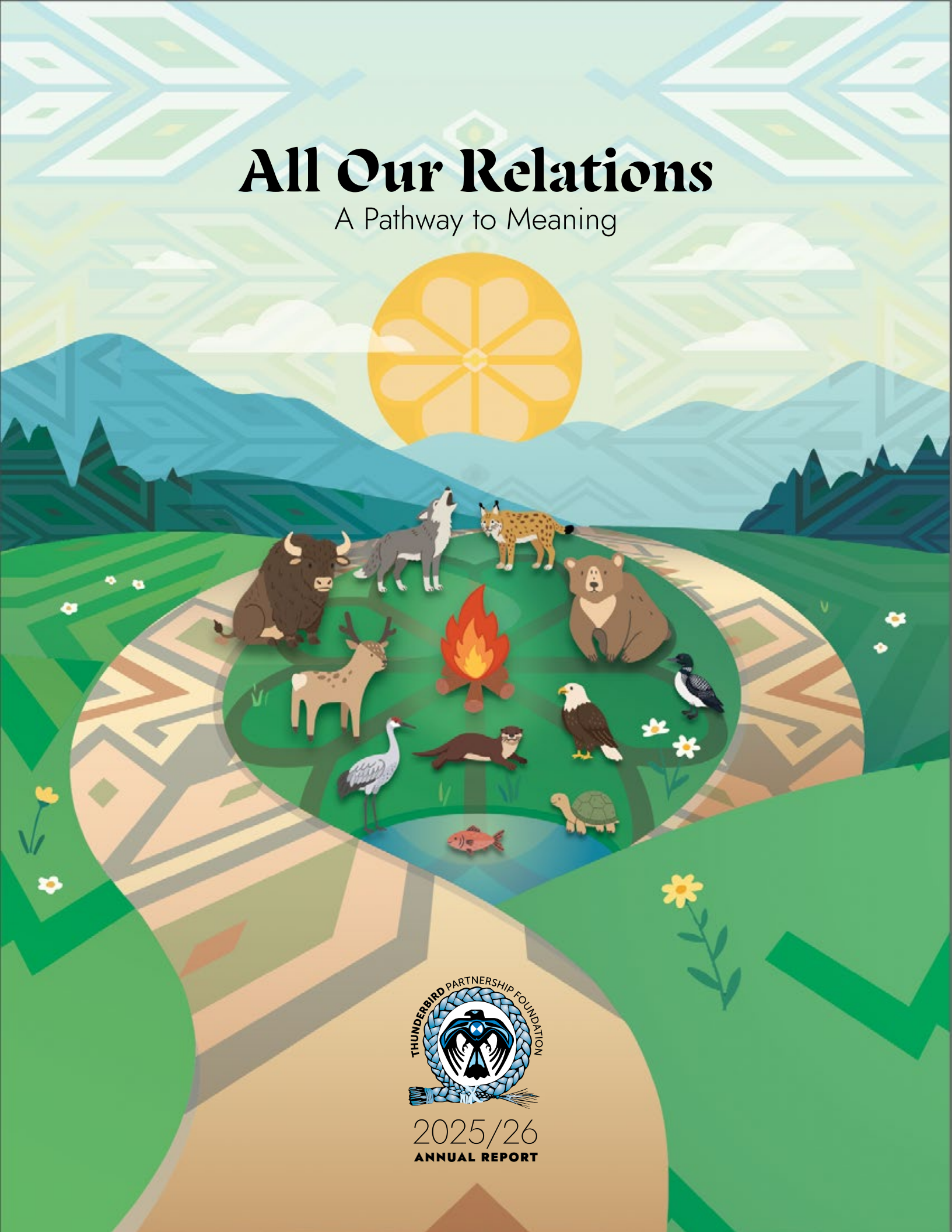


All Our Relations

A Pathway to Meaning



2025/26
ANNUAL REPORT



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

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



VISIT OUR LIFE PROMOTION WEBSITES

cultureforlife.ca for Youth wisepractices.ca for Communities



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Message from Board President and CEO

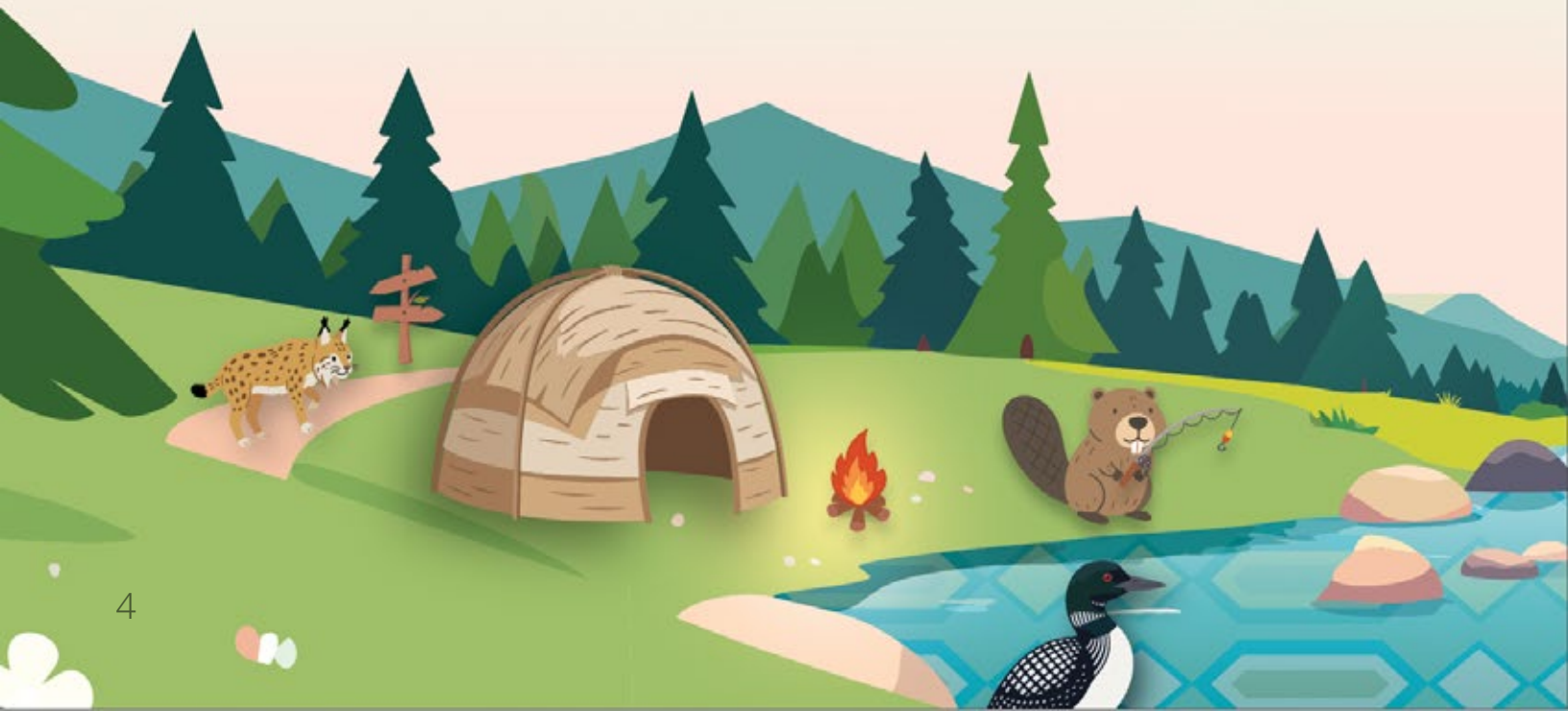
Advancing Mental Wellness, Honouring First Nation Voices, and Building Momentum

This past year at Thunderbird Partnership Foundation was shaped by our continued commitment to First Nations Mental Wellness as defined by Hope, Belonging, Meaning, and Purpose. Together with our board, staff, partners, and community collaborators, we advanced key initiatives that will further enhance support to First Nations in addressing the challenges of substance use. We completed the review and renewal of the *Honouring Our Strengths: A Renewed Framework to Address Substance Use Among First Nations People in Canada (2011)*. A key focus of the renewed framework, titled *Honouring Our Strengths: A Framework to Support Substance Use Health for First Nations Wellness in Canada (2026)*, is increased capacity for First Nation community-based intervention to address the drug crisis.

We remain proud of the energy and innovation shown across the organization as we continue to grow and adapt to evolving community needs. A major focus this year was the development of two First Nations community-based service delivery models: (1) that serves as a companion to the renewed *Honouring Our Strengths (2026)*

framework to support First Nations in designing community-based service delivery model and (2) the complex trauma model of care. We also began the development of First Nations Child, Youth, and Family Mental Wellness training for the workforce meant to provide community-based early intervention and intervention services for children, youth and their families. Thunderbird's Bundles of Intervention Resources and Culture Hub (BIRCH) has also added culture-based addictions treatment modules that can be accessed as pre-treatment, and post-treatment virtual resources, or as hybrid virtual care to reach more families, more efficiently. These innovations reflect Thunderbird's long-standing commitment to equitable and timely access to substance use services for First Nations.

First Nations know all too well the grief of the drug crisis that has disproportionately taken more lives of First Nations than the drug poisoning deaths experienced by the Canadian population. Overdose and drug poisoning has also caused brain injury, and chronic use of methamphetamine and stimulants such as crack cocaine has also significantly impacted quality



of life and relationships among First Nations and their environment. Yet this area has seen little new funding for First Nations community-based intervention. As First Nations have continued to advocate for access to naloxone, Thunderbird remains committed to advocating for resources to *preserve the sacred breath of life*.

This year also marked the launch of the Ways of the Heart Youth Councils' mental wellness workplan, supported by Thunderbird Partnership Foundation and First Peoples Wellness Circle. With the added support of the McConnell Foundation, the WHYC was able to stay connected through peer support, engaging in culture and land. We're incredibly proud to see their workplan projects take shape and grateful to the youth for turning lived experience into meaningful change.

We are so excited to have begun a new journey with the Youth Substance Addiction Committee, First Nations Health Managers Association and First Peoples Wellness Circle toward hosting Healing Our Spirit Worldwide, the 10th gathering, in Ottawa! Be sure to look for more information.

One of the biggest changes for Thunderbird Partnership Foundation / the National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation is the retirement of Chief Austin Bear, President and Chair of the Board. He is a great leader and champion for harm reduction, and for supporting mental wellness for First Nations. We are so grateful for his contributions. To everyone who contributes to our mission—staff, Board of Directors, First Nations workforce, and partners— thank you. You inspire us every day.

As we move into this next chapter, we do so with renewed Purpose to fulfil our vision. Every person has a voice facilitated through the sacred breath of life. Every voice deserves to be heard, and every breath requires our commitment to mental wellness.

Pam Charlong
Acting President

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



Connecting to Grow Forward Together

Thunderbird Partnership Foundation and the Youth Substance Addiction Committee co-hosted the *2026 National First Nations Substance Use Summit*, from February 24-26, in Gatineau, Quebec on the unceded territory of the Algonquin First Nation. The Summit was grounded in culture and guided by the understanding that culture, language, Elders, land, and Creation all play essential roles in supporting individual and collective wellbeing.

The Summit brought together a diverse cross-section of people working in different aspects of First Nations substance use and mental wellness, most of whom were frontline wellness workers and service providers.

Through keynote presentations, panels, and interactive breakout sessions, event participants explored emerging frameworks, training, and research shaping First Nations substance use and mental wellness. The Summit also featured a tradeshow space for participants to connect and share resources.

During the Summit, participants also decorated quilt squares which were later stitched together into a quilt honouring the collective work, stories, and connections shared during the gathering.

The first night of the Summit featured an awards banquet to honour 50 years of the National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP). Individuals and programs from across the country were recognized for supporting wellness in their communities. Chief Austin Bear was also honoured with a blanket ceremony for his longstanding commitment and leadership in advancing the health and wellbeing of First Nations communities.

Overall, feedback from attendees of the *2026 National First Nations Substance Use Summit* reflected a strong desire for continued gatherings such as this to address evolving community wellness needs.



Chief Bear, Muskoday First Nation

Austin Bear served as the Chief of the Muskoday First Nation, located in Saskatchewan, for 14 consecutive terms, and some 30 years when he retired in 2019. He is known as a ground-breaking leader on addictions services, and land management.

Chief Bear served as the President/Chair of the National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation (NNAPF) from 2000 to 2026, and Thunderbird Partnership Foundation, a division of NNAPF which works at the national level to strengthen support and promote excellence in the First Nations mental wellness and substance use and addictions in Canada.

