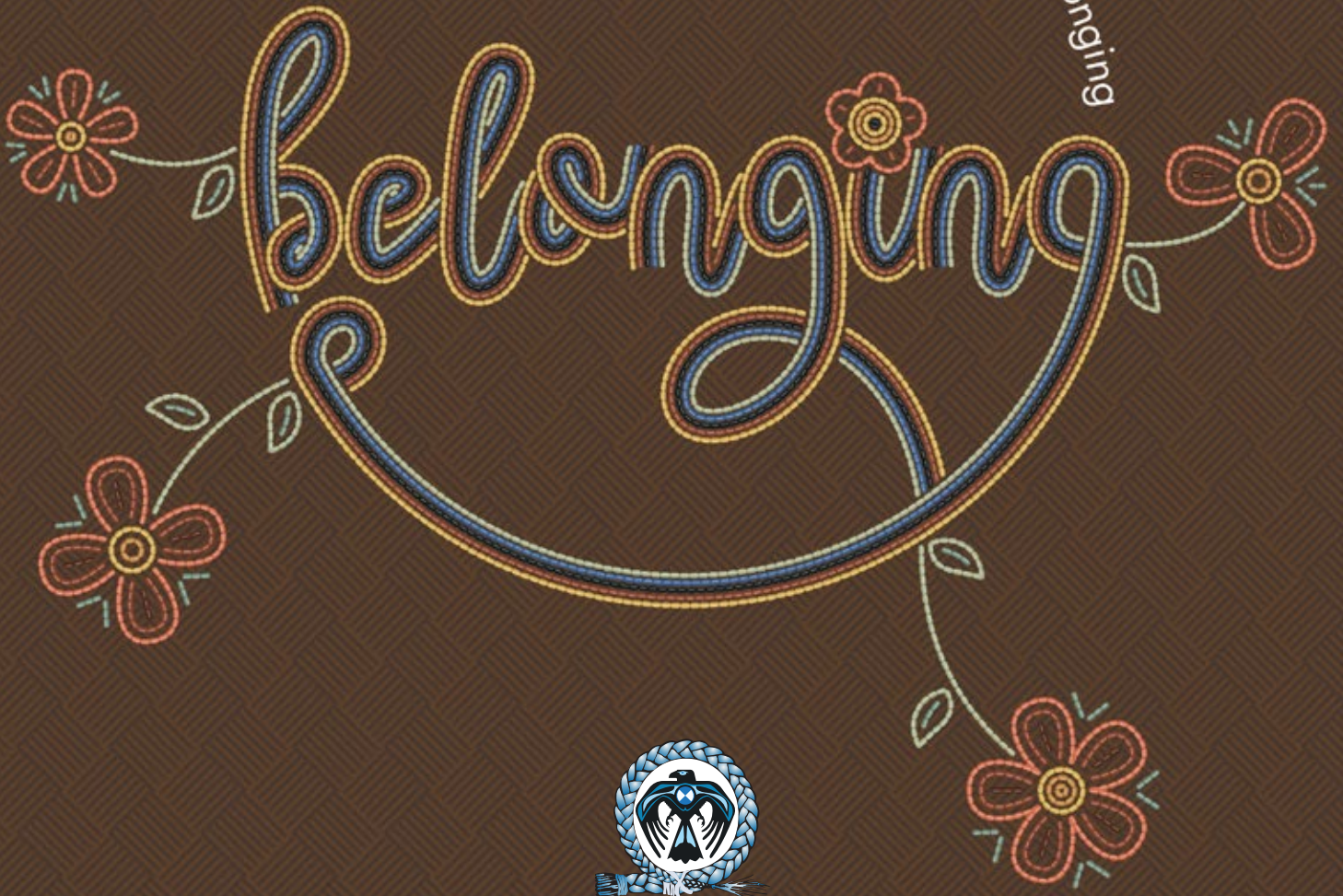


HELPING ONE ANOTHER

Strengthening the Circle of Connection Through Belonging



**THUNDERBIRD**  
PARTNERSHIP FOUNDATION  
Annual Report  
**2020/21**





## Vision

Cultivating and empowering relationships that connect us to our cultural strengths and identity within wholistic and healthy communities.


## Mission

The Thunderbird Partnership Foundation, a division of the National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation Inc., is a leading culturally centred voice advocating for collaborative, integrated and wholistic approaches to healing and wellness.


## Mandate

The Thunderbird Partnership Foundation is the national voice advocating for First Nations culturally-based substance use and mental wellness services.

*Thunderbird Partnership Foundation has a centralized office located on the Eelūnaapéewi Lahkèwiit Territory, in southwestern Ontario.*

 **MAIN OFFICE**  
22361 Austin Line  
Bothwell, ON  
N0P 1C0

• 8:30 to 16:30 ET

 **PHONE**  
(519) 692-9922

**TOLL-FREE**  
1-866-763-4714

 **FAX**  
(519) 692-9977

 **E-MAIL**  
[info@thunderbirdpf.org](mailto:info@thunderbirdpf.org)

***thunderbirdpf.org***

     @thunderbirdpf

**VISIT OUR LIFE PROMOTION WEBSITES**

**cultureforlife.ca** for Youth

**wisepractices.ca** for Communities

- 4** Message from the Board President and Chief Executive Officer
- 5** Operational Changes
- 6** Demand for Thunderbird Resources Continues as Virtual Training Increases
- 7** New Visitors to Thunderbird Websites Increase, Social Platform Fan Numbers Increase
- 8** Balanced Scorecard and Strategic Planning Update
- 9** Organizational Evaluation
- 10** Building a National Training Network
- 11** Thunderbird Removes Barriers to Learning During Covid-19
- 11** Evaluation of Virtual Services Aims to Develop Standards and Criteria for Emental Health for Youth
- 12** Virtual Hubs Provide Much Needed Support
- 13** Facilitating Wellness in a Virtual Training Environment
- 14** National Training Delivery
- 15** Increased Demand for Self-Paced On-Line Courses
- 15** Thunderbird Partnership Foundation Training Needs Survey
- 16** Thunderbird Wellness App Reaches Beta Test Stage
- 17** Thunderbird's Partnerships Support Anti-Stigma Awareness
- 18** *WisePractices.ca* Confirmed as Key Life Promotion Resource and Source of New Training Curriculum
- 19** Life Promotion Research Supports Development of Knowledge Translation Tools
- 20** Life Promotion Toolkit Reaches Draft Stage
- 21** Thunderbird Advocacy Updates
- 22** - Equitable Funding Needed for Addictions Services in First Nations Communities
- 23** - Community Response to Opioid Crisis
- 24** - Thunderbird Advocates for Decriminalization
- 24** - Safe Supply
- 25** Developing Culture-based Resources on Methamphetamine Use
- 26** NNADAP Year in Review
- 27** NYSAP Year in Review
- 28** COVID-19 Data – Virtual Services
- 29** NNADAP/NYSAP Treatment Centres Using the Native Wellness Assessment (NWA™)
- 30** Addiction Management Information System (AMIS)
- 31** Update on First Nations Guidelines for Addressing Opioid and Methamphetamine Use
- 32** Mental Wellness Workforce Survey Results
- 34** Database Security and Ethics
- 35** Treatment Centre Conference Calls Create Support and Connections
- 36** Cannabis Survey Updated
- 37** Responding to Community Needs with Rapid Development of Digital Tools
- 38** Gathering Evidence to Tell Our Story
- 40** Supporting French Access to Thunderbird Resources
- 41** Indigenous Patterns Reflect Thunderbird's Approach
- 42** Conferences/Events
- 43** Thunderbird Acquires Additional Office Space
- 43** Finance Report 2020-2021

# Message from the Board President and Chief Executive Officer

During these challenging times Thunderbird Partnership Foundation is proud to be working to advance equity, reduce disparities, and support First Nations communities and treatment centres across Canada. For 21 years, with our partners, we have addressed the most pressing community issues in substance use and championed Indigenous Knowledge, culture, and innovative solutions to drive change.

As the leading culturally centred voice on First Nations substance use and addictions that is working to advance equity, we are called upon to dispel racist misconceptions and advocate strongly for the needs of communities and treatment centres. Today, we are facing another threat to our collective health and safety. **Contaminated drugs are taking the lives of First Nations people at alarming rates.** This epidemic can be prevented with equity that enables access to harm reduction services in community, with the right partners, and with culture and land-based supports. In addition, COVID-19 has put the workforce serving First Nations under extreme stress with no reprieve in sight. They have quickly shifted to virtual services and modified in-person services to respond to increased levels of anxiety, trauma, and grief.


First Nations will struggle if the workforce is not specifically included in relief and recovery efforts. Even though new federal funding has been announced for Indigenous mental wellness resources, **more needs to be done** to increase staffing levels for community-based outreach and coordination and to ensure treatment centres can continue to address increasing demands for virtual services and recover from losses due to modified and closed services.


We know each day places significant challenges and pressures on treatment centres and First Nations communities – and on their leadership. We also know leaders rise to these challenges with ingenuity, compassion, resilience, fortitude, and integrity. In times like these, treatment centres stand shoulder-to-shoulder with First Nations. **We encourage all to stand with and be vocal advocates for First Nations.**

Thunderbird is evaluating **how to move our strategic priorities forward while being responsive to ever-changing community needs.** The Foundation's Board of Directors and staff are fully invested, and we hope that this report gives you a glimpse into the difference we have made through partnerships, research, training and education and communication strategies.

**We try to take care of each other and do our best to serve you.** We meet regularly with treatment centres, partners, and networks. Thunderbird's staff has been working from home since March 2020, but daily check-ins help us keep our circle strong despite the distances. We have expanded our capacity to operate virtually. We have also invested in internet enabled tablets to help treatment centres reach First Nations people in need of support. We have a loan program that ensures treatment centre workers have laptops and mobile internet sticks to fully engage in training courses, our Train-the-Trainer programs and continue their learning journey through our online Community of Practice. We continue to support conversations that seek to establish new policy for life promotion and are extremely proud of the youth leaders who have developed a life promotion toolkit to support First Nations in engaging youth. We will be looking to additional virtual engagement offerings, as we know obeying the *stay at home order* has been lonely. Social isolation is not a natural state of being, and we continue to work on solutions to support our connection to Belonging!

With gratitude, we present Thunderbird Partnership Foundation's Annual Report for 2020-2021, aptly titled **Helping One Another: Strengthening the Circle of Connection Through Belonging.**

  
President Austin Bear  
President and Chair

  
Carol Hopkins, O.C., MSW, LL.D (hons)  
Chief Executive Officer

# Operational Changes – Bringing New Staff on Board!

Thunderbird Partnership Foundation experienced a high level of growth in 2020-2021 with seven new employees (increasing from 22 to 29 staff), allowing for greater capacity across all teams.

During 2020-2021, competencies were included in all employee job descriptions and became part of the performance appraisal system for the organization. These changes resulted in standardized job descriptions, the identification of core competencies and standardized competencies for all positions. This contributed to creating an objective process in establishing base salaries which are competitive and equitable.

In addition, the onboarding and orientation process was standardized during the year allowing for new employees to be well prepared and supported during their first weeks of employment. The administration staff for each team assists with the following list of tasks to support onboarding of new employees:

*The feedback received from new staff to the onboarding process has been positive.*



- a welcome email is sent to the employee before their first day of work



- standardized equipment and orientation package ensures consistency for each employee



- **a 2-step orientation process:**  
step 1 – on day one the new employee meets with the administrative staff from their team followed by a meeting with the manager and/or the team;  
step 2 – two weeks on the job triggers a check in with the administrative staff to further review information and answer any questions



- meet and greet sessions with all teams to get to know their colleagues and their work



- ensure new hires complete the required training in health and safety





# Demand for Thunderbird resources continues as virtual training increases

The increase in online training last year to accommodate the COVID-19 restrictions ensured Thunderbird’s resources continued to be in high demand.

The organization shared a combined total of 17,398 copies of both its print and digital resources, a decrease of only 21% despite not having conference events to share our resources from our tradeshow booth.

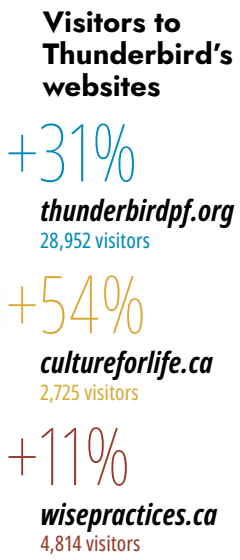
Our campaign to increase engagement of the First Nations Opioid and Methamphetamine Surveys was a highlight of the year. A total of 1,800 surveys were shared with stakeholders, a jump of 68 percent over the previous year’s totals at 1,072.



# New Visitors to Thunderbird Websites Increase

All of Thunderbird’s websites saw a leap in new visitors last fiscal, reflecting the increase in use of virtual platforms during the pandemic.

The top pages viewed on our main site, thunderbirdpf.org, were the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum and the Native Wellness Assessment™. Thunderbird’s COVID-19 information page also experienced solid engagement, with more than 2000 visitors. Fact sheets developed by Thunderbird in the initial shut down phase of the pandemic garnered several views, with *Harm Reduction* (259 views) and *Staying Connected to Culture Without the Sweat Lodge During COVID-19* (213 views) topping the list.



# Social Platform Fan Numbers Increase

Our top posts on our social media platforms in 2020/21 included our weekly “Culture Is” postcard asking our followers what culture means to them and providing insightful reflections on the diverse meanings of Indigenous culture gathered from Elders during the Indigenous Culture as Intervention in Addictions Treatment project (2014). The postcards were updated and redesigned by Thunderbird staff with watercolour imagery.

In November, Thunderbird saw a sharp increase in followers and engagements on its Facebook page when we live streamed the FNMWC Implementation Team meetings in November. We also saw an uptake in followers when we partnered with the Chiefs of Ontario for their virtual Annual Health Forum (Feb 23-25), participating with a live virtual booth promoting Thunderbird’s resources.

