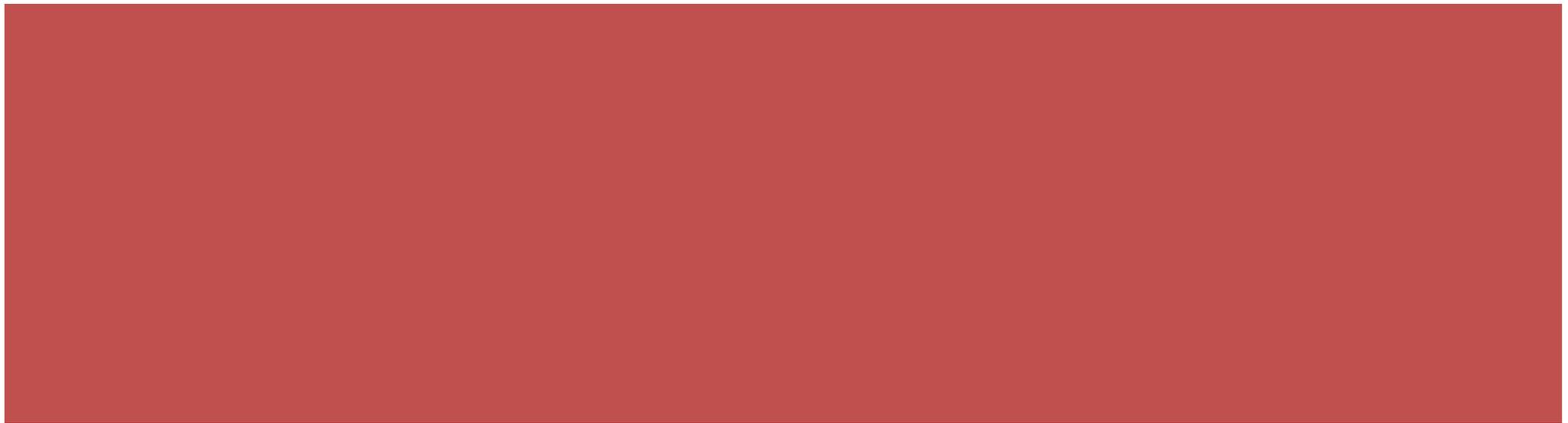


Transforming the Future: Building Mental Wellness Through Culture



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Substance Use & Misuse



It is anticipated the COVID-19 pandemic has created a backlog of needs for services and long-wait lists due to closure or limited access during the pandemic

Substance use frequencies in First Nations were 4-6% higher in severity (20 or more times per month) during the pandemic (March 2020 – Jan 2021) compared to pre-pandemic (April 2019 – Feb 2020) for alcohol, tobacco, stimulants, opioids, sedatives, and hallucinogens.*



However, for some First Nation communities, there was a decline in substance use during the pandemic.

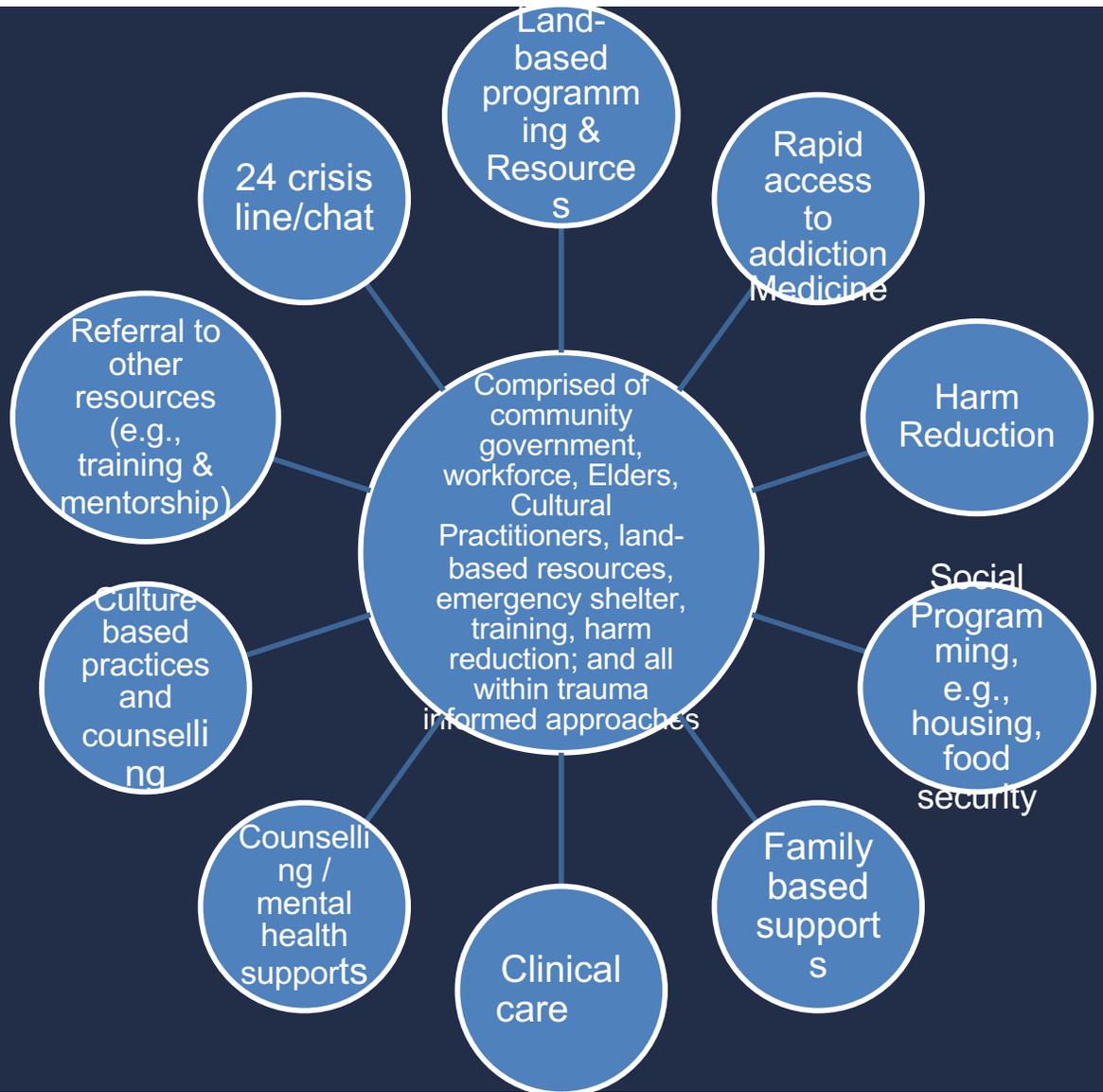
Reasons:

