A photograph of a person standing in a forest of tall, thin trees. The person is wearing a wide-brimmed hat and a long, fringed garment made of brown material, possibly animal skin or wool, draped over their shoulders. They are standing on a dirt path, looking towards the trees. The forest is dense with tall, thin trees, and the ground is covered in moss and ferns. The lighting is soft, suggesting a forest interior.

# Decolonizing Substance Use

Cultural Safety Training for Organizations

# Grounding & Intention Setting





# Overview

## PART 1 - Racism & Prohibition in colonial Canada

- Formulate linkages between racism and prohibition laws
- Distinguish the harms associated with substance use and prohibition policies

## PART 2 - Decolonizing Substance Use

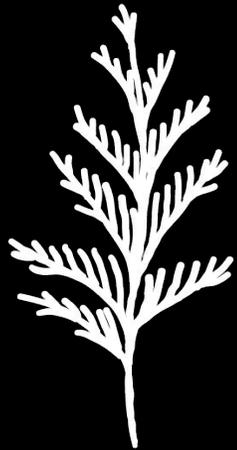
- Identify root causes of addiction within Indigenous context
- Dismantle stigmatizing language and behaviours associated with substance use

## PART 3 - Indigenous Harm Reduction Practices

- Examining Indigenous perspectives on harm reduction
- Open conversation, Q&A



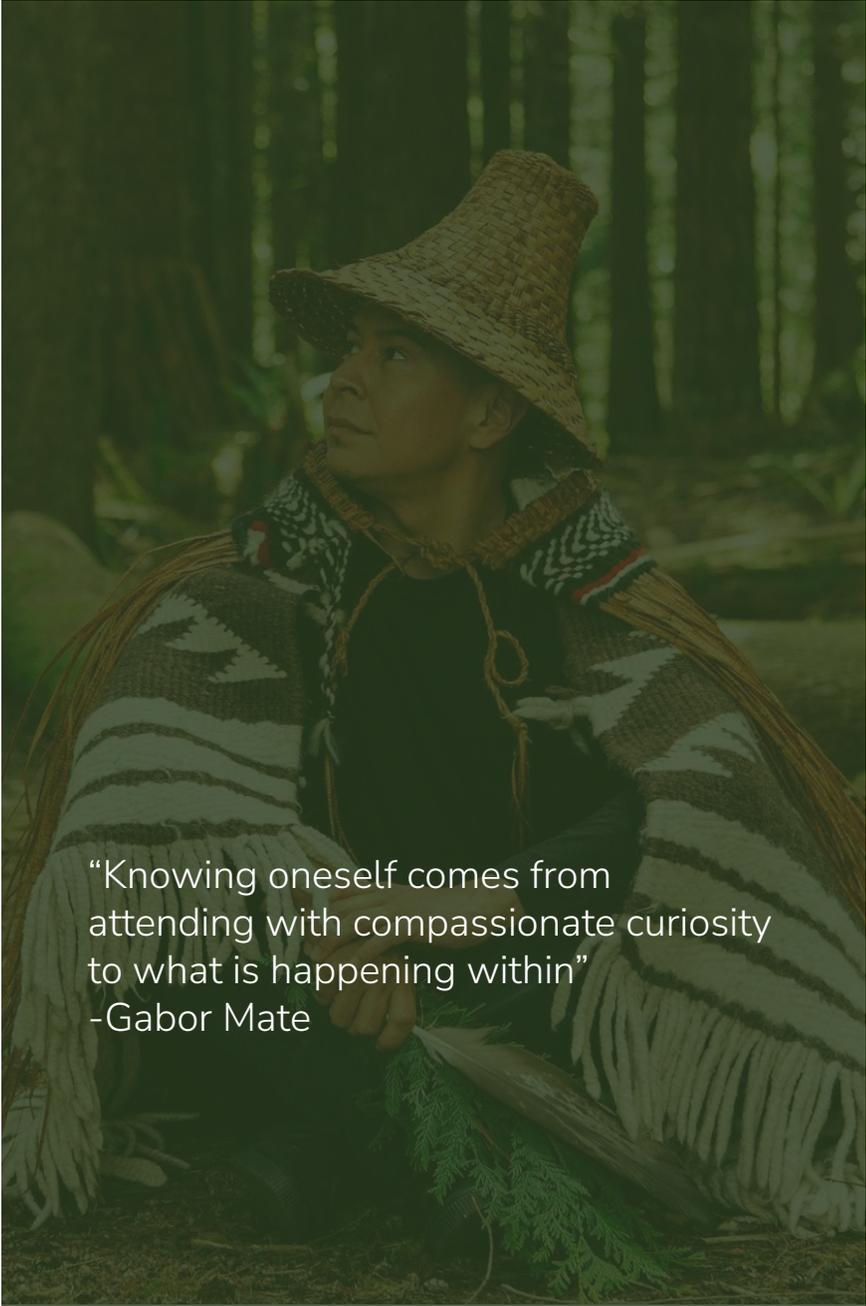
# CONTENT WARNING



Some language and curriculum content in DSU/IHR can be emotionally triggering for some people. Please remember take care of yourself , drink some water, walk and breathe.

