

Indigenous-led Harm Reduction: Starting the Conversation



“The Four Pillars” Model

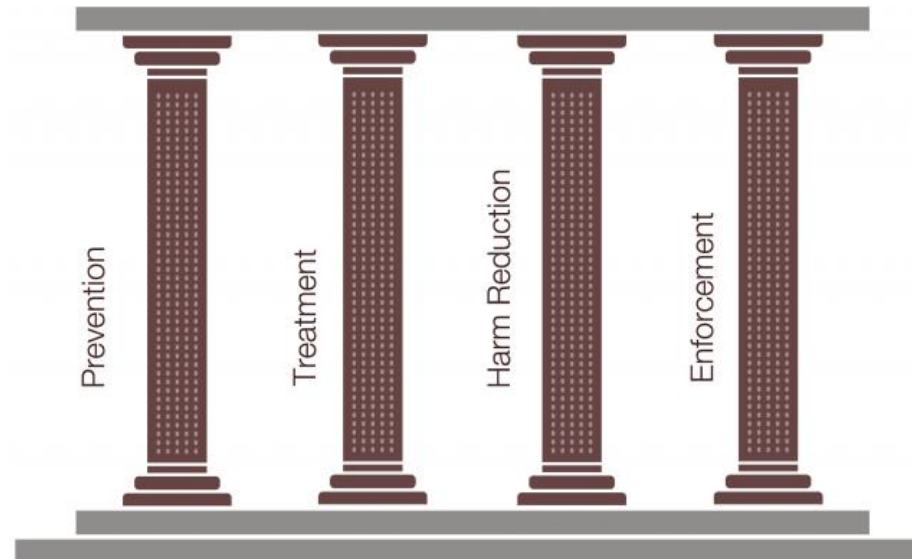
This is a practical approach to substance use drug strategies, and one of the main models referenced in Western practice.

Prevention

Treatment

Harm Reduction

Enforcement



The “Four Fires” Model

Is an Indigenous approach to the “Four Pillars” Model.

Cultural Safety

"Acknowledge the power differences that exist between service provider and client/patient. Allow and create spaces for Indigenous peoples to feel safe to be our whole selves when receiving care."

Sovereignty

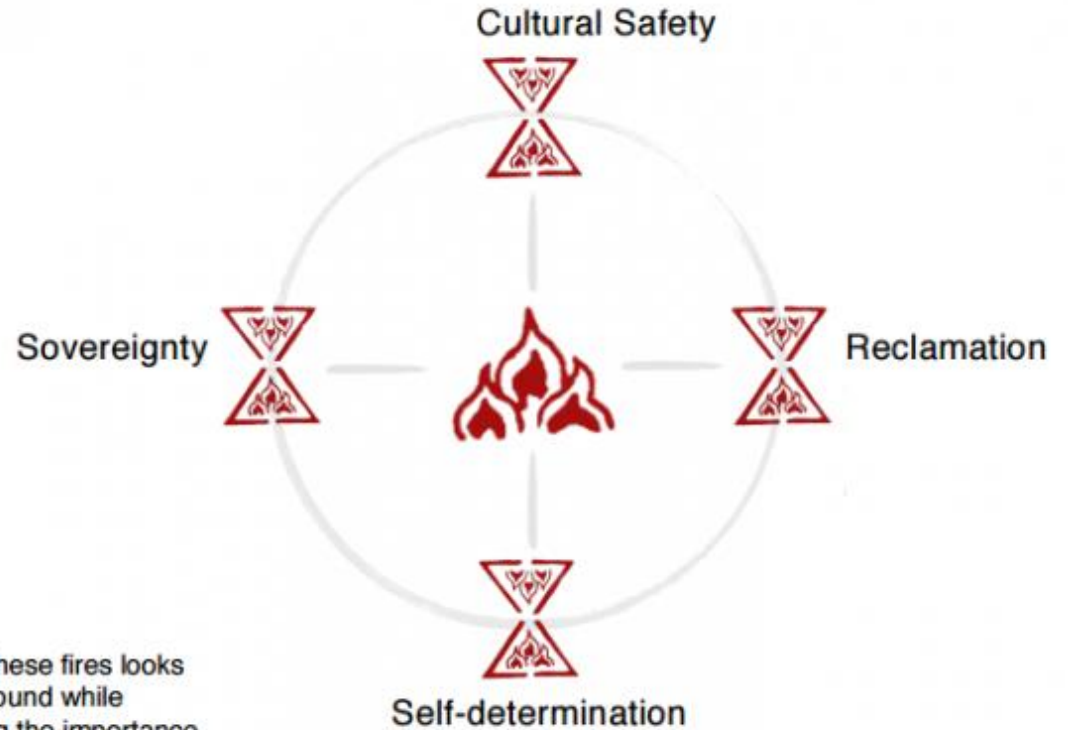
"Principles like non-interference teach us to support and meet people where they're at."

Reclamation

"Colonialism uprooted and distorted many structures and ways of life within our communities. Reclaiming cultural practices can strengthen us."

Self-Determination

"Allow individuals, communities and Nations to decide specifically for ourselves what works best for us."



What would these fires look like on the ground while understanding the importance of the central home fire?

<https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/visions/indigenous-people-vol11/indigenizing-harm-reduction>

The Four Fires Model continued

“By focusing on community well-being and the restoration of various Indigenous knowledge systems, life ways, ceremonies, culture and governance structures, Indigenous peoples of many Nations and cultures can reduce the harm we experience in our lives.” –Here to Help, BC

- The idea is, that to focus on building a strong Homefire, we need to collectively address the harms of colonialism. We can look at the ways that policies, programs and common practices have been influenced by colonization and challenge them by creating policies, programs and common practices **that meet our community members where they are at.**
- To reduce the harms for people who use drugs/people who use substances, we need to centre their input and engage them in a safe way. What supports do they need? What is not working? Peer-led input that is inclusive and challenges power-structures fosters reclamation and reciprocity between service-providers and service-receivers.