This past fiscal Thunderbird added an Instagram account and refreshed its Pinterest account. We also continued to post our job postings and work-related information on LinkedIn.





# Balanced Scorecard and Strategic Planning Update

There was a lot of growth in developing the balanced scorecard model to fit Thunderbird as an organization during 2019-2020.

We built capacity to utilize the model and its four perspectives: Financial/Stewardship, Internal Processes, Stakeholder Satisfaction, and Learning and Development. We also developed consistent reporting templates, case scenario examples, and a tool to guide our application of **Hope, Belonging, Meaning, and Purpose**: the HBMP Evaluation Framework.

Additional growth continued in 2020-2021 with the establishment of a strategic monitoring model that supported the following outcomes:

Detailed logic models were developed by each team, and at the organizational level, to support planning of 2021-2022 strategic priorities (Harm Reduction, Life Promotion, Virtual Services, Pandemic Planning & Response, Trauma Informed Organization).

Internal processes were more closely analysed and gaps and areas for improvement were identified; overall, a more focused effort on maximising efficiencies was prioritized and will remain a focus for the 2021-2022 fiscal year and organizational evaluation.

An anticipated outcome of this process will be building our capacity and Ways of Doing, through the development of standards, policy, and procedures to support our internal processes and overall service effectiveness.

An increase in Thunderbird's risk management capacity was also supported and guided by the balanced scorecard:

A dedicated staff position was created to support evaluation and continuous quality improvement of the organization and implementation of the balanced scorecard and related tools.

Risk definitions and assessments were incorporated into reporting and monitoring tasks, both operational and strategic.

Educational webinars were developed and presented to Thunderbird staff to increase awareness and understanding of Thunderbird's supporting tools: balanced scorecard, HBMP Evaluation Framework, and risk definitions. These webinars will be continually updated and presented to staff, and other interested groups.

Moving forward, all three tools: balanced scorecard, HBMP Evaluation Framework, and the risk definitions, will be further coordinated to support planning, reporting, evaluation, and change management activities. Continuous quality improvement of Thunderbird's internal processes will support our strategic goal to establish ourselves as a Centre of Excellence in the use of Indigenous Knowledge and culture for mental wellness.

# Organizational Evaluation

Thunderbird Partnership Foundation is evaluating the organization for Year 3 (2021-2022) and Year 5 (2023-2024) of the current five-year strategic plan.

### Five key strategic priorities have been identified for Year 3:

**Harm Reduction, Life Promotion, Virtual Services, Pandemic Planning and Response, and Trauma-informed Organization.**

All strategic priorities are supported by logic models and will be used as our guiding lens throughout the evaluation. The evaluation is led by four technical approaches:

- **A values-based approach**, which uses Thunderbird's five key strategic priorities to inform how, why, and what we measure.
- **Utilization-focused evaluation**, which ensures evaluation design supports usefulness to each working group, our stakeholders, and Thunderbird as a whole.
- **A mixed-methods approach**, where multiple data collection methods will support a more comprehensive understanding of impact through strategic directions and internal processes.
- **Contribution analysis**, which determines the contribution of our activities, considering the impact of external factors on our intended outcomes.

Thunderbird's internal processes and organizational climate will also be assessed as a result of recent increases in capacity and growth. Assessment of processes, policies, standards, and procedures will help identify strengths and gaps within the organization. Strategic priorities, internal processes, and organizational climate will be assessed using five different data collection methods. Each method builds upon and supports the others.



**Organizational Vital Signs (OVS):** The OVS assesses organizational climate based on principles of emotional intelligence. A survey has been completed by 97% of Thunderbird staff. Staff described reasons for staying at Thunderbird that express connections to Hope, Belonging, Meaning, and Purpose. **Hope** was described by beliefs and values shared with the organization's mandate; **Belonging** was described by positive and supportive staff relationships within the organization; **Meaning** was described by the impact and value of the work; and **Purpose** was described through appreciation of the organization's dedication to its stakeholders. Results will be discussed at all levels and an action plan will be developed.

Thunderbird is currently operating at **54% higher engagement** than the average organization that takes OVS. And **12% higher** than what is considered a world-class organization.

### Historical Engagement Levels



Since 2013 engagement levels are on a consistent increase, from 38% in 2013 to 79% in 2021. Disengagement has gone from 50% to a consistent 0% for three administrations. Neutral was 12%, 50%, 22% and now 21%.

### Key Informant Interviews:

Interviews with our stakeholders (internal and external) will highlight strengths and areas for improvement in service delivery as well as assessing successes and gaps in the outcomes of our strategic priorities (those provided in the logic models).

**Surveys:** Similar to the proposed interviews, the surveys will assess internal staff and external stakeholders' perception of Thunderbird's service delivery, overall service effectiveness, and achievement of our strategic priority outcomes. Internal perception questions will be cross-referenced with those asked in the OVS to avoid duplication.

### Balanced Scorecard:

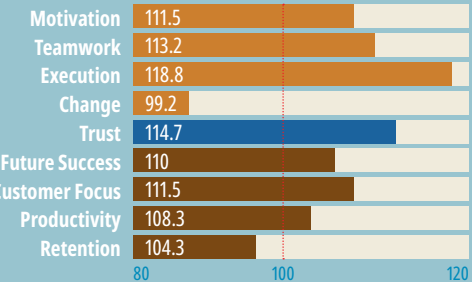
The balanced scorecard's guiding perspectives will be used to assess Thunderbird's internal processes (e.g., the internal processes related to finance and governance, stakeholder satisfaction, learning and development, and overall operations of the organization).

**Database Analysis:** A spreadsheet will cover quantitative elements of each strategic priority's outcomes (e.g., # meetings with stakeholders, # documents produced, # social media interactions, etc.). This information will help provide context and ensure progress throughout our logic models.

### Combined Snapshot

This chart shows the climate and outcome scores at a glance.

The OVS has a median (mid-point) score of 100 with a standard deviation (variable) of 15.



Understanding Thunderbird's impact and service effectiveness is a function of its strategic priorities, stakeholder satisfaction, and internal processes. Evaluation based on these elements will help ensure Thunderbird has the organizational structure to achieve a Centre of Excellence and remain accountable to its stakeholders.



# Building a National Training Network

Thunderbird Partnership Foundation continues to expand its training platform with the goal of building a national network of regional First Nations trainers.

The trainers will deliver Thunderbird's certified curriculum through it's Train-the-Trainer (TTT) model facilitating the capacity of First Nations across the country to access certified training.

## New Training on the Way

Thunderbird plans to pilot the following three additional Train-the-Trainer programs in the fall/winter of 2021-2022:

- **First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Implementation**
- **Cannabis & First Nations Communities**
- **Trauma Informed Training**

Wise Practices for Life Promotion is Train-the-Trainer curriculum supported by the wisepractices.ca website. This training is currently in development and slated for delivery in Winter 2022.

## COMMUNITY CRISIS PLANNING FOR PREVENTION, RESPONSE AND RECOVERY



The Community Crisis Planning, for Prevention, Response, and Recovery Training was launched in December 2020. Three virtual deliveries were completed, with 49 prospective trainers from six regions of Canada.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, strength-based community capacity building has been supported via knowledge sharing and skills development in community crisis response, allowing participants to establish peer support networks across the country.

This training uses the Community Crisis Planning, for Prevention, Response, and Recovery First Nations Service Delivery Model.

### Participant comments

*Everything was great! I learned a lot in this past week. I will be using this and developing more programs and more ways to teach my community on how to deal with a crisis and ways to help everyone involved.*

*Meeting everyone from around Canada was wonderful and just the sheer resilience of it all. Being able to participate in something like this through a worldwide pandemic was incredible.*

*I loved the participatory activities - especially the visualization and how you were able to take us out on the land.*

*I appreciated the translation method so I could fully participate.*

*The video as well as the engagement of drawing and reflecting putting the pieces together and break-out room activities were great at getting others to collaborate and interact.*

*I liked that it was the FIRST French led webinar and that the facilitators were very prepared.*

*They were very knowledgeable in working on the land in their own communities and shared their own experiences. Well Done!*

## LAND FOR HEALING



The Land for Healing Train-the-Trainer program was delivered to three cohorts in the winter of 2020 just prior to the start of the global pandemic, and virtual delivery options were developed in fiscal 2020-21 to support training participants in fulfilling their certification requirements. Thunderbird scheduled a two-week webinar series for 12 participants of the TTT cohorts (representing four regions) to deliver the Land for Healing curriculum virtually. The webinars were offered with simultaneous French interpretation and recorded to share on the Community of Practice web platform. As a virtual support resource, the training team created a plan to prepare and deliver how-to recordings to support Zoom webinar delivery, with a step-by-step outline of Zoom tools, tips for virtual delivery, and a training delivery template.

# Thunderbird Removes Barriers to Learning During Covid-19



Thunderbird Partnership Foundation's adaptation to virtual training delivery in a pandemic brought attention to potential barriers preventing people from fully participating in training sessions.

The necessary adjustments to workplaces to ensure employee safety highlighted challenges surrounding access to digital tools and internet connectivity.

The virtual training experience is most effective with appropriate digital tools (laptop, computer, iPad), and reliable internet access. Training participants demonstrated their commitment to training as they overcame the challenges accessing the 3-day sessions using nothing but the audio on their cell phones, while others in rural and remote locations repeatedly lost internet connection.

Thunderbird responded by purchasing mobile internet sticks and laptops and establishing a **Digital Tools Lending Library** to support improved access for stakeholders. The lending library is also available for treatment centre staff who require professional certification and wish to enroll in Thunderbird's self-paced online courses.

## Evaluation of virtual services aims to develop standards and criteria for eMental health for youth



Thunderbird has begun an evaluation of virtual services for Indigenous youth by developing standards and criteria for eMental health interventions.

The new project builds on the work of Thunderbird's 2019 report *Recommendations for Delivering eHealth Psychological Interventions to Indigenous Youth*, which describes outcomes of various types of eMental health initiatives.

The pandemic increased the use of virtual environments over a variety of platforms to reach Indigenous youth, in addressing substance use issues and for provision of psychoeducational programs. Standards and criteria for e-Mental health interventions will help ensure applications support psychological safety, are culturally safe and relevant, and demonstrate risk management protocols.

There are three overarching goals of this project, which will guide three phases of tasks. They include identification of potential standards/criteria for eMental health applications; engagement of First Nations stakeholders to confirm standards/criteria for eMental health applications; and a pilot-test of the standards/criteria to existing eMental health applications being used by Indigenous youth.

A literature scan has started and a group of National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP) and National Youth Solvent Abuse Program (NYSAP) treatment centres have been identified to support a project working group.



# Virtual Hubs Provide Much Needed Support

Thunderbird Partnership Foundation has seen its new Community Wellness Hub grow to 480 members since launching in April 2020.

The wellness network is part of Thunderbird's Community of Practice platform providing a forum for community workers to find peer support which has become even more important during the pandemic for sharing strategies, successes, and challenges. The wellness hub invites members to a shared space to reflect on best and wise practices, and ways to strengthen Indigenous ways of knowing and ways of being.

There are hundreds of cultural, health and wellness, substance use and pandemic related resources accessible to the members of the wellness hub. It also promotes national webinars and virtual events.

In 2020-21, Thunderbird expanded its Community of Practice to include individualized training hubs to facilitate an environment that nurtures Hope, Belonging, Meaning and Purpose by creating a space for engaged and connected community networking once a training course is complete.

The hubs provide expanded access to course resources, ongoing shared learning opportunities for training participants and added support for the virtual training experience. Each hub offers unique opportunities for networking and sharing on topics relevant to the specific training course. There are multiple engagement options within each hub such as a home wall, photos and forums. Forums allow for additional information such as resources that expand on concepts presented in training, event sharing, and opportunities to interact with other training hub members. Additionally, the hubs allow for participants to remain connected to Thunderbird Partnership Foundation.

Plans for fiscal 2021-22 include improved access for French speaking training participants. Thunderbird has hired a bilingual translator to facilitate enhanced engagement on the training platforms and forums.

## Training Hubs Participation



### Community of Practice

(includes all Community Wellness Hubs)

- 746 visitors between April 2020 - March 2021
- The average time spent on our training platforms was 12:06 minutes, with 10.79 pages viewed per session.



### Treatment Centre Hubs

Treatment Centre Hubs for Adults  
Treatment Centre Hubs for Youth

| Participants | Posts |
|--------------|-------|
| 37           | -     |
| 55           | 27    |



### Community Wellness Hub

| Participants | Posts |
|--------------|-------|
| 480          | 350   |

CARE FACILITATION

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 9 | - |
|---|---|

COMMUNITY CRISIS PLANNING

|    |    |
|----|----|
| 21 | 20 |
|----|----|

CULTURE AS FOUNDATION & NWA™

|    |    |
|----|----|
| 24 | 17 |
|----|----|

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EQ)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 9 | - |
|---|---|

FNMWC FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION

|    |    |
|----|----|
| 29 | 18 |
|----|----|

PHARMACOLOGY

|    |    |
|----|----|
| 39 | 59 |
|----|----|

STRENGTH BASED CARE

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 9 | - |
|---|---|

USING TRAUMA INFORMED APPROACHES IN OUR WORK

|    |    |
|----|----|
| 44 | 23 |
|----|----|

Total Hub Participants: 664      Total Posts: 487



### Train-the-Trainer Journeys

| Participants | Posts |
|--------------|-------|
|--------------|-------|

BUFFALO RIDERS EARLY INTERVENTION TRAINING PROGRAM (PDT)\*

|    |    |
|----|----|
| 64 | 41 |
|----|----|

BUFFALO RIDERS EARLY INTERVENTION TRAINING PROGRAM (TFT)\*\*

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 9 | - |
|---|---|

COMMUNITY CRISIS PLANNING (PDT)

|    |    |
|----|----|
| 48 | 45 |
|----|----|

COMMUNITY CRISIS PLANNING (TFT)

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 11 | - |
|----|---|

LAND FOR HEALING (PDT)

|    |    |
|----|----|
| 73 | 45 |
|----|----|

LAND FOR HEALING (TFT)

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 10 | - |
|----|---|

LET'S TALK CANNABIS (TFT)

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 11 | - |
|----|---|

\* PDT: Professional Development Track    \*\* TFT: Training Facilitation Track

# Facilitating Wellness in a Virtual Training Environment

Thunderbird Partnership Foundation's shift to virtual training required attention to facilitating and maintaining Indigenous learning environments and practices that are also aligned with our national frameworks.