Chief Bear's accomplishments are numerous, and he demonstrates leadership in the field of addictions, in the community, provincially, nationally, and internationally. Chief Bear's involvement with the National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP) began when he held the position of Coordinator/Community Worker for the Muskoday First Nation. In the five years of service to NNADAP, he developed alcohol and substance use prevention programming for the community. Chief Bear has enjoyed many years of sobriety and is a Certified Addictions Counsellor. He is known for his leadership most especially because he is a respectful listener and believes in First Nations people. He is well known for his kindness and respect for First Nation people as he would extend what he had to those less fortunate; he would offer his time to support family wellness throughout his tenure as a Chief.

Chief Bear's long standing and tireless work to build and sustain partnerships, to build relationships with other First Nations, with Indigenous and mainstream communities and organisations, governments, academic institutions and private sector bodies is his strongest and most effective contribution to First Nations.

Chief Austin Bear was a recipient of Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee Medal (2012).



Healing Our Spirit Worldwide

Since January 2026, Healing Our Spirit Worldwide has moved toward establishing the foundational structures required to support the next gathering in 2028. Planning for the 10th Gathering of Healing our Spirit Worldwide (HOSW10) is now focused on converting the vision into an operational framework that will enable a large-scale, culturally grounded, and globally connected Indigenous Gathering.

The intent of HOSW10 is to create a space that brings together Indigenous Nations, countries, communities, organizations, and jurisdictions to share knowledge, strengthen relationships, honour cultural practices, and advance practical pathways for collective well-being.

Key progress towards HOSW10 includes:

- Completion of the HOSW business plan, defining governance, scope, and delivery model
- Procurement of an event management company to support operational planning and execution
- Establishment of working relationships with the City of Ottawa and Destination Ottawa in support of host city coordination
- Initiation of accommodation strategy, including hotel bid development to secure capacity for a large-scale Gathering
- Development of branding and communications assets, including collaboration with a local Indigenous artist on the 10th Gathering logo
- Development of branding and communications assets
- Early-stage promotion and stakeholder engagement to build awareness and participation
- Advancement of international relationship-building to support a coordinated global Indigenous network

Looking ahead, the next key milestone will take place in July 2026 in Ottawa, beginning with a pipe ceremony to ground the work in Indigenous protocol and collective responsibility. This will be followed by the formal signing of a memorandum of understanding with international committee members and co-host partners, confirming shared commitment to delivery.

It will serve as both a cultural and strategic anchor point as planning transitions into full program and operational development.

Moving forward, HOSW will focus on confirming partner roles, establishing working groups to support critical planning areas, advancing sponsorship and resource development, and refining operational planning. While still in early stages, strong momentum has been established, which bodes well for coordinated growth and delivery of HOSW10 in the months ahead.



National Ways of the Heart Youth Council

The Ways of the Heart Youth Council (WHYC) continues to advance Indigenous youth mental wellness across Canada through youth-led, culturally grounded initiatives. Guided by Indigenous knowledge systems and community values, WHYC supports national engagement, resource development, and leadership opportunities that promote wholistic well-being.

During the 2025–2026 reporting period, WHYC strengthened governance, expanded youth representation, and advanced key initiatives focused on land-based learning, cultural reconnection, and mental wellness supports.

National Representation & Governance

WHYC is comprised of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis youth representatives from Ontario, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Nunavut, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Quebec. Recruitment remains ongoing to ensure full representation, with a focus on Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

A key milestone was the May 2025 in-person gathering, where members finalized the Terms of Reference and annual Work Plan, strengthening accountability and strategic direction. WHYC also contributed to governance through participation in the Thunderbird Partnership Foundation Board Meeting.

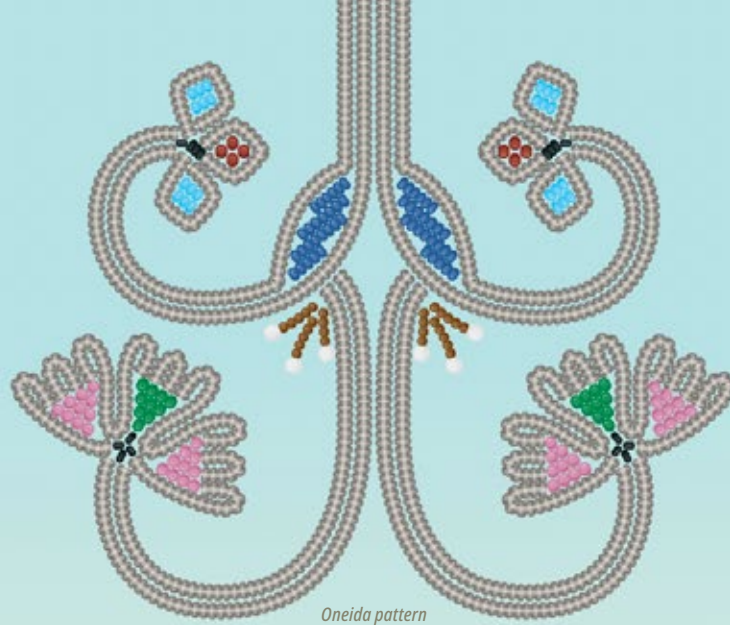
Key Activities & Engagement

WHYC members participated in national and regional gatherings that elevated youth voices in mental wellness and cultural revitalization, including land-based camps, cultural gatherings, and national forums. These engagements strengthened relationships, supported knowledge exchange, and ensured youth perspectives were integrated into broader mental wellness strategies.

Members also completed targeted training, including complex trauma and Train-the-Trainer certifications, enhancing their capacity to lead culturally grounded programming and peer-based initiatives.

WHYC members attended/participated in:

- WHYC in-person meeting, May 2025. Development of Terms of Reference and Work Plan
- Land based Indigenous Learning Project July 2025: Consisting of four main components, this project produced a toolkit: 1. Fire Teachings 2. Water Teachings 3. Elder and Youth Interaction 4. Medicine Teachings and a "Facilitator Guide" with the following content: 1. Safety and Logistics Checklist 2. Recommended Equipment Checklist 3. Tips for leading culturally respectful camps 4. Icebreaker activities
- Métis and WE MATTER Officio Rep Thunderbird Board meeting in Prince Edward Island in July 2025
- Youth were supported to participate in WE MATTER'S Land Based Buffalo Camp Aug 2025, Alberta
- The New Brunswick and Métis Rep ONECA Engagement in Parry Sound, Sept 2025
- Ontario and Manitoba reps attended ACCESS Advisory Meeting in Thunder Bay



Oneida pattern

Key Achievements

- **Land-Based Indigenous Learning Project:** Completion of a comprehensive Toolkit and Facilitator Guide, including teachings on fire, water, medicine, and Elder-youth relationships, alongside practical tools for safe and culturally respectful program delivery.
- **Digital Resources:** Contributions to the launch of the *“Soaring Together” Youth Mental Wellness Website* and updates to the Life Promotion Toolkit, improving access to culturally relevant supports.
- **Leadership Development:** Strengthened youth facilitation skills and governance participation at national levels.

Ongoing & Emerging Initiatives

- **2-Spirit Resource Development:** Creating inclusive, culturally relevant supports for 2-Spirit youth.
- **Disconnection to Reconnection Project:** Developing pathways for displaced Indigenous youth using the Hope, Belonging, Meaning, and Purpose framework (workplan completed; resource development underway).
- **Partnership Development:** Continued collaboration with partners, including FPWC, to support coordinated youth mental wellness initiatives.

Looking Ahead (2026–2027 Priorities)

- Host second in-person WHYC gathering (May 2026)
- Advance key projects (2-Spirit resources and Disconnection to Reconnection)
- Expand national representation, particularly in northern regions
- Continue development of culturally grounded tools and digital resources
- Strengthen partnerships and youth leadership opportunities

The 2025–2026 year reflects meaningful progress in strengthening Indigenous youth leadership and advancing culturally grounded mental wellness initiatives. WHYC remains committed to uplifting youth voices and supporting pathways to healing, connection, and resilience for Indigenous youth across Canada.

- The WE MATTER Ex officio, Ontario, and Manitoba Reps attend Culture camp in Kettle point November 2025
- Métis Rep went to 2-Spirit Symposium Montreal November 17-23, 2025
- Assembly of First Nations Mental Wellness Community Edmonton November 2025

- Training programs youth completed
 - Métis Rep Member Participated in Thunderbird Partnership Foundation Training: Complex Trauma training
 - Train the Trainer training for Ontario and the New Brunswick Reps

First Nations Child, Youth, and Family Mental Wellness

The mental wellness of First Nations children, youth and families has been a long standing critical concern. Thunderbird Partnership Foundation is developing a new training program to support the workforce in wholistic and healing centered services for First Nations children, youth, and families. To more effectively support children, youth and families, the workforce needs new resources and core training that is wholistic and healing centred.

To that end, in 2025 Indigenous Services Canada provided project funding for Thunderbird to develop and deliver courses customized for the First Nations wellness workforce. These workers support children, youth and families, often through complex and multi-faceted challenges. While First Nations communities do receive dedicated funding for child welfare (via First Nations Child and Family Services), services to address gaps and needs are managed across multiple sectors and programs that comprise the First Nations workforce.

The goal of this new training and resource development is to assist the existing workforce, as well as Elders/ Traditional Healers within the network across Canada, to support Settlement Agreement class members and potential class members, including affected family and community members.

Thunderbird's training initiatives are developed with a foundation of culture and align with the principles of

- *Honouring Our Strengths: A Renewed Framework to Address Substance Use Issues Among First Nations People in Canada*, and
- the *First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum* framework.

Core competencies towards certified knowledge, skills, and attitude for the workforce are facilitated through trauma informed, strength-based course content, with careful attention to worker wellness.

This project workplan was initiated in December 2025 and training delivery is expected to begin in phases starting in early fall 2026 with existing and updated courses. The full complement of new training courses will begin delivery in January 2027. Project funding for this initiative continues until March 2028.



Buffalo Riders Youth Early Intervention Program Facilitator Training

Thunderbird received funding in 2025 from Indigenous Services Canada to train and certify up to 150 new facilitators for the Buffalo Riders Youth Early Intervention Program. The Training and Education team completed ten virtual deliveries of the program between January 2025 and March 2026.

Promotion for this training opportunity resulted in interest from 199 people who proceeded through the registration process. Of those registrants, 149 people attended and participated in the virtual training, with 93% of them completing the training and receiving Program Facilitator certification. Program attendees participated virtually from eight provinces and two territories.

Here are some comments from the participants about the *best aspect* of the training they received from Thunderbird:

'The knowledge I learned in the training will help me in my journey working with youth in my community! I didn't expect the resources provided, it's amazing!'

'Learning new and exciting ways to engage and interact with the youth. This was a very fun and insightful training.'

'How to deliver a youth program effectively'

'The significance of cultural intervention influencing changes in the brain. How to incorporate culture in lessons. The value of culture in programming'

'Life promotion, our youth are so precious and such a gift, we need to do all we can to help support them so they can become the leaders they are born to be.'

'Emotional intelligence'

All registered training participants received a comprehensive resource package from the Buffalo Riders program so that upon training completion and certification, they were fully ready to implement the youth early intervention programming. Each resource package included instructional materials, teaching aids, and toolkits to complement the facilitator guide and youth workbook.

Facilitators for the Buffalo Riders Early Intervention Training Program work to support and enhance community level capacity through delivery of programming for youth, indicated as at-risk for problematic substance use within First Nations schools, communities and Indigenous organizations. The Buffalo Rider program itself is developed from an Indigenous wisdom perspective fostering positive youth cultural identity—it incorporates positive development theories and strength-based practices to enhance resiliency and social-emotional competency.



Sharing Trauma Informed Training from Coast to Coast

This certified three-day training program highlights core competencies and skills specific to a trauma-informed practice. Training participants learn about trauma (including intergenerational and vicarious trauma) in an Indigenous context. Practices and resources are also shared to develop resiliency strategies within programs and service delivery. In 2025, Thunderbird delivered this training, in-person, to First Nations communities in the Eastern and Western regions of the country.

Biljik First Nation, New Brunswick -

Thunderbird delivered *Trauma-Informed Approaches* training from October 21-23, 2025, in collaboration with the Wolastoqey Tribal Council in New Brunswick. The training was hosted in Biljik First Nation, and training participants came from the five First Nation communities within the Wolastoqey Nation. Training participants connected positively with the course topics, specifically the description of the different types of trauma and discussions around self-care and worker wellness. The host community offered a warm and caring learning environment where trauma-informed care centred on community needs. The Thunderbird team felt inspired by the community's demonstration of mutual care, resiliency, and their wellness-centred working environment.

