

# Men's Mental Health: Why we need to talk about it

As You Are Therapy & Consulting

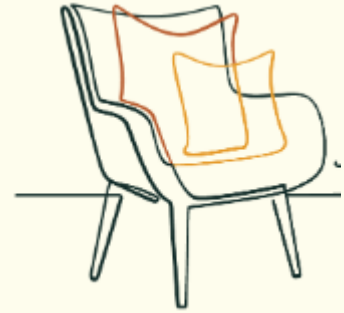
For

First Nations Telehealth Network

April 15, 2025 10:00 AM MDT

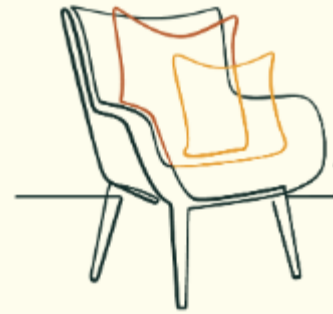


# Land Acknowledgement



As humans, we are all connected to one another and to the natural world around us. As You Are Therapy & Consulting was created on, and inspired by, Mohkinstsis (The Blackfoot name for The Confluence), the ancestral land of the Blackfoot Confederacy which includes the Siksika Nation, Kainai Nation, and North and South Piikani Nations. We also acknowledge other Treaty 7 Members, Tsuut'ina and Iyiarhe Nakoda which includes the Chiniki, Goodstoney, and Bearspaw First Nations. Mohkinstsis is also home to Métis Alberta Districts 4,5, and 6. As visitors to this land and all lands across Turtle Island, we honour the traditional stewards of the earth and all nations, people, genders and spirits who grow, love, work, and play here.

# Who we are



Amber Jerome (she/her) mom, aunt, friend, nature enthusiast. MACP, Certified Clinical Counsellor. Settler person of Irish descent who grew up on the traditional land of the Syilx Okanagan people.

Amelia Larson (she/her) mother, partner, auntie, daughter, sister, friend. MSW, RCSW, Approved Clinical Supervisor. Settler person of Irish and Norwegian descent who grew up in Two Row Wampum Agreement home of the Hatiwendaronk, the Haudenosaunee and the Anishinaabe

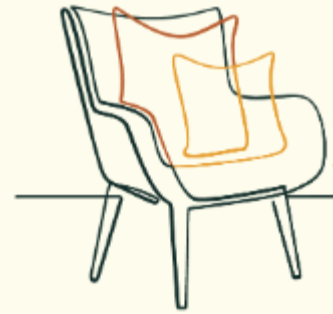
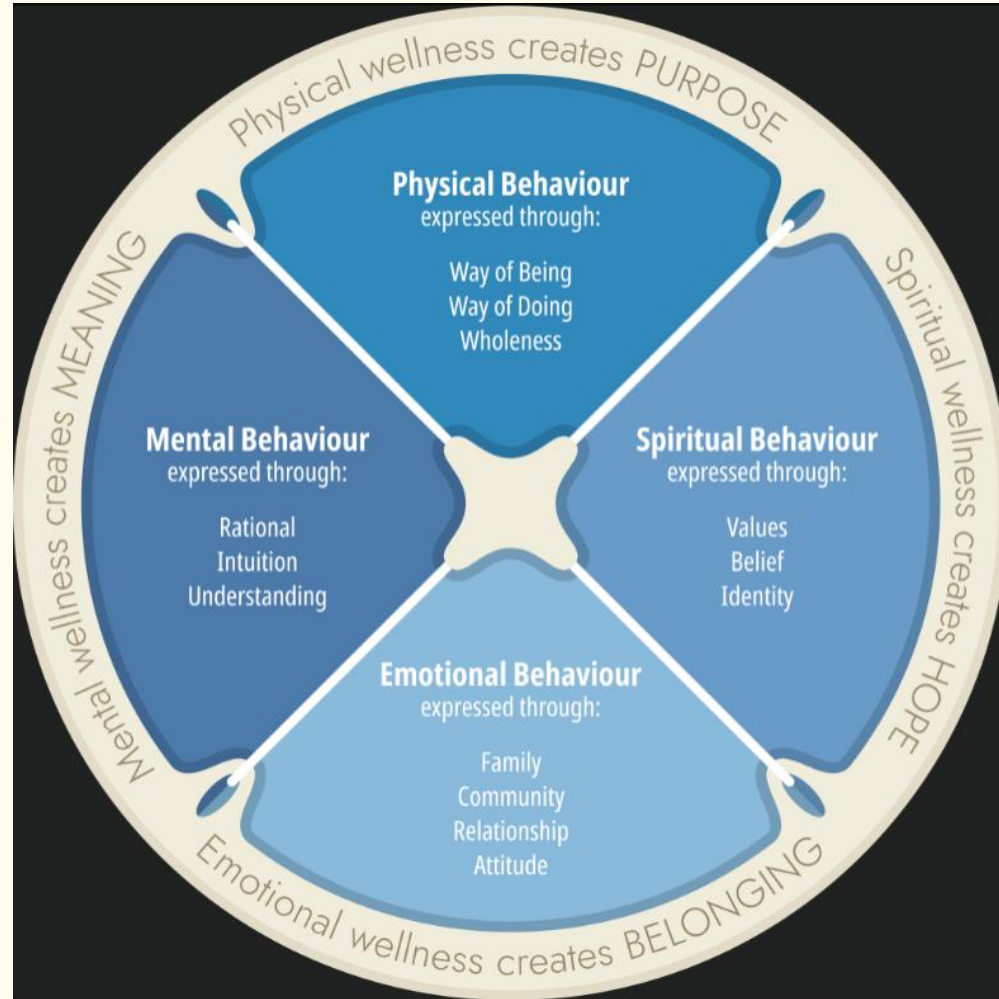