Thunderbird's training courses are developed from a culture as foundation, strength-based trauma informed approach. The method of training delivery is structured to support the content and engage participants in a shared learning space that incorporates Indigenous teaching circle concepts. Ensuring these Indigenous principles and values are applied in virtual training along with optimizing the tools available through virtual platforms creates a group experience and expression of Hope, Belonging, Meaning and Purpose.

Shared belief and values, shared connection and relationship, shared story, knowledge and experience, and a shared sense of purpose was evidenced repeatedly amongst diverse training groups and made more meaningful through the challenges faced by the First Nation workforce during this pandemic.

Individualized training hubs added to the virtual Community of Practice, ensure training participants have continued learning opportunities, connection, and access to a national support network.

## Here's what people are saying about our training!

"I really enjoyed it and meeting other support people from across the country that have the same interest as I do."

"Meeting everyone from around Canada was wonderful and just the sheer resilience of it all. Being able to participate in something like this through a worldwide pandemic was incredible."

"It was not what I expected. It was really awesome. I thought it would be dry but all the different forms of tech used and activators kept my interest. I enjoyed myself thank you."

"Even though this was online you created a warm, welcoming atmosphere. Enjoyed it."

"[Liked the] culture integration; cultural aspect and how it ties into practice and helping others and myself."

"Really like the different tools you used to facilitate interaction and communication. Great knowledge of topics and very open to everyone's input and ideas."

"I was so amazed at how this was delivered especially the break-out rooms. It was as though we were there in person."

"I enjoyed listening to other's stories and how they put perspective on the training."

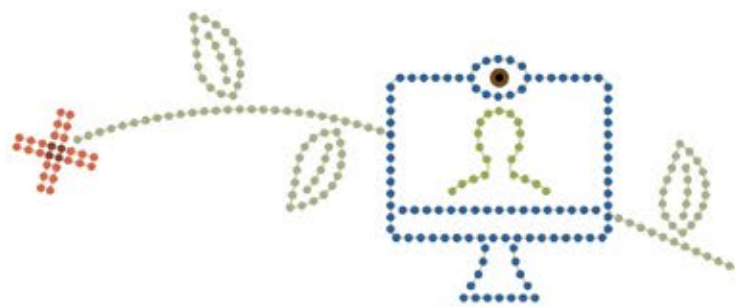
"I really enjoyed this training and the components of zoom and flow of the presentations. I enjoyed the breakout rooms and was impressed on how efficient it went."



# National Training Delivery



# Increased Demand for Self-Paced On-Line Courses



Many treatment centres were confronted in 2020 by the growing reality that face-to-face programming could no longer occur, so resilience and strength was demonstrated as they transitioned to virtual psychoeducational programming.

With many treatment centre staff working from home, Thunderbird's on-line courses provided an ideal opportunity to not only fulfil their certification requirements, but also to expand their knowledge with the following courses: *Clinical Supervision; Indicators to Assess Cultural Competency; Intake, Referral, Discharge and Aftercare Planning; Prescription Drug Abuse; and Developing a Basket of Screening and Assessment Tools for Mental Wellness Workers*. As a result, fiscal year 2020/2021 saw a significant increase in demand for self-paced on-line learning compared to the previous year.

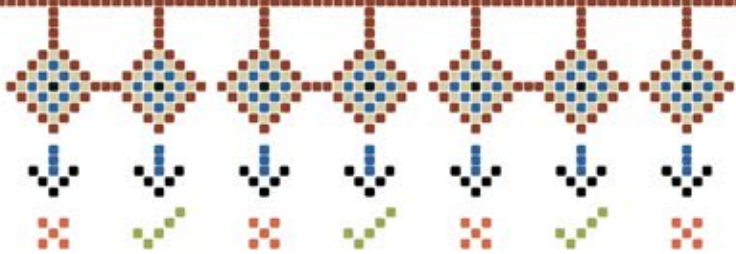
In response to this increased demand, Thunderbird is also completing the development of two additional on-line courses: *Indigenous Perspectives on Trauma, Vicarious Trauma and Wellness*, and *Wise Practices for Virtual Care*. Similar to Thunderbird's Virtual Instructor-Led Trainings (VILT), self-paced online courses also offer Hope, Belonging Meaning, and Purpose, for those who may be struggling during the pandemic. Self-paced on-line courses guide people through a natural process of learning at a pace that is right for them, providing another avenue to realize and connect with their own strengths. Thunderbird's on-line courses are available at no charge for NNADAP/NYSAP treatment centre employees and First Nations community wellness workers.

## Comments from Thunderbird On-line Course Participants

"I want to thank Thunderbird Partnership Foundation for the courses they had online. The courses were very challenging for me but made me more aware of what a NNADAP counsellor needs to know."

"I am really enjoying these courses. They are well done, with lots of information."

# Thunderbird Partnership Foundation Training Needs Survey



To facilitate the development of an annual national training calendar that would maximize Thunderbird Partnership Foundation's response to the training needs of stakeholders, a Mental Wellness Needs Training Survey was developed in February 2021 in collaboration with First Peoples Wellness Circle.

Survey responses were gathered from NNADAP and NYSAP treatment centres, mental wellness teams, and regional partners. Thunderbird received 43 responses to the survey and the respondent's training requests helped develop the 2021-2022 National Training Calendar.

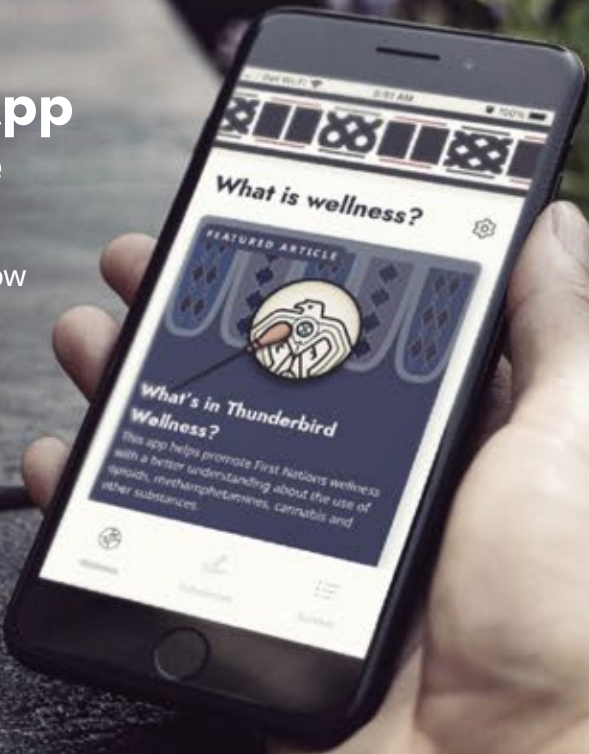
There are currently 28 training sessions scheduled for virtual delivery May-December 2021. The fourth quarter (January-March 2022) calendar is reserved for Train-the-Trainer course delivery and additional training requests. Thunderbird will promote any available seats for scheduled training sessions through our partner networks and the Thunderbird Community Wellness Hub.



# Thunderbird Wellness App Reaches Beta Test Stage

The new Thunderbird Wellness mobile app is now ready to move into the beta test stage.

This involves collecting feedback on the content, functionality, and how the app “feels” from our partners and stakeholders, then fixing any issues found in the testing process. It’s the last phase before Thunderbird Wellness becomes available free for download from the App Store and Google Play. Thunderbird felt doing the beta test was an important step to ensure we “have it right.” Subscribe to our newsletter on our website, or follow us on Twitter and Facebook to see how you can participate in the beta testing.



The app development is a first for Thunderbird with many months of research, developing prototypes, design work, coding, and gathering relevant content from our library of resources.

Thunderbird Wellness promotes a strengths-based, trauma informed approach to supporting Indigenous wellness. It provides tangible ways to support First Nations, on issues such as opioids and methamphetamines use, treatment, prevention, addressing stigma associated with substance use, and how to support harm reduction strategies. The content is presented in a user friendly, culturally grounded way. An interactive feature uses the drum to connect with culture and the heartbeat of our first Mother, the Earth.

The app also includes easy access to short surveys which provide a better understanding of the impact of opioid and methamphetamine use, and cannabis use on First Nations. The anonymous surveys inform prevention, treatment and harm reduction strategies as well as equity challenges and crisis management at the community and national levels. The survey answers can also identify possible solutions to the unique challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thunderbird Wellness draws from our three key frameworks: Honouring Our Strengths: A Renewed Framework to Address Substance Use Issues Among First Nations People in Canada, the Indigenous Wellness Framework, and the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum.

Offline content will be available in areas with poor internet access when the app is downloaded over Wi-Fi.

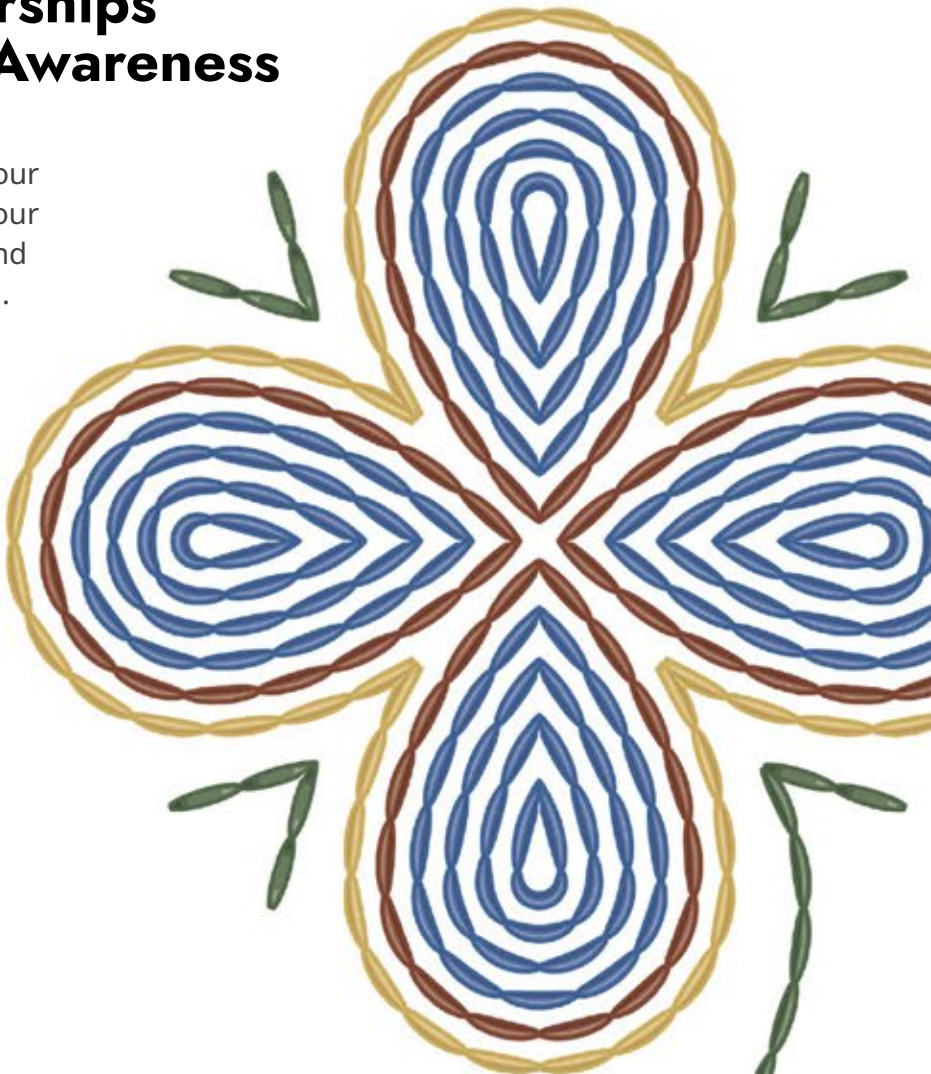


# Thunderbird’s Partnerships Support Anti-Stigma Awareness

To raise awareness of stigmatizing behaviour Thunderbird supported the leadership of our partners at First Peoples Wellness Circle and First Nations Health Managers Association.

Together, we drew on our combined strengths to create a new advertising campaign set to launch in fiscal 2021-22 to raise awareness about the harms of stigma and ways to change our interactions. The campaign focuses on addressing stigma in three key areas: COVID-19, mental health and substance use.

With the expertise of Nation Talk, an Indigenous communications network, the partners developed an advertising campaign which aims to reconnect people with Indigenous values of kindness, caring for one another and respect. The TV, radio and print ads will share messages of Hope, Belonging, Meaning, and Purpose that resonate with First Nations communities to support awareness of stigma. The campaign will use strengths-based language, promote cultural ways of being that offer tangible ways to reach out to people and show they are important and cared for by a supportive family and community.









## Life Promotion Toolkit Reaches Draft Stage

Eight Indigenous youth have been developing a life promotion toolkit to provide guidance for First Nations communities on how to engage youth in life promotion initiatives.

The toolkit is being developed in response to concerns raised by First Nations youth who identified a need for an approach focused less on death and dying and more on living life in a positive way, drawing from cultural strengths.

Three youth project coordinators, supported by an Elder, along with five additional youth, have met virtually every week to develop the toolkit with specific independent tasks between meetings. Thunderbird ensured youth had the technical and digital capacity they needed to fully engage in this project by providing laptops and internet through Wi-Fi or internet sticks.

The youth had a one-day learning session with the Feather Carriers program to ensure they understood the difference when talking about suicide prevention and life promotion. The youth leaders also invested time reviewing the *WisePractices.ca* life promotion website.

