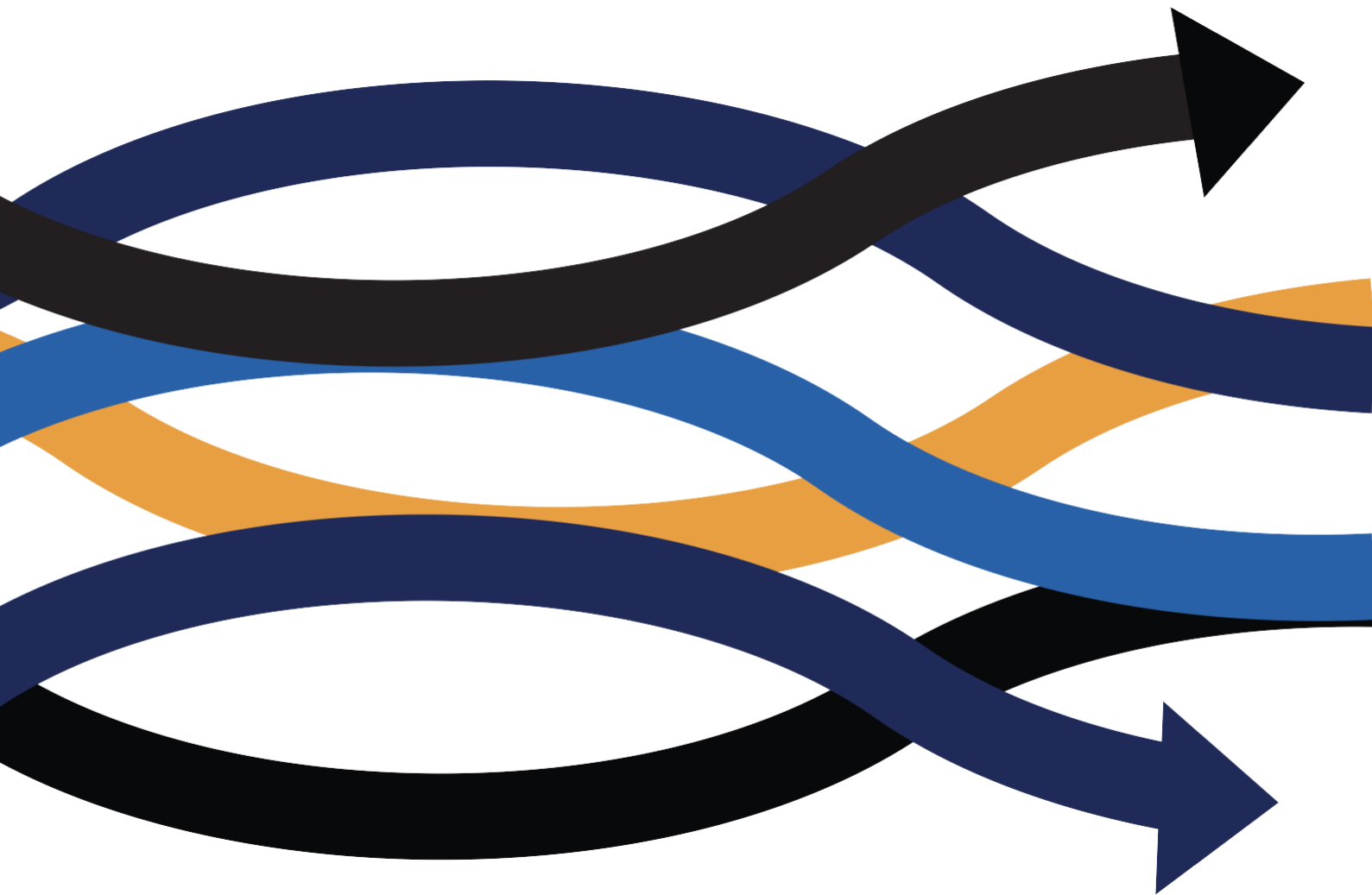


Alberni Valley Toxic Poisoned Drugs (Opioid) Crisis Strategy

**Coming Together in Response to the Crisis
of Toxic Poisoned Drugs, Substance Use, and
Overdoses in the Alberni Valley**



Coordinated by the Tseshaht First Nation



In partnership and collaboration with the:

Port Alberni Community Action Team



Kuu-us Crisis Line Society



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Vision and Values	6
Executive Summary	8
Pillars of a House	8
Two-Eyed Seeing Approach.	8
4 Pillars of Action.....	9
People.....	12
Places.....	15
Programs.....	17
Prevention.....	20
Importance of Implementing a Comprehensive Strategy	23
General Implementation Approaches.	26
Conclusion.....	27

Introduction

December 2023 - In the heart of the Alberni Valley, where the majestic mountains meet the flowing waters, a crisis looms over our communities. The pervasive grip of the unregulated supply of poisoned drugs, substance disorders and overdoses with far too many resulting in death; has reached alarming proportions, threatening the very fabric of our society. But in the face of this adversity, we find hope and strength in the power of unity and collaboration.

