

## Recommended Strategies & Actions to Address the Crisis of Toxic Drug Deaths & Addiction in Cowichan Tribes

Updated March 2024

**Vision:** A strong, safe, healthy Nation, free from addiction and drug poisonings, where members are firmly grounded in Quw'utsun culture and get the services and supports they need, delivered by Cowichan Tribes.

### **Guiding Principles:**

1. **Quw'utsun Culture.** Cowichan Tribes' approach to addressing the crisis of toxic drug deaths and addiction is firmly grounded in and guided by Quw'utsun culture, the Quw'utsun Snuw'uy'ulh (Teachings), the Hul'q'umi'num' language, and Nuts'amaat shqwaluwun (One Mind, One Heart).
2. **Healthy Families & Communities.** Building healthy Quw'utsun families and communities who are firmly grounded in Quw'utsun culture is essential to ending the crisis of toxic drug deaths and addiction.
3. **Cowichan Tribes Sovereignty & Self-Determination.** As much as possible, services and supports for Quw'utsun people must be managed and delivered by Cowichan Tribes, including detox, treatment, and long-term recovery services and supports.

### **Key Strategies to Address the Crisis:**

1. **Improve Access to Services and Supports with an Integrated Approach & Continuum of Care:** Integrated approach to addiction prevention and treatment with a continuum of care, based on Quw'utsun culture; Ts'ets'uwut Tth'ele' Mustimuhw (Helping Hearts Outreach Team); Detox & Treatment Houses; post-treatment recovery supports; cultural, counselling, and mental health supports; Sa'qw'thut culturally-grounded program; addictions medicine support at Slhexun Sun'ts'a Clinic.
2. **Cross-Departmental Collaboration Led By a Standing Working Group:** Standing Working Group to enable an integrated approach and continuum of care; collaboration among managers, staff, and partners to improve access to services and secure more provincial and federal long-term operational funding; situation monitoring, data collection, and reporting; collaboration among Cowichan Tribes and health service partners to improve services and end systemic racism.
3. **Improve Access to Housing & Shelter:** Housing First approach; supportive housing for people in recovery; increased supply of low-barrier pod housing for people who use substances; increased supply of on-reserve housing options; 24/7 Youth Safe Space; supportive housing for youth transitioning out of care; substance-free temporary housing and shelter.
4. **Prevention:** Collaborative, proactive, wrap-around interventions to support at-risk members and youth *before* they fall into crisis or begin using substances; New Youth Centre & youth supports.
5. **Education & Communication:** Prevention and harm reduction education, particularly for Quw'utsun youth and parents; public health communications on the toxic drug crisis; education to end discrimination and stigma against people who use substances; communications with service providers and governments to improve services and funding, and to end systemic racism.

# Recommendations to Address the Crisis of Toxic Drug Deaths & Addiction in Cowichan Tribes

Updated March 2024

The Cowichan Tribes Opioid Crisis Response Working Group presents the following recommendations to Chief and Council on what is needed to address the crisis of toxic drug deaths and addiction in Cowichan Tribes.

*Please see the Cowichan Tribes Opioid Crisis Response Working Group's Final Report & Recommendations for the findings and community needs on which these recommendations are based.*

## Top Priority Recommendations

Among the Working Group's recommendations, seven have been identified as **top priority recommendations** which require urgent action by Cowichan Tribes:

- (1.1) Build and operate supportive housing for people in recovery.
- (1.3) Collaborate with partners to increase the supply of low-barrier pod housing, and establish permanent sites with different options to meet different needs.
- (2.1) Build and operate Cowichan Tribes-run Detox & Treatment Houses.
- (3.1) Build a new Youth Centre as soon as possible, as per the Youth Centre feasibility study.
- (3.2) Continue work with community partners to build and operate a 24/7 Youth Safe Space.
- (4.1) Ensure Ts'ewulhtun Health Centre's Harm Reduction & Outreach Team is adequately staffed with *at least* 1 Coordinator, 2 Harm Reduction Workers and 1 Harm Reduction Nurse.
- (6) Establish a permanent cross-departmental working group – with dedicated support and adequate resources – to coordinate Cowichan Tribes' ongoing response to the crisis of toxic drug deaths and addiction.