The life promotion toolkit is structured around four major components: connection to self, connection to spirit, connection to land, and connection to community as key factors in promoting life. The toolkit itself will consist of best practices, and include examples of community life promotion activities, multimedia sources promoting life, resources for youth and communities, images and visual aids, links to other Indigenous life promotion documents, storytelling, and exploring life promotion in Indigenous languages.

This toolkit will be presented by the youth in a workshop and panel presentation at the virtual, World Indigenous Suicide Prevention Conference in August 2021 and will be available in both the English and French languages.

The youth have completed a draft of the toolkit and plan to finalize all components and then conduct a pilot test with other youth before finalizing the kit with graphic design and production of multimedia.

## Thunderbird Advocacy Updates

Thunderbird Partnership Foundation participates in various committees each year to further support understanding of substance use, addictions and mental health issues for First Nations in Canada. The following information updates are a result of this collaboration in fiscal 2020-21.

**Supervised Consumption Sites<sup>1</sup> (SCS)** are harm reduction programs approved by the federal government operating in urban centres across the country. They offer a service that reduces barriers for people who use drugs, such as hygienic and supportive spaces for drug consumption, and provides access to sterile drug use supplies, peer support, and health and social services.

Major aims of SCSs include providing an environment for safer drug use to prevent death, improving the health status of people who use drugs, and mitigating public disorder. Depending on the site, it may be authorized<sup>2</sup> to permit the use of substances by

- injection
- inhalation (smoking)
- oral (swallowing) and intranasal (snorting)
- peer assistance, where one person provides assistance to another in the course of preparing and consuming drugs, often required by women, people with disabilities or illness, and other vulnerable populations. Friends or other clients may help assist, but employees of a supervised consumption site do not directly administer the drugs.

Drug checking is also an authorized service at some sites. Drug checking is a harm reduction measure where people have their drugs tested for toxic or unexpected and potent substances, such as fentanyl.

**Overdose Prevention Sites<sup>3</sup> (OPS)** were established as a community-based response to overdose deaths bypassing the bureaucratic delays associated with SCS applications. They tend to be peer-run, bare-bones facilities (sometimes just a tent in a public park) where people can use their own illicit drugs, access sterile harm reduction equipment, and receive emergency overdose response as needed. Many people prefer OPS to SCS, because they fill a critical gap in the spectrum of harm reduction providing access to the direct experience of peer workers. OPS also have fewer barriers, such as allowing certain modes of consumption prohibited in most SCS, such as drug inhalation.

The makeshift shelters often found in the bush, abandoned buildings and vehicles in First Nations communities often serve as OPS...supported by peers. Greater safety measures for people who use drugs in these environments are needed. In turn, these harm reduction services would increase safety for the community and has potential to preserve public housing that may be contaminated by drug preparation and use

Few First Nations communities in Canada operate mobile overdose prevention services to mitigate the rising rates of HepC, HIV, and other blood borne infections contracted through sharing needles and other drug use/preparation equipment. More of these services are needed across First Nations communities.

<sup>1</sup> Livingstone, James D. (2021). Harm Reduction Journal (2021) 18:4 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12954-020-00456-2>

<sup>2</sup> Government of Canada (2021). <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/substance-use/supervised-consumption-sites/status-application.html>

<sup>3</sup> Pivot Legal Services. What's the difference between an SCS and an OPS? [https://www.pivotlegal.org/scs\\_ops\\_map](https://www.pivotlegal.org/scs_ops_map), accessed May 2021



## Equitable Funding Needed for Addictions Services in First Nations Communities

First Nations community-based funding for National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs (NNADAP) is funded at the prevention level rather than the capacity needed to address the acuity of substance use dependence and addiction. First Nations communities report the lack of funding is a significant barrier to maintaining a workforce that would support outreach for people who use drugs and alcohol.

### Low Wages Still a Major Concern

Low wages are reported as a reason why people leave work, as well as the high stress that accompanies community development and community-based, trauma informed, substance use and addiction services. Treatment centres continue to struggle with this same issue. The Ontario Case Study on NNADAP and NYSAP funding continues to be highlighted as a resource articulating the need for wage parity, equitable operational funding and capital. This is a concern while treatment centres continue to innovate their services to respond to needs, such as offering residential treatment with a reduced capacity, virtual treatment services, outpatient services, and using the Addictions Management Information System. The treatment centres and First Nations community NNADAP workforce continue to maintain high rates of certification in addictions core competency and meet health services standards of excellence for accreditation.

### Partnerships Reduce Harms

First Nations communities and treatment centres are seeing a reduction in harms related to substance use when they maintain partnerships with cultural practitioners, Elders, local health authorities, mental wellness teams, and harm reduction networks. This not only benefits people who use drugs and alcohol, but also reduces harms for their family and community.

## Community Response to Opioid Crisis

Supporting First Nations communities to address substance use, addictions and mental health issues is a big part of what Thunderbird Partnership Foundation does. The following are some key *take aways* resulting from our work with communities who are looking for a strengths-based approach to respond to an opioid crisis, that is grounded in culture and evidence.

### How communities are responding to the opioid crisis through a combination of clinical and cultural services

First Nations communities who survived the opioid crisis through the pandemic had the following characteristics in place:

- community-based wholistic programs that included opioid agonist therapy, managed alcohol programs and other harm reduction efforts,
- relied on culture-based practitioners and Elders for advice and support on land-based services,
- community based outreach staff that supported people who use drugs and their families with access to resources,
- had partnerships with clinical services available by phone and video conferencing as well as in-person to First Nations people who use drugs and their families,
- clinical services from outside the community and willing to invest in community development through conversations and planning with chief and council, health, culture and land-based services,
- supported people who use drugs, their families, and the workforce with a trauma-based approach,
- offered services both virtually and in-person (with public health measures).

Outcomes for these communities included

- avoiding the expected increase in illegal drugs coming into the community,
- not experiencing death through contaminated drug supply (overdose),
- better health outcomes for covid-19, and
- community compliance to public health measures such as community border closures.

Where there was an absence of such coordinated efforts and relationships with clinical services (a nurse practitioner or physician), First Nations communities continued to report deaths due to contaminated drug supplies, increased presence of gangs within the community, and increased threats to public safety. Blood borne infectious diseases continue to increase across communities without a harm reduction philosophy and services.

Land-based services serve are a critical component of community-based harm reduction services. Cabins and tents serve as emergency shelter while also centring care for people who use drugs through outreach services. Elders and Cultural Practitioners play a key role in facilitating a connection to land, healing, and safety without imposing sanctions for participating while engaged in opioid replacement therapy, managed alcohol programs, or unregulated cannabis use, as a safe way for managing the symptoms of withdrawal from drugs.

Where land-based programs are governed and coordinated across culturally connected communities, the benefit to the families and individuals who are in substance use recovery have been clearly demonstrated through measuring Hope, Belonging, Meaning, Purpose, and Indigenous wellness, using the Native Wellness Assessment™.

Communities have reported wise practices such as a hub and spoke model work best. In this case the community is the hub inclusive of land, Elders and Cultural Practitioners, outreach, engagement of chief and council, investments to support methods such as the Matrix model leading to employment, peer support, and an outreach workforce. The spokes in the model are clinicians who provide rapid access to medication to manage withdrawals, monitoring, pharmacy, harm reduction advice and guidance, health promotion resources, bulk supply and distribution of naloxone, crisis services, access to health for overall and chronic needs, income support and housing.



# Thunderbird advocates for decriminalization

The *war on drugs* has not saved lives, reduced illegal drug markets, or ensured public safety. The criminalization of people who use drugs has no evidence of making a positive difference.

Decriminalization of simple possession and personal drug use is increasingly recognized as an urgently needed harm reduction response to COVID-19 and its disproportionate impact on people who use drugs. The pandemic has elevated the need for a different approach, because of harms to people and community safety with criminalization. Thunderbird has joined key partners, such as the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition to support decriminalization. There is more than one model of decriminalization. Initially, the model based on the right to health and social services was viewed as a progressive model. However, there are concerns that diversion is coercive and assumes that all people who use drugs are in need of treatment. People who use drugs advocate against coercive treatment through diversion.

Criminalizing drug use puts people's lives in danger because the threat of criminal prosecution forces people who use drugs to seek illegal and potentially contaminated drugs. The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police has called for decriminalization. The federal government itself introduced Bill-C22 in February to repeal mandatory minimum sentences for drug offences, and it includes a diversion program. While an evidence-based diversion program appears progressive, there is a lack of available programs and services to support diversion. Leaving police as the gatekeeper to these services does not ensure that First Nations People will fare any better than the current system which tends to incarcerate. Decriminalization in and of itself is a significant harm reduction measure that has potential to protect the health of people who use drugs, their dignity, human rights, and reduces the harm to families and communities.

## Safe Supply

Safe supply increases access to safer, pharmaceutical-grade alternatives to the contaminated illegal drug supply for people at risk of overdose.

Safe supply refers to a legal and regulated supply of drugs with mind/body altering properties that traditionally have been accessible only through the illicit drug market<sup>1</sup>. People who use drugs face concurrent public health emergencies from overdose, HIV, HepC, and Covid-19. Responses to people who use drugs must go beyond treatment to include:

- decriminalization without sanctions,
- providing a safe supply of pharmaceutical-grade drugs, and emergency safe-supply prescribing, and
- providing housing to people experiencing homelessness.<sup>2</sup>

Risk of overdose is not just an issue for urban populations. First Nations communities in rural and remote geographical areas are increasingly impacted by death due to contaminated illegal drug supplies while also experiencing a rise in sex trafficking and children being used as drug mules. A safe supply of pharmaceutical-grade alternatives is one harm reduction measure that can increase the safety of First Nations communities while preserving life for people who use drugs and do not want sobriety when no other options are available for mitigating food insecurity, addressing homelessness, justice issues, child welfare issues, and unresolved intergenerational trauma.

<sup>1</sup> Safe Supply: Concept Document, February 2019. Canadian Association of People Who Use Drugs. CAPUD.ca  
<sup>2</sup> Addressing the Syndemic of HIV, Hepatitis C, Overdose, and COVID-19 Among People Who Use Drugs: The Potential Roles for Decriminalization and Safe Supply  
 Matthew Bonn, Adam Palayew, Sofia Bartlett, Thomas D. Brothers, Natasha Touesnard, and Mark Tyndall.  
 Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs 2020 81:5, 556-560

# Developing Culture-based Resources on Methamphetamine Use

Thunderbird Partnership Foundation is developing culturally relevant resources to support First Nations in addressing the harms associated with methamphetamine use. This project is guided by a working group including First Nations Elders, subject matter experts and healthcare providers, and is funded by the Substance Use and Addictions Program of Health Canada.

Thunderbird will be working with First Nations treatment centres, governments, frontline workers and other partners. A literature review has been developed to understand the harms of methamphetamine use, providing evidence for treatment and prevention strategies that are necessary to support First Nations communities. In addition, Thunderbird has drafted a culture-based strategy for addressing methamphetamine use in First Nations communities. These resources and the process of developing them is informed by *Honouring our Strengths (HOS): A Renewed Framework to Address Substance Use Issues Among First Nations People in Canada* and the *First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum (FNMWC) framework*. The tools will be comprehensive and focus on mental wellness from a strength-based, culturally relevant lens. A vision of Hope, Belonging, Meaning, and Purpose will ground the outcomes in an Indigenous definition of wellness.

## Goals of this Project

1. Identify actions to support First Nations people in addressing the increased prevalence of harms associated with methamphetamines.
2. Collaborate with First Nations treatment centres to determine best practices including pharmacological support for secondary withdrawal issues.
3. Engage conversations with First Nations Elders using applied Indigenous research methodologies to identify culture-based approaches to fill the gaps in the literature.

The literature review and the culture-based strategies will serve as complementary documents to the findings from an environmental scan that will highlight practice-based strategies for methamphetamines within treatment centres and community-based programs.



# NNADAP Year in Review

The Addictions Information Management System (AMIS) has been designed to meet the needs of the 40 National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP) and the ten National Youth Solvent Abuse Program (NYSAP) treatment centres across Canada.

This year's data reflects a full year of delivering services during the COVID-19 pandemic, which reinforced treatment centres' ability to innovate and offer their services virtually, and through socially distanced in person, land-based treatment programs.

A total of 34 treatment centres (23 NNADAP and 10 NYSAP) actively used AMIS from April 1, 2020, through March 31, 2021. This infographic represents national aggregate data from AMIS of NNADAP treatment centres across Canada, as of May 25, 2021.

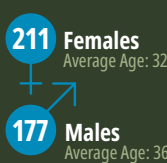
Total NNADAP Applicants: 812

Number of clients accessing multiple levels of care: 105



COMPARED TO 2019-2020 (due to the pandemic and treatment centre closures)

Total NNADAP Clients in Treatment: 388



Accessed Pre-treatment Services: 47% (183 clients) (N= 388)

Post-treatment Referrals: 38% (99 clients) (N=258)



# NYSAP Year in Review

The National Youth Solvent Abuse Program (NYSAP) has a network of ten treatment centres for Indigenous youth across Canada. All ten treatment centres are actively using the Addictions Management Information System (AMIS).

National aggregate data reflected in this infographic reflects treatment services provided from April 1, 2020 through March 31, 2021 and accessed from AMIS on May 25, 2021.

This year's data also reflects the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in treatment centres demonstrating their ability to innovate to continue to provide treatment services and supports virtually.

