

# Decolonizing Substance Use and Addiction

Paula Tait & Len Pierre

## Background

First Nations people represent 3.3 per cent of British Columbia's population, yet accounted for an overwhelming 16 per cent of all overdose deaths in British Columbia from January to May, 2020 (FNHA, 2020). The substance use related challenges are directly influenced by the negative multi-generational impacts of colonization.

**Decolonizing Substance Use and Addiction** is an unconventional way to share knowledge that reflects our own lived experiences in the context of colonialism and the ripple effects of inter-generational trauma and its profound implications on accessing substance use services today. Through this work, we aim to create a collective understanding on substance use for Indigenous peoples, remove the blame from people who have experienced trauma, make clear linkages between colonialism and substance use, and to respectfully balance the tone of the conversation to move forward in a good way. Indigenous youth in both rural and urban regions, deserve culturally relevant, culturally safe, and diversified means of engaging with substance use and harm reduction services.

## Indigenous Harm Reduction Principles and Practice



### 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

Contact information:  
Paula.Tait@fnha.ca  
len.pierre@fnha.ca