### ***Recommendation 1 – Housing***

It is recommended that Cowichan Tribes:

- 1.1 Build and operate supportive housing for people in recovery. ***(TOP PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION)***
- 1.2 Formally support a Housing First approach to addressing the crisis of toxic drug deaths and addiction.
- 1.3 Collaborate with partners to increase the supply of low-barrier pod housing, and establish permanent sites with different options to meet different needs. ***(TOP PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION)***
- 1.4 Build and operate “sober” transitional housing & shelter for people who don’t use substances.
- 1.5 Build and operate additional supportive housing for Quw’utsun youth transitioning out of care and into the community.
- 1.6 Advocate to the BC Government and the Government of Canada to increase funding for Cowichan Tribes’ housing needs, and to take stronger action to address the housing crisis.
- 1.7 Advocate to the City of Duncan, the Cowichan Valley Regional District, and the BC Government to dramatically increase the supply of off-reserve housing in the Cowichan Valley, including by increasing allowable density and housing types, and ending exclusionary single-family zoning.

### ***Recommendation 2 – Detox, Treatment & Recovery Supports***

It is recommended that Cowichan Tribes:

- 2.1 Build and operate Cowichan Tribes-run Detox & Treatment Houses. ***(TOP PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION)***.
- 2.2 Improve access to youth detox and treatment services and supports.
- 2.3 Advocate to the BC Government and the Government of Canada to dramatically increase funding for culturally appropriate detox and treatment services in the Cowichan Valley.

### ***Recommendation 3 – Youth Supports & New Youth Centre***

It is recommended that Cowichan Tribes:

- 3.1 Build a new Youth Centre as soon as possible, as per the Youth Centre feasibility study. ***(TOP PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION)***
- 3.2 Continue work with community partners to build and operate a 24/7 Youth Safe Space. ***(TOP PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION)***
- 3.3 Recognize youth services and supports as essential services for the long-term wellbeing Quw’utsun youth.

- 3.4 Enhance cross-department and community collaboration to ensure adequate youth supports, programs, and activities, including frontline youth outreach workers.
- 3.5 Improve access to culturally appropriate detox and treatment services for Quw'utsun youth.
- 3.6 Improve collaborative planning and wrap-around supports for Quw'utsun youth transitioning out of care and into the community, including supportive housing.
- 3.7 Advocate to ensure all Quw'utsun youth in care receive the same standard of culturally appropriate service, regardless of which agency is responsible for them.
- 3.8 Advocate to the BC Government to increase the age at which youth in care are forced to “age out” of receiving essential services and supports.
- 3.10 Establish a cooperative protocol with Cowichan District Hospital to ensure timely communication and discharge planning with Lalum'utul' Smun'eem and Ts'ewulhtun Health Centre when Quw'utsun youth are admitted and need culturally safe follow-up supports.

#### ***Recommendation 4 – Harm Reduction & Outreach***

It is recommended that Cowichan Tribes:

- 4.1 Ensure Ts'ewulhtun Health Centre's Harm Reduction & Outreach Team is adequately staffed with *at least* 1 Coordinator, 2 Harm Reduction Workers and 1 Harm Reduction Nurse. ***(TOP PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION)***
- 4.2 Advocate to the BC Government, the Government of Canada, FNHA, Island Health, and local service providers to increase and maintain frontline outreach and harm reduction supports.

#### ***Recommendation 5 - Cultural, Counselling & Mental Health Supports***

It is recommended that Cowichan Tribes:

- 5.1 Increase Kwun'atsustul Counselling staffing to *at least* 2010 levels (13 staff) to maintain regular counselling services, *plus* additional staff to maintain and expand the Sa'qw'thut culturally-grounded treatment program as it expands to meet community need.
- 5.2 Increase the Embracing Life team to *at least* 3 full-time positions (1 manager and 2 staff).
- 5.3 Advocate to the BC Government, the Government of Canada, Island Health, and the FNHA to increase funding and supports for culturally appropriate mental health and counselling services in the Cowichan Valley.

### ***Recommendation 6 - Working Group & Collaboration***

It is recommended that Cowichan Tribes:

6. Establish a permanent cross-departmental working group – with dedicated support and adequate resources – to coordinate Cowichan Tribes’ ongoing response to the crisis of toxic drug deaths and addiction. ***(TOP PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION)***

### ***Recommendation 7 - Communications & Prevention Education***

It is recommended that Cowichan Tribes:

7. Maintain and enhance the Working Group’s prevention and harm reduction education and communications campaign, including regular newsletter sections, social media posts, updates to the Opioids webpage, and ongoing updates to members on the toxic drug crisis and how to get help for addiction.

### ***Recommendation 8 - Safe Supply of Substances & Decriminalization***

It is recommended that Cowichan Tribes:

- 8.1 Improve access to safe supply of substances.
- 8.2 Advocate to the BC Government, the Government of Canada, Island Health, and FNHA to fully decriminalize substance use and rapidly improve access to a safe supply of substances.

### ***Recommendation 9 – Clinical Counselling for Staff***

It is recommended that Cowichan Tribes:

9. Add Clinical Counselling to the employee benefits package and enhance mental health supports for staff.