Now, more than ever, it is imperative that we come together as a collective force, transcending boundaries, and differences, to confront this crisis head-on. The urgency of the situation demands a unified response that embraces the voices and wisdom of all community members, particularly the First Nations and local governments. It is through the convergence of our shared knowledge, traditions, and experiences that we can forge a pathway towards healing, recovery, and a brighter future.

The traditional teachings and values of the Tseshaht First Nation have guided this land for countless generations, offering profound wisdom and resilience in the face of adversity. This Strategy recognizes the deep connection between culture, community, and well-being, and understands that the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives is essential in shaping effective strategies to address the crisis at hand. By honouring and integrating Tseshaht's values, we can foster an environment that is respectful, culturally sensitive, and driven by the collective vision of a healthier and more vibrant Alberni Valley.

Similarly, local, and regional governments have a critical role to play in addressing this multifaceted crisis. United by a shared commitment to the well-being of our communities, we can leverage our resources, expertise, and governance structures to enact meaningful change. By harnessing the collective power of the municipality within the region, we have the capacity to advocate for policy reforms, secure funding, and implement comprehensive programs that address prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and long-term support services.

Together, we possess a tremendous potential to create lasting impact. By embracing collaboration, respect, and open dialogue, we can break down the barriers that have hindered progress in the past. Our shared goal is to build a community where individuals are not defined by their struggles but rather uplifted by the support, compassion, and opportunities that surround them.

This strategy is not merely a document on paper; it is a call to action. It is a testament to our collective commitment to combat the poisoned drug crisis that has ravaged our communities and families. As we embark on this journey together, we will forge a path towards healing, resilience, and hope.



In the pages that follow, we present a comprehensive approach to address the crisis of poisoned drugs, substance disorders and overdoses in the Alberni Valley. This strategy encompasses prevention, harm reduction, acute response, detox/stabilization, treatment, recovery, long-term supports, culture, and community supports. It is rooted in the values and perspectives of the Tseshaht First Nation and guided by the collaborative efforts of all governments in the Alberni Valley.

Let us join hands, hearts, and minds as we stand united against the challenges that lie ahead. Together, we can build a future where every individual has the opportunity to thrive, where connections are strengthened, and where the resilience of our communities shines brightly amidst the darkest of times.

Vision and Values

Vision

A thriving Alberni Valley united, resilient, and free from the devastating impact of poisoned drugs, substance disorders and overdoses where the First Nations and all local and regional governments stand together, guided by the wisdom of our ancestors, and driven by a shared commitment to the well-being of every individual.



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Values

The following values provide a foundation for this strategy's implementation and serve as guiding principles to shape decision-making, actions, and interactions throughout the process.

They emphasize the significance of collaboration, cultural respect, empathy, and resilience in addressing the crisis and creating a supportive and inclusive environment in the Alberni Valley.

- » **Collaboration and Unity:** We value collaboration and unity as we recognize that only through collective efforts, involving the Tseshaht First Nation and all local and regional governments, can we effectively address the crisis of poisoned drugs, substance disorders and overdoses in the Alberni Valley.
- » **Cultural Respect and Sensitivity:** We value cultural respect and sensitivity, ensuring that the traditions, teachings, and values of First Nations are honoured and integrated into every aspect of our strategy's implementation, fostering a culturally safe, interconnected, inclusive and holistic environment for all.
- » **Empathy and Compassion:** We value empathy and compassion, acknowledging that every individual impacted by substance use disorders deserves understanding, trauma informed support, with the opportunity for recovery, and ensuring that our practices reflect a genuine concern for their well-being.
- » **Resilience and Hope:** We value resilience and hope, as we believe in the inherent strength of our community to overcome challenges, to uplift and inspire individuals in their recovery journey, and to provide a beacon of hope for a brighter future in the face of this crisis.