# 1

## Racism & Prohibition in colonial Canada



“Knowing oneself comes from attending with compassionate curiosity to what is happening within”  
-Gabor Mate



**“There is no war on drugs, because you can’t war  
on inanimate objects.**

**There is only a war on drug addicts, which means  
we are warring on the most abused and  
vulnerable segments of society.”**

---

Gabor Mate

# What is drug prohibition?

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Drug prohibition in Canada is a drug control system adopted in the early 1900's and expanded on for more than a century. In Canada, drug prohibition is primarily a criminal justice system approach.

(Boyd 2017)



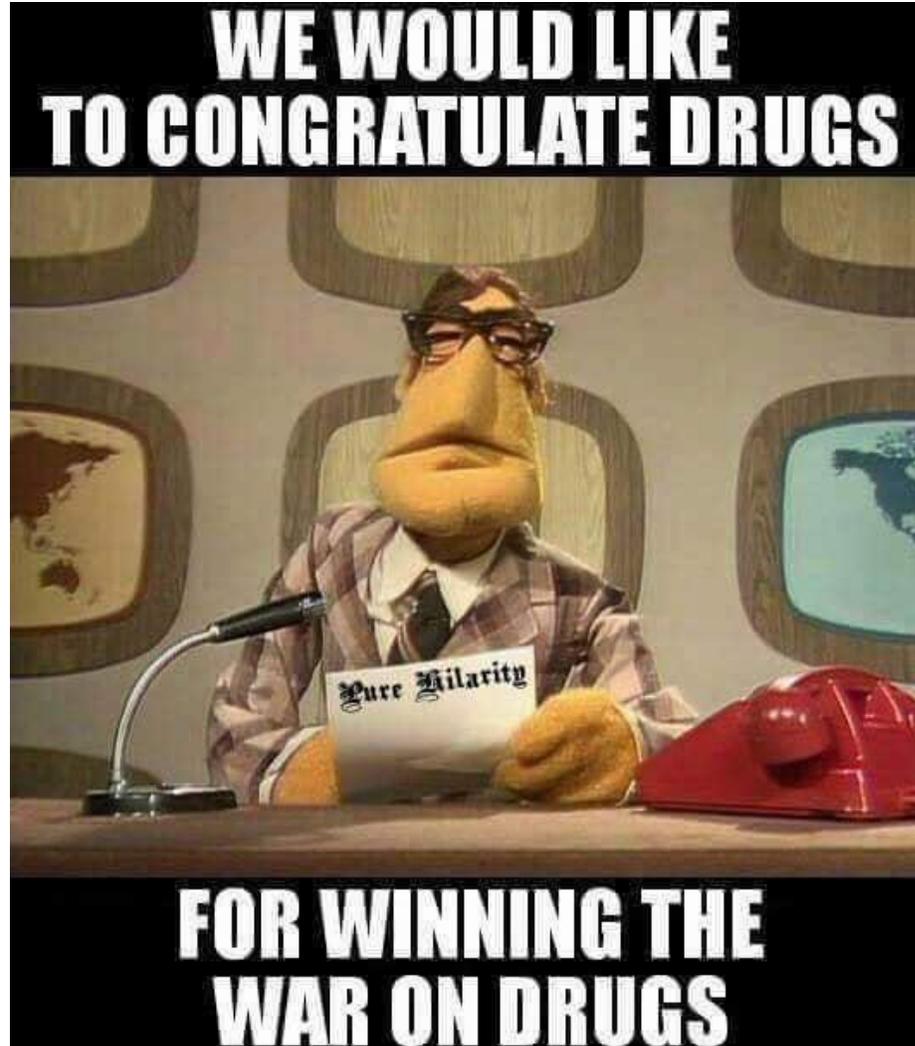
# What is drug prohibition?

