



Working Group Activity Update - June 15th, 2021

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The cross-departmental **Opioid Crisis Response Working Group** leads and coordinates Cowichan Tribes' ongoing response to the opioid overdose epidemic. We provide direct outreach, support, overdose prevention, harm reduction, and addiction treatment services to members, including at-risk youth and members who use substances.

Used Needles Pickup

For pickup of used needles, a team can come to your location to collect them.

Call CMHA Sharps Line: 250-732-7736 | 7 days per week, 7:30am to 10:30am
(You may need to leave a voice message with a location and your phone number.)

We're grateful to the Canadian Mental Health Association for this service.

Activity Highlights & News

Over the past four weeks we met virtually twice – once with staff members and once with staff plus external partners from Island Health, FNHA, and RCMP. Heading into Summer, we will be further enhancing harm reduction and outreach services.

Nature-Based Addiction Treatment & Recovery Program. We continue to make good progress on establishing our own nature-based addiction treatment and recovery support program. A Program Coordinator has been hired and the program is on track to launch by late Summer. The program will be firmly grounded in the Quw'utsun Snuw'uy'ulh (Teachings), delivered by Kwun'atsustul Counselling on the land and sea in Quw'uwtsun territory, and open to members of all ages.

Overdose Prevention Site (OPS) Visits by Indigenous People. Over the four weeks from May 13 to June 9, Indigenous people visited Duncan-Cowichan OPS 1,358 times to use substances and/or access services and supports. The high volume of visits shows the severity of the crisis of addiction and substance use that our Nation is facing, and the importance of this life-saving service.

Visits to Overdose Prevention Site by Indigenous People (May 13 to June 9)

Males < age 25	Females < age 25	Males > age 25	Females > age 25	Total Visits (May 13-Jun 9)
321	264	396	377	1,358



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Opioid Crisis Community Survey Report

Last Fall, Cowichan Tribes received 222 responses with over 950 written comments to the online Opioid Crisis Community Survey. There were 127 responses from Cowichan Tribes-registered people. Independent researchers recently completed an analysis of all responses and comments. We encourage members to read the [Survey Report](#) on Cowichan Tribes' [Opioid Response webpage](#).

What Is Needed To Address The Crisis Of Addiction And Overdoses. The survey asked participants, *"In your opinion, what is most needed in the areas of prevention, supports and treatment to address the overdose crisis?"* The themes mentioned most by respondents were, in order of frequency:

1. **Improve access to detox, treatment, and recovery services and supports**, including local, culturally-appropriate services which can be accessed rapidly (no wait lists), a range of service options, and long-term supports for people in recovery.
2. **Increase mental health supports and staff**, including culturally appropriate services, proactive rather than reactive supports, and supports that are trustworthy and non-judgemental.
3. **Enhance education and awareness**, about addiction and substance use, the risks, overdose prevention, and the need to talk more openly about the causes of the crisis of addiction and mental health in order to end stigma.
4. **Enhance outreach services and supports**, for at-risk members and people who use substances.
5. **Enhance youth programs and supports**, including youth activities and programs grounded in Quw'utsun culture and teachings.
6. **Improve access to safe, affordable housing**. The lack of safe, affordable housing was cited as a major barrier to healing from addiction, particularly by those who use substances.
7. **Safe supply of substances**. The need for safe supply was emphasized by several respondents, particularly people who use substances.
8. **End the stigmatization of people struggling with addiction**. Stigma against addiction and substance use is a major barrier to healing.

The survey also found that **Quw'utsun culture** must be a foundational part of healing from addiction.

"Teachings are so powerful. It's teachings that have kept Cowichan Tribes people strong through everything they have lived through. Teachings are about family, love, kindness, helping each other. Every single member of Cowichan Tribes is here for a reason. Sometimes that reason gets lost but it can be found again!!!"

- Quw'utsun survey respondent.