Executive Summary

Tseshah First Nation is proud to provide this strategy through collaboration with many individuals, organizations, governments, and First Nations for the entire Alberni Valley. We felt it was necessary to share this isn't just a Tseshah, Nuu-chah-nulth or Indigenous issue in the Valley; this is a human issue across the world.

By everyone coming together in collaborative, coordinated and untied approach, we believe this strategy is not the end all be all, but a piece of the puzzle to very complex, interconnected issues.

For those who endorse this strategy, we are calling upon the federal and provincial governments, Island Health, and First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) to fully resource and implement this strategy immediately, many people of the past, present and future as relying on us.

Pillars of a House

Many First Nations on the west coast have a deep connection to their traditional longhouse which housed our people, kept them safe, provided a space to gather, celebrate, mourn, and feast. This strategy provides symbolism to our longhouses where we are building upon the foundation of those who laid the groundwork before us, the PILLARS are what hold up our house to ensure we protect what is inside our house, our people.

Two-Eyed Seeing Approach

Embrace the Two-Eyed Seeing approach, which emphasizes the integration of Indigenous and Western knowledge systems, to guide the implementation of the strategy in a way that respects and balances both cultural perspectives.

Four Pillars of Action

To address the poisoned drugs, substance disorders and overdose crisis in the Alberni Valley, the following four pillars of action can be advanced:

Pillar 1: People

- » **Coalition Building and Advocacy:**
 - » Establish a coalition of First Nations, local and regional government bodies, organizations, and interested individuals to create a unified voice for requesting support from the Provincial and Federal government. The coalition should aim to prioritize addressing the poisoned drugs crisis and push for the implementation of specific measures.
- » **Community Mobilization:**
 - » Foster a sense of community and connection across all demographics to address the crisis. Building community support for people with substance use disorders and their families should be an ongoing detailed strategy. This should involve creating safe spaces for connection and resources for support.
- » **Patient Satisfaction:**
 - » Health care providers must set up a patient survey methodology that measures the satisfaction of care for First Nations, people who are marginalized, and patients with substance disorders. The metrics to be reportable to the community.

Pillar 2: Places

- » **Inclusive Detox/Recovery Facilities:**
 - » Advocate for a local fully funded inclusive Detox/Recovery Facility sponsored by the Provincial Government via Island Health supported by the Federal Government and the First Nations Health Authority, which is timely and barrier free. This facility will help people with substance use disorders in the Alberni Valley access appropriate care and treatment.
- » **Housing Support:**
 - » Support initiatives to create the full spectrum of permanent housing for people who are marginalized as no one can start the healing journey without a safe place to sleep.

Pillar 3: Programs

- » **Cultural Training:**
 - » Lobby for implementation of cultural training including but not limited to health care providers, first responders, service providers, in particular Emergency Department staff at the West Coast General Hospital. The training should focus on addressing the unique needs of First Nations, marginalized individuals, and people with substance use disorders.
- » **Comprehensive Continuity of Healing, Learn from Successful Models:**
 - » Adopt policies and strategies used in other countries that have successfully addressed the substance disorder crisis. For example, Portugal's strategy of focusing on harm reduction, treating drug addiction as a public health issue rather than a criminal one, encompassing a program that takes you from referral to in community support until the patient no longer needs it and setting in place educational programs to change the cultural attitudes towards drugs and people who use drugs can be adopted. Implementing an immediate referral system for people who require help with substance disorders is essential.

» **Transportation:**

- » Establish a system that will transport people who need to access to appropriate facilities and services for concurrent disorders.

Pillar 4: Prevention

» **Education:**

- » Intensify education opportunities within the community on prevention, harm reduction and stigma reduction. Prevention and education with a focus on youth. Focus on harm reduction strategies, such as not using drugs alone, getting drugs tested, and using the overdose prevention site. Addressing stigma requires a specific education campaign that addresses attitudes towards racism, people who are marginalized, and people who use substances.

» **Prevention:**

- » Other prevention initiatives, programs and services must be fully funded to support preventing children and youth; addressing trauma/intergenerational trauma, grief, and support of individuals.

» **Recovery Focused Language:**

- » Change the language from negative stereotypes to recovery-focused language. Encourage empathy, understanding, and cultural awareness towards people with substance use disorders and recognize that addiction is a complex disease that affects individuals differently.

Pillar 1: People

Priority Action 1: Coalition Building and Advocacy

Goal: Establish a coalition of First Nations, local and regional government bodies, organizations, and interested individuals to create a unified voice for requesting support from the Provincial and Federal government. The coalition should aim to prioritize addressing the poisoned drugs crisis and push for the implementation of specific measures.