Total NYSAP Applicants: 207

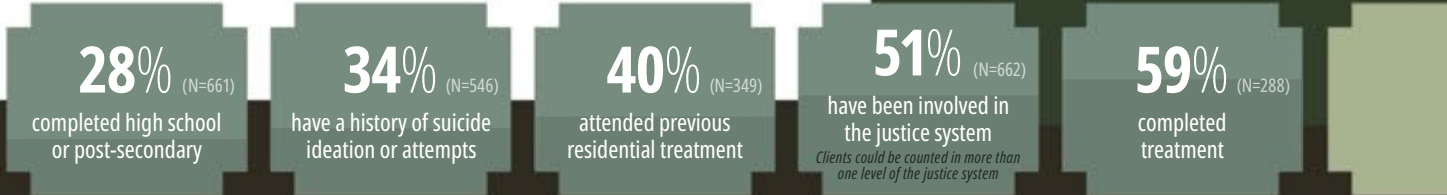
Number of clients accessing multiple levels of care: 35



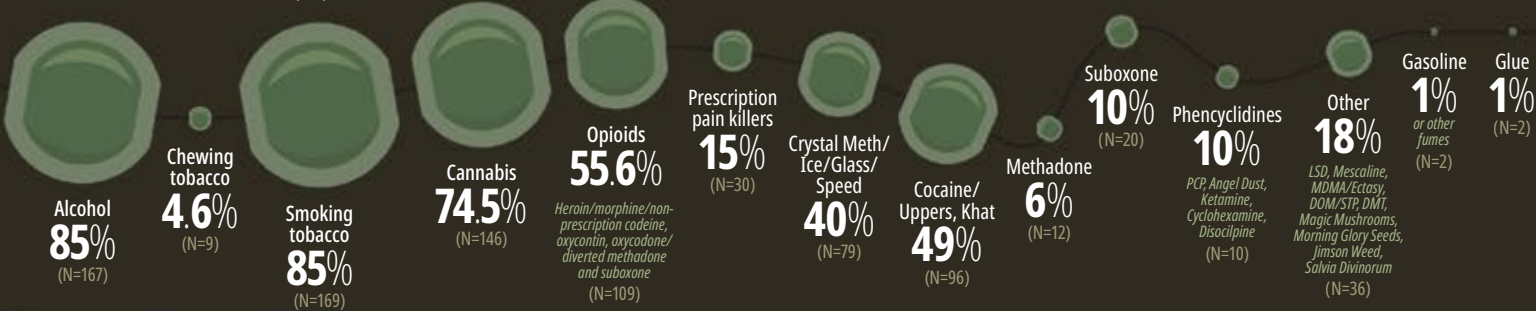
Total NYSAP Clients in Treatment: 77

Accessed Pre-treatment Services: 9% (7 clients) (N= 77)

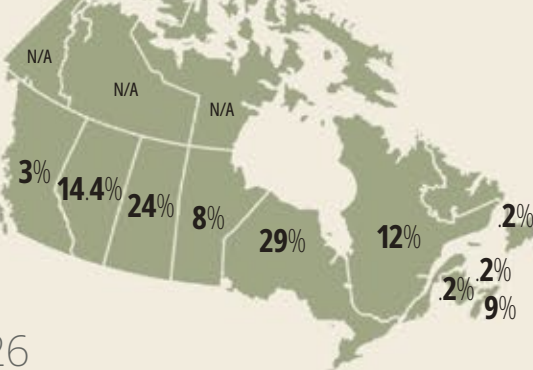
Post-treatment Referrals: 52% (22 clients) (N=42)



Substance Use (%) \*These statistics were gathered by adult clients using DUST-R (Full and Short Versions (n=196). Too few assessments were completed by youth in 2020-2021 to provide data for these substances.)

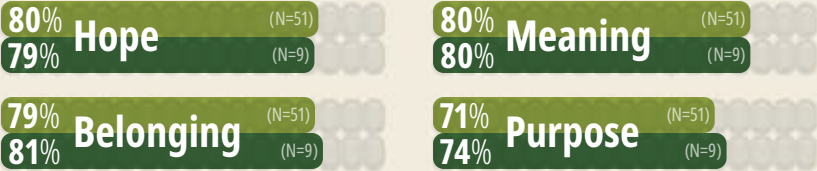


## Regional distribution of clients in NNADAP treatment



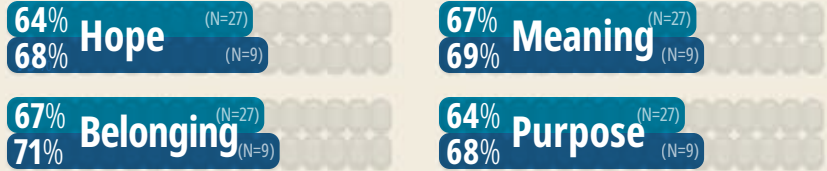
## Native Wellness Outcomes

The Native Wellness Assessment™ is the first instrument of its kind to psychometrically and statistically validate the effect of cultural interventions on wellness over time. The graph below represents a 0-3% increase in client wellness for Belonging, Meaning and Purpose, resulting from cultural interventions at NNADAP treatment centres across Canada. A 1% decrease in Hope was reported when comparing self and exit assessments. This is likely due to the sample size and the difference in the number of entry and exit assessments completed.

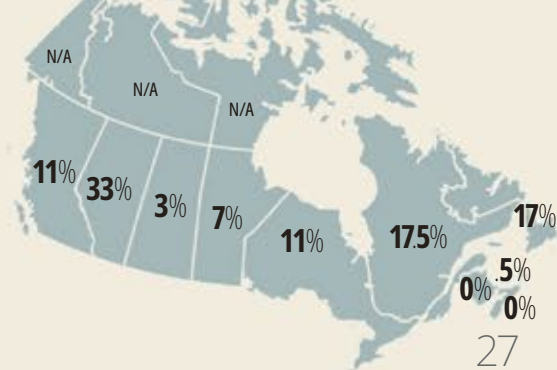


## Native Wellness Outcomes

The Native Wellness Assessment™ is an Indigenous knowledge-based instrument that demonstrates the effectiveness of First Nations culture as a health intervention in addressing substance use and mental health issues. Culture is the key to restoring and maintaining wellness. The chart shows client outcomes for improvement in Hope, Belonging, Meaning and Purpose. Overall, NYSAP clients are gaining 2 - 4% in wellness indicators throughout their program stay.



## Regional distribution of clients in NYSAP treatment

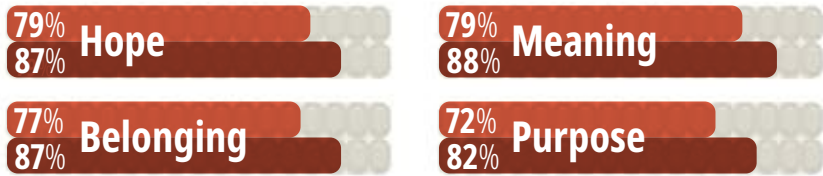




# COVID-19 Data – Virtual Services

This data was filtered to provide a snapshot of how cultural interventions used by treatment centres through outpatient/virtual services and outreach/virtual treatment services impacted wellness over time during COVID-19.

Outpatient/virtual services includes virtual treatment provided on a non-residential basis, usually in regularly scheduled sessions (i.e. 1-2 hours per week).



Outreach virtual treatment services\* include anyone who participated in the following virtual services through NNADAP and NYSAP treatment centres:

- Cultural Intervention
- Emergency Crisis Services
- Individual Counselling
- Prevention Webinars
- Substance/Life Skills Education
- Harm Reduction
- Group Counselling
- Opioid Replacement Treatment

Client wellness increased from 9 – 12% due to cultural interventions used during outreach virtual treatment services at NNADAP and NYSAP treatment centres across Canada.



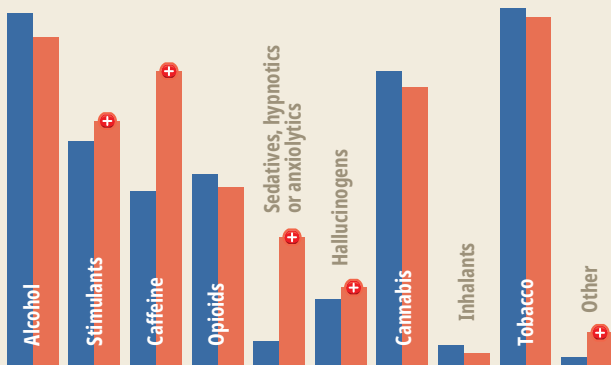
\* Outreach virtual services were delivered using virtual platforms such as: live streaming (Facebook/other), instant messaging/text support, audio/video platforms (i.e. Google Classroom, Zoom, or Microsoft Teams).

## Pre and Post COVID-19 Substance Use Statistics

The following section provides a comparison of substance use prior to COVID-19 and during COVID-19. The data was gathered using the Drug Use Screening Inventory (DUSI-R).

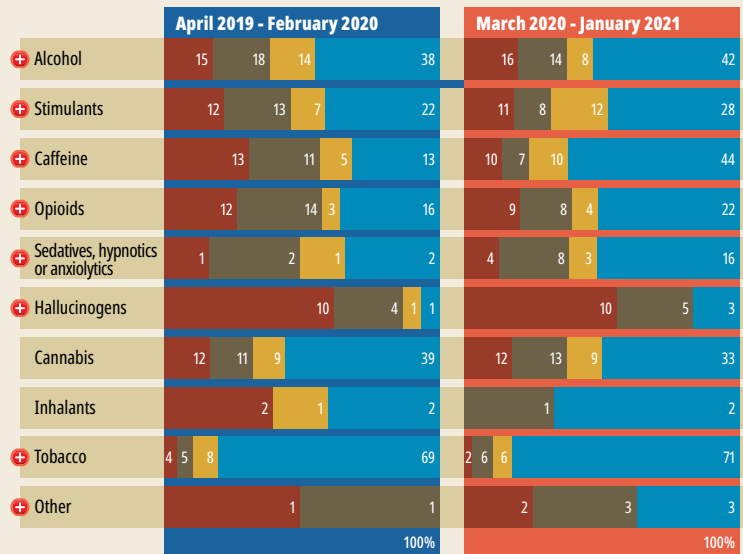
It is important to note that culture-based supports and interventions, land-based programming, virtual supports and family and community supports were protective factors identified for substance use during the pandemic and can be used to develop prevention strategies and public health education.

Pre- COVID-19: April 2019 – Feb 2020  
During COVID-19: March 2020 – January 2021



## Substance Use Frequency During COVID-19

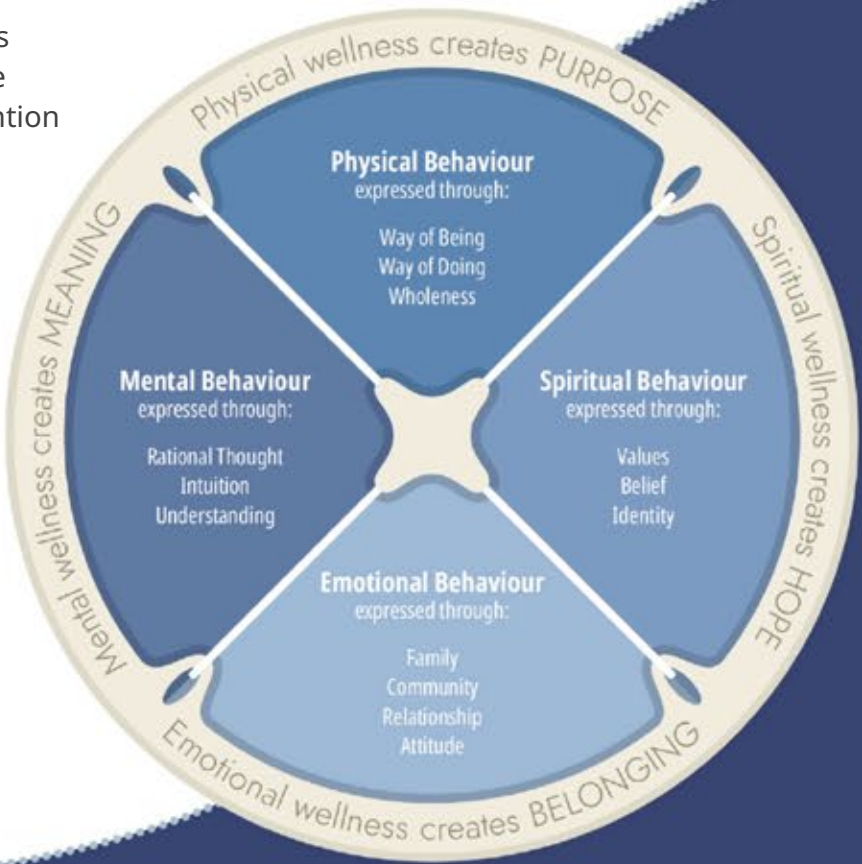
Substance use frequencies were higher during the pandemic compared to pre-pandemic when comparing substances used more than 20 times per month. The substance use frequencies increased for the following: alcohol (4%), tobacco (2%), stimulants (6%), opioids (6%), sedatives, hypnotics and anti-anxiety medication (14%) and hallucinogens (Phencyclidines, ketamine, MDMA/ecstasy, LSD, magic mushrooms, salvia divinorum, DOM/STP) (2%). A 31% increase in caffeine was reported during the pandemic, which can affect sleep patterns.



# NNADAP/NYSAP Treatment Centres Using the Native Wellness Assessment (NWA™)

The Native Wellness Assessment (NWA™) is the first assessment tool that validates the effect of Indigenous culture as an intervention in substance use treatment over time.