Here is an example of participant feedback:

"I loved all of it, but most impactful was the section on vicarious trauma. We spend so much time focusing on others that we often forget to check on ourselves. Really appreciated the reflection/activities"

(Training participant, Oct 23, 2025).

Sumas First Nation, British Columbia -

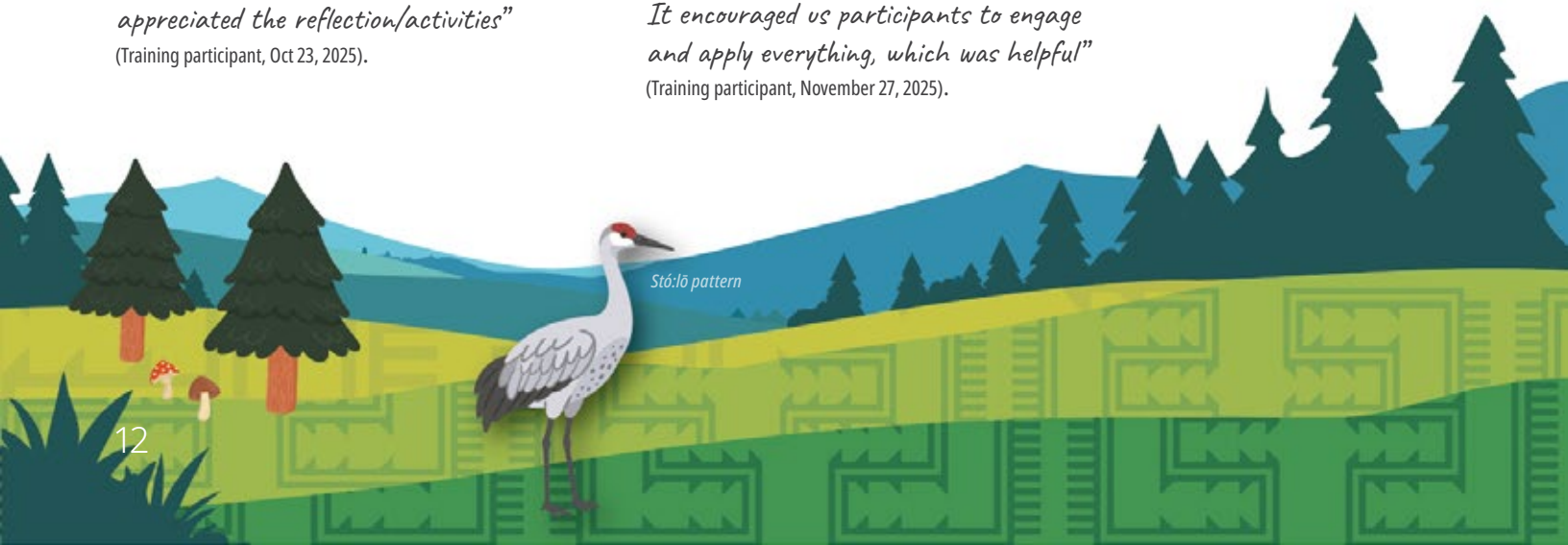
Trauma-Informed Approaches training was also delivered from November 25 – 27, 2025, in collaboration with Indigenous Health and Fraser Health Authority in British Columbia. This training was hosted by the Sumas First Nation and brought together First Nations communities and a variety of organizations and partners from the Lower Mainland region. Feedback from training participants emphasized the insightful group discussions and use of storytelling, which supported a safe, comfortable, and engaging learning environment. The Thunderbird team is grateful to the hosts who provided a welcoming and culture-centred training space that included daily prayer, smudging, drumming, singing, and traditional foods. All of this enhanced the learnings from the week and fostered a warm space for community-building and collaboration.

Here is an example of participant feedback:

"The facilitators were phenomenal. The material was excellent and presented in an interesting way, easy to understand. It encouraged us participants to engage and apply everything, which was helpful"

(Training participant, November 27, 2025).

For more information about Thunderbird's Trauma Informed Approaches training, visit thunderbirdpf.org/training or email training@thunderbirdpf.org.



Training Delivery in Labrador

Thunderbird headed north to Labrador early in 2026 to provide in-person *Community Crisis Response* training to support First Nations communities, and support workforce development through training certification. *Community Crisis Response* training is a three-day training that is based on the *Community Crisis Planning, Prevention, Response, and Recovery Service Delivery Model*. Thunderbird's certified training program respects the unique characteristics and priorities of each community and recognizes that First Nations communities may experience and identify crisis differently based on their planning and development.

In collaboration with Innu Round Table Secretariat, *Community Crisis Response* training was delivered from March 3-5, 2026, in Sheshatshiu Labrador. Training participants appreciated the opportunity to collaborate with others, share stories, and learn through group discussions. The Asset Mapping activity was particularly affirming for participants, as they recognized that they are already applying many components of the service delivery model through their preventative culture-based and land-based activities. It was inspiring to hear participants speak about their communities' cultural strengths. Participants also shared that they look forward to building on an existing cultural foundation through further trainings and on-going collaborative work.

Here is an example of participant feedback:

"I feel that coming together as different community organizations gives us a chance to talk, chat about community crisis & what we feel needs to be done. Great chance to meet new people, especially if new in the community"

(Training participant, March 5, 2026).

For more information about Thunderbird's *Community Crisis Response* training, visit <https://thunderbirdpf.org/training> or email training@thunderbirdpf.org.

Mishuunnat pattern

Training Delivery Statistics

Total Participants Registered: 1115
Training Participants = Number in Attendance

	Training Deliveries	Training Participants	Provinces and Territories Represented
Two- and Three-Day Trainings			
Cannabis Education for First Nations	1	22	SK, YT, MB, PE, ON, QC, NT, AB (8)
Community Crisis Response	3	107	SK, QC, NB, NS, NL, BC, ON, AB, BC, MB, PE (11)
Culture as Foundation	2	53	AB, ON, QC, MB, NB (5)
Emotional Intelligence	1	14	AB, BC, MB, NS, ON, PE, QC (7)
First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum	2	63	ON, AB, YT, QC, MB, NS, BC, NB, MB, SK, NT (11)
Land for Healing	3	58	AB, SK, ON, QC, NS, MB, BC (7)
Pharmacology	1	31	QC, NB, AB, SK, NB, ON (6)
Trauma Informed Approaches	6	211	NT, NU, QC, NB, NS, ON, MB, SK, YT, AB, NL, BC (12)
Wise Practices for Life Promotion	2	46	ON, AB, QC, NL, BC, SK, PE, MB, NS, YT, NB (11)
Program Facilitator Trainings			
Buffalo Riders	8	119	AB, ON, NS, QC, SK, MB, YT, BC (8)
Let's Talk Cannabis	1	23	ON, QC, NS, MB, AB, NL (6)
Harm Reduction and Naloxone	2	46	AB, ON, NB, QC, SK, MB (6)
Train-the-Trainer			
Cannabis Education for First Nations	1	12	AB, MB, NT, ON, QC, SK, YT (7)
Community Crisis Response	1	16	SK, QC, MB, ON, AB (5)
First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum	1	7	BC, ON, MB, SK (4)
Land For Healing	1	22	AB, BC, ON, MB, SK, NB (6)
Pharmacology	1	18	ON, SK, QC, MB, AB, BC (6)
Wise Practices for Life Promotion	1	11	SK, NT, ON, BC, NB, QC, NS (7)
	38	879	

Stakeholder Identifiers

Treatment Centre: Training Participants	154
Mental Wellness / Crisis Response Team: Training Participants	376
Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Worker: Training Participants	26
First Nations Workforce / NNADAP Counselors/Other: Training Participants	323

879



Community of Practice

HUBS	Enrollments (2025/26 Fiscal Year)	Enrollments to Date (up to March 31, 2026)
Community Wellness Hub	618	3031
Cannabis Education for First Nations (CEFN) - Training Hub	29	95
Community Crisis Response - Training Hub	160	495
Culture as Foundation and NWA™ - Training Hub	52	270
Emotional Intelligence (EQ) - Training Hub	16	60
FNMWC Framework Implementation - Training Hub	38	206
Land for Healing - Training Hub	76	361
Pharmacology - Training Hub	45	384
Trauma Informed Approaches - Training Hub	195	600
Indigenous Knowledge and Epigenetics - Training Hub	3	31
Wise Practices for Life Promotion - Training Hub	57	154
	1289	5687

Program Facilitator Hubs	Enrollments (2025/26 Fiscal Year)	Enrollments to Date (up to March 31, 2026)
Buffalo Riders - Training Hub	151	330
Harm Reduction Approaches and Naloxone - Training Hub	56	57
Let's Talk Cannabis - Training Hub	28	88
	235	475

Train-The-Trainer (TTT) Journeys	Enrollments (2025/26 Fiscal Year)	Enrollments to Date (up to March 31, 2026)
Cannabis Education for First Nations (CEFN)	14	58
Community Crisis Response (CCR)	27	77
First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum (FNMWC)	17	85
Land for Healing (LFH)	26	92
Pharmacology (PH)	30	28
Wise Practices for Life Promotion (WPLP)	19	49
	133	389

Other Hubs	Enrollments (2025/26 Fiscal Year)	Enrollments to Date (up to March 31, 2026)
Addictions Management Information System (AMIS) Connection Hub	54	256
Bundle of Interventions, Resources, and Cultural Hub (BIRCH)	28	191
	82	447

Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) pattern

Online Self-Directed Courses

Online Courses	Enrollments (2025/26 Fiscal Year)
Clinical Supervision	123
Developing a Basket of Screening and Assessment Tools for Mental Wellness Workers	293
Indicators to Assess Cultural Competency	205
Intake, Referral, Discharge and Aftercare Planning	233
Prescription Drug Abuse	140
Western Science and Epigenetics	6
Wise Practices for Virtual Care	226
Indigenous Perspectives on Trauma, Vicarious Trauma and Wellness	598
	1824

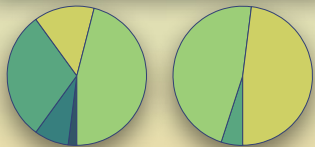
Online Courses	Completions (2025/26 Fiscal Year)
Clinical Supervision	40
Developing a Basket of Screening and Assessment Tools for Mental Wellness Workers	177
Indicators to Assess Cultural Competency	95
Intake, Referral, Discharge and Aftercare Planning	110
Prescription Drug Abuse	68
Western Science and Epigenetics	2
Wise Practices for Virtual Care	100
Indigenous Perspectives on Trauma, Vicarious Trauma and Wellness	319
	911



Training Evaluation Survey Data

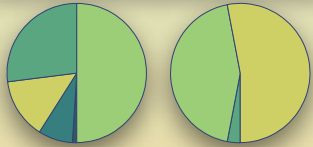
My knowledge of how culture contributes to wellness.

	Before Training	After Training
Excellent	96	330
Good	310	319
Average	205	36
Fair	56	2
Poor	11	0



My understanding of the benefits of applying culture to improve wellness.