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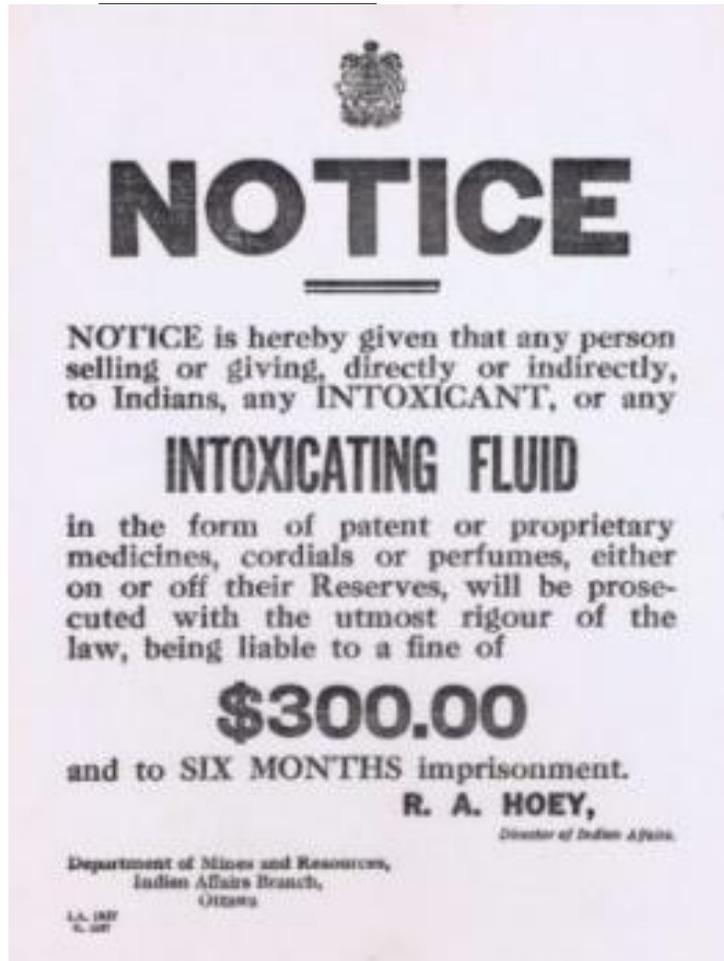


# What is drug prohibition?

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# Canadian racism & prohibition



- Illegality of alcohol on Indian reservations for 100+ years
- \$300 fine
- Imprisonment up to six months
- Fear of mixing white and Indian blood
- System of control





THE SCREAM - KENT MONKMAN



TELEPHONE: } RESIDENCE, 210  
OFFICE, 327

NO. 19427

E. E. EVANS, M. D.

OFFICE OVER SPRINGER'S GROCERY; HOURS, 11 TO 12 A. M., 1 TO 5 P. M.

FOR Mr E. D. Burkhart

DATE 7-5-09

R Heroin Hydr. gr  $\frac{1}{12}$  <sup>99</sup> - no XXIV

sig - a Tablet every 2 to 4 hours for cough

Take this to the RED APPLE DRUG STORE

NO. 321

PRESCRIPTION IN 1909





VANCOUVER'S POWELL STREET 1907



WILLIAM LYON MACKENZIE KING



# Canada's War on Drugs

- Was born out of racism
- Has nothing to do with the health and wellbeing of population
- Is a war on our most marginalized peoples
- Billion dollar failure
- Overdose deaths
- HIV & HCV
- Survival Crime



# THE AMERICAN ISSUE

A Sobersized Nation and a Spirited Flag

Volume 1177      WASHINGTON, D.C., JANUARY 2, 1919      Number 1

# U.S. IS VOTED DRY

## 36th STATE RATIFIES DRY AMENDMENT

Nebraska Noses Out Missouri for Honor of Completing Jo into the Constitution; Wyoming, Wisconsin and Minnesota

### JANUARY 16, 1919, MOMENTOUS DAY IN W

Ratification Accomplished in a Little Less Than Thirteen Months with Three States More Resolution Save Period of Seven Years for the Completion of Task Remaining Ours Else This Act, With Possible Exception of New Jersey. United States Takes Initial Step in Some and National League Now Give Earnest Attention to Law Enforcement Legislation



AMERICAN PROHIBITION IN THE 1930'S

# The real harm behind drugs

---

Harm	Drug
Euphoria	✓
Withdrawal	✓
Overdose	
Viral Infections	
Bacteria Infections	
Violence	
Illegal Activity	



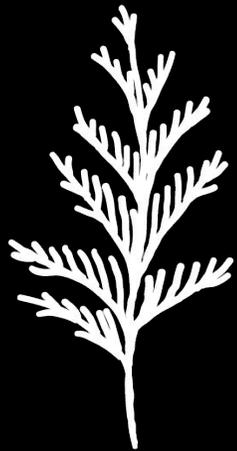
# The real harm behind drugs

---

Harm	Drug	War on drugs
Euphoria	✓	
Withdrawal	✓	
Overdose		✓
Viral Infections		✓
Bacteria Infections		✓
Violence		✓
Illegal Activity		✓



# Check-in



Turn to your neighbour.