Some of the ways we will advance this goal include, but will not be limited to:

- 1. Creating a Local Coalition:** Representatives from local, regional and First Nation government bodies, including the Tseshaht First Nation, City, ARCD, and others, to form a unified coalition focused on the poisoned drugs crisis, facilitating information sharing and collaborative decision-making. The coalition will leverage collective strengths to develop effective strategies and advocate for support from governments and health authorities.
- 2. Synergizing Requests to Governments and Health Authorities:** With a united voice, the coalition will collaborate on developing a comprehensive set of requests and proposals to be presented to the Provincial government and health authorities. By aligning our requests, the coalition will amplify our collective influence and enhance the chances of securing meaningful support from the Provincial government and health authorities. The coalition will engage in ongoing communication and coordination with the Provincial government and health authorities, advocating for the implementation of the recommended measures and highlighting the urgent need for support to address the crisis effectively.
- 3. Coordination > Plan > Advocate / Lobby > Implement:** Coming together to develop plans and strategies from front line workers, administrative and organizations, providing advice to political advocates and leading to financial, legal, legislative/policy etc. for coalition organizations to implement.

Priority Action 2: Community Mobilization

Goal: Foster a sense of community and connection across all demographics to address the crisis. Building community support for people with substance use disorders and their families should be an ongoing detailed strategy. This should involve creating safe spaces for connection and resources for support.

Some of the ways we will advance this goal include, but will not be limited to:

- 1. Fostering Connection and Community Support:** Programs, initiatives, and events will be implemented to encourage interaction, build relationships, and create a supportive network for individuals with substance use disorders and their families. This action involves actively fostering a sense of connection and community support across all demographics in the Alberni Valley.
- 2. Creating Safe Spaces for Support:** Creating safe spaces is crucial in providing individuals with substance use disorders and their families a supportive environment free from stigma, discrimination, and judgment. Safe spaces can include physical locations, online platforms, or designated community events where people can come together, share their stories, seek guidance, access resources, and receive support (emotional, mental, spiritual, etc.).
- 3. Addressing “Us vs. Them” Mentality:** It is essential to challenge and transform the “Us vs. Them” mentality that often divides communities and perpetuates stigma towards individuals with substance use disorders. Educational campaigns, public awareness initiatives, and community dialogue sessions will be conducted to challenge misconceptions, reduce stigma, promote empathy, cultural awareness and understanding.

Priority Action 3: Patient Satisfaction

Goal: Health care providers must set up a patient survey methodology that measures the satisfaction of care for First Nations, people who are marginalized, and patients with substance disorders. The metrics to be reportable to the community.

Some of the ways we will advance this goal include, but will not be limited to:

- 1. Establishing a Methodology for Patient Satisfaction Measurement:** Work with Island Health to develop a methodology for measuring patient satisfaction among First Nation, marginalized, and substance disorder patients. It will be important to ensure the specific indicators and metrics accurately capture the experiences and perspectives of these patient populations while always ensuring culturally appropriate approaches are being utilized.
- 2. Reporting Metrics to the Community:** Establish a reporting mechanism that ensures the transparency and accessibility of patient satisfaction metrics to Tseshaht First Nation. Regular reporting of the metrics must be conducted to provide the community with insights into the quality of care and the experiences of First Nation, marginalized, and substance disorder patients. Data must be presented in a clear and understandable format, making it accessible to community members, organizations, and decision-makers for informed discussions, advocacy, and improvement initiatives.

Pillar 2: Places

Priority Action 4: Inclusive Detox/Recovery Facilities

Goal: Advocate for a local fully funded inclusive Detox/Recovery Facility sponsored by the Provincial Government via Island Health supported by the Federal Government and the First Nations Health Authority, which is timely and barrier free. This facility will help people with substance use disorders in the Alberni Valley access appropriate care and treatment.