# Objectives for today



- Understanding of the current state of men's mental health,
- Signs that someone is struggling with mental health
- Societal factors contributing to mental health
- Towards change- shifts in men's mental health

# Thunderbird Partnership Foundation Wellness Framework



# Men's Mental Health Today



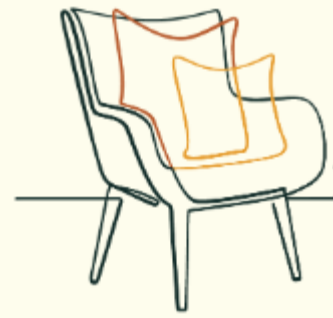
## Statistics:

Men account for 75% of suicides in Canada. This is 4x the rate of female suicide

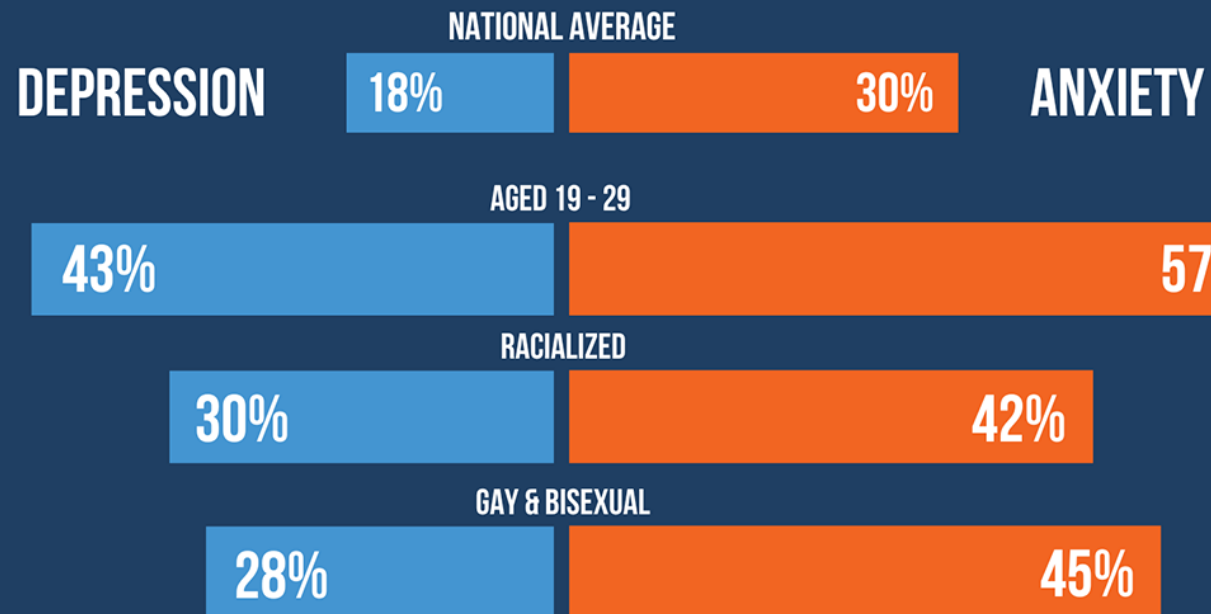
- o Men are diagnosed with anxiety and depression at far lower rates than women despite the stats.
- o Men experience mental health challenges at the same rate as women; however, their expression of them is different.

Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for men under 50

Nearly 1 in 10 men experience depression or anxiety



## CANADIAN MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH RISKS



# Challenges



- Stigma around mental health as a "weakness."
- Reluctance to seek help due to societal expectations
- Fear of the unknown and vulnerability
- Men are often blamed for maladaptive coping strategies (addiction, aggression, risky behaviours) over support to treat the underlying issue (anxiety, depression, PTSD).
- Men have higher dropout rates
- Non-heterosexual, white, and middle aged-senior men are more likely to seek help
- Male youth seek help less than any other demographic



# First Nations Men's Mental Health



- Higher Suicide Rates:
  - Inuit communities have the highest suicide rates in Canada
- Effects of Colonization:
  - Loss of language, cultural identity, and spirituality
- Unique Challenges:
  - Racism, discrimination, and systemic barriers to care
  - Culturally safe mental health services are harder to find

# Society

## Social Determinants of Mental Health

### Key Factors:

- Socioeconomic status (poverty, unemployment)
- Cultural disruption and historical trauma
- Systemic barriers in health care
- Social exclusion and stigma



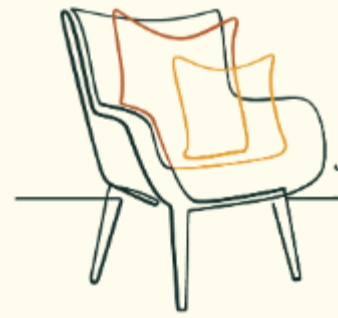
# The forgotten focus



Historical focus on women's mental health in research - gender biases have led to misdiagnosis or downplaying of men's symptoms within mental health fields and less mental health services were geared towards men

This has decreased recognition of mental health symptoms in men personally and professionally (ex. confusing depression as being stressed)

# Signs to look out for



## Emotional Signs:

- Persistent sadness, irritability, or anger.



# Signs to look out for



## Behavioral Signs:

- Withdrawal from family/friends, substance abuse, risk-taking behaviors, avoidance/escapist behaviours.



# Signs to look out for

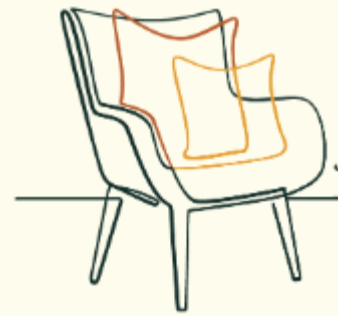


## Physical Signs:

- Fatigue, changes in appetite or sleep patterns, headaches, stomach or muscle pain - More likely to seek medical help than mental health support.



# How to support if you see someone struggling



Tangible tools and things to say

- It's ok to not know what to say

Saying

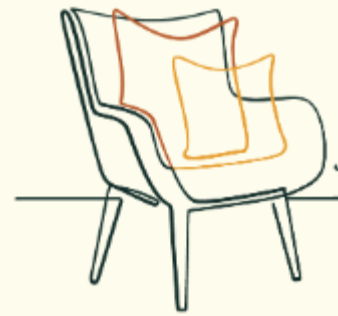
“I don't know how to help, but I want to support you,” or

“I am here for you,”

is ok!

- Avoid advice giving “you should do or try ...”  
can be mistaken as judgement.

# How to support continued



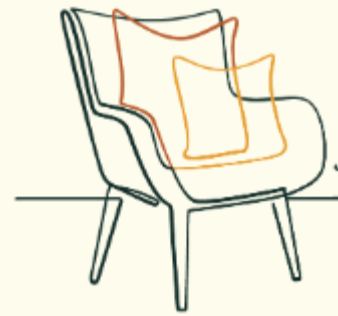
Speak from experience

“when I’m upset I find ....helps”- This normalizes their experiences, lets them know they are not alone, and makes them more likely to reach out later.

- Ask them what they need, “Do you need to talk, helping fixing things, or do you need a distraction?”
- Thoughtful gestures inviting the person out, a home cooked meal, check in texts/calls etc.

