

THE DEADLY CRISIS IN OUR BACKYARD

Photo: Wendy D. Photography

It's been six years since the opioid crisis was declared a public health emergency.

Since then, more than 9,000 people have died in B.C. That's three times more than COVID-19 related-deaths in the province.

What would it look like if our governments, communities, and businesses tackled the deadly opioid crisis with the same level of resources, attention, vigour, and urgency as we did with COVID-19?

Deaths due to the poisoned drug supply have become the second leading cause of death in B.C. after cancer.* Take a moment to let that sink in.

SECOND. LEADING. CAUSE.

The response to COVID was swift; focused on mitigating deaths and controlling the spread of the virus. We ask you, shouldn't we see the same level of response for the opioid crisis? **This is happening in our own backyard, a crisis far more disruptive and deadly than COVID, yet the response has been grotesquely different.**

During the pandemic, a series of one-time funding streams were rapidly made available. Governments quickly mobilized. Stats were shared daily. Despite being deadlier—and worsening by the day—the poisoned drug supply has continued to worsen.

The opioid crisis affects EVERYONE who walks through our doors. If not directly, then indirectly, as people continue to lose loved ones to a poisoned drug supply. We continue to lose valuable members of our community. Participants are losing their lives or losing those around them.

This is why your support is so crucial. As we come out of emergency COVID response, we continue to battle this deadly crisis. We are extremely proud to have delivered Peer Witnessing for the last few months, but must remember that WISH is not an overdose prevention site.

Yet, we see overdoses every day, and on every shift, at WISH. Your donations mean WISH can be more than a safe space to use.

Your donations help us connect participants to life-changing mental health and addiction resources and provide one-on-one supports for meeting long-term healing and recovery goals. Please help us navigate this far deadlier, more disruptive, and ongoing crisis.

**In terms of potential years of life lost*

IMPROVING SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS PARTICIPANTS

Indigenous Health and Safety Program

Spring 2022 brings the redesign and re-launch of the Indigenous Health & Safety Program (IHSP) at WISH.

The program offers cultural healing that centers participants' mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being. It uplifts participants' lived experience, knowledge, and expertise, and provides culturally-safe one-on-one support.

The re-design and re-launch of the program began with the creation of a Manager of Indigenous Inclusion position plus the creation of two additional positions: an Indigenous Inreach worker and an IHSP Supervisor.

The reopening of the IHSP classroom allows for a re-imagining of what programming looks like when it is grounded in ceremony, supporting participants to reclaim connection to culture, land, and language.

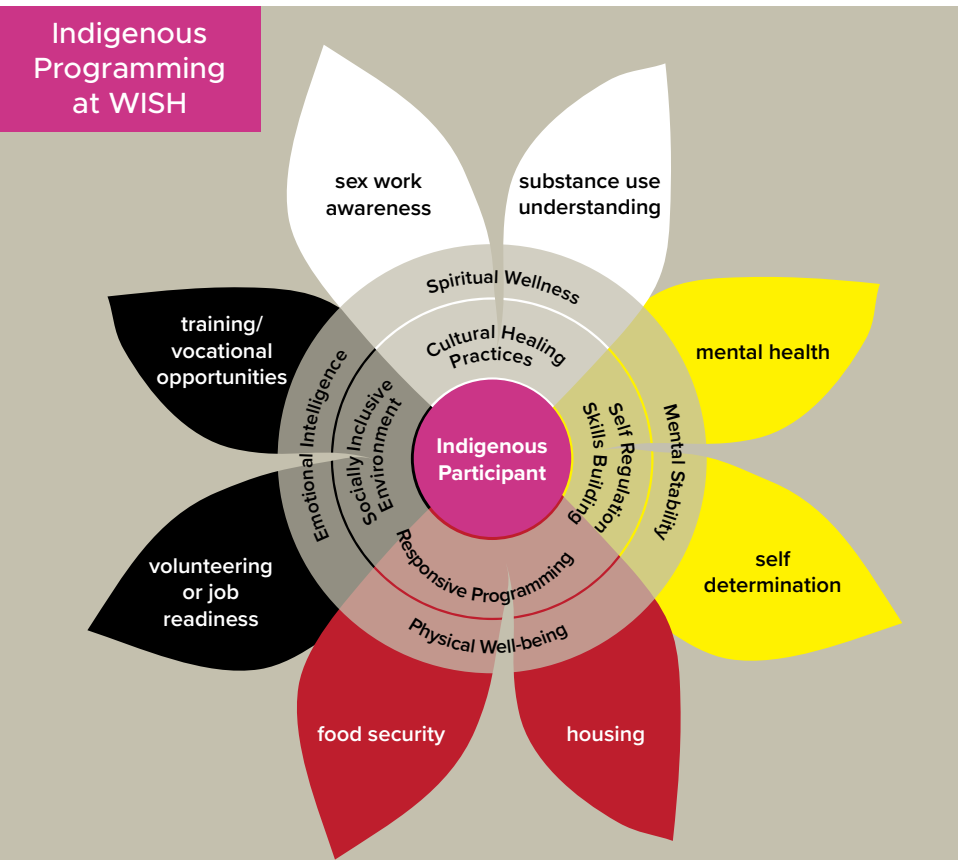
Through reclamation of traditional healing, alongside culturally-safe support and advocacy, the program addresses the impacts of daily colonial violence on the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health of Indigenous participants.