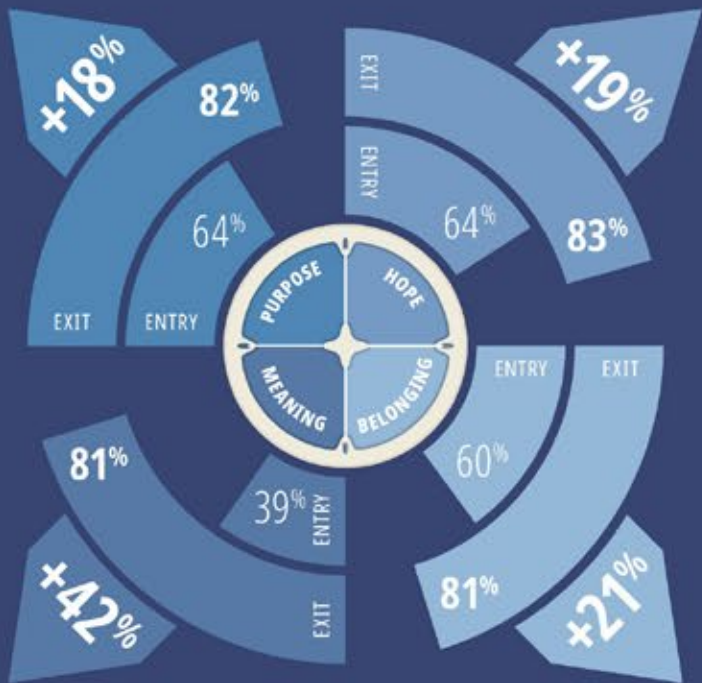
NNADAP/NYSAP treatment centres which have implemented the land-based program during COVID-19 have used the NWA™ to measure the impact of land connection on people's wellness as an expressed connection to Hope, Belonging, Meaning and Purpose. The numbers show people experienced an increase in wellness across all four outcomes: Hope by 19%, Belonging by 21%, Meaning by 42% and Purpose by 18%. Safe protocols such as personal protective equipment, mental health support, land-based activities (fishing, planting, gardening) were in place. There is a tangible improvement over the three land-based activities people participated in throughout the program. A connection to the land is essential for a secure sense of Belonging and sets the foundation for unconditional love by the Creator.



## Balance in Wellness Across Time Through Land-based Practices During COVID-19

March 2020 – April 2021

The following graph shows the improvement in wellness people expressed when they first entered treatment and when they exited treatment. Wellness is measured through their connection to and new understanding of Hope, Belonging, Meaning and Purpose in their lives.



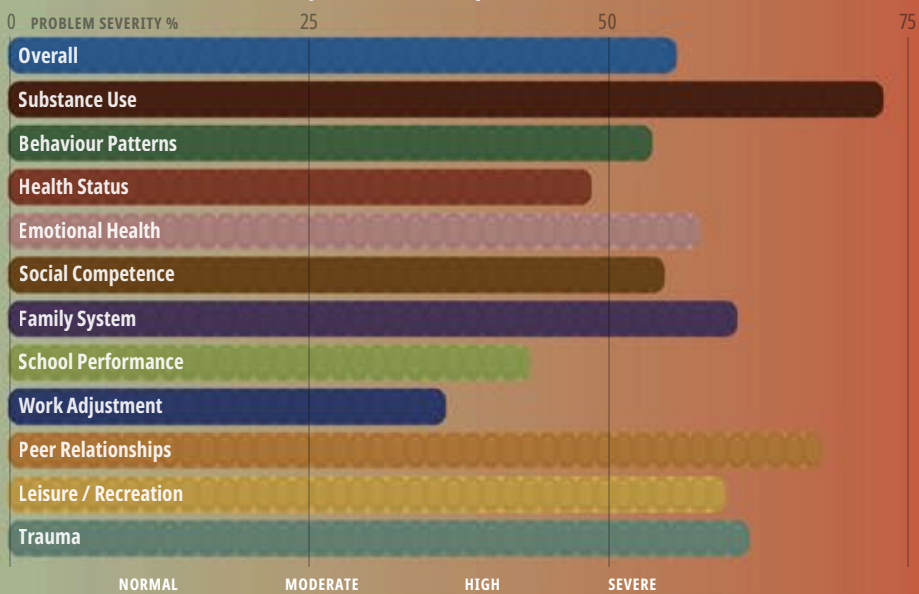


# Addiction Management Information System (AMIS)

Thunderbird implements the Addiction Management Information System (AMIS) database to collect evidence of stories, experiences, and strengths of National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP) and National Youth Solvent Abuse Program (NYSAP) treatment centres across Canada.

The AMIS database collects information from Drug Use Screening Inventory – Revised (DUSI-R) and NWA™ assessment tools. The DUSI-R is a screening and assessment tool that quantifies the severity of substance use and mental health across various areas or domains. Overall, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of the areas fell into the severe and high score range. The most severe domains included substance use (72%), family system (60%), peer relationships (67%), and trauma (61%).

Adult Absolute Problem Density: March 2020 - April 2021



Treatment centres have confronted several challenges during COVID-19 such as closure of their facilities, early discharge of clients from treatment, and maintaining and improving funds to help community, front-line workers and clients who use substances. However, treatment centres have demonstrated their strength to innovate by quickly developing alternative strategies to provide services during this time such as, established crisis phone lines, virtual counselling support, virtual programming, reallocating funds and food security for isolated communities.

The importance of incorporating Indigenous Knowledge and land-based activities as an intervention to improve the mental health and wellness of Indigenous People is known. It was reported that 20% of Indigenous People recognized the power of land-based strategies as a protective factor for substance use. Since the pandemic began in 2020, treatment centres from different provinces have developed strategies to reinforce land-based practices as a strategy to promote a connection with the land and improve wellness in clients.

# Update on First Nations Guidelines for Addressing Opioid and Methamphetamine Use

The First Nations guidelines for addressing opioid and methamphetamine use intend to provide evidence-based support to First Nations communities and treatment centres in developing a response to the on-going crisis impacting communities.

This project is guided by a national working group of First Nations Elders, First Nations treatment centre representatives, nurse practitioners, Assembly of First Nations representatives, community-based workforce, healthcare providers, and others with expert knowledge surrounding Indigenous wellness and substance use.

The guidelines aim to do the following

- 1. Promote culture as a foundation for treatment by drawing on First Nation's cultural practices to provide clients with quality care.
- 2. Identify a continuum of care that is trauma informed, and recognizes the role of the social determinants of health.
- 3. Build a thriving and sustainable workforce and highlight wise practices for the long-term success of clients.
- 4. Inform the development of knowledge translation tools to support all communities, including those experiencing crisis.

The Covid-19 pandemic has created a valuable learning opportunity to share knowledge on how treatment centres have adapted services to meet the needs of those who use opioids and methamphetamines. The guidelines have been updated to reflect this new reality with information that can be useful for communities and treatment centres navigating through the pandemic.

The next phase for this project includes the co-development of knowledge translation tools led by the working group, and piloting the guidelines in various communities and/or treatment centres. Thunderbird Partnership Foundation will continue to share the learnings from the guidelines in conferences, workshops and webinars throughout 2021-2022.



# Mental Wellness Workforce Survey Results

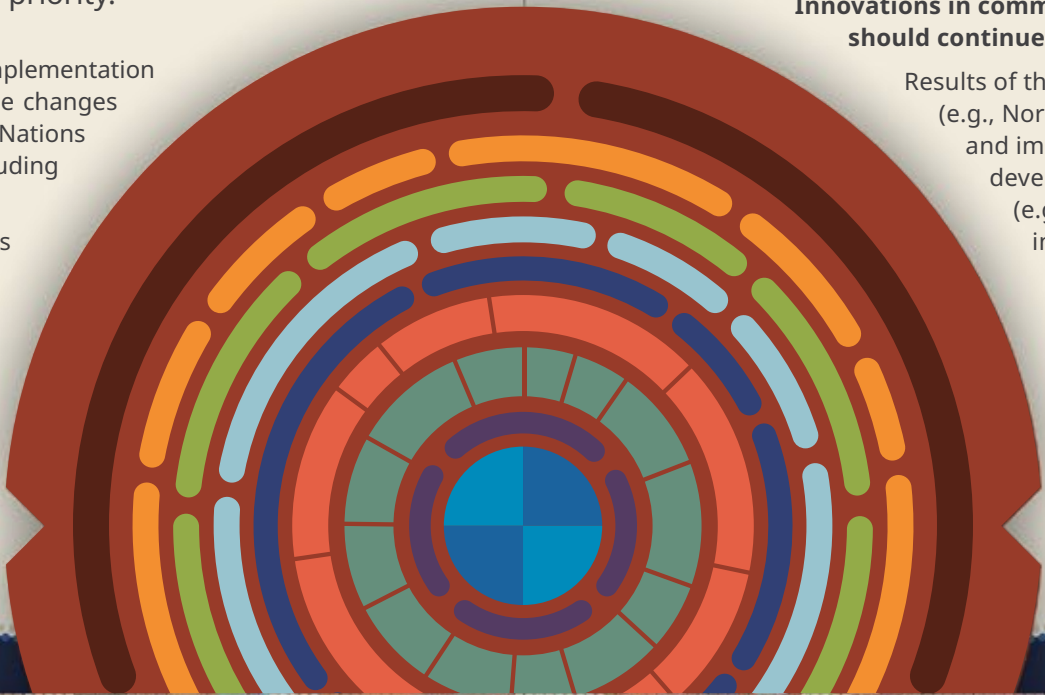


The Mental Wellness Workforce survey results show how the COVID-19 pandemic has increased pre-existing inequities in First Nations communities, intensifying the need to have mental health and addictions supports as a priority.

The survey was informed by the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum (FNMWC) Implementation Team Secretariat\*. Early on in the pandemic, the Secretariat wanted to understand the changes and impacts COVID-19 was having on mental wellness at the workforce level within First Nations communities, families, and individuals. Representatives from various organizations, including those led by youth or those that serve youth, also supported survey development.

The survey covers themes around changes in mental health outcomes and mental wellness services, concerns relating to reopening, and youth involvement in pandemic efforts, from the perspective of the mental wellness workforce supporting First Nations communities during the pandemic.

Initial results represent responses from frontline and leadership workforce members supporting First Nations communities in mental health, substance use, and general health. The responses were gathered between August and November 2020.



Overall, the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing inequities in First Nations communities resulting in increased suicide, overdose, and violence, and has further intensified a need to have mental wellness and addictions supports as a priority through a comprehensive approach.

**Innovations in communities need to be celebrated and community strengths should continue to be engaged in the pandemic response moving forward.**

Results of this survey have been shared with various committees (e.g., Northern Public Health Working Group on Mental Wellness) and implemented in reporting (internal), policy (e.g., support in developing pandemic planning and response), and advocacy (e.g., support/evidence for treatment centres and other groups in funding proposals) efforts supported by Thunderbird.

*\* Thunderbird and First Peoples Wellness Circle co-chair the Secretariat with additional members from the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), First Nations Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB), Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs (CIRNA), and since the onset of the pandemic youth organizations, including We Matter and Canadian Roots Exchange (CRE).*

## Changes in Mental Health Outcomes

- A **significant increase** in stress or anxiety related to public health measures within communities, families, and individuals.
- **Noticeable increases** in stress or anxiety specific to COVID-19; stress around access to food, clothing, shelter, lack of safe space; low mood or depression; substance use; violence, abuse, or neglect; as well as financial stress, unemployment, or inability to meet basic needs.
- The increases in stress, anxiety, depression, violence, substance use, and unemployment are all supported by data collected from Thunderbird's First Nations Opioids and Methamphetamines Survey.

## Changes in Mental Wellness Services

- **Noticeable decreases** in overall access to health and social support services.
- **Significant increase** in the need for better connectivity and/or devices to support virtual approaches.
- **Noticeable increase** in the need for information around mental wellness.
- **No change** was reported in access to mental wellness services – this is a result of respondents claiming change at polar ends where significant increase, significant decrease, and no change were all equally reported suggesting influence of context specific factors.
- **Noticeable increases** were reported for the following: partnerships to support families and communities; use of virtual approaches to telehealth; innovation in communities; and participation in land-based activities and cultural events.

## Identified Mental Health and Health Concerns

The following were reported by more than 70% of respondents as being a concern related to mental health and health, as communities start to reopen (note this was prior to the second and third wave):

- Anxiety or fear around reopening.
- Being able to safely attend ceremonies and community events.
- Long-lasting financial stress, unemployment, inability to meet basic needs.
- A resurgence of cases.
- Anxiety around being in groups and seeing friends and family.
- Increases in violence, abuse, and neglect.

## Identified Concerns Related to Mental Wellness Services

The following were reported by more than 70% of respondents as being a concern related to mental wellness services as communities start to reopen (note this was prior to the second and third wave):

- Access to substance use treatment.
- Access to mental wellness services.
- Capacity to address long waitlist/backlog.
- Supports for youth, children, families, and Elders.
- Lack of support for populations at greater risk for mental health issues.

## Youth Involvement in the Response to COVID-19

- More than half of survey respondents were not aware of how youth had been involved in the response to COVID-19, and more than one third stated they had not been involved in the response to COVID-19.
- Of those aware, the following areas of involvement were mentioned: youth-specific resources, projects, and supports; youth-led initiatives and projects; community initiatives; volunteer opportunities.



# Database Security and Ethics



Thunderbird is developing a new data collection, storage, and database management system.

The database system will be a secured source for all the raw data Thunderbird is collecting from surveys and assessment tools. It will be used as a tool to assist First Nations communities so they have the capacity to enter their own data into a secured database. This provides First Nations communities full ownership and control over their data. The database highlights Thunderbird's commitment to the principles of OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession).

Thunderbird is also establishing a Research Ethics Board (REB) to support the equitable use and dissemination of First Nation's data. As the theme of this annual report is about Belonging, a REB creates a sense of interconnection between members, researchers and communities to support research priorities that benefit First Nations across the country. We envision the REB to include Elders and Knowledge Holders, community members, academic partners, Thunderbird staff and other diverse members. The REB will ensure Thunderbird is meeting important OCAP principles that hold us accountable to First Nations communities. Thunderbird's REB will align research principles with a two-eyed seeing approach that leads with Indigenous worldviews on knowing and being, in addition to Western methodologies on research ethics.

With an internal mechanism in place, the REB will support a policy with the following principles:



We look forward to establishing a working group and beginning the process of developing Thunderbird's Research Ethics Board this year.

# Treatment Centre Conference Calls Create Support and Connections



At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Thunderbird began hosting weekly conference calls with treatment centre directors.

A year later, meetings continue twice each month through video conferencing and have expanded to include not only directors, but also other treatment centre staff, outreach/intake staff, community organizations, and regional First Nations and Inuit Health Branch partners. This meeting continues to be a venue for peer-to-peer support, education, and pandemic response and sharing of virtual treatment services and other resources.