	Before Training	After Training
Excellent	96	358
Good	342	296
Average	180	22
Fair	55	1
Poor	4	0



Ojibwa pattern

Sample of Participant Feedback response on 'Biggest Impact'

Let's Talk Cannabis

- *The resources and tools provided were the biggest impact as it gave a clear step by step structure on how to facilitate the sessions and how it ties into Indigenous culture.*
- *The way the suggestions for dialogue are laid out makes it less intimidating when communicating with youth. Keep it simple! I really appreciate the cultural components and the brain science*

Trauma Informed Approaches

- *I enjoyed all the activities where we had to think about ourselves and ground ourselves. That's something people in these fields don't often think about as we are always helping others.*
- *The different ways presented that we can as helpers incorporate culture into trauma interventions is excellent*
- *I enjoyed how calm and trauma informed the training was. Everything was beautifully thought out from the tones, imagery, and music. I would recommend this training to so many others who work within not only indigenous communities but working with people in general. I have a lot more tools and look forward to reflecting back on the notes and course material.*

Harm Reduction Approaches and Naloxone

- *All of the content, my understanding of Harm Reduction was so limited, now I have a greater understanding what it is about.*
- *Medications to support individuals who use opioids and toxic drug poisoning response and naloxone training*
- *I found this the most interesting and useful*

Community Crisis Response

- *It was an eye opener for me. I'm truly grateful I have more knowledge to bring forward to my community in crisis planning*
- *Thank you for making the online sessions so engaging and interactive. Your patience, clarity, and real-life examples made the material easy to connect with. I truly appreciated the safe space you created for questions and discussion—it felt personal, even through a screen.*

Cannabis Education for First Nations

- *Learning new things about cannabis such as the pharmacy side of it, how many active ingredients are in cannabis and cannabis during pregnancy*
- *The course had a lot of interacting with the others in the group, that was great especially meeting others from other places*

Wise Practices for Life Promotion training and Train the Trainer training

- *I loved that I was introduced to new ways of thinking and doing in relation to Youth Suicide Prevention to Life Promotion!*
- *The resources on the wisepractices.ca website and how they have been arranged for ease of accessibility*

Hoocqk (Ho-Chunk) pattern



First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Implementation

- *All the practical tools and strategies had the biggest impact on me. They provided clear, applicable approaches that I can immediately integrate into my daily work to better support clients and teams*
- *Hearing the Canada wide range of stories and input really was eye opening for me*
- *Visioning for Change*

Pharmacology Train the Trainer

- *Gaining a broader sense of the impacts of substances on the body, how spirituality must be incorporated to support a balanced recovery*
- *How detailed everything was. The Facilitators Guide is amazing, there is so much detail. It will definitely help me deliver an engaging training*

Culture as Foundation

- *In general, the way that I learned how different cultural activities may link to different quadrants helped me to deepen my understanding of wellness framework.*
- *Native Wellness Assessment*

Land for Healing

- *Learning more about how healing the land is, and the elder saying that the land is alive, so you are never really alone*
- *I always knew that I was on the right path with my programming so this training gave me greater confidence in my work plans. the resources and tools are ones that I will use*

Emotional Intelligence

- *The parts about self-reflecting inward to better serve and understand others*
- *Consequential thinking had the biggest impact on me and I will be using it a lot more in my personal/work life.*



Evolving To Support First Nation Communities

The work of Thunderbird's National Mental Wellness Coordination (NMWC) team is a core strategic priority, dedicated to expanding mental wellness capacity in collaboration with the First Peoples Wellness Circle (FPWC). The team achieves this by supporting regional and national linkages to strengthen collaborative relationships, networks and partnerships. The NMWC team brings extensive knowledge, skills and a deep caring and ongoing commitment to communities, regions and national partnerships towards achieving this goal.

The current NMWC team includes a national coordinator along with regional coordinators located in British Columbia and Manitoba. The team has evolved throughout 2025-26 with the ebb and flow of new coordinators joining and others transitioning on to new commitments. Thunderbird is grateful for the work and achievements of all coordinators and continues to strengthen the capacity of the team by building internal and external collaboration and through ongoing recruitment.

Thunderbird and FPWC are moving towards a vision for a complete continuum of services to strengthen mental wellness capacity at community, regional, and national levels. Partnerships at these levels have been built and strengthened by the NMWC team to support First Nation community led initiatives with culture-based approaches—this will better ensure Mino Bimaadiziwin (Good Life) for the people.

Thunderbird remains committed to engaging with communities and partners through outreach activities such as trade show booths and information presentations.

Engagement and feedback are important to the NMWC team. Throughout the past year, the team has intentionally cultivated a space for mutual learning, honouring the wise practices and unique teachings shared across regions. These meaningful exchanges have fostered collective growth and elevated the integrity of Thunderbird's work. Rooted in respect and humility, these values now serve to guide the team as they walk alongside communities, ensuring that support remains deeply relational and culturally grounded.





2025-2026 Regional Mapping of Essential Services

The First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum framework served as a guide to map essential services in regions that support mental wellness, and address substance use. This is an ongoing priority, both regionally and nationally, which prompted the development of a standardized template to maintain consistency across all regions. Thunderbird has refined the mapping report template to better reflect the strengths and essential services unique to each area—this ensures that community remains at the centre of how services are understood, reflected, and supported across the continuum of care. Mapping supports strengths and opportunities and identifies gaps and barriers for First Nations. It also informs potential capacity building and partnerships for First Nation community-led initiatives in models of care that support individuals, families and communities' approach to a circle of care and care pathways that support mental wellness and address substance use.

The NMWC team has made good progress this past year with regional mapping:

- Alberta regional mapping report is complete
- Manitoba regional mapping report is proceeding through review processes
- Ontario regional mapping report is in draft form to support collaboration with the Chiefs of Ontario
- British Columbia regional mapping report is in the initial data collection stage

Thunderbird continues to foster strong regional relationships to ensure that mental wellness and substance use initiatives are fully supported by comprehensive regional mapping to advance regional and national evidence-based strategies. Through proactive, collaborative working relationships, the NMWC team maintains a unified approach by integrating continuous feedback and collaborations from diverse partners and stakeholders. This process involves a review of recommendations from regional mapping reports, which will be integrated into a national report. By merging these localized metrics and insights, key national initiatives can remain aligned with Thunderbird's strategic goals.



Hoocqk (Ho-Chunk) pattern

2025-2026 Project Initiatives

- **2026 updated edition of *Honouring Our Strengths* (HOS-2)** – development support
- **Jordan's Principle Pilot** – regional engagement
- **Complex Trauma Model of Care** – engagement, development and participation in internal and external working group
- **First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum (FNMWC)** – Training Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)
- **FNMWC – Implementation Team**
- **Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Mental Wellness Committee**
- **First Peoples Wellness Circle (FPWC)** – Maamawi Kanaakiimi project charter meetings with FPWC and Mental Wellness Workforce Wellness Video (Martin Family Foundation)
- **Model of Care for Substance Use** – led the stakeholder engagement and overall development which included collaborating with internal teams, regional partners, and national partners on a companion resource tool for the HOS-2. In collaboration with Thunderbird staff and partners, the NMWC team finalized the draft *Model of Care for Substance Use* during the 2025-26 fiscal year. By participating in key regional forums like the SOLE gathering and 2026 National First Nations Substance Use Summit, the team ensured the Model of Care for Substance Use is scalable, flexible, practical and provides targeted guidance for communities navigating the toxic drug crisis and long-term service planning. The model builds on the generational strengths and the ancestral wisdom of First Nations, fostering Hope, Belonging, Meaning and Purpose.



Model of Care for Substance Use

During fiscal year 2024/25, Thunderbird began work on a model of care for substance use treatment and care. This new Model of Care for Substance Use is a community-driven, community focused hub and spoke system for substance use treatment and care. The goal is to provide a framework for service and care that can be adapted for use by First Nation communities.

The updated Honouring Our Strengths framework and First Nations Opioid and Methamphetamine Guidelines were integrated into the model.

The first draft of the Model of Care for Substance Use was completed and submitted to Communications for editing, design and translation in the fall of 2025.

After further review, the Model of Care for Substance Use was shared in print as a draft at the 2026 National First Nations Substance Use Summit in February 2026. The current draft is being reviewed to ensure alignment with the updated Honouring Our Strengths (HOS-2) edition, with a final version set for public release in the first quarter of fiscal year 2026-2027.



Ojibwa pattern

Culture-Based Model of Care for Complex Trauma

Thunderbird has developed a culture-based model of care for complex trauma. The model of care was informed by a working group of First Nations Elders, Knowledge Keepers, researchers and practitioners, academic and grey literature, Thunderbird existing resources, national engagement, and external reviewers.

The model affirms that collective trauma needs to be addressed at a community level. It also reinforces that individuals and families are best served within their community by services and supports that are developed, delivered, and governed by community. This new model of care will support the work of the mental wellness workforce. Key components for the model include:

- First Nations definition of complex trauma
- Values and principles
- Culture across the life stages for healthy development
- Adapted Western modalities
- Populations served
- Assessment tools – Native Wellness Assessment (NWA)[™]
- Outcomes – Hope, Belonging, Meaning, and Purpose
- Workforce competencies
- Workforce wellness
- Governance, coordination and partnerships
- Implementation of community-based model

Thunderbird will also develop training resources to support the implementation of this new culture-based model of care for complex trauma.



Tsésthó'e (Cheyenne) pattern

BIRCH Program Growth and Evolution

Just over one year ago *birchbundle.ca* introduced mental wellness workers to the BIRCH program – a self-guided substance use recovery program facilitated by First Nations mental wellness workforce. Between April 2, 2025, and March 31, 2026, the BIRCH program website welcomed 2,798 visitors. When comparing the initial launch timeframe to the final months of the year, BIRCH noted 126% increase in time spent exploring the site and its resources.

Birchbundle.ca offers easy access to the following supports:

- program modules with facilitation guides, by request, for use by mental wellness workers
- virtual program developer guides
- internal resource e hub for First Nations mental wellness workers

After completing an accessibility review of the site, Thunderbird worked to ensure that French versions of resources were also available on the site or by request. Thunderbird continues to update the BIRCH program through feedback and program analysis resulting in ongoing content evolution.

Thunderbird invites you to explore the BIRCH program online!



Check out birchbundle.ca



Request program modules and facilitation guides:

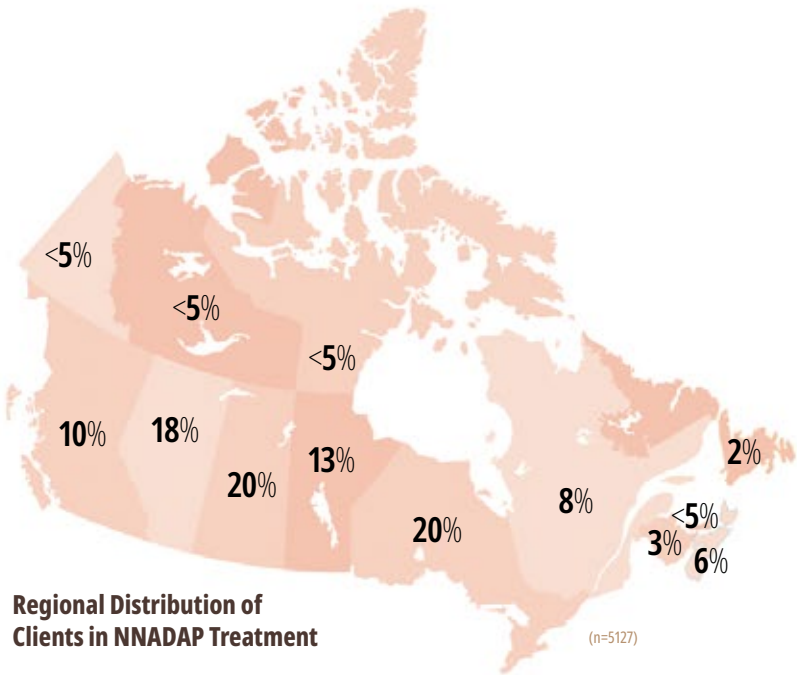


Join the conversation in the CoP hub:



National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program

The National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP) supports a national network of treatment centres for First Nation and Inuit clients. This year NNADAP saw an increase of 12% in clients accessing treatment compared to the previous year. Thunderbird noted a sizable 22% increase in clients seeking multiple levels of care and a 15% increase in clients accessing pre-treatment services, compared to the previous year.