Delivered by Indigenous staff, Elders, and peers, IHSP focuses on offering a space to reclaim community-care, self-love, joy, creativity, and self-determination.

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Above: Pictured in the middle, Matriarchs Carleen Thomas from Tsleil-Waututh Nation, Clarissa Antone from Squamish Nation, and Mary Point from Musqueam Nation, join WISH on the National Day for Truth & Reconciliation, offering blessings to continue doing our work on their lands.



Spotlight on WISH's in-house Elder

Kwaakwii, also known as Elder Terri, is a proud Haida woman from Haida Gwaii, who moved to the Lower Mainland about 30 years ago.

She first came to WISH three years ago when her sister told her about an Indigenous-led program. **"I was glad that there was a program like that for our women to get back to their traditions and culture and sharing that with them,"** she says.

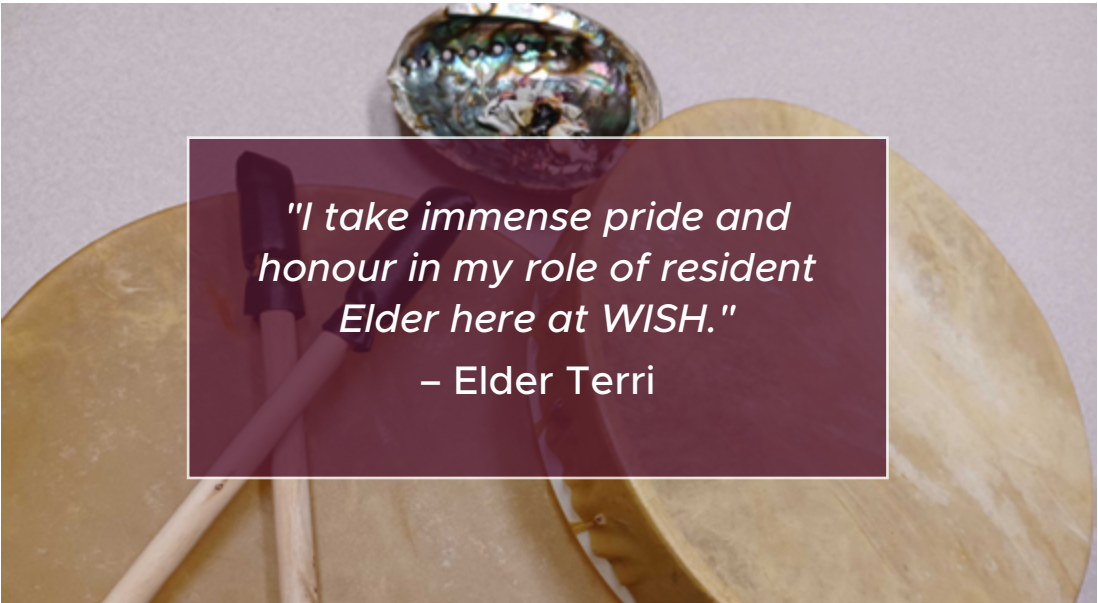
Elder Terri's journey began as a participant in the program and in less than three years she became WISH's in-house Elder. "I take immense pride and honour in my role of resident Elder here at WISH," she shares. She now helps guide the program in addition to attending group sessions to offer support and teachings to participants.

"I bring diverse experiences working with health care, legal, non-profit organizations, and it is especially here where I thrive and feel a sense of belonging," Elder Terri adds. **"I believe taking a culturally-centered approach means listening and softening the heart."**

When asked what she would like others to know about IHSP she highlights the importance of healing. "The healing part was really important for me. It changed my life. The cultural activities validated me," she explains.

Elder Terri says being a resident Elder brings her joy as she gets to share her knowledge and wisdom with the community.

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"I take immense pride and honour in my role of resident Elder here at WISH."
– Elder Terri



Photos: Hannah Morgan

MAP VAN TO STAY ON THE ROAD THANKS TO PROVINCE OF B.C.



Photo: Iman Baobeid/Megaphone

We are head over wheels! We're extremely excited to announce WISH has been granted the funding needed to replace the aging, and soon-to be retired, Mobile Access Project (MAP) Van.

Since adding the day shift more than two years ago, the van is in use 12 hours a day, every day of the week, every week of the year.

With more than **110,000km** on the odometer, the van is experiencing frequent breakdowns and costly repairs. But thanks to the Province of B.C., and with specific support from Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equity, Grace Lore, Minister David Eby's office, Minister Mike Farnworth's office, and BC Housing, we have secured funding to replace our MAP Van.

"The staff, support and connections this program provides is unique and critical to ensuring sex workers safety. Congratulations, WISH!"

– Grace Lore, Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equity

The funding will also cover costs to add the required storage for harm reduction supplies, clothing donations, and food