What we have noticed is that while they are happening during a pandemic, these meetings have been a time to connect and re-connect, to support mental wellness, and to inspire innovation in service delivery. Participants have expressed that they look forward to the meetings and especially the sharing circle, shared solutions, information updates and resources. Participants appreciate the support they feel from one another; they encourage and pray for one another in times of hardship, and they applaud one another in times of success. In fact the number of treatment centres offering virtual services has steadily increased throughout the pandemic.

The meetings are structured to respond to the identified needs of participants. The forward agenda includes discussions on vaccines and infection control, best practices for pandemic planning and response, workforce mental wellness, virtual programming, harm reduction, wage parity, and more.

As a gesture of mental wellness care for the workforce, a care package was sent to participants including a number of Thunderbird resources, medicine and a smudge kit, and a bundle of natural tobacco.



2020/21



# Cannabis Survey Updated

The Indigenous Community Cannabis Survey was initially developed to support community preparation for cannabis legalization and has since been updated to reflect post-legalization and to understand cannabis use during the COVID-19 pandemic.



The survey gathers both adult (18+), and youth perspectives (12-17) regarding cannabis use within First Nations communities. The survey is used to produce public health information specific to the needs of First Nations communities, with attention to youth, adults, parents, and people involved with child welfare, criminal justice and the education system.

Since September 2020, Thunderbird Partnership Foundation has collected nearly 700 cannabis surveys (both adult and youth versions). The results highlight many community strengths and opportunities as well as potential areas for further advocacy surrounding systemic inequities in justice and health outcomes.

## Cannabis Survey Snapshot

1. Participants identified four areas of need specific to cannabis: more community education (51% of participants), enhanced mental wellness support (27%), increased access to community support and programs (27%), and access to cultural and traditional practices (25%) [Figure 1].
2. Most participants know cannabis can be used for harm reduction, such as a replacement for opioids for pain management, a safe alternative to other substances, or to manage withdrawal symptoms [Figure 2].
3. Because of COVID-19, participants have reported using cannabis more often than before or they started using because of the pandemic, while citing stress, anxiety, the need to get high, and dealing with trauma among reasons for using [Figure 3].

The Indigenous Community Cannabis Survey also collects information on where community members are obtaining cannabis. Gathering this information can be used to better understand how current cannabis legislation impacts First Nations people as well as to identify inequities that may result from these policies.

Throughout 2021, the surveys will be further promoted. The survey takes less than 15 minutes to complete, it is anonymous, and available in both hard copy and electronic versions. To participate online, click on the adult or youth QR codes. To receive hard copies of the cannabis survey, contact [research@thunderbirdpf.org](mailto:research@thunderbirdpf.org).



### Youth Module

[ThunderbirdPF.org/  
FNCannabisSurvey\\_Youth\\_2020](https://thunderbirdpf.org/FNCannabisSurvey_Youth_2020)



### Adult Module

[ThunderbirdPF.org/  
FNCannabisSurvey\\_Adult\\_2020](https://thunderbirdpf.org/FNCannabisSurvey_Adult_2020)

FIGURE 1  
Preferred strategies to provide information about cannabis



FIGURE 2  
Participants' knowledge of medical cannabis as a safe alternative

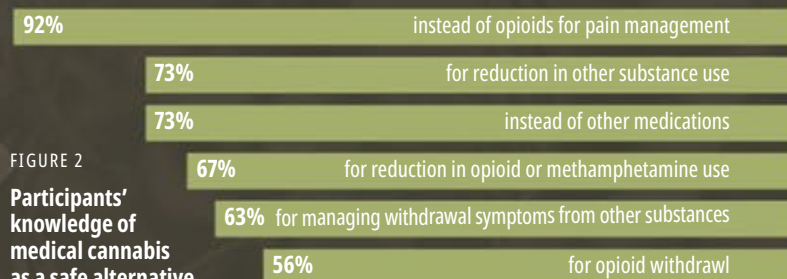


FIGURE 3  
Participant consumption of cannabis during COVID-19



During COVID-19, the majority of participants (40%) who consume cannabis are using more often than before and 20% started using it during this time.



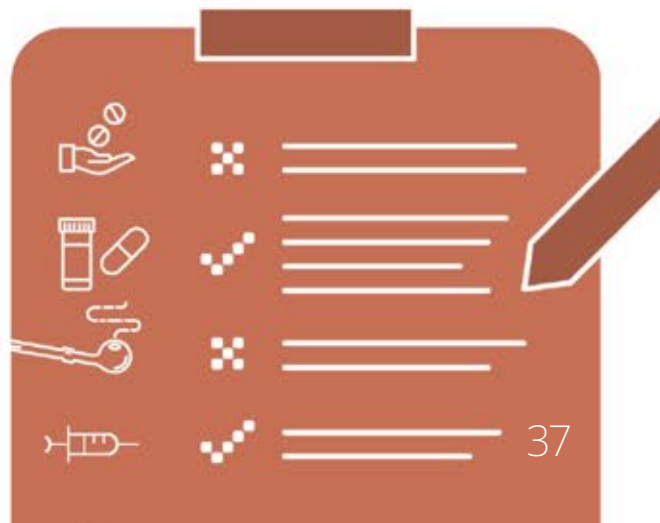
## Responding to Community Needs with Rapid Development of Digital Tools

How to collect information and give out rewards but still maintain participant's privacy?

In mid-January 2021, the Northern Inter-tribal Health Authority (NITHA) contacted Thunderbird because they wanted to use the First Nations Opioid and Methamphetamine Survey to better understand substance use in their four member communities and also provide small rewards for participants. They needed support to solve a problem. Because the surveys are anonymous, the data collected to distribute rewards had to exist in a separate system to ensure the participant's privacy.

The result to this quandary was a tool developed by Thunderbird- a custom mini-app tailored to the community's needs. The mini-app uses the latest technology and security practices to ensure privacy.

If your community could use a similar tool, contact us for more information.





# Gathering Evidence to Tell Our Story

The Thunderbird Partnership Foundation has increased efforts to gather strong and accurate evidence on First Nations communities around substance use, mental wellness, community challenges and strengths of First Nations people.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added additional hardships and exacerbated the existing inequities in many First Nations communities. Regardless, many First Nations people have the tenacity, resilience, adaptability, and unity to care for and preserve the integrity of their communities and families.

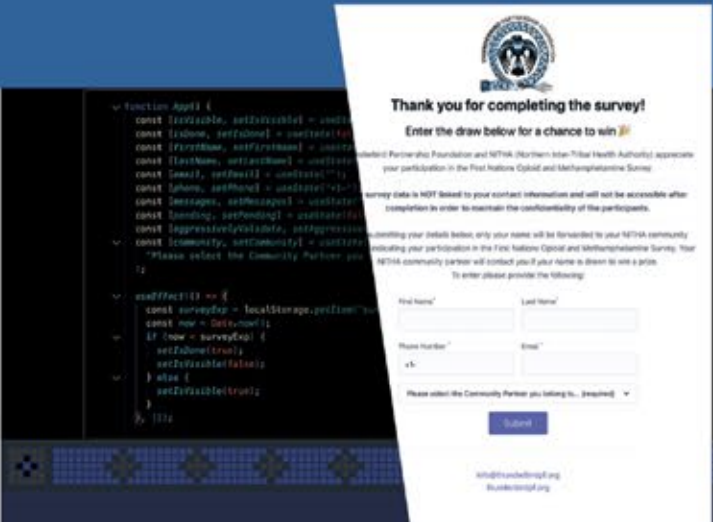
Data from the First Nations Opioid and Methamphetamine Survey, Addictions Management Information System (AMIS) and the Native Wellness Assessment (NWA™) tell us strong stories during this challenging time.

## The First Nations Opioid and Methamphetamine Survey

The opioid and methamphetamine surveys collect data to better understand the impacts of opioids, methamphetamines, crisis management and available community support. This is a three-year project funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) that wraps up in March 2022. To date, Thunderbird has collected 996 completed adult and youth surveys through engagement with First Nations communities, organizations, and treatment centres across the country.

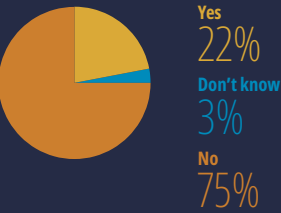
A total of 683 hard copies and 313 electronic surveys have been collected. The survey is available in English and French.

The survey collected data on harm reduction strategies to respond to the needs of people who may be at risk and to support further community understanding about how they can provide care. Preliminary data shows communities believe substance use education (71%), opioid overdose and poisoning prevention education (64%) and the use of naloxone/Narcan kits (64%) are essential and effective strategies to help reduce the risk of harm in communities. In terms of accessibility, only 44% of participants have access to substance use education, opioid overdose, and poisoning prevention education (24%) and naloxone/Narcan kits (38%). The numbers also show 13% of youth have access to and education about the use of a naloxone/Narcan kit.

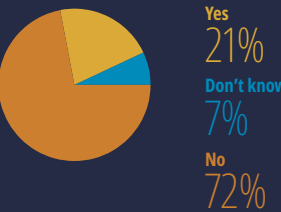


### Youth Knowledge of naloxone/Narcan Kit

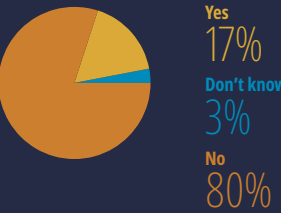
Knowledge of naloxone/Narcan kit



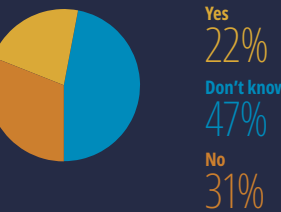
Knowledge of what to do in opioid overdose



Knowledge of how to use naloxone/Narcan kit



Availability of naloxone/Narcan kit in the community



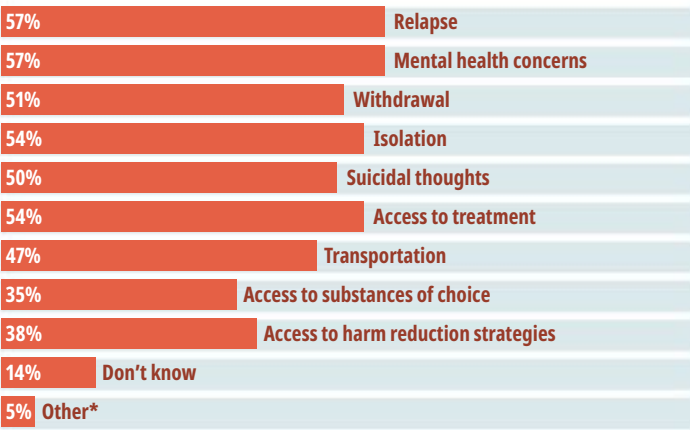
## COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted the health and well-being of First Nations People. We have seen a surge in overdoses and received reports of increased mental wellness challenges experienced by Indigenous Peoples across Canada. The First Nations Opioid and Methamphetamine Survey now includes a section specific to the pandemic to understand the impact it is having on people and communities.

The pandemic has identified the strengths and resiliencies that First Nations People have. Communities have come together to provide support while ensuring that everyone is safe. Many communities and treatment centres have created virtual programming to ensure that people who use substances still have access to the services they need.

The graph below identifies community challenges that people who use substances may experience during the pandemic. The preliminary data shows the majority of participants (57%), feel that people who use substances experience relapse and/or mental health challenges. Some of the other challenges include withdrawal, isolation, and access to treatment.

### Challenges due to COVID-19 for people who use substances



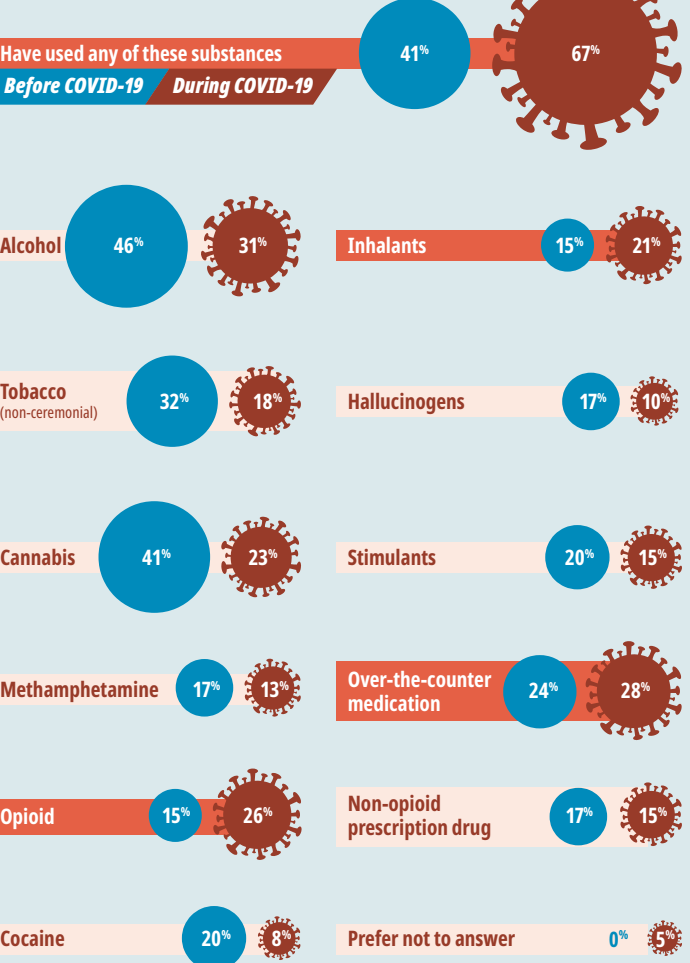
The survey also examines the impacts COVID-19 has had on the community (adult data). Sixty-four percent of participants believe it has caused people to experience depression and anxiety, 43% of participants believe that there has been an increase in substance use during the pandemic and 44% of participants believe it has increased unemployment. Of the youth participants that completed the survey, 50% believe people are experiencing depression and anxiety due to the pandemic. Thirty-five percent of participants believe people are experiencing a lack of food and 28% believe there has been an increase in domestic violence.