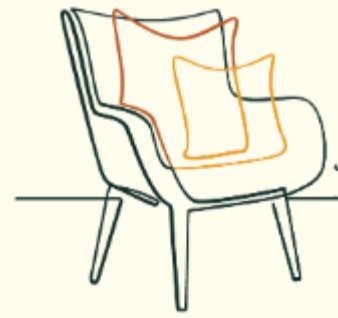


# Why seeking help is difficult



- Barriers for All Men:
  - Stigma around masculinity and emotional vulnerability
  - Financial constraints and lack of awareness
  - Men tend to be more solution or task oriented and spend less time processing emotions - there is a need for male specific mental health interventions.
- Additional Barriers for First Nations Men:
  - Lack of culturally safe services.
  - Distrust due to historical trauma

# Cultural and Community Based Solutions



- Importance of Cultural Safety:
  - Services led by Indigenous staff using culturally relevant practices
- Community Healing:
  - Sweat lodges, traditional ceremonies, and healing spaces as therapeutic tools
- Role Models and Mentorship:
  - Engaging First Nations men as mentors for younger generations

# Strategies to support



## Individual Level:

- Encourage open conversations about emotions.

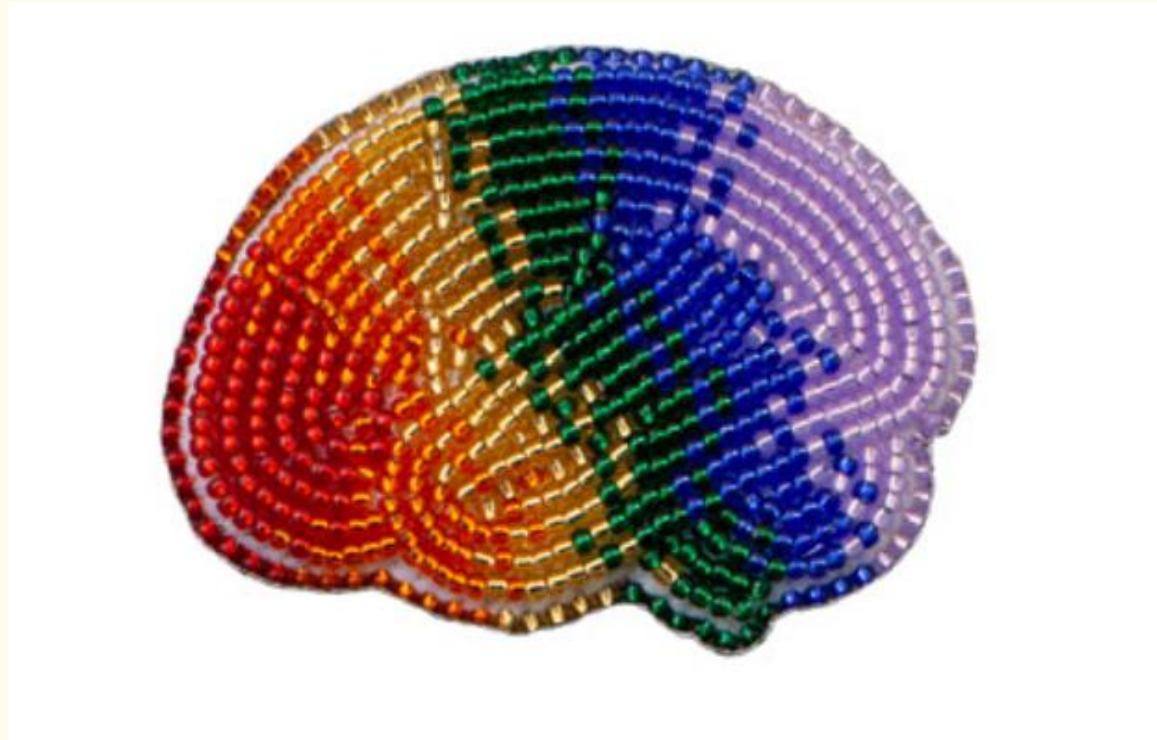
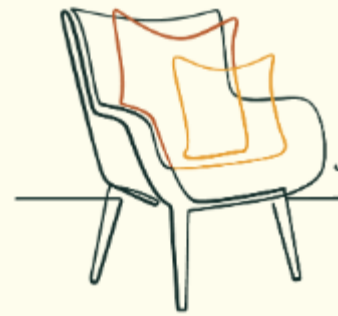
## Community Level:

- Develop peer support networks.