Females
2525
Average Age: 36

Males
2513
Average Age: 38

Total number of client intake forms completed
3049

Female/Woman	49%
Male/Man	49%
Two-Spirited	<5%
Unknown	<5%

Total number of NNADAP applicants
5127 +12%
from previous year

Total number of clients accessing treatment
5038 +16%
from previous year

Number of clients accessing multiple levels of care
830 +22%
from previous year

Number of clients accessing pre-treatment services
2077 +15%
from previous year

Post-treatment referral services available to NNADAP clients:



case management services



community mental health supports



community-based peer support programs



cultural activities and supports



doctor / physician



education and/or job training



employment supports



Elders



family supports and programs
(i.e. AHSOR, FASD, MCH)



housing services



NNADAP community-based workers



provincial services and programs

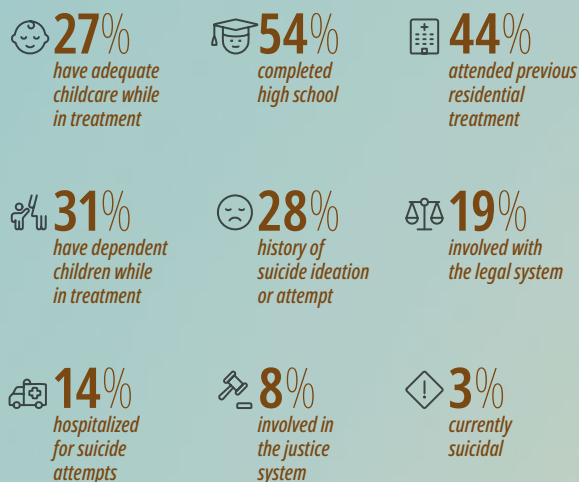


psychiatrist / psychologist

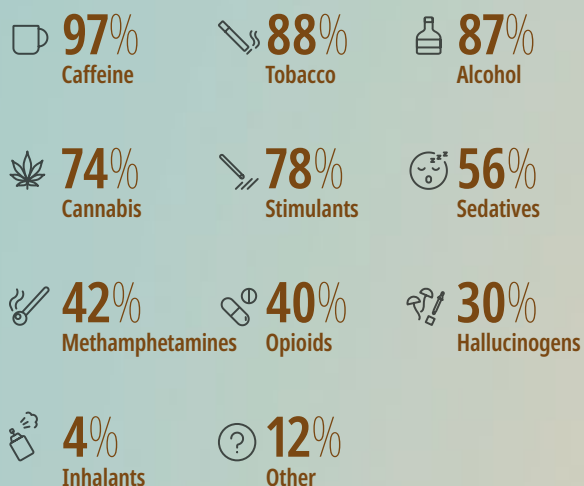




Client characteristics upon entry to treatment (n=3029)



Types of substances used (n=1552)

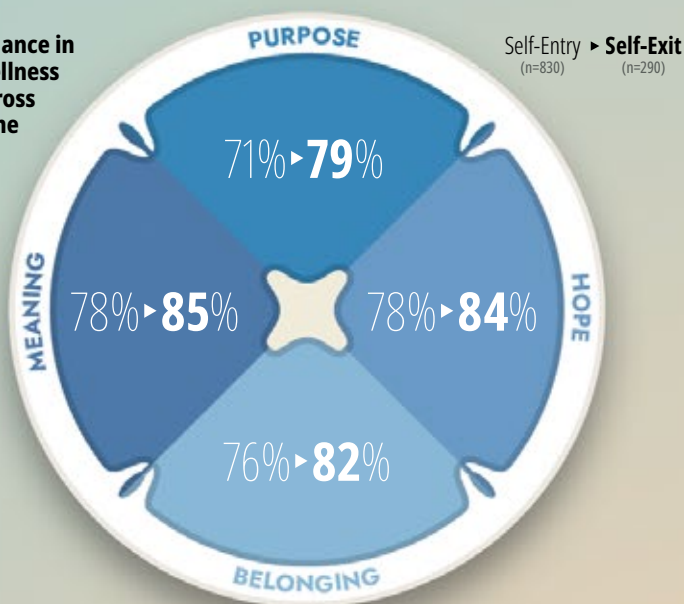


The data on this spread was obtained from the Addictions Management Information System (AMIS), which is a national electronic case management system that captures mental wellness data from individuals who attend First Nation treatment centres and Indigenous-governed community organizations.

NNADAP Native Wellness Outcomes

The Native Wellness Assessment (NWA™) is also available to treatment centre clients and assesses the impact of culture-based interventions over time on the four wellness outcomes of Hope, Belonging, Meaning, and Purpose.

Balance in Wellness Across Time



NNADAP Comparative Culture-Based Practices to Promote Wellness

Indigenous culture can be expressed through culture-based practices in a journey toward wellness. Culture-based practices have long been recognized as Indigenous expressions of spirit-heart-mind-body at work.

GROUP 1

Activities more commonly practiced on an everyday basis such as smudging, and using sacred medicines.

2.32 ▶ 2.57

GROUP 2

Seasonal practices such as harvesting, fishing and hunting. Also includes practices that occur often between groups 1 and 3 such as pipe ceremonies or seeking help from a traditional healer.

2.24 ▶ 2.45

GROUP 3

Specialized activities that are less frequent such as memorial feasts and fasting.

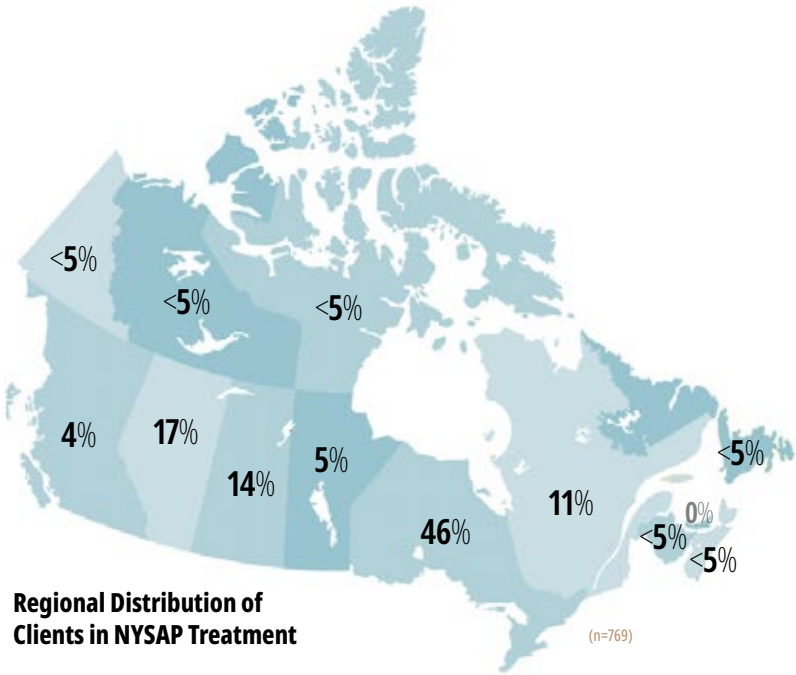
2.13 ▶ 2.25

A connection to culture-based practices from 1.00 (weak) up to 3.00 (strong).

National Youth Solvent Addiction Program

During the past fiscal year, the NYSAP program saw 212 self-reported *entry* point wellness scores. *Follow-up* observations noted 78 self-reported wellness scores that showed increases in all 4 components - Hope, Belonging, Meaning, and Purpose.

Meanwhile, the connection to culture-based practices scores increased at *follow-up* for all three culture-based interventions groups when compared to their *entry* scores for these groups of clients.



Regional Distribution of Clients in NYSAP Treatment

Females

399

Average Age: 17

Males

239

Average Age: 18

Total number of client intake forms completed

464

Female/Woman	56%
Male/Man	38%
Unknown	4%
Other*	2%

*Other includes: Gender Fluid, Transgender, Two-Spirited, No category describes me

Total number of NYSAP applicants

769 +17%

from previous year

Total number of clients accessing treatment

638 +14%

from previous year

Number of clients accessing multiple levels of care

253 +13%

from previous year

Number of clients accessing pre-treatment services

289 +26%

from previous year

Post-treatment referral services available to NYSAP clients:

- 

case management services
- 

community mental health supports
- 

community-based peer support programs
- 

cultural activities and supports
- 

doctor / physician
- 

education and/or job training
- 

Elders
- 

family supports and programs
(i.e. AHSOR, FASD, MCH)
- 

housing services
- 

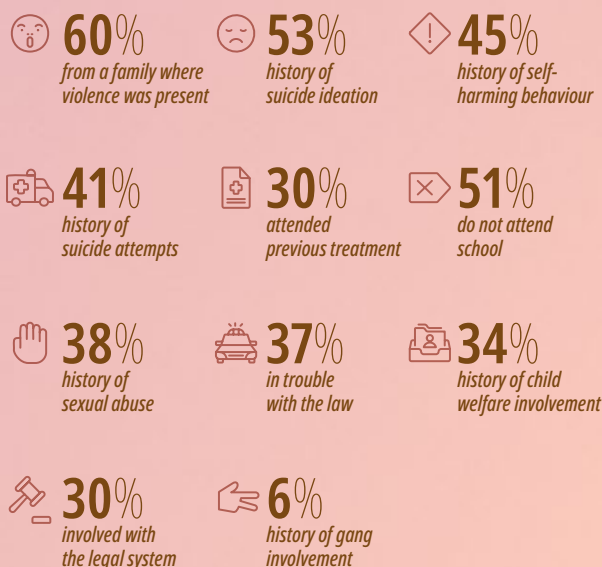
NNADAP community-based workers
- 

provincial services and programs
- 

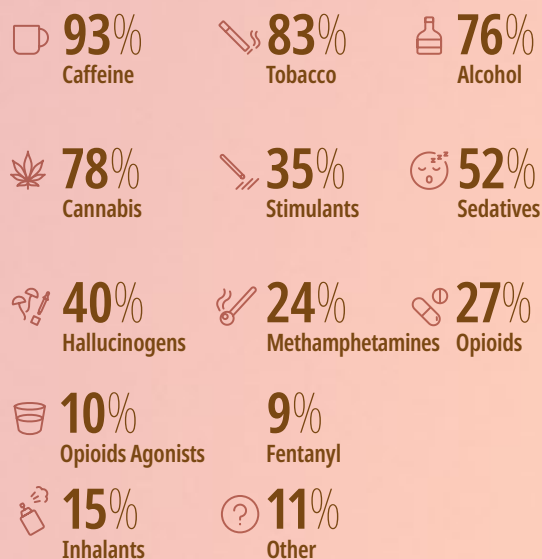
psychiatrist / psychologist



Client characteristics upon entry to treatment (n=464)



Types of substances used (n=209)

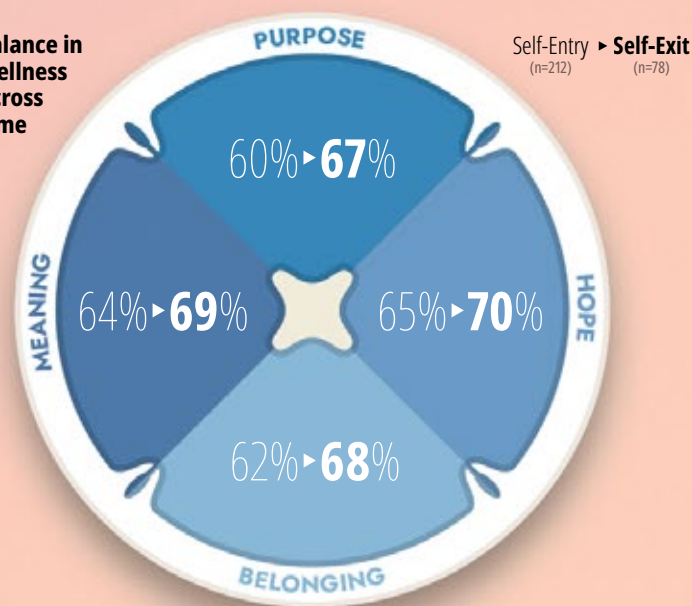


The data on this spread was obtained from the Addictions Management Information System (AMIS), which is a national electronic case management system that captures mental wellness data from individuals who attend First Nation treatment centres and Indigenous-governed community organizations.

NYSAP Native Wellness Outcomes

The Native Wellness Assessment (NWA™) is also available to treatment centre clients and assesses the impact of culture-based interventions over time on the four wellness outcomes of Hope, Belonging, Meaning, and Purpose.

Balance in Wellness Across Time



NYSAP Comparative Culture-Based Practices to Promote Wellness

Indigenous culture can be expressed through culture-based practices in our journey toward wellness. Culture-based practices have long been recognized as Indigenous expressions of spirit-heart-mind-body at work.

GROUP 1	Activities more commonly practiced on an everyday basis such as smudging, and using sacred medicines.	2.21 ▶ 2.44
GROUP 2	Seasonal practices such as harvesting, fishing and hunting. Also includes practices that occur often between groups 1 and 3 such as pipe ceremonies or seeking help from a traditional healer.	2.10 ▶ 2.33
GROUP 3	Specialized activities that are less frequent such as memorial feasts and fasting.	2.05 ▶ 2.21

A connection to culture-based practices from 1.00 (weak) up to 3.00 (strong).

Addictions Management Information System Enhancements

Thunderbird implemented system enhancements to the Addictions Management Information System (AMIS) in the 2025 – 2026 fiscal year. These updates were designed to strengthen the security of client data and refine the system's performance, ensuring First Nations treatment centres and governed community organizations have an efficient, secure, and culturally relevant platform for client care and reporting.

Conducting system enhancements involves modifying the existing database to improve its performance, such as adding new fields, optimizing queries, or restructuring tables to better meet changing needs of the AMIS users.

Key System Enhancements:

- 1. Data Integrity and Workflow Validations** These updates enhance system accuracy by restricting premature inpatient status changes, locking open case notes to prevent conflicts, and enforcing attendance tracking.
- 2. Reporting and Data Analysis Updates** These enhancements ensure better data utilization, for example expanded annual data tables for gender identity and sexual orientation, and default fiscal year settings on dashboards.
- 3. User Management and Security** These updates strengthen security and streamline administration by empowering designated personnel to manage staff access directly, and enforcing secure, personalized password habits from the outset. It ensures that user access is tightly controlled, audited, and immediate.
- 4. Client Management and Demographics** These enhancements ensure that specific reports, such as AMIS residential intake forms, accurately include or exclude data based on the required criteria for those forms.