Some of the ways we will advance this goal include, but will not be limited to:

- 1. Lobbying for a Local, fully funded, and inclusive Detox/Recovery Facility:** Advocating and lobbying for the establishment of the urgently needed local, fully funded, and inclusive detox/recovery facility, sponsored by the Provincial government, and supported by the Federal government and the First Nations Health Authority, to address the growing crisis of poisoned drugs, substance disorders and overdoses in the Alberni Valley. Lobbying efforts will include engaging with government officials, healthcare providers, community leaders, and organizations, to build support and gather resources for the facility.
- 2. Sponsorship by the Provincial Government via Island Health and First Nations Health Authority (FNHA):** Securing sponsorship and support from the FNHA and Provincial Government, specifically through Island Health, is crucial for the successful establishment and operation of a local, fully funded, and inclusive detox/recovery facility. Collaboration with Island Health and FNHA representatives, government officials, and community advocates will be instrumental in conveying the significance of the facility.
- 3. Eliminating User Fees:** The goal is to ensure that the local, fully funded, and inclusive detox/recovery facility operates without user fees, making it accessible to all individuals regardless of their financial circumstances. Lobbying efforts will emphasize the need for public funding to support the operation and maintenance of the facility, thus removing the financial barrier for individuals seeking care and treatment.

4. Inclusive, innovative, timely and barrier free: Helping people start their healing journey as soon as possible is crucial in addressing the poisoned drug crisis. The recommendations for recovery treatment timeframes stress the importance of acting quickly. Dealing with substance disorders is something that needs immediate attention. Current models through our existing health system often refer people to treatment or assessment measured in days or even weeks. These recommendations highlight the need for fast access to proven critical care, follow-up treatments and supportive services in our community. We look to jurisdictions that are considered the best in the world, where they've made smart people supportive choices. They focus on immediate response to help people start their healing journey. This includes providing detox and recovery support, addressing the reasons why people use substances, and offering detox/ recovery programs through a critical care facility, then detox/recovery programs and within the community as outpatients after they leave in-care programs. The goal is to provide critical care for substance disorders through the admittance of our hospital Emergency Department, with a referral to an in-community Detox/Recovery Program within forty-eight hours.

Priority Action 5: Housing Support

Goal: Support initiatives to create a full spectrum of permanent housing for people who are marginalized as no one can start the healing journey without a safe place to sleep.

Some of the ways we will advance this goal include, but will not be limited to:

- 1. Supporting Initiatives for Marginalized Housing:** Collaborations will be established with local housing organizations, non-profit agencies, and government entities to identify and support housing initiatives that prioritize the needs of marginalized populations. Efforts will focus on securing funding, resources, and partnerships to facilitate the development and implementation of affordable and supportive housing programs.
- 2. Importance of Safe Places for Recovery:** Recognizing that safe and stable housing is an essential foundation for recovery, this action emphasizes the need to prioritize the provision of safe places for individuals seeking recovery from substance use disorders. Efforts will be made to ensure that housing options are free from harmful environments, promote community integration, and provide the necessary supports for individuals to maintain sobriety and build healthy lives.

Pillar 3: Programs

Priority Action 6: Cultural Training

Goal: Lobby for implementation of cultural training including but not limited to health care providers, first responders, service providers, in particular Emergency Department staff at the West Coast General Hospital. The training should focus on addressing the unique needs of First Nations, marginalized individuals, and people with substance use disorders.

Some of the ways we will advance this goal include, but will not be limited to:

- 1. Lobbying for a Local, fully funded, and inclusive Detox/Recovery Facility:** Advocating and lobbying for the establishment of the urgently needed local, fully funded, and inclusive detox/recovery facility, sponsored by the Provincial government, and supported by the Federal government and the First Nations Health Authority, to address the growing crisis of poisoned drugs, substance disorders and overdoses in the Alberni Valley. Lobbying efforts will include engaging with government officials, healthcare providers, community leaders, and organizations, to build support and gather resources for the facility.
- 2. Implement an Appropriate Cultural Training Program:** Emphasize the importance of implementing a culturally sensitive program or similar initiatives for cultural training in with Island Health. Advocate for the integration of an appropriate program that addresses the unique needs of First Nations, marginalized individuals, and people with substance use disorders.
- 3. Ongoing and Measurable Training:** Cultural training for Island Health staff should not be a one-time event but an ongoing and integrated component of professional development. Regular training sessions, workshops, and refresher courses will be implemented to ensure that staff members receive continuous education and updates on cultural competency and best practices.

Priority Action 7: Comprehensive Continuity of Healing, Learn from Successful Models

Goal: Adopt policies and strategies used in other countries that have successfully addressed the substance disorder crisis. For example, Portugal's strategy of focusing on harm reduction, treating drug addiction as a public health issue rather than a criminal one, encompassing a program that takes you from referral to in community support until the patient no longer needs it and setting in place educational programs to change the cultural attitudes towards drugs and people who use drugs can be adopted. Implementing an immediate referral system for people who require help with substance disorders is essential.