## Policy Level:

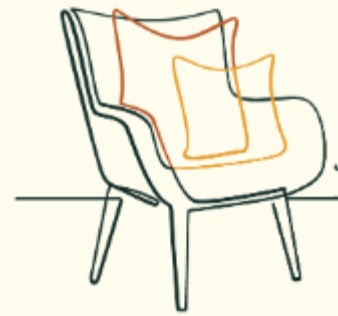
- Advocate for tailored mental health services for First Nations men.

# A Colourful Mind by Jamaica Cass



*Jamaica Cass is a Mohawk artist and clinician. Her mother's untimely death drove Jamaica not only to pursue a career in healthcare (MD and a PhD from Queen's), but also seek traditional ways of healing both the body and the spirit.*

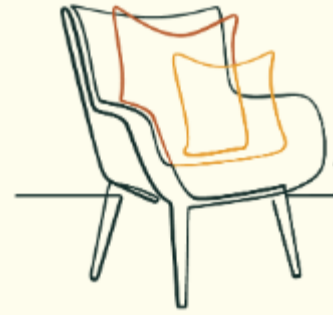
# Shifts in men's mental health:



We are seeing more and more men access mental health services. Why?

- Shame around men's mental health is reducing with cultural shifts around personal awareness and self care.
- Increased research in men's mental health and resources.
- Shifts and expansion of gender expression.
- More men are speaking out.
- Rates of men accessing mental health supports are slowly increasing, they are still not equal to womens.

# Example: The Dudes Club



The DUDES Club, established in 2010 in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside neighborhood, is a successful program supporting Indigenous men's mental health.

This community-based health promotion initiative aims to build solidarity and brotherhood among vulnerable men, particularly those marginalized by social and structural inequities.

The program offers biweekly drop-in meetings that provide a safe space for men to be vulnerable, open up to one another, socialize, and improve their health literacy and peer-support skills.



# The Dudes Club Con't



An evaluation survey conducted between August 2014 and May 2015 showed overwhelmingly positive results:

90.6% of respondents indicated that the DUDES Club program improved their quality of life. Participants who attended meetings more frequently experienced greater physical, mental, and social benefits.

Indigenous participants reported increased feelings of trust, support, and connection to culture and heritage.

The DUDES Club addresses a critical gap in health services for Indigenous men, offering a unique balance of social supports and health services.

The success of the DUDES Club has led to the establishment of three pilot sites in northern British Columbia, demonstrating its potential for wider implementation and positive impact on Indigenous men's mental health.

# Call to Action



## Encourage Advocacy:

Support policies addressing men's mental health disparities.

## Promote Awareness:

Share resources like the Canadian Men's Health Foundation or CAMH initiatives

## Talk about challenges openly

Share experiences to normalize and reduce stigma



# Support and resources:



## Hope for Wellness Help Line

- Provides immediate mental health counselling and crisis intervention 24/7.
- Call: 1-855-242-3310 or chat online at [hopeforwellness.ca](https://hopeforwellness.ca)

## Indian Residential School Crisis Line

- Offers support for those experiencing distress related to residential school experiences.
- Call: 1-866-925-4419.

## Crisis Services Canada

- Canada Suicide Prevention Service Helpline: 1-833-456-4566 or text 45645

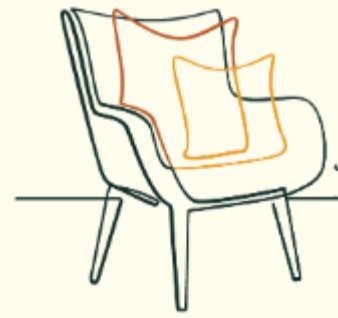
## Indian Residential School Survivors Society (IRSSS)

- Offers counselling and cultural support for former residential school students and their families.
- Call: 1-800-721-006

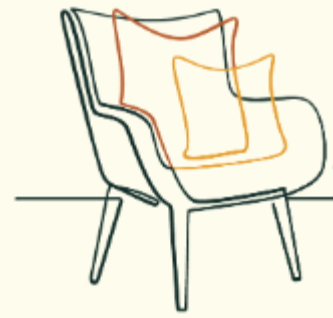
## Headsupguys

- Resources specific to men's' mental health
- <https://headsupguys.org/>

# Questions or thoughts?



# Sources



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# Contact us



As You Are Therapy & Consulting

<https://www.asyouaretherapy.ca/>

<https://www.asyouaretherapy.ca/therapy-blog/mens-mental-health-signs-may-be-different-than-what-you-think>

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