including OAT; registered nurse prescribing planning is underway in seven communities
- **FNHA's Virtual Substance Use and Psychiatry Service** was launched in the summer of 2020 and provides access to addictions specialists for assessments, treatment planning, access to OAT, withdrawal management, and pharmaceutical alternatives
- **Indigenous treatment and land-based healing services that are grounded in cultural teachings:** 147 sites providing mental health and addictions services
- **First Nations Treatment and Healing Centres:** Revitalization of six existing treatment centers and construction of new healing centres in Vancouver Coastal and Fraser Salish regions
- **OAT clinic fees:** 223 people received subsidies to access OAT at medical clinics

## SUPPORT PEOPLE ON THEIR HEALING JOURNEYS



- **Difficult Conversations Webinar Series:** Hosted four webinars and encouraged 450+ people to lean into difficult conversations about substance use. The webinars encourage family members, friends and loved ones to share their challenges in accessing harm reduction services and supports, and reframe the discussion to include Indigenous strengths and self-determination.
- **Indigenous Harm Reduction Community Council:** Developed a province-wide network of Indigenous people working on Indigenous approaches to harm reduction and providing knowledge sharing across all regions
- **Unlocking the Gates:** Supported 188 people during their release from incarceration to address the strong link between transitioning out of correctional facilities and subsequent toxic drug events and deaths
- **Promoting culturally safe services:** Increased partnerships with Indigenous service providers and health system partners to address cultural safety and systemic anti-Indigenous racism in health services provided to Indigenous people