Some of the ways we will advance this goal include, but will not be limited to:

- 1. Studying Successful Strategies in Other Countries:** Work with Island Health to develop a methodology for measuring patient satisfaction among First Nation, marginalized, and substance disorder patients. It will be important to ensure the specific indicators and metrics accurately capture the experiences and perspectives of these patient populations while always ensuring culturally appropriate approaches are being utilized.
- 2. Portugal's Approach:** Efforts will be made to study and understand the specific components of Portugal's strategy, such as harm reduction, public health-oriented interventions, and cultural attitude change initiatives. Collaboration with experts and stakeholders who have knowledge and experience in Portugal's approach will be sought to guide the adaptation and implementation of relevant components within the Alberni Valley community.
- 3. Applying Evidence-Based Practices to Alberni Valley:** Best practices and research-based interventions from various countries and contexts will be identified and adapted to align with the specific needs and resources of the Alberni Valley community. Continuous monitoring and feedback mechanisms will be put in place to assess the impact of these practices and make necessary adjustments to optimize outcomes.
- 4. Safer Supply:** The latest Canadian evidence-based research is confirming the multiple benefits of a safer supply. We are aware of several regulated safe supply trials that have been ongoing in the province for at least 2 years. Information from these trials also shows extensive benefits

for patients, healthcare systems, cost to taxpayers and society in general. We understand the complexities of regulated safe supply implementation, including shifting public opinion. For that reason, we ask that the Provincial government consider a graduated approach to the type of regulated safe supply and expedient scalability of implementation. We look to the Provincial government to broaden the application of safer supply, exploring the Alberni Valley as a next step in the safe supply trials.

Priority Action 8: Transportation

Goal: Establish a system that will transport people who need access to appropriate facilities and services for concurrent disorders.

Some of the ways we will advance this goal include, but will not be limited to:

- 1. Creating a Transportation System to Regional Facilities:** A comprehensive plan will be developed to ensure efficient and reliable transportation options are available, considering factors such as scheduling, accessibility, and the specific needs of individuals accessing regional facilities. The transportation system will aim to remove barriers, such as transportation costs and logistical challenges, which may prevent individuals from seeking the necessary detox and treatment services.
- 2. Model Based on Freemason Cancer Car Project¹:** The Freemason cancer car project will serve as an inspirational model for developing the free ride system for individuals accessing regional detox and treatment facilities. The model will be adapted and customized to fit the specific needs and requirements of individuals seeking detox and treatment services for substance use disorders. Considerations will be given to factors such as distance, frequency of trips, coordination with healthcare providers, volunteer recruitment, and funding mechanisms to sustain the free ride system.

¹ <https://freemasonry.bcy.ca/textfiles/cancer.html> and <http://www.templelodge33.ca/freemasons-cancer-car-program-cowichan-valley/>

Pillar 4: Prevention

Priority Action 9: Education

Goal: Intensify education opportunities within the community on prevention, harm reduction and stigma reduction. Prevention and education with a focus on youth. Focus on harm reduction strategies, such as not using drugs alone, getting drugs tested, and using the overdose prevention site. Addressing stigma requires a specific education campaign that addresses attitudes towards racism, people who are marginalized, and people who use substances.

Some of the ways we will advance this goal include, but will not be limited to:

- 1. Intensifying Harm Reduction Education:** Collaborations with local healthcare providers, community organizations, and peer support groups will be established to disseminate accurate and evidence-based information about harm reduction strategies. The goal is to empower individuals with knowledge and tools to make informed decisions that prioritize their safety and reduce the risks associated with substance use.
- 2. Addressing Stigma through Education:** A specific education campaign will be developed to address and challenge the prevailing attitudes and stigmas surrounding racism, marginalized individuals, and people who use substances. Community-wide initiatives, including workshops, public forums, and media campaigns, will be implemented to foster empathy, promote understanding, and debunk stereotypes associated with these populations.
- 3. Promoting Progressive Drug Policies and Mental Health Awareness:** Education efforts will extend beyond harm reduction and stigma to promote progressive drug policies and increase mental health awareness within the community. Public discussions, expert panels, and community dialogues will be organized to engage individuals in conversations about progressive drug policies, advocating for evidence-based strategies and human-centered approaches to substance use disorders.

Priority Action 10: Prevention

Goal: Other prevention initiatives, programs and services must be fully funded to support preventing children and youth; addressing trauma/intergenerational trauma, grief and support of individuals.