Offer a reaction to what you just heard or learned:

- Comment
- Question
- Doubt
- Frustration
- Excitement
- Aha moment



**Questions**

**Comments**

**Criticism**

**Reflections and sharing**

---



# 2

## Decolonizing Substance Use

# DECOLONIZATION:

---

A process of disrupting, dismantling, and deconstructing cultural and colonial barriers that separate us, suppress us, and often oppress us.

(Pierre 2019)



# Substance use vs. addiction

---

- More than 90% of people who use illicit substances do not meet the criteria for problematic behaviors associated with addiction
- We obsess of the small percentage who are affiliated with criminal activity
- People with addiction are not the only people at risk of harm & overdose



# Why decolonize substance use?

---



Create a collective understanding about sensitive and complex topics



Make clear linkages between colonialism, trauma, and substance use



Remove blame from people who have experienced trauma



Respectfully balance the tone of the conversation and move forward in a good way



**Residential Schools**

**The 60's Scoop**

**Land Theft**

**Colonialism**

First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

The infographic features a light orange background with a faint map of Canada. Three overlapping circles are positioned at the top: a red circle on the left containing the text 'Residential Schools', an orange circle in the middle containing 'The 60's Scoop', and a dark blue/black circle on the right containing 'Land Theft'. The word 'Colonialism' is written in a large, bold, red font across the center of the map. In the bottom right corner, there is a logo for the First Nations Health Authority, which consists of a stylized blue and white emblem above the text 'First Nations Health Authority' and 'Health through wellness'.



**Fear & Shame**  
**Isolation**  
**Helplessness**



**Detachment**  
**Loss of Identity**  
**Loss of Rights**



**Poverty**  
**Lack of Housing**  
**Loss of Freedom**



**Residential  
 Schools**



**The 60's  
 Scoop**



**Land  
 Theft**

# Colonialism



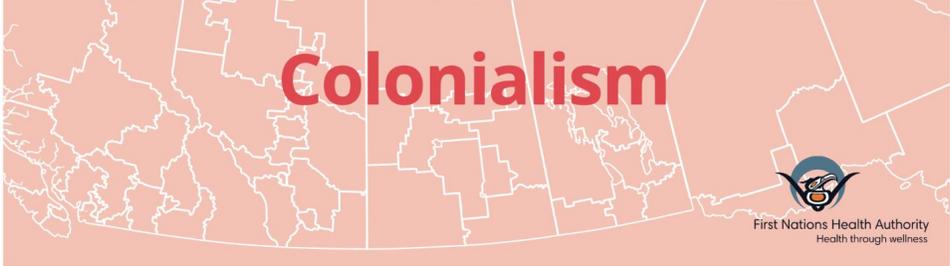
First Nations Health Authority  
 Health through wellness

**TRAUMA | GRIEF | LOSS | STRESS**

  <b>Fear &amp; Shame</b> Isolation Helplessness	  <b>Detachment</b> Loss of Identity Loss of Rights	  <b>Poverty</b> Lack of Housing Loss of Freedom
--	---	--

 <b>Residential Schools</b>	 <b>The 60's Scoop</b>	 <b>Land Theft</b>
---	--	--

**Colonialism**



  
First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

DRUGS ALCOHOL EXERCISE  
PAIN ADDICTION Caffeine  
WORK SEX  
GAMBLING FOOD PHONE/TECH



**TRAUMA | GRIEF | LOSS | STRESS**



**Fear & Shame**  
Isolation  
Helplessness



**Detachment**  
Loss of Identity  
Loss of Rights



**Poverty**  
Lack of Housing  
Loss of Freedom



**Residential  
Schools**

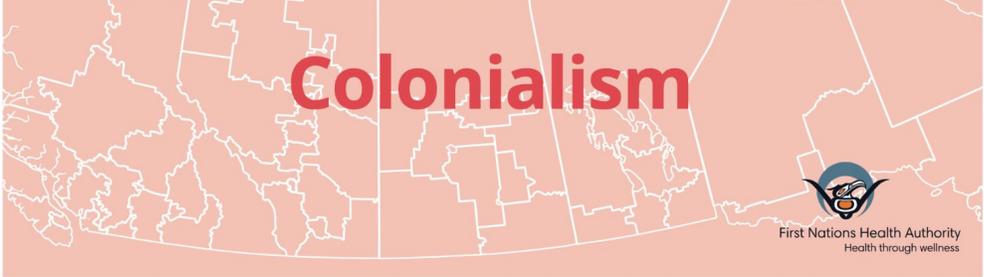


**The 60's  
Scoop**



**Land  
Theft**

**Colonialism**



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

safety integrity responsibility  
creativity emotions  
**connection**  
empowerment generosity  
contribution love purpose

