

FIRST NATIONS AND THE TOXIC DRUG POISONING CRISIS IN BC

NORTHERN | JANUARY - DECEMBER 2023



Harm reduction efforts are saving lives but drug toxicity continues at record high levels affecting First Nations families and communities across BC.

The data presented here is specific to the Northern Region.

Toxic Drug Poisoning Deaths
Of First Nations People

95

↑ 23.4%
Increase over 2022

FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE DIED FROM TOXIC DRUG POISONINGS IN 2023.

This is a 23.4% increase from the 77 deaths in 2022.

Deaths of
First Nations People
BY GENDER

♂ 50.5%
Male

♀ 49.5%
Female

Deaths of
First Nations People
BY AGE

33.7%
40 Years and Older

66.3%
Younger than 40

Rate of
Toxic Drug Poisoning Death

5.0x

First Nations people experienced a death rate 5.0x higher than other residents of the region.

First Nations People are Disproportionately Represented in
Toxic Drug Poisoning Deaths

14.8%

First Nations people make up 14.8% of the region's population.

46.1%

46.1% of toxic drug poisoning deaths in 2023 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. Data are collected as of February 2024, and are subject to change.

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



Toxic Drug Poisoning Events involving First Nations People

691

8.3%
Increase over 2022

TOXIC DRUG POISONING EVENTS EXPERIENCED BY FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE IN 2023

This is an increase of 8.3% from 638 events experienced in 2022.

6.7x First Nations people experienced an event rate 6.7x higher than other residents of the region.

Events of First Nations People BY GENDER

55.9%
Male

44.1%
Female

Events of First Nations People BY AGE

31.7%
40 Years and Older

68.3%
Younger than 40

First Nations People are Disproportionately Represented in Toxic Drug Poisoning events

14.8%

First Nations people make up 14.8% of the region's population.

53.2%

53.2% of toxic drug poisoning events in 2023 were First Nations people.

NOTES

- Most toxic drug poisoning events are non-fatal and represent when 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

Regional contact email
MWResponse.North@fnha.ca

Harm Reduction Hub
harmreduction@fnha.ca

Emotional and Cultural Support

Northern BC Crisis Line – Call 1-888-562-1214, 24 hours per day, seven days a week. Youth support text to 250-564-8336 (4-10 p.m. daily)

Drug Alerts –Text JOIN to ALERTS (253787)

Tsow Tun Le Lum Society – Call 1-888-403-3123 (toll-free) or visit www.tsowtunlelum.org

Indian Residential School Crisis Line is a national service for anyone experiencing pain or distress as a result of their residential school experience. Call toll-free 1-800-721-0066. www.irsss.ca/service-request-form.

KUU-US Crisis Service – Call 1-800-KUU-US17 (588-8717) for an immediate response. 24-hours a day, seven days a week. www.kuu-uscrisisline.com

Hope for Wellness Help Line offers 24 hour immediate mental health counselling and crisis intervention by phone or online chat. Call toll-free 1-855-242-3310 or start a confidential chat with a counsellor at www.hopeforwellness.ca

310 Mental Health Support – Call 310-6789 (no area code needed) toll free anywhere in BC. Available 24 hours a day.

Fentanyl Test Strips – Fentanyl test strips are available at all OPS and SCS sites in BC and you can also use the them at home. The FNHA will reimburse costs for up to 100 fentanyl testing strips.