Some of the ways we will advance this goal include, but will not be limited to:

- 1. Prevention Strategies:** To capitalize on the opportunity prevention strategies offer to the Tseshaht people and the community at large, especially around prevention programs aimed at youth. Every young person who chooses healthy coping skills over substance disorders saves decades of future pain and suffering, for themselves, their families, and the community. Possibly saving their life. Prevention to date has been a missed opportunity. Prevention programs need to be designed by peers, especially youth-focused programs. Details of programs need to concentrate on the why message about drugs. Past programs like “Just Say No” or “Don’t Use Drugs” have been found to actually worsen the situation. Youth are smart and see through the parental message immediately. Use famous people or well-known local community members to front the messages of prevention. Utilize communication channels that youth frequent – social media, texting, etc. Create parent education programs that help parents understand substance prevalence in our community, substance disorders and how they can communicate with their children. Work with school boards and school systems to integrate education on substance use within classrooms, including age-appropriate messages in the primary grades.

Priority Action 11: Recovery-Focused Language

Goal: Change the language from negative stereotypes to recovery-focused language. Encourage empathy, understanding and cultural awareness towards people with substance use disorders and recognize that addiction is a complex disease that affects individuals differently.

Some of the ways we will advance this goal include, but will not be limited to:

- 1. Changing Language and Stereotypes:** Efforts will be made to replace stigmatizing terms with person-centered and non-judgmental

language that recognizes the complexities of addiction and emphasizes the individual's journey towards recovery. Training sessions and awareness campaigns will be conducted to educate and empower community members, healthcare professionals, and media personnel on the importance of using language that fosters dignity, respect, and understanding.

2. **Emphasizing the Potential for Recovery:** Public awareness campaigns and storytelling initiatives will be launched to share stories of individuals who have successfully overcome addiction and are living fulfilling lives in recovery. Collaborations with individuals with lived experience, recovery communities, and support groups will be fostered to provide authentic perspectives and inspire hope among those struggling with substance use disorders.
3. **Encouraging Empathy and Understanding:** Emphasis will be placed on promoting a non-judgmental attitude, challenging stigma, and fostering support networks that prioritize empathy and inclusivity. All efforts will be undertaken with the goal of reducing stigma, promoting positive attitudes, and fostering an environment that empowers individuals to seek help, access treatment, and embark on a path to recovery.



Importance of Implementing a Comprehensive Strategy

While the implementation approach should be further refined and tailored through ongoing dialogue and collaboration with Tseshaht First Nation and other local governments in the Alberni Valley, to ensure the strategy reflects their unique cultural values, needs, and aspirations, the following implementation trauma informed approach is meant to serve as a starting place:

1. Prevention & Promotion:

- a. Collaborate with all governments in the Alberni Valley, including the Tseshaht First Nation, to develop culturally relevant prevention and promotion programs that incorporate traditional teachings and values.
- b. Engage Elders and knowledge keepers from the First Nation to guide the development and delivery of prevention initiatives.
- c. Implement comprehensive public awareness campaigns that address substance use disorders, promote healthy lifestyles, and emphasize the importance of cultural identity and community connection.
- d. Youth engagement to ensure youth have input into a strategy which impacts them the most, prevention programs and services for youth must be guided by youth.

2. Harm Reduction/Overdose Prevention:

- a. Establish comprehensive overdose prevention initiatives in collaboration with all governments and appropriate organizations in the Alberni Valley, incorporating culturally sensitive approaches.
- b. Enhance naloxone and other harm reduction distribution programs and ensure accessibility in both urban and remote areas, including within the Tseshaht First Nation community.
- c. Implement drug-checking facilities (spectrometer in community) and harm reduction measures that prioritize the safety of individuals who use substances, aligning with First Nations values and practices.
- d. Advocating for the extension of the OPS to operate 24/7.



3. Acute Response:

- a. Develop an integrated acute response system that includes all governments in the Alberni Valley, including support for trauma in sudden death events, to ensure a coordinated and timely response to overdoses and related emergencies.
- b. Establish protocols for emergency departments and first responders to provide culturally appropriate care and support to individuals experiencing substance-related crises.
- c. Ensure adequate training and resources for healthcare professionals and frontline workers to address acute situations, with an emphasis on trauma-informed and culturally safe approaches.
- d. Implementing 24/7 supports (ER, Indigenous Counseling, OPS, etc.).

4. Stabilization:

- a. Collaborate with all governments in the Alberni Valley, local First Nations, to establish stabilization programs that provide immediate access to safe housing, basic needs, and harm reduction services for individuals in crisis.
- b. Implement low-barrier, culturally sensitive stabilization centers that offer support, counseling, and referrals to appropriate services.
- c. Integrate traditional healing practices and cultural activities into stabilization programs to promote holistic well-being and resilience.