- Increase support by clinicians and community culture, funding, and uptake of on the land activities & programming
- New and/or increased access to virtual support services
- Community engagement and commitment towards ensuring protection against COVID-19
- Public health restrictions/community lockdowns limited access to substances such as alcohol & drugs

*Based on analysis of First Nations data using the First Nations Opioid and Methamphetamine survey, the Drug Use Screening Inventory-Revised, and the Native Wellness Assessment from the First Nations Addiction Management Information System which collects data from the National Native Alcohol Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP) and National Youth Substance Abuse Program (NYSAP) treatment centres across Canada.

Hub and Spoke Model For Community Based Addictions Program

6. Northern Public Health Working Group on Mental Wellness, 2021 (unpublished report)



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Substance Use & Misuse Recommendations

- Harm Reduction
- Community Capacity
- Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine
- Culturally Appropriate and Relevant Service Providers
- Community Based Solutions
- Investments

Workforce Wellness



Workforce Wellness Factors



Impacts on Workforce Wellness

1. Demonstrate expertise in trauma and healing, complex grief, intergenerational learning and land-based healing
2. Recognition that workforce often hold multiple roles – work and personal life/roles not easily separable.
 - Workers must navigate complex and sensitive decisions when responding to community needs.
 - More susceptible to exposure to multiple forms of trauma with more complex impacts to the worker.
3. Strategies and process to manage ethical dilemmas when a worker holds multiple roles may be challenged
4. Elders and cultural practitioners are often engaged in supporting wellbeing of multiple groups such as workers, individuals, family and community even if they are not part formally acknowledged as a part of the workforce

Impacts on Workforce Wellness

5. Workforce must be skilled in navigating and negotiating within colonial structures and systems.
 - More likely to experience racism, discrimination and other forms of interpersonal violence.
6. High expectations of the workforce by community, leaders, funders and other professions. May be excessively criticized for their response (or lack of).
7. Large and complex workloads
8. Complex crisis and adequacy of crisis response
9. Imposed structures
10. Needs of unpaid workforce such as volunteers, translators or those in other systems (i.e, teachers)
11. Cultural competency
12. Scarcity of resources (health, human, financial)

Investments in Workforce Wellness





Key Takeaways



Community governance is key to effective service delivery, ensuring cultural safety and a whole of community response



Land and connection to land is critical for wellness. Land based services serve a continuum of care: from health promotion to intervention, for support to individuals and families



Substance use challenges and life promotion efforts must be supported through culture and land



There are key variables that stand out for communities that are managing problematic substance use:

- rapid access to addictions medicine through partnerships with clinicians for community based virtual and in-person services,
- collaboration with culture-based practitioners and land-based services, investment in community development,
- support for families and loved ones struggling with addiction,
- trauma informed approach
- Key partnerships for workforce development

Key Takeaways



Language use and cultural support require sustained investments



Equity in health, education, culture and language is asserting rights for First Nations people



Investment in First Nation evidence and knowledge



Decolonizing systems to better respond to First Nation challenges and gaps and the workforce



Leveraging partnerships and training to improve quality of care



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