Additional analyses were completed this year utilizing AMIS data. These analyses included:

- Fentanyl Use among First Nations accessing NNADAP & NYSAP Treatment Centres
- AMIS centres accepting clients on Methadone or Suboxone
- AMIS Complex Trauma Indicators
- AMIS Social Determinants of Health Indicators
- Frequency of substance use among clients who experience trauma-related events
- Saskatchewan AMIS Regional Report 2024-2025
- Alberta AMIS Regional Report 2024-2025
- British Columbia Regional Report 2024-2025
- Manitoba Regional Report 2024-2025
- Ontario Regional Report 2024-2025
- Land-based Services make a Difference in Wellness: Evidence from the Native Wellness Assessment (NWA™) data

AMIS Training Workshops (April 2026) Moving to Virtual Data Cleaning Sessions

Thunderbird's commitment to delivering the most relevant and hands-on training has prompted an update to the upcoming April 2026 AMIS training. To focus intensely on practical data skills and provide immediate, direct support to AMIS Users, the formerly scheduled in-person workshop will now be conducted as a Virtual Data Cleaning session. This new, interactive format allows for deeper, tailored engagement that better ensures treatment centre staff can manage data challenges in real-time.

Training Support

Throughout the 2025-26 fiscal year, over 50 specialized training sessions were delivered to enhance operational efficiency. These sessions included onboarding, training, data cleaning workshops, and ongoing support, driving significant improvement in team performance.

Bi-annual in-person AMIS training workshops were also conducted to facilitate comprehensive data cleaning and ensure high-quality data collection standards.

Bi-annual in-person AMIS Training #1:

**Apr 8-10, 2025 – DoubleTree
by Hilton Hotel Toronto, ON**

- 22 participants from 11 treatment centres, including:
 - 3 centres located in Ontario
 - 2 centres located in Manitoba
 - 1 centre located in Quebec
 - 1 centre located in Saskatchewan
 - 1 centre located in British Columbia
 - 3 centres located in the Atlantic region

Bi-annual in-person AMIS training #2:

**Nov 4-6, 2025 – Westin
Calgary Airport, Calgary, AB**

- 24 participants from 16 treatment centres, including:
 - 4 centres located in Ontario
 - 3 centres located in Manitoba
 - 1 centre located in Quebec
 - 4 centres located in Alberta
 - 3 centres located in Saskatchewan
 - 1 centre located in the Atlantic region



The AMIS Training Workshop Evaluation completed by participants of the training that occurred November 4 – 6, 2025 identified participant feedback and key actionable takeaways.

One hundred percent of participants who completed the workshop evaluation identified that the training aligned with the training goals they wanted to accomplish that week, and that the assistance to support new learning was helpful. All participants reported gaining skills intended by the training, with users who provided additional feedback reporting feeling more confident and proficient with their use of the Addictions Management Information System as a result.

Other users who provided additional feedback identified increased knowledge in the use of system reports, and one participant reported looking forward to using the system to help their centre run more efficiently and manage cases more safely. On a scale from 1 to 10, participants identified an overall average rating of 9 out of 10 for the relevance of the training to their job.

All participants identified at least one aspect of the training they found particularly helpful, including 4 participants identifying all of the training, 8 participants identifying reporting, 4 identifying navigating the system, 3 identifying data cleaning,

and 3 identifying the assessment tools, including the Native Wellness Assessment, and that the assessment tools can support treatment planning.

76% of participants did not identify an element of the training that could be improved or that they would have liked covered more in depth, with remaining participants providing feedback that will support future training provision with consideration to participant engagement, time for particular content, such as data cleaning tailored to conflicting needs of users, and content focus tailored to specific users needs, such as use and interpretation of the Drug Use Screening Inventory-Revised.

Most participants did not identify additional support that would be needed in a future workshop, with remaining participants identifying that additional one on one support, more time for data cleaning, support interpreting assessment results, having more of their staff attending, and having more follow along instructions during the training and to refer to after the training would be helpful.



AMIS Webinars

The purpose of the *2025-2026 AMIS Webinar Series* was to provide ongoing, practical training and live, weekly, drop-in support for staff at treatment centres.

These sessions focused on optimizing the use of the AMIS platform to manage client records, residential cycles, data reporting, and outreach services effectively for the AMIS users.

Here were the main themes for each session in the cycle:

System Setup and Configuration

- **Focus:** Setting up centre information, residential cycles, outreach programs/ services, and utilizing help desk resources
- **Dates:** April 2, June 11, August 20, October 29, 2025

Client Record Management

- **Focus:** Adding, editing, and managing client data, with specific instructions for continuous intake centres
- **Dates:** April 16, June 25, September 3, November 12, 2025

Residential Cycles and Dashboard

- **Focus:** Managing clients in cycles, discharging, and reviewing cycle dashboard widgets (or summarizing data from various sources into charts, metrics, or graphs)
- **Dates:** April 30, July 9, September 17, November 26, 2025

Referrals and Data Transfer

- **Focus:** Accepting/referring records, comparing manual versus automated processes
- **Dates:** May 14, July 23, October 1, December 10, 2025

Reporting and Data Review

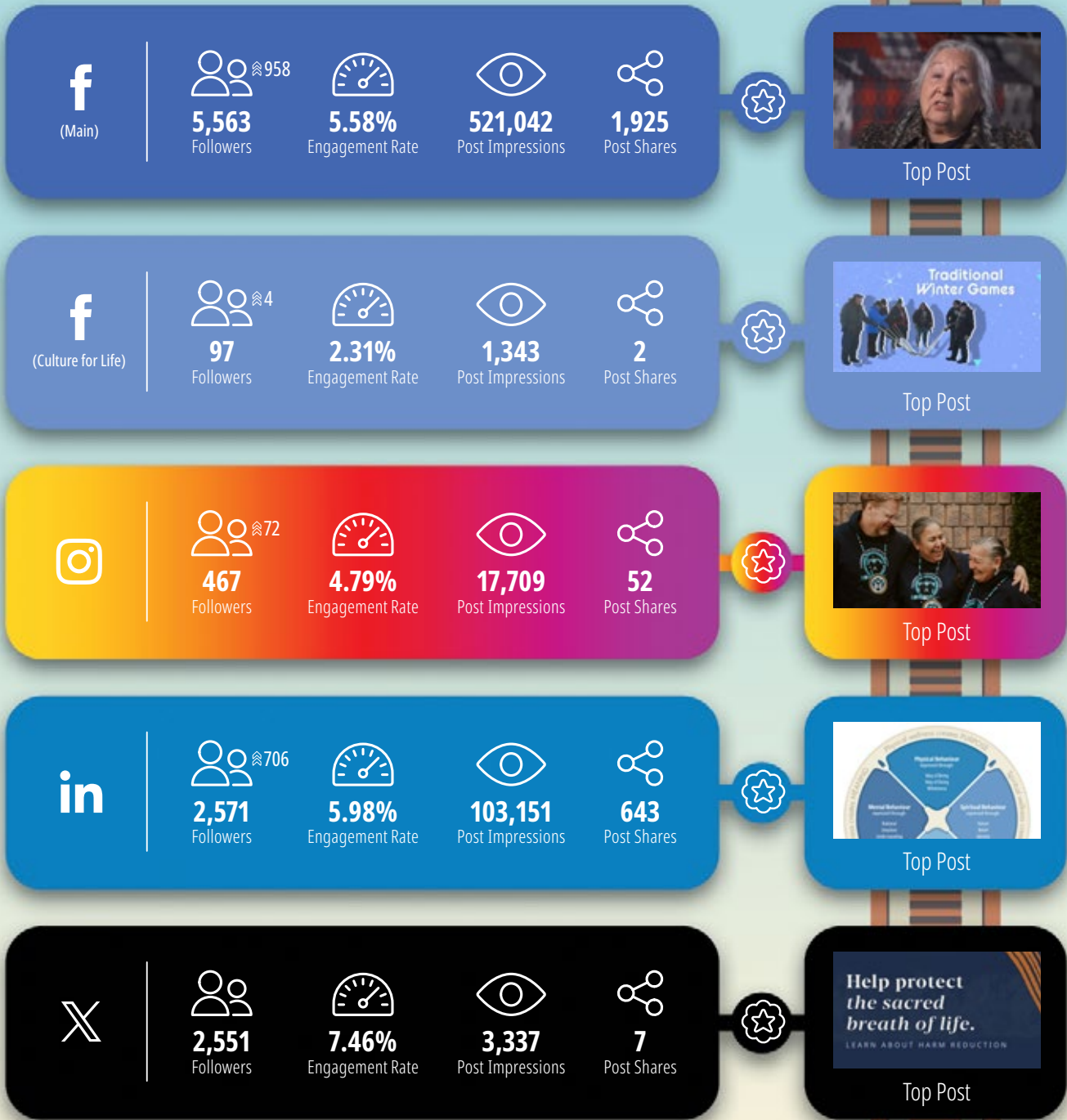
- **Focus:** Using the Client Data Summary Report, updating past episodes of care, and running quarterly/annual reports
- **Dates:** May 28, August 6, October 15, 2025, January 7, 2026

Data Cleaning

- **Focus:** How to clean up client data in preparation for running an annual report - Q&A Session
- **Dates:** January 21, February 4 & 18, March 4 & 18 2026

Wendat (Huron) pattern

Social Media and Web Statistics



Pueblo pattern

Digital Rematriation

In five years, since the project began, Thunderbird's graphic designers have carefully reproduced 150 different historical Indigenous patterns into digital replicas. These digital patterns are housed in Thunderbird's online Indigenous Pattern Library which is readily accessible and easy to navigate. Each pattern in the library has its own detail page which includes its name, image, territory location, and map.

The process to reproduce patterns involves carefully studying historical source material, often from museum and archival collections, and recreating patterns in digital form with close attention to colour, shape, balance, and detail. Thunderbird prioritizes patterns with clear sourcing information and approaches the work with respect for the communities these designs come from. In this sense, the library also reflects a form of digital rematriation – returning visual knowledge to contemporary use so it can live beyond colonial archives and support Indigenous visibility in the present.

These patterns now play an important role in Thunderbird's visual identity, appearing across communications materials in ways that support more meaningful and culturally grounded design. Through the Indigenous Pattern Library, Thunderbird continues to support visual communications that honour the richness and diversity of Indigenous cultures across Turtle Island. See the Indigenous Pattern Library here - <https://thunderbirdpf.org/patterns>

Camping Toolkit

Thunderbird developed the Camping Toolkit as part of a youth-centred project grounded in culture-based wellness and land-based learning. Created for workers, organizations, and groups supporting Indigenous youth, the resource encourages camping experiences that help strengthen connection to Creation, culture, and one another.

Grounded in teachings shared by Elder Gene Cada and Elder Gloria McGregor Oshkabewisens, the toolkit brings together fire teachings, water teachings, Elder and youth interaction, and medicine teachings. It invites facilitators to see camping as a space for reflection, relationship, and cultural learning.

Alongside these teachings, the toolkit includes practical supports to help make land-based camps safer and easier to plan. A facilitator guide offers safety and logistics considerations, recommended equipment lists, icebreaker ideas, and tips for leading camps in culturally respectful ways. It encourages facilitators to understand the territory they are on, connect with local Indigenous knowledge holders where possible, and approach the experience with care.

The toolkit was also designed to feel welcoming and engaging for youth. Its bright, illustrated style helps bring the resource to life, making the content feel approachable while reflecting the spirit of being on the land. By pairing practical guidance with cultural teachings in a format that feels accessible and visually inviting, the toolkit creates more opportunities for youth to learn from Elders, build relationships, and carry teachings forward.



Myaamia (Miami) pattern



First Nations OAT Decision Making Tool

First Nations communities often face significant barriers to care, including limited access to opioid agonist therapy (OAT), prescribers, and pharmacies. The rising toll of opioid-related harms in First Nations communities across Canada has motivated Thunderbird to create an accessible, evidence based, and culturally grounded resource to support recovery and wellness. The knowledge tool, titled *Which Medicines Will Support My Recovery from Opioid Addiction?*, offers a guide to support informed decision-making about OAT medications and culture-based healing for First Nations individuals recovering from opioid addiction.

This 12-page resource (published 2025) adapts clinical guidance from META:PHI's OAT knowledge tool and integrates it with the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework. It provides plain-language explanations of OAT options (e.g., methadone, buprenorphine/naloxone, naltrexone, Kadian) alongside Indigenous healing approaches rooted in connection, ceremony, land, and community. The tool is designed for use by clients, families, and providers, and supports dialogue around culturally safe, person-centred care. By highlighting both medication-assisted recovery and First Nations Knowledge of healing and wellness, it represents a strengths based and decolonizing approach to recovery support resources.