5. Treatment and Recovery:

- a. Develop a comprehensive treatment and recovery system in collaboration with all governments in the Alberni Valley, incorporating First Nations perspectives and traditional healing practices.
- b. Increase access to culturally appropriate treatment options, including residential programs, outpatient services, and Indigenous-led healing centers.
- c. Provide ongoing support for individuals in recovery, including counseling, mental health services, peer support, and aftercare programs that reflect cultural awareness and trauma informed values and needs of the First Nation community.
- d. All treatment and recovery services based on best practice models such as Red Fish and clinical guide from BC Centre of substance use services.

6. Long-Term Supports:

- a. Collaborate with all governments in the Alberni Valley, including local First Nations, to establish long-term support programs that address the complex needs of individuals in sustained recovery.
- b. Develop comprehensive housing, including complex housing initiatives that prioritize safe and affordable housing for individuals in recovery, considering the unique needs of the First Nations community.
- c. Implement employment and training programs that facilitate sustainable livelihoods and economic stability for individuals in recovery, including opportunities for traditional cultural practices and entrepreneurship.
- d. Implementing 24/7 supports (ER, Indigenous Counseling, OPS, etc.).

7. Culture & Community Supports:

- a. Engage Tseshaht First Nation members and other local Indigenous peoples in the process, ensuring that their values and perspectives guide the development and implementation of culture and community supports.
- b. Support the revitalization of Indigenous cultural practices, ceremonies, and language within the Alberni Valley community, fostering cultural pride and healing.
- c. Increase partnerships with cultural support providers, Elders, and knowledge keepers to deliver culturally appropriate services and create safe spaces for cultural activities and community gatherings, for all.



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General Implementation Approaches

- 1. Collaborative Effort:** Foster a collaborative and inclusive approach involving all governments in the Alberni Valley, with a particular focus on engaging First Nations and other Indigenous peoples to ensure that the strategy reflects and respects their values, traditions, and aspirations.
- 2. Cultural Safety & Competency:** Provide trauma informed cultural awareness and safety training to all those involved in the implementation process to enhance understanding, respect, and responsiveness to First Nations cultural values and protocols.
- 3. Resources & Capacity Building:** Support First Nations and organizations to build their capacity to lead and deliver services by providing funding, training, and resources specific to their needs and priorities.
- 4. Continuous Evaluation & Improvement:** Establish mechanisms for ongoing evaluation, monitoring, and feedback to assess the effectiveness of implemented actions, ensuring that adjustments can be made to better align with the First Nation's values and aspirations.
- 5. Resources & Capacity Building:** Prioritize meaningful engagement with community members throughout the planning and implementation process, ensuring their active participation, consultation, and leadership in decision-making and implementation activities.

Conclusion

With the successful implementation of this strategy, prevention and education efforts will flourish, fostering a culture of understanding, empathy, and support. We have envisioned a community where individuals are empowered with the knowledge and resources to make informed choices, while being surrounded by a network of caring and compassionate community members.

When we are successful, overdose prevention initiatives will be robust and inclusive, ensuring that naloxone and harm reduction services are readily accessible to all. Our acute response systems will be swift, efficient, and culturally sensitive, providing immediate care and support to individuals in crisis. We strive for a community where lives are saved, and the dignity and worth of each person are upheld in every interaction.

As we strive for stabilization, we envision a network of safe spaces and programs that offer refuge, stability, and support. Individuals in crisis will find solace in comprehensive treatment and recovery services that are founded on cultural understanding, healing practices, and a holistic approach to well-being. Our community will stand as a beacon of hope, guiding individuals along their journey of recovery and offering the necessary tools for sustained healing.

Through our collective efforts, long-term supports will be embedded within our community fabric, ensuring that individuals in recovery have access to stable housing, meaningful employment opportunities, and ongoing mental health and counseling services. To be successful, we must embrace the values and teachings of the Tseshaht First Nation, fostering a deep connection to culture, community, and identity. Indigenous traditions must be revitalized, celebrated, and integrated into our support systems, recognizing their pivotal role in the healing journey.

Together, we forge a path forward that prioritizes unity, collaboration, and the well-being of all community members. This shared strategy is a testament to our unwavering commitment to a future where resilience triumphs over adversity, where compassion erases stigma, and where the transformative power of community lifts us all towards a brighter tomorrow.