↑  
**healing, joy, bonding, peace**

↑ ↑ ↑

 <p>Love Inclusion Purpose</p>	 <p>Identity Power Attachment</p>	 <p>Stability Relationships Autonomy</p>
---	--	---

↑ ↑ ↑

**Family & Friends**   **Culture & Tradition**   **Nation & Territory**

**Community**



# Addressing misinformation

---

**Myth:** Addiction is a choice

**Fact:** People do not choose to be addicted. Addiction is used to cope with bad thoughts, feelings, and emotions



# Addressing misinformation

---

**Myth:** We just need to kick out all the drug dealers to solve the problem

**Fact:** Prohibition does not work

**IT DOESN'T WORK**



# Addressing misinformation

---

**Myth:** Harm reduction enables substance use

**Fact:** Harm reduction saves lives and improves the quality of life

I ❤️  
**SOMEONE  
WHO USES  
DRUGS**

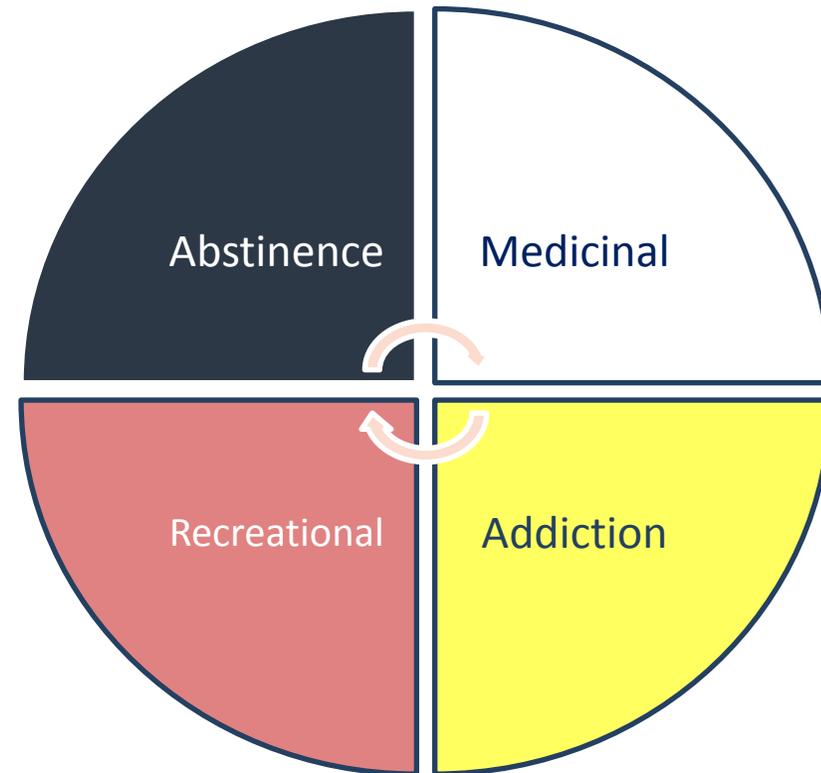


# Addressing misinformation

---

**Myth:** All people who use drugs are addicted

**Fact:** There are four relationships we can have with substances





## Think-Pair-Share:

- Introduce yourself to someone new
- What resonated with you the most?
- What feelings came up for you?
- What questions does this bring up for you?





# Snowball fight!



Ask us anything!

1. Write down a question about anything Indigenous
2. Crumple it into a snowball
3. Throw it in the basket
4. We will gather up the snowballs and answer the questions