New Recovery Tool for First Nation Communities

Methamphetamine use and addiction have become a considerable and growing health concern in First Nations communities across Canada. *Supporting First Nations Recovery from Methamphetamine Addiction: Sharing Knowledge and Culture-based Approaches to Healing* is a new knowledge tool developed by Thunderbird to promote culturally grounded, evidence-based approaches for individuals, families, and communities responding to the methamphetamine crisis.

While no pharmacologic treatments for methamphetamine addiction are currently approved in Canada, this tool highlights First Nations culture as a powerful foundation for healing and wellness. It features information on spirit-centred care, land-based activities, and culture-based teachings, as well as Western harm reduction and counselling approaches.

It also outlines the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual impacts of methamphetamine use and provides culture-based strategies to support recovery across its stages. Grounded in the Indigenous Wellness Framework, this tool promotes a holistic approach to recovery to support First Nations individuals and communities affected by methamphetamine addiction.



New Proaction Resource Launched in 2025

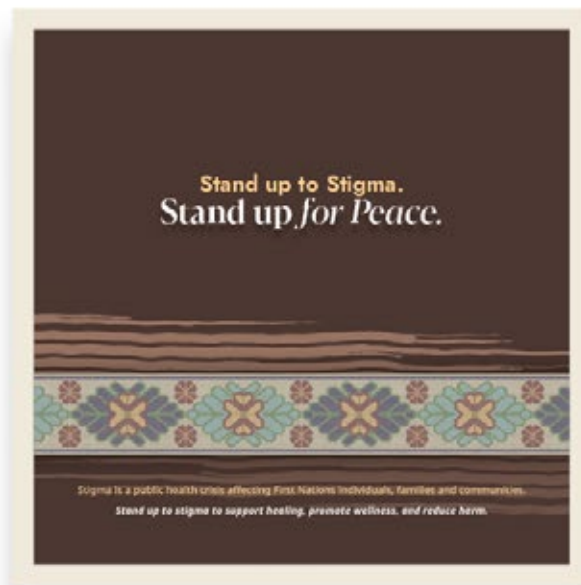
Thunderbird has further supported a proaction approach to addressing stigma by developing a new resource: *Stand Up to Stigma. Stand Up for Peace.* It was created this past year to address stigma as a barrier to healing, wellness, and harm reduction for First Nations individuals, families, and communities. The resource frames stigma as a public health crisis, far beyond a personal or social issue, because it continues the harms of colonization by isolating people, reinforcing harmful judgments, and blocking pathways to care.

Grounded in First Nations worldviews, *Stand Up to Stigma. Stand Up for Peace.* encourages a shift away from blame and shame and toward dignity, compassion, and peace-making. It explores how stigma can affect people's sense of Hope, Belonging, Meaning, and Purpose, and how self-stigma can shape the way people see themselves and their place in the world. Rather than accepting harmful assumptions about substance use, mental illness, trauma, recovery, or culture-based practices, the resource calls on readers to stand up for peace by responding to stigma with curiosity, empathy, and care.

A key strength of the resource is its practical approach. It pairs common stigmatizing beliefs with destigmatizing, peace-making responses that reflect a more informed and compassionate understanding of substance use and addiction. It also highlights ways to reduce stigma in practice such as

- using people-first language,
- offering wraparound support,
- valuing Indigenous Knowledge and healing practices, and
- upholding the right of First Nations people to participate in culture and identity without judgment or exclusion.

Throughout, the resource reinforces that healing from the harms of stigma is possible. It reminds readers that every person deserves dignity, Belonging, and support, and that peace-making begins with how we choose to see and respond to one another. By linking stigma reduction to cultural teachings and wellness, *Stand Up to Stigma. Stand Up for Peace.* is a grounded tool for reflection and change that is easily accessible online.

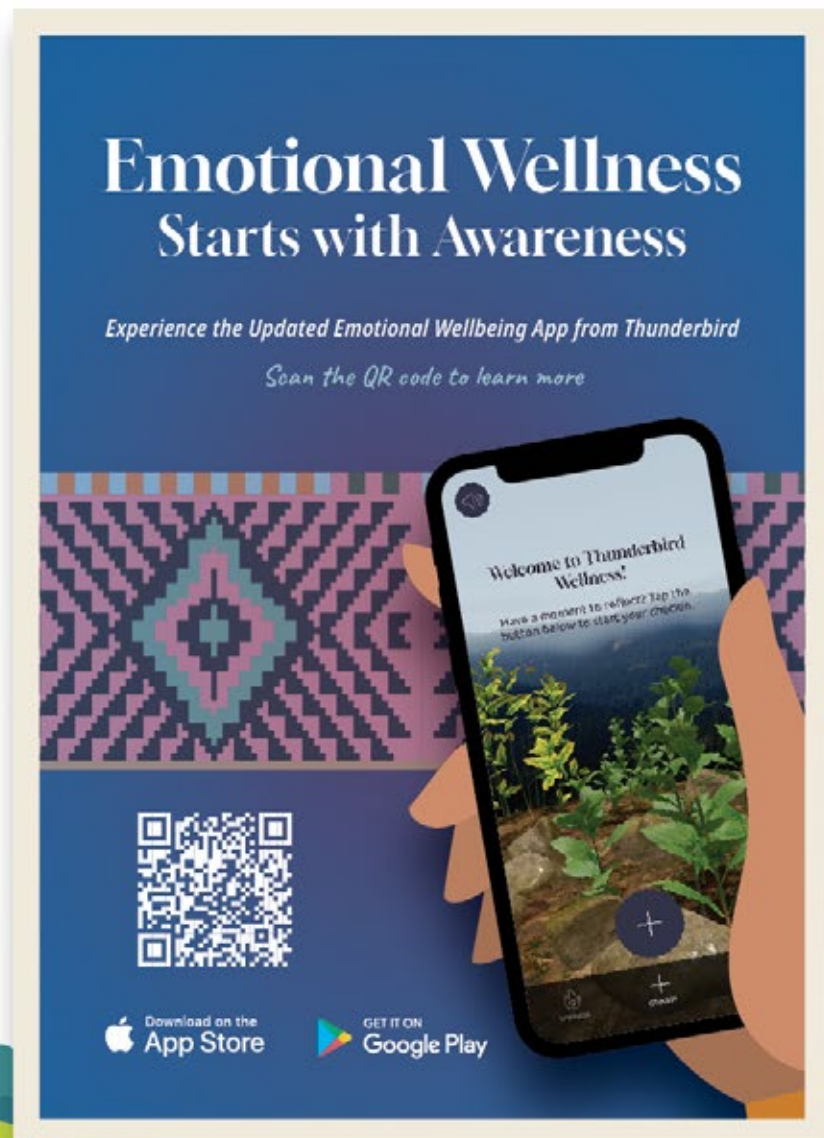


Release of Updated Thunderbird Wellness App

Early in 2025, Thunderbird released a newly revamped version of the Thunderbird Wellness App which is available on both the iOS App Store and Google Play. The redevelopment focused on translating Indigenous Knowledge into interactive activities that support users in exploring the four directions of wellness - mind, body, heart, and spirit. The app was designed with particular consideration for individuals experiencing the impacts of complex trauma, offering accessible, strengths-based tools to support healing and self-reflection.

The app was developed in collaboration with a working group of subject matter experts in Indigenous mental health, Knowledge Keepers, and an Elder. Their guidance ensured the app is culturally grounded and reflective of Indigenous worldviews. The content is organized around four guiding questions that support Indigenous wellness, with activities designed to help users strengthen their relationships with themselves and others through emotional awareness and connection.

The app was publicly released on November 21, 2025, and was piloted at the National First Nations Substance Use Summit hosted by Thunderbird in February 2026, where it received positive feedback and strong initial engagement. Ongoing updates and improvements will continue to be made as user feedback is gathered, ensuring the app remains responsive to community needs and experiences.



Recruitment Data

For the fiscal year 4 interns and 11 employees were hired for different positions in the organization. These are all of the positions that were filled for this year.

Teams	Positions	Number of Hires
Mental Wellness Coordination	Regional Mental Wellness Coordinator	2
Policy & Partnerships	Interns	4
	Research Analyst	1
	Youth Engagement Lead	1
	Conference Coordinator	1
	Executive Administrative Assistant	1
Training & Education	Administrative Support Officer	1
	Facilitator Coach Navigator	2
Operations	Finance and Administrative Support Assistant	1
Research	Addictions Program Coordinator	1
Total		15

Unangas (Aleut) pattern

The total staff headcount of Thunderbird as of March 2026 is 39 employees and 4 interns. Below is the breakdown of the staff reporting in the Headquarters (Delaware Nation), the London, Ontario Office and employees reporting remotely in the different provinces.



HEADQUARTERS

Delaware Nation (11)

- Chief Executive Officer
- Executive Administrative Assistant
- Project Coordinator
- Finance Manager
- Senior Administrative Officer
- Evaluation & CQI Coordinator
- Training & Education Manager
- Training Coordinator
- Trainer (2)
- Training Administrative Support Officer
- Senior Epidemiologist



OFFICE

London, Ontario (9)

- Operations Manager
- Inventory Specialist
- Human Resources Coordinator
- Knowledge Mobilization Specialist
- Policy Analyst/Writer
- Research Analyst
- Curriculum Developer
- General Administrative Support Officer
- Epidemiologist



REMOTE

Ontario (14)

- National Mental Wellness Coordinator
- Addictions Program Coordinator (2)
- French Language Translator
- Graphic Designer
- Writer / Editor
- Facilitator Coach-Navigator
- Virtual Learning Systems Navigator
- Instructional Design and Development Specialist
- Trainer
- Public Health Masters Student Interns (4)

British Columbia (4)

- Full Stack Developer
- Creative Lead
- Regional Mental Wellness Coordinator
- Conference Coordinator

Alberta (3)

- Communications Manager
- Research Manager
- Regional Mental Wellness Coordinator

Manitoba (2)

- Addictions Program Coordinator
- Regional Mental Wellness Coordinator

Saskatchewan (1)

- Youth Engagement Lead

Resources Distributed / Lending Library



HOS
2,008



FNMWC
2,306



FNMWC Wheels
1,602



Cannabis Info
746



Opioid Info
3,521



Training Workbooks
4,479



Training Resources
9,733



Service Delivery Models
1,720



Annual Report
1,008



Thunderbird USB sticks
2,646



Life Promotion Toolkit
3,460



French Resources
464



Workforce Bundle
4,639



Connecting with Culture
2,379



Northern Public Health Reports
1,025



Framework, Thunderbird Info and Cotton Bags
7,023



BIRCH
347



Workforce Advocacy and Support
1,177



AMIS Resources
1,741



Youth Resources
402



Various Reports
568



Internet Sticks
22



Laptops
21



Naloxone Kits
30,050

Kiowa Apache pattern

Financial Overview



Assets

Current Assets

CIBC Chequing Account	10,225,928.81
CIBC Alberta Treatment Standards	6,344.01
Investment Account	383,446.50
Accounts Receivable	386,514.70
Payroll Clearing Account	(101,377.77)
HST Recoverable Current Year	101,655.95
Prepaid Expenses	176,108.70
	11,178,620.90

Fixed Assets

Furniture and Equipment	115,578.95
Board Room Equipment	123,724.76
Computer Hardware	222,951.86
Computer Software	14,544.91
Less Accumulated Depreciation	282,455.30
	194,345.18

\$11,372,966.08



Summary of Revenue and Expenditure

Revenue

ISC - Core and Project Funding	9,174,236.00
Other	651,856.00
	\$9,826,092.00

Expenses

ISC - Core and Project Funding	9,397,055.00
Other	235,252.00
	\$9,632,307.00

Excess Revenues Over Expenses	\$193,785.00
Deferred Revenue	\$11,154,012.00

Deferred revenue priorities will include maintaining current programming and projects; continued distribution of naloxone kits to stakeholders.

Managing Change

As Thunderbird looks to manage change towards strategic goals for the coming decade, this year's *OVS (Organizational Vital Signs)* survey sought to seek and analyze staff input through a lens focused on an outcome of evolving the organization.

The OVS survey measures employees' relationship with and within the organization. It has been administered at Thunderbird frequently since 2013, and most recently in 2025. Using the principles of emotional intelligence, the OVS survey analysis helps identify ways to best support staff moving forward.

Thunderbird's 2025 OVS survey results were reviewed by managers with additional analyses completed after that. The 2025 results showed improvement in two areas of note, including a 7% increase in organization engagement levels and fewer staff (2% reduction) reporting as *disengaged*.