Indigenous Approaches to Harm Reduction

Harm Reduction is a way of life, based on love, non-judgement, and non-interference.

Indigenous approaches to Harm Reduction are rooted in Indigenous Knowledges and Worldviews, while utilizing Western evidence-based practice. It is Two-Eyed seeing.

One might recognize an initial discomfort around Harm Reduction, this is natural. Substance use has devastated Indigenous communities as a result of the on-going impacts of colonialism. Harm Reduction is an act of decolonizing.

Indigenous peoples must be given leadership in Harm Reduction to build wellness for and with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. For example, The decision to develop or implement a harm reduction program in a community must come from within that community.

Examples of Indigenous- led Harm Reduction

**HER Pregnancy Program -
Edmonton, AB**



Examples of Indigenous-led Harm Reduction

HER Pregnancy Program - Edmonton, AB

The H.E.R. program aims to assist street-involved pregnant women to access healthcare and social resources – ultimately supporting women to shape and attain their pregnancy and parenting goals. The staff work to build trust with the women, empower them to believe in their own worth and vision for the future, and link them with the services and resources they need to achieve their goals. Staff provide health education nursing services including testing, systems navigation, referrals, and accompaniment to health and social services.

Examples of Indigenous-led Harm Reduction

Ambrose Place – Edmonton, Alberta



Examples of Indigenous-led Harm Reduction

Ambrose Place – Edmonton, Alberta

Ambrose Place is a housing-first facility with 42 spaces for Indigenous people. It is “operated using a set of practical strategies that help people reduce the negative consequences of drug use, alcoholism and mental illness by:

- meeting people where they are at
- focusing on improving the quality of the individual’s life, health and well-being
- educating the person on options and consequences, thus enabling the individual to improve their quality of life, health and well-being
- working with residents in a non-judgemental and gradual fashion

This approach has been very successful in enabling people, who have not been appropriately served by traditional facilities, to significantly improve their circumstances.”

Examples of Indigenous-led Harm Reduction

[13 Moons Harm Reduction – Winnipeg, Manitoba](#)

Is a Youth, Peer-led community project in the North End of Winnipeg, Manitoba. It is grounded in local and Indigenous knowledge, aiming to support Indigenous youth ages 11-35. They utilize the “Four Fires” Model to Harm Reduction.

They provide:

- Overdose Response and Naloxone Training
- Safer-Consumption supplies (new needles, pipes, etc)
- Safer-Sex supplies (condoms, lube, etc)
- Harm Reduction programming
- Peer Outreach and Advocacy



13 MOONS: CULTURE-BASED PROGRAM FOR PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS

THE GRIND

We reached out to people in systems who could help. We used our usual ways of discussing new ideas and developing solutions in the community, including AYO Politix Brainstorm, Meet Me at the Bell Tower, ongoing conversations with Knowledge Keepers , and connecting with people who use drugs. We framed our program using the **NYSHN Four Fire model of harm reduction**

(<http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/indigenizingharmreduction.html>)

SOVEREIGNTY

- Meeting people where they're at
- Treating with respect
- Non-judgemental
- Peer outreach workers connecting with people who use drugs
- Offering safer consumption supplies
- Naloxone training and distribution

RECLAMATION

- Recognize/ honor all cycles
- Culture-based curriculum
- 13 weeks, 4 times for each year
- Seasonal teachings
- **Medicine wheel:** **spring:** children, new growth, beginnings
- **Summer:** focus on youth, physical activities
- **Fall:** Adults, emotional themes and support
- **Winter:** Knowledge keepers, stories & the mind

CREATION STORY



We have grieved many relatives who couldn't get the help they needed because of the stigma of drug use. Melissa was our sister. She was funny. She helped people in the village. When she was pregnant and using crystal meth, she was afraid her baby would get taken from her, and didn't know where she could turn for help. She took her own life outside a community health service building that wasn't yet open for the day. This was our last straw, and we knew we had to do something. This was our inspiration to begin community led action.

SELF-DETERMINATION

- Nothing about us without us
- Rights-based approach to Indigenous leadership
- Governance Model with AYO as lead decision makers
- Circle of organisational support to help operationalise their leadership
- Peer advisory circle to ensure program is responsive to their needs

CULTURAL SAFETY

- Peer outreach workers
- Supporting navigation of existing systems
- Training settler healthcare providers to provide culturally safe care to people who use drugs
- Leading culturally safe system transformation

Examples of Indigenous-led Harm Reduction

Toronto Indigenous Harm Reduction - Toronto



Examples of Indigenous-led Harm Reduction

Toronto Indigenous Harm Reduction - Toronto

Toronto Indigenous Harm Reduction is a grassroots Indigenous led support system that receives volunteer and donation support from many members of the community. They provide support to Indigenous houseless folks in Toronto through generous donations and with the help of those who believe in the value of harm reduction as a lifesaving and unconditional expression of Love and support.

Toronto Indigenous Harm Reduction (TIHR) emerged during the first wave of the COVID19 pandemic in response to a massive shutdown of frontline services and a lack of basic needs for Indigenous houseless folks in the city of Toronto.

They have provided basic needs, access to critical health support & covid 19 testing, harm reduction supplies, sexual, reproductive health and prenatal support, traditional medicines, traditional food, expressive arts and ceremony.

TIHR has been on the frontlines of encampment support and the devastating overdose crisis that is currently taking place across Turtle Island.



Questions, Comments?

- Take a moment to think about the words that stand out to you.
- Any Knowledge shared can be taken or left here today