**Questions**

**Comments**

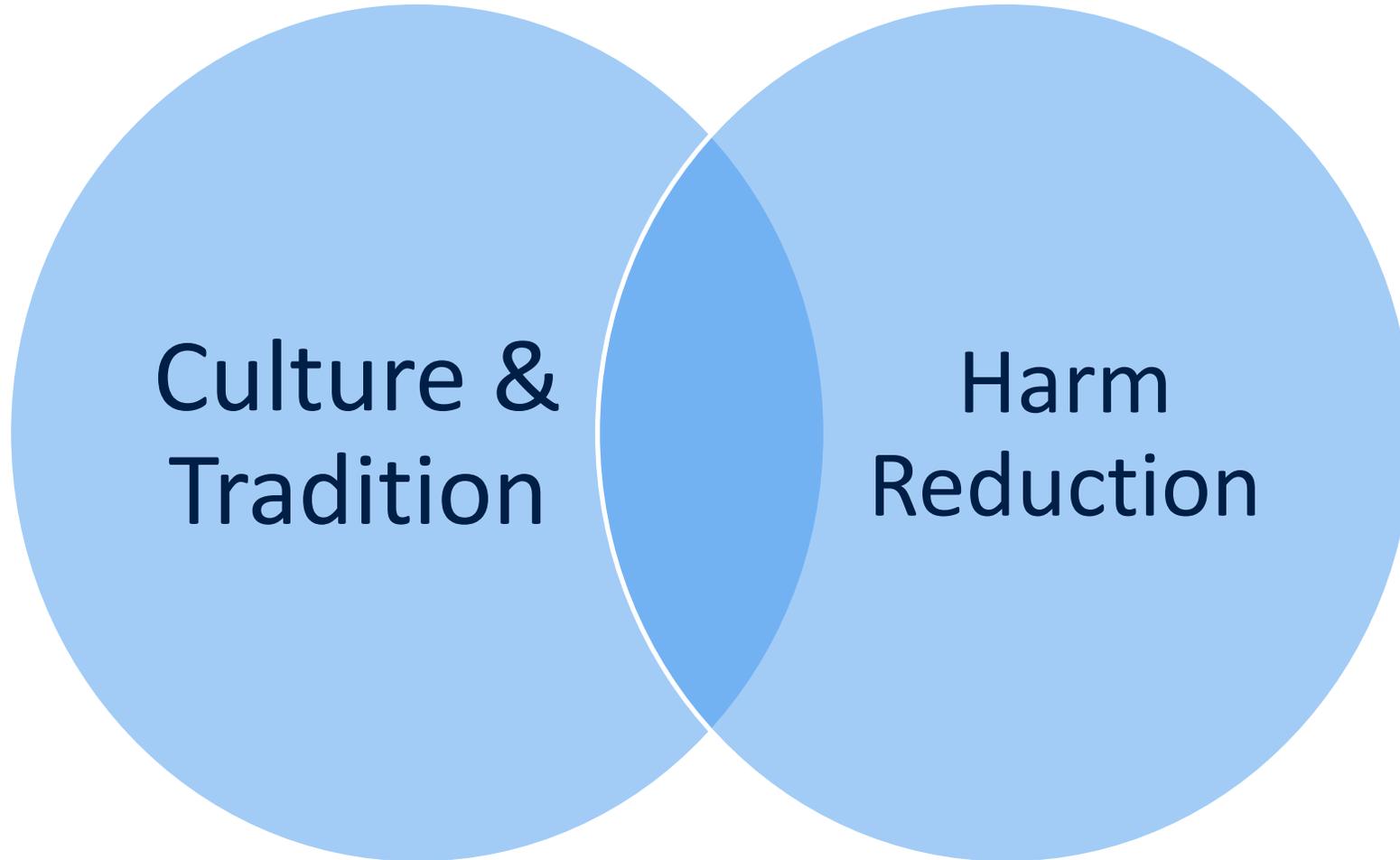
**Reflections and sharing**



# INDIGENOUS HARM REDUCTION PRACTICES

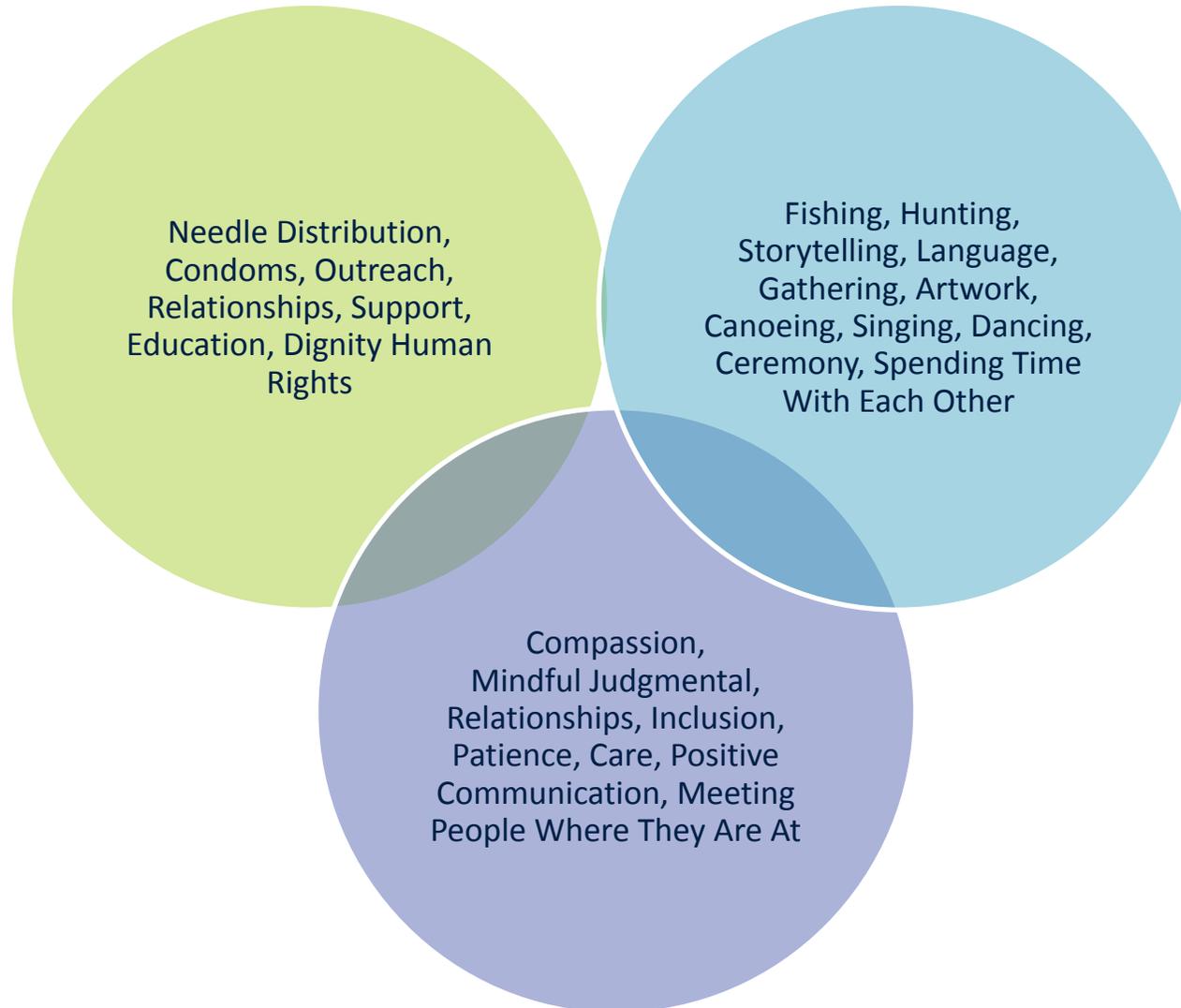
# 03

# Indigenous Harm Reduction



# Indigenous Harm Reduction

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# Indigenous Harm Reduction



## Relationships and Care

Healing requires working together as one heart and one mind



## Strength and Protection

Healing is embedded in culture and tradition



## Knowledge and Wisdom

Healing requires time, patience and reflection



## Identity and Transformation

Healing involves finding out who you are and accepting who you were



# The Wolf

---

## This looks like:

Forming relationships and providing outreach to people who seek support



## This sounds like:

Connecting with people who use substances over something other than their substance use



# DO'S

- DO** talk with people about something other than their substance use. Take a more holistic approach to engaging in conversations.
- DO** talk about addiction and substance use as a healing journey instead of it being a choice. Addiction is not a choice. It's much more complicated than "just saying no."
- DO** include people using substances in conversations and activities as often as possible, just as you would anyone else. Inclusion and belonging are good sources of medicine.
- DO** prepare to meet people where they are at instead of telling them where they should be at. People who struggle with addictions know their addictions affect everyone around them.
- DO** take time to learn about addiction and substance use. Talk to a counsellor or do your own research.
- DO** use person-first language like "people who use drugs" or, for people who have engaged in substance use in the past, "people with lived experience." Person-first language is respectful, maintains a person's dignity and shows compassion.

# DON'TS

- DON'T** focus the conversation solely on addiction. People are not their addictions or their behaviours. Addiction is just one part of life and it's important to focus on all the things that bring us joy, purpose and meaning.
- DON'T** tell people to "clean-up" or just "get sober." Avoid focusing the conversation on rehab and detox. These are overwhelming and unrealistic approaches to addiction and wellness. These approaches are judgmental and will not result in an opportunity for connection.
- DON'T** segregate or isolate people using substances or make relationships with them conditional. Doing this is hurtful and often leads to increased substance use.
- DON'T** give people using substances demands or try and guilt them with statements such as, "if you really loved me, you would stop using."
- DON'T** believe everything you see or hear about substance use on social media or television. There are a lot of myths, assumptions and incorrect statements. Take the time evaluate what is a commonly held belief that may not be true.
- DON'T** use stigmatizing language like "drug user," "drug addict," "clean" or other harmful terms. These terms reduce people to a single behaviour when they are so much more than that.