To support completion of the OVS (previous years saw less than complete staff participation), two information sessions (instead of regular staff meetings) were held in July 2025 with time allotted within the meeting to complete the survey. The results showed a participation rate of 92%, which is an increase over 2024's participation rate of 89%. Previous iterations of the OVS relied on staff to complete the survey on their own (work) time. Also, staff who were unable to attend both meetings this time were sent reminders about the survey.

Thunderbird will continue to manage and evolve the organization by consulting with staff and integrating feedback and findings into the plans moving forward.



Hoocqk (Ho-Chunk) pattern

Critical Updates to a Foundational Framework

Honouring Our Strengths: A Renewed Framework to Address Substance Use Issues Among First Nations People in Canada (HOS) was published in 2011 and has been foundational to the work of Thunderbird Partnership Foundation.

Thunderbird worked with a group of First Nations Elders, Knowledge Keepers, researchers, and clinicians to develop a second edition of HOS titled *A Framework to Support Substance Use Health for First Nations Wellness in Canada* (HOS-2). A wide range of stakeholders across the country were engaged through knowledge gathering tools, in-person consultations and virtual workshops. Thunderbird also partnered with the First Nations Housing Professionals Association to conduct a community-perspective survey on the experiences of housing and addiction to inform the new edition (HOS-2).

The new content focused on key topics:

- the drug crisis
- complex trauma
- anti-Indigenous racism
- community safety
- housing with wrap around supports
- health emergency management
- substance-induced psychosis

Statistics and language were also updated in the new edition with an added focus on eliminating stigmatizing content and increasing the strength-based approach. Thunderbird is working with its partners at the Assembly of First Nations to engage the Chiefs-in-Assembly to support the HOS-2 edition through a resolution to endorse it as the national policy document for First Nations substance use health services.



Myaamia (Miami) pattern

National Treatment Program Curriculum

Thunderbird's long-term business plan includes the development of a standardized curriculum or series of educational modules that ensure the workforce has the information and programming they require to provide services based on needs and priorities.

During 2025-2026, Thunderbird's project team completed important milestones including updating the Maamawi Kanaakiimi (or project charter), critical path and workplan. This involved visioning how the curriculum content could be structured and understanding how the project is interconnected with Thunderbird's other work and especially the National Mental Wellness Workforce Association and BIRCH, the National Virtual Treatment Program.

Curriculum content is centred on client needs and priorities and relates these, where appropriate, to the core competencies of the workforce association.

Next steps involve the development of internal and external working groups to determine needs and then a schedule of module development. This work is set to begin early in 2026.



National Mental Wellness Workforce Association

Thunderbird and First Peoples Wellness Circle have been working together to develop a guiding framework for a national association for Indigenous mental wellness workers such as substance use treatment workers, mental wellness teams, residential school support workers and affiliated workforces.

With culture as the foundation, the association will ensure the availability of quality mental wellness workers across Canada.

In 2025-2026, First Peoples Wellness Circle contracted the Firelight Group for help in synthesizing the competency work already completed by the project partners. Firelight was also tasked with providing a draft association framework that could be used to support a business case proposal.

A first draft, the *National Indigenous Mental Wellness Association Roadmap*, was provided in the last quarter of the 2025/26 fiscal year. The roadmap is grounded in the key priorities that came through engagement such as

- clarifying governance roles,
- outlining an initial certification pathway, and
- identifying early foundational pieces including a Code of Ethics and the competency framework.

Rather than duplicating existing organizations and work, the intent is to build on and create space for alignment and partnership.

The Roadmap will be finalized by the end of June 2026 after which the business case will be developed.



Cree - Nêhinaw (Swampy) pattern

Building a National Voice for Indigenous Youth

Last year, in February 2025, Thunderbird launched *Soaring Together: Tools for Life* (soaringtogether.ca) to support First Nations youth with useful resources and information.

The site has since been promoted

- by members of the Community Safety Discussion Group through presentations to a variety of audiences,
- through postcard distribution at events, and
- by Thunderbird through its newsletter and social media channels.

Soaringtogether.ca has seen several thousand visitors during this promotion period. Thunderbird continues to monitor and update the site with input from the group.

The Community Safety Discussion Group has continued to meet to determine ways to enhance the content and visibility of soaringtogether.ca and to further discuss community safety issues. The group also conducted a lessons learned session to record best practices for future projects.

*Soaring
Together*
Tools for Life

soaringtogether.ca



Diné (Navajo) pattern

Internships

Thunderbird has hosted students, who are passionate about supporting First Nations wellness, for internship and practicum opportunities since 2014. These learning opportunities have allowed students from a variety of disciplines to contribute to meaningful, First Nations community-informed work while gaining hands-on experience in a collaborative and supportive environment.

During the past year, Thunderbird welcomed four young adults to complete practicum placements, and one other was hired for a summer internship. Here is a glimpse into the students' areas of study and contribution:

- Nya is a Master of Public Health student from the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry at Western University in London Ontario. During her placement, Nya worked with staff to help define complex trauma from a First Nations perspective and identify key skills and competencies needed to support First Nations individuals, families, and communities.
- Jacob is a master's student from the Sport Management and Leadership program at the University of Windsor. Jacob's internship workplan included three smaller projects and one main project focused on supporting Indigenous youth. Through this experience, Jacob expanded his leadership skills while gaining experience managing budgets and deadlines.
- Shreya and Madison are students from the University of Toronto's Master of Public Health in Indigenous Health program. They worked with the Policy and Partnerships team, where their main roles focused on grey literature extraction to inform culture-based workforce competencies for the Complex Trauma Model of Care and developing a report of the engagement strategy that took place amidst the revision of the Honouring our Strengths framework.

Thunderbird is proud to offer a supportive space for students to grow both professionally and personally. Students interested in applying are invited to connect with Thunderbird (via info@thunderbirdpf.org) about current opportunities, application timelines, and current areas of focus.



Partnerships

- Assembly of First Nations
- Federation of Saskatchewan Indigenous Nations
- First Nations Health Managers Association
- First Peoples Wellness Circle
- Global Leadership Exchange
- Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority
- Wharerātā Group



The Global Leadership Exchange (GLE) is an international, non-profit network connecting leaders in mental health, disability, and addiction to share innovation, best practices, and research. By connecting policymakers, funders, and sector leaders, GLE aims to transform services, advance equity, and enhance the lives of people with these needs worldwide. For the 2026 event hosted by Canada, with leadership from the Public Health Agency of Canada, Thunderbird has several roles:

- Co-host the Anti-Indigenous racism match with First Peoples Wellness Circle and First Nations Health Managers Association.
- Host the Wharerātā Group, an Indigenous Leadership Group within the Global Leadership Group.
- Organize a First Nations Culture-based welcome for international guests.
- Promote the Healing Our Spirit Worldwide, 10th Gathering.

Grants and Awards

McConnell Foundation

Three-year support grant to work with the Integrated Youth Services (IYS) Indigenous Network and provincial/territorial IYS initiatives to deliver trainings and capacity building opportunities that can support more culturally responsive approaches to youth mental health in IYS settings.



Canada's Top Mental Health Advocates 2025 Award for Indigenous Mental Health Advocacy

Presented to Carol Hopkins in July 2025.



2025

2026

APRIL**META:PHI 2025 Conference**

Virtual Presentation: Kate Turner – BIRCH - Developing a Virtual Hub for Substance Use Treatment Programming within First Nations Communities

FPWC Mental Wellness Gathering

Presentation: Deanna Jones-Keeshig and Tina Linklater – Developing a Culture-based Model of Care for Complex Trauma to Support First Nation Community Specific Approaches

MAY**Canadian Counselling Psychotherapy Association Conference, Calgary**

Workshop: Carol Hopkins – Pre-conference workshop for Indigenous Circle Chapter on implementing the use of the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework in clinical and community practice.

Keynote Address: Carol Hopkins and Brenda Restoule – First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum framework

JUNE**Mik'Maq Confederacy of PEI: Health Emergency Management Gathering**

Keynote Address: Carol Hopkins – First Nations Mental Wellness Needs in Emergency Planning, Response, and Recovery

JULY**Canada's Top Advocate in Indigenous Mental Health – Recognition Event**

Recipient Speech: Carol Hopkins

AUGUST**Chiefs of Ontario First Nations Community Wellness Conference**

Communities Alliances And Networks Webinar: Carol Hopkins – Indigenous Harm Reduction

Workshop: Carol Hopkins – First Nations Experiences of Complex Trauma

SEPTEMBER**Canadian Mental Health Conference**

Keynote Panel with Dr. James Makokis – Reconciliation and Mental Health

Manitoba First Nations Treatment Directors

Update: Carol Hopkins – Thunderbird Partnership Foundation Update on Priorities

OCTOBER**Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami**

Presentation: Shawna Olson – Addictions Management System Development and the Native Wellness Assessment

NOVEMBER**First Nations Health Managers Association Conference**

Presentation: Joanne MacMillan – Update of the Honouring Our Strengths: A Renewed Framework to Address Substance Use Among First Nations in Canada

Presentation: Carol Hopkins and Mae Katt – Confronting the Crisis: Working Together to Improve Medical Treatment of Opioid Use Disorder

Presentation: Kate Turner – BIRCH: A Virtual Hub for Substance Use Treatment Programming within First Nations Communities

CCSA Issues of Substance Use Conference, Halifax

Breakout Discussion: Nya Elijah and Katie Hoffman – A Literature Review on Complex Trauma from a First Nations perspective: Preliminary Results

Breakout Discussion: Carol Hopkins and Joanne MacMillan – Update of the Honouring Our Strengths: A Renewed Framework to Address Substance Use Among First Nations People in Canada

Breakout Discussion: Mary Deleary – Reclaiming Indigenous Resiliency and Hope

Panel: Kate Turner, Mary Deleary and Elaine Toombs – Culture in Virtual Care Environments: A Virtual Hub for Substance Use Treatment Programming Within First Nations Communities (BIRCH) and Further Considerations for Wise Practices in a Digital Age

Presentation: Majd Radhaa and Stephanie McConkey – Assessing the impact of Treatment and Healing on Indigenous Wellness Outcomes: Results from the Addictions Management Information System 2023-2024

Workshop: Jessica Ford and Carrie Miller – Buffalo Riders Early Intervention Program for First Nations Youth

Workshop: Jody-Ann Henry, Jessica Ford and Kayla Vick – Let's Talk Cannabis: Digital Tool resources for Connecting With First Nations Youth About Cannabis

Six Nations of the Grand River

Presentation: Carol Hopkins – Indigenous Harm Reduction

JANUARY**Saskatchewan Climate Change, Health Emergency Management and Mental Wellness Gathering**

Presentation: Carol Hopkins – Creating the Conditions for Resilient Communities: A Public Health Approach to Emergencies

Manitoba First Nations AIDS/HIV & STBBI Working Group

Presentation: Joanne MacMillan, Nya Elijah & Tina Linklater – Providing Insights into the Complex Trauma Model of Care for First Nations

FEBRUARY**3rd Annual Frontline Workers Forum, Fredericton**

Presentation: Carol Hopkins – Creating the Conditions for Resilient Communities: A Public Health Approach to Emergencies

Health Forum, Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat, Moncton

Presentation: Carol Hopkins – Creating the Conditions for Resilient Communities: A Public Health Approach to Emergencies

Chiefs of Ontario 19th Annual Health Forum, Toronto

Keynote: Deanna Jones-Keeshig – Complex Trauma Among First Nations and Building a Culture-based Model of Care

Presentation/Launch: Katie Hoffman and Nya Elijah – Complex Trauma Knowledge Gathering Tool

First Nations Early Learning and Child Care Conference (FNECC)

Presentation: Tina Linklater – Complex Trauma Among First Nations Youth and Building a Culture-based Model of Care

2026 National First Nations Substance Use Summit

Presentation: Carol Hopkins with Brenda Restoule – Developing the National First Nation Mental Wellness Workforce Association Framework

Presentation: Nicole Semenoff – Planning the 10th Healing Our Spirit Worldwide Gathering

Presentations (3): Katie Hoffman and Nya Elijah – Providing Insights into the Complex Trauma First Nations Model of Care

Presentation: Jennifer Bridle and Mary Deleary – Child and Family Services (CFS) Mental Wellness Workforce - Training Needs

MARCH**West Region Tribal Council NNADAP and Wellness Team**

Presentation: Nya Elijah, Tina Linklater and Joanne MacMillan – Providing Insights into the Complex Trauma Model of Care

Cree - nēhiyawak (Plains) pattern



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