## Substance Use

The graph below looks at substance use among youth before and during COVID-19. According to the preliminary data, substance use among youth during the pandemic increased. Of these substances there was an increase in the use of opioids, inhalants and over the counter medication.

The survey also examines substance use among adults before and during COVID 19. The data shows that there was an increase in substance use during the pandemic among adults with an increase in alcohol, methamphetamines, opioids, stimulants, and non-opioid prescription drug use.

### Substance use among youth before and during COVID-19





# Supporting French Access to Thunderbird Resources

Thunderbird continues to demonstrate its commitment to ensuring all of its resources are equally accessible to stakeholders in both official languages.

We have spent the last fiscal year going back to translate older resources that had only been available in English or still had English components, such as graphs, and diagrams. The new Thunderbird Wellness app, and notes from the bi-weekly communications with First Nations treatment centres are also available in both English and French. This work continues into 2021-2022.

New French versions of existing resources include Early Identification and Brief Intervention; Family Members Caregivers Guidebook; Intake Referral, Discharge, and Aftercare Planning; Developing a “Basket of Mental Health & Addiction Screening and Assessment Tools.”

Thunderbird’s main website – [thunderbirdpf.org](http://thunderbirdpf.org) – will be undergoing a refresh this fiscal which includes a French language update. The organization’s [cultureforlife.ca](http://cultureforlife.ca) and [wisepactices.ca](http://wisepactices.ca) websites which support youth and life promotion are also available in both languages.

Changes for next fiscal include a French language review and update to Thunderbird’s new training platforms, the Community of Practice and Community Wellness Hubs. This work is supported by a new translator who will engage with French speaking training participants through virtual forums.



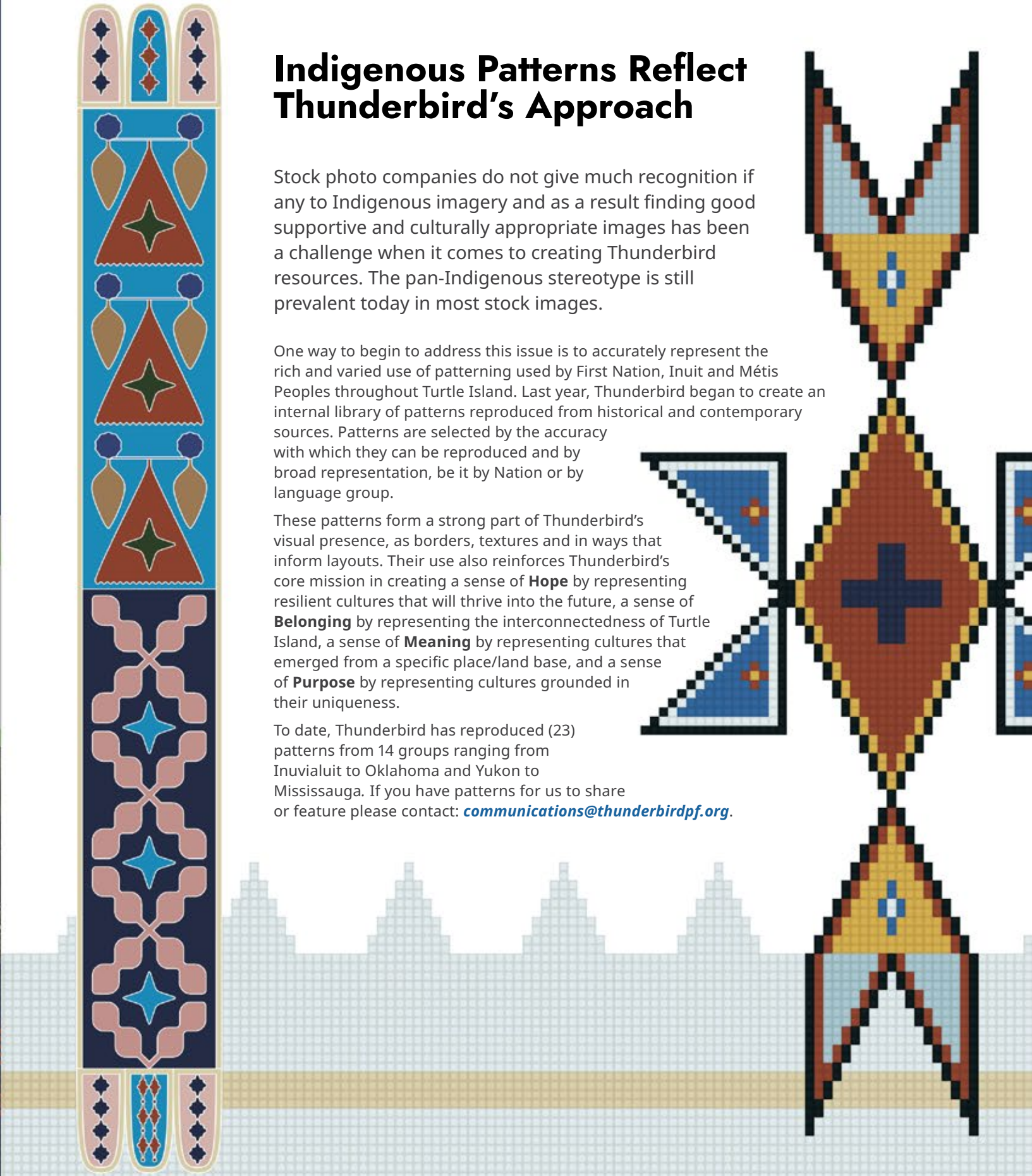
# Indigenous Patterns Reflect Thunderbird’s Approach

Stock photo companies do not give much recognition if any to Indigenous imagery and as a result finding good supportive and culturally appropriate images has been a challenge when it comes to creating Thunderbird resources. The pan-Indigenous stereotype is still prevalent today in most stock images.

One way to begin to address this issue is to accurately represent the rich and varied use of patterning used by First Nation, Inuit and Métis Peoples throughout Turtle Island. Last year, Thunderbird began to create an internal library of patterns reproduced from historical and contemporary sources. Patterns are selected by the accuracy with which they can be reproduced and by broad representation, be it by Nation or by language group.

These patterns form a strong part of Thunderbird’s visual presence, as borders, textures and in ways that inform layouts. Their use also reinforces Thunderbird’s core mission in creating a sense of **Hope** by representing resilient cultures that will thrive into the future, a sense of **Belonging** by representing the interconnectedness of Turtle Island, a sense of **Meaning** by representing cultures that emerged from a specific place/land base, and a sense of **Purpose** by representing cultures grounded in their uniqueness.

To date, Thunderbird has reproduced (23) patterns from 14 groups ranging from Inuvialuit to Oklahoma and Yukon to Mississauga. If you have patterns for us to share or feature please contact: [communications@thunderbirdpf.org](mailto:communications@thunderbirdpf.org).





Conferences/Events

|  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| APRIL 22, 2020<br>COVID-19 Public Health Working Group on Isolated and Remote Communities Mental Wellness                | APRIL 29, 2020<br>Chiefs of Ontario, Health Directors Town Hall Alcohol  | MAY 21, 2020<br>First Nations Health Managers Association COVID-19 Virtual Town Hall   | MAY 27, 2020<br>ISC-FNIHB Saskatchewan Region Mental Wellness and COVID-19  |
| MAY 28, 2020<br>Pan American Health Organization Advisory Group Cultural Considerations in COVID-19 Communication        | JUNE 11, 2020<br>First Nations Health Managers Association COVID-19 Virtual Town Hall  | JUNE 18, 2020<br>First Nations Health Managers Association COVID-19 Virtual Town Hall  | JUNE 18, 2020<br>Manitoba Radio Show Harm Reduction   |
| JUNE 25, 2020<br>Anishinabek Nation Mental Wellness  | JULY 24, 2020<br>First Peoples Wellness Circle Promoting Wellness and Providing Support During COVID-19: Harm Reduction                                  | AUGUST 13, 2020<br>Registered Nurses Association of Ontario First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum  | SEPTEMBER 24, 2020<br>First Nations Health Managers Association COVID-19 Virtual Town Hall (Virtual Training; CoP; Community Wellness Hub)  |
| OCTOBER 15, 2020<br>Public Health 2020   Plenary 3 Population Mental Wellness  | OCTOBER 22, 2020<br>First Nations Health Managers Association COVID-19 Virtual Town Hall   | OCTOBER 22, 2020<br>Manitoba First Nations Health and Social Secretariat, Overview, and Introduction to Epigenetic Training  | NOVEMBER 12, 2020<br>Shkaabe Makwa Virtual Launch and Keynote   |
| NOVEMBER 30, 2020<br>Patient Safety Summit Mental Health Panel   | DECEMBER 5, 2020<br>Indigenous Health Conference Culture as Foundation; Native Wellness Assessment   | JANUARY 14, 2021<br>First Nations Health Managers Association COVID-19 Virtual Town Hall   | JANUARY 15, 2021<br>Culturally Safe Research Supporting the Wellbeing of First Nations Children and Youth in FEHNCY   |
| JANUARY 20, 2021<br>Helping the Helper Resources and Tools to Support Resilience and Mental Health for Front-End Workers | JANUARY 20, 2021<br>Anishinabek Nation Health Conference Keynote address First Nation Resilience, Hope towards Healing Trauma and Strengthening Wellness | JANUARY 20, 2021<br>Anishinabek Nation Health Conference Workshop: Indigenous Epigenetics  | JANUARY 26, 2021<br>Ahkameyimok Podcast with National Chief Belgarde  |
| JANUARY 28, 2021<br>World Indigenous Suicide Prevention Webinar Series Honouring Our Strengths in Life Promotion         | FEBRUARY 12, 2021<br>Shkaabe Makwa (CAMH) Mental Health Basket of Tools Conference Native Wellness Assessment™   | FEBRUARY 18, 2021<br>First Nations National Water Symposium Mental Wellness  | FEBRUARY 23-25, 2021<br>Chiefs of Ontario, 15th Annual Health Forum Drug Replacement Therapy- Crisis Response, First Nations Opioid and Methamphetamine Survey, The Native Wellness Assessment: Measuring the effect of culture on wellness during Covid-19 & Virtual Tradeshow Booth |
| MARCH 2, 2021<br>Registered Nurses Association of Ontario and Chiefs of Ontario Indigenous Focused Wellness Webinar      | MARCH 25, 2021<br>First Nations Health Managers Association COVID-19 Virtual Town Hall   | MARCH 25, 2021<br>Assembly of First Nations National Forum on First Nations Income Assistance First Nation Cultural Strengths: Roots of Resilience for Healing Trauma and Building Worker Wellness | MARCH 30, 2021<br>Chiefs of Ontario Youth Wellness Forum Youth Covid Conversations: Supporting Mental Wellness  |

Thunderbird Acquires Additional Office Space

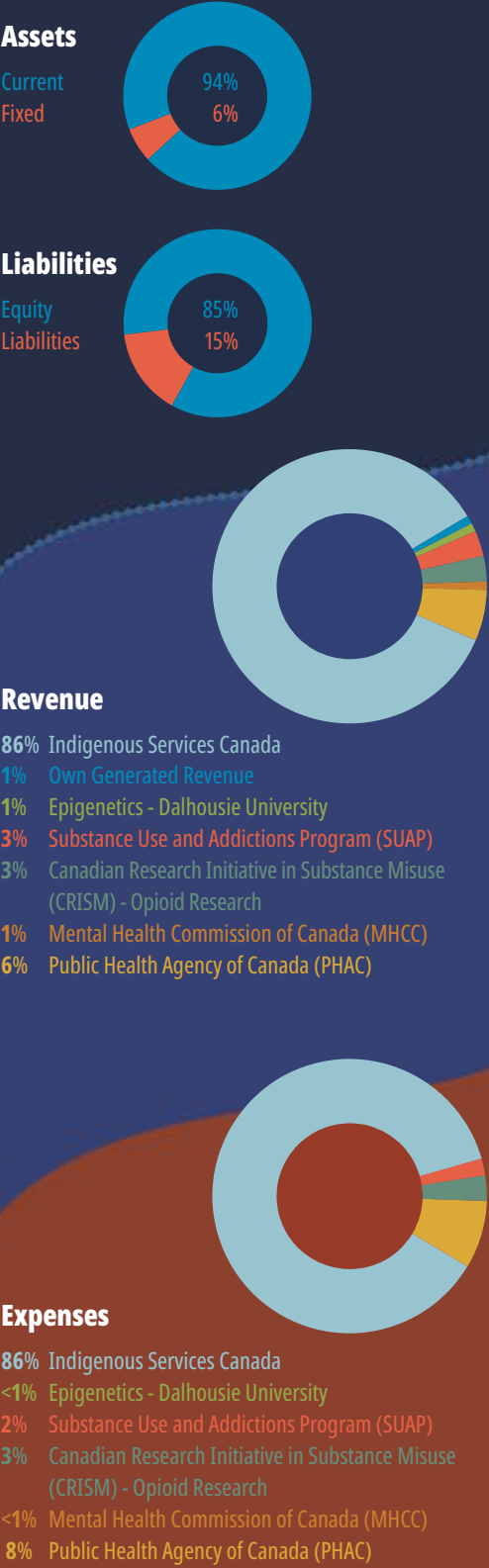
Thunderbird Partnership Foundation expanded its London, Ontario office space this year to accommodate the organization’s accelerated growth. The additional office space is located in the same building, just next door to its existing London offices.

The renovations to the new space added an additional meeting room with an audio/visual function, two additional offices and a larger resource room to handle Thunderbird’s growing inventory needs. This expansion has allowed all resource materials to be moved from the head office at Eelūnaapéewi Lahkéewiit (Delaware Nation at Moraviantown), near Bothwell, Ontario.

The additional meeting room and audio/visual capacity increases the capacity of Thunderbird to deliver training programs, provide webinars and manage meetings through virtual technology. Because of the travel restrictions over the past year due to COVID-19, funding became available to cover the cost of renovations.



Finance Report 2020-2021







[thunderbirdpf.org](http://thunderbirdpf.org)