



Communication Brief

Date: October 3, 2025

Topic: Developing an *Honouring Our Strengths: A Renewed Framework to Address Substance Use Issues Amongst First Nations People in Canada* second edition.

Prepared for:

Thunderbird stakeholders: First Nations treatment centre and community-based substance use workforce, First Nations mental wellness workforce, First Nations governments, First Nations community leadership and members, First Nations individuals, families and communities.

Thunderbird partners: First Peoples Wellness Circle, Youth Substance Addiction Committee, Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Health Managers, Regional health and social services, Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Indigenous Services Canada, Health Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada, Public Safety, Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, Pan-Canadian health organizations, Provincial and Territorial governments, Non-governmental organizations, professional associations, and research institutes.

Background:

[*Honouring Our Strengths: A Renewed Framework to Address Substance Use Issues Amongst First Nations People in Canada*](#) (2011) was developed through a collaborative, nation-wide approach grounded in First Nations leadership and partnership. The process was led by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation (NNAPF), now called Thunderbird Partnership Foundation, and Health Canada. It was guided by the First Nations Addictions Advisory Committee, which included Elders, Knowledge Keepers, health professionals, researchers, and community representatives. The Framework is a tool to describe, strengthen, and advocate for a culturally grounded full continuum of care to prevent and treat substance use challenges.

Since *Honouring Our Strengths* was published in 2011, much has changed. There is a need to update the *Honouring Our Strengths* framework to address the *drug crisis* that has developed due to the toxic drug supply as well as ongoing inequities created through health and social policies. Additional reasons to develop a second edition of *Honouring Our Strengths* include: ensuring it reflects current experiences; updating the language and the statistics, basing the content on the most recent knowledge, evidence and practices; strengthening culture as foundation and wholistic care that includes spirit centred care; and updating the renewal opportunities.



Current Situation:

Thunderbird has been working with its partners, specifically the Assembly of First Nations, First Peoples Wellness Circle and the First Nations Housing Professionals Association, to guide the development of the second edition of *Honouring Our Strengths*. A working group of First Nations Elders, Knowledge Keepers, researchers, academics, and service providers was established in February 2025 to guide and inform the updates. Engagement with stakeholders and partners has been ongoing.

Next Steps:

A first draft of the second edition of *Honouring Our Strengths* has been developed. Thunderbird is now focusing on engagement and validation of the new content. Future engagement and validation sessions include attending standing committees and conferences, roundtables that identify key participants and webinars. Here is where Thunderbird will be in the coming months:

- The First Nations Health Managers Conference in Montreal November 5, 2025
- The Canadian Centre for Substance Use and Addiction, Issues of Substance Conference – November 18, 2025 - 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm
- National Webinar October 29, 2025 – 11:00 am to 1:00 pm EST
register here <https://forms.office.com/r/PL7H0ynzs5>
- National Webinar November 12, 2025 – 11:00 am to 1:00 pm EST
register here <https://forms.office.com/r/PL7H0ynzs5>

If you would like to learn more about the update to *Honouring Our Strengths: A Renewed Framework to Address Substance Use Issues Amongst First Nations People in Canada* or provide input and feedback, please contact:

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