# The Bear

---

## This looks like:



Recognizing that culture is intergenerational strengths that heal people

## This sounds like:

Practicing culture and maintaining relationships



# Culture Saves Lives



# The Eagle

## **This looks like:**

Meeting people where they are at on their healing journey and being mindful about where we are at on our own healing journey

## **This sounds like:**

Providing good information and resources, reducing stigma, and being mindful about the language we use



## What we hear:

Addict

User

Clean/Sober

## What we want to say:

People who use

People who drink

Healing Journey

# The Raven

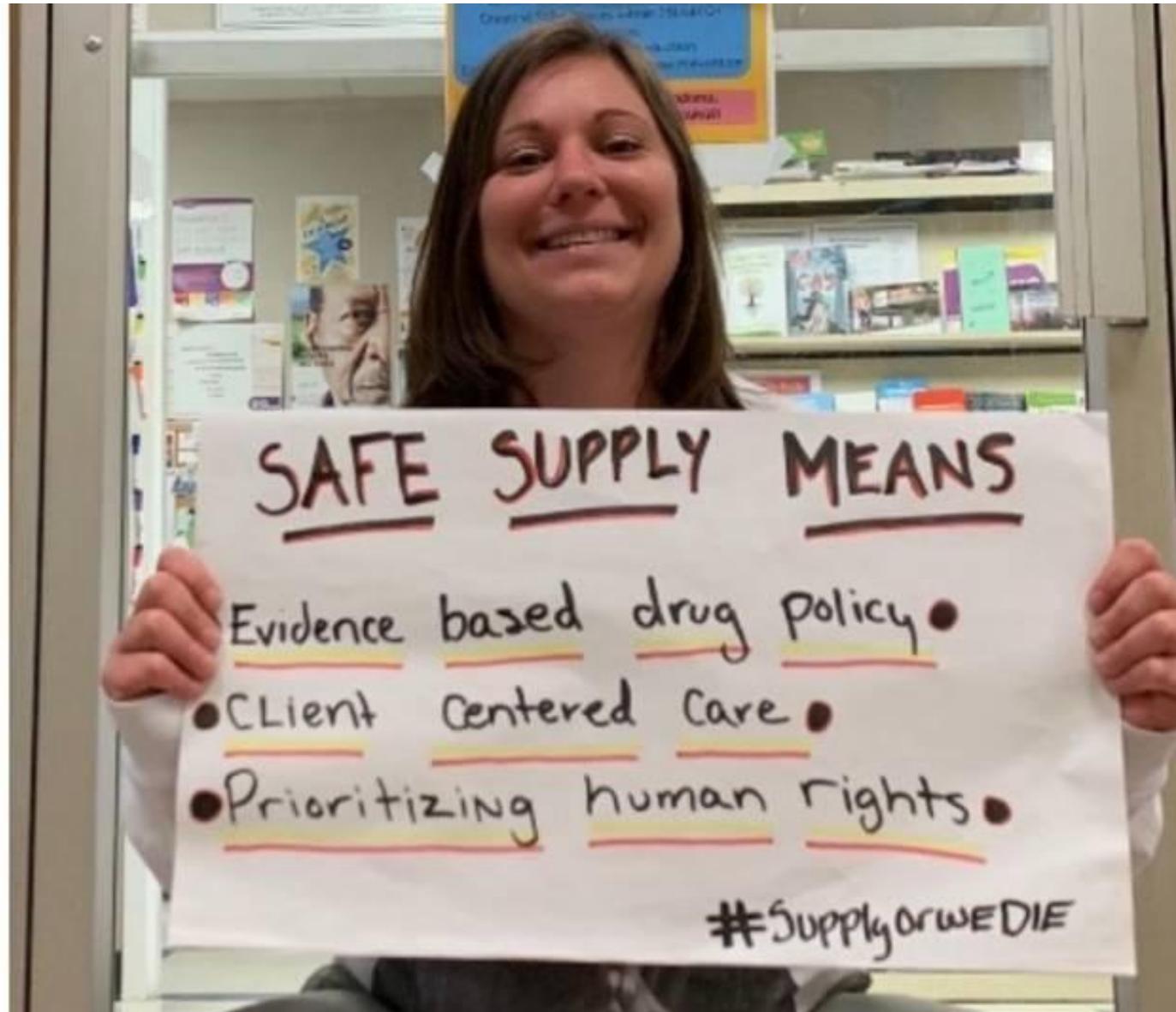
## **This looks like:**

Providing ongoing opportunities for compassion and inclusion on the healing journey

## **This sounds like:**

Acknowledging that substance use is a journey with abstinence not always being the end goal





SAFE SUPPLY MEANS

- Evidence based drug policy ●
- Client centered care ●
- Prioritizing human rights ●

#SupplyorWEDIE



**“Safety is not the absence of threat... it is the presence of connection”**



Dr. Gabor Mate

THANK YOU  
HAY CX<sup>W</sup> QΘ



LEN  
PIERRE  
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candace@lenpierreconsulting.com



**Feedback is  
our friend!**

**PLEASE  
EVALUATE  
THIS  
SESSION  
WITH THIS  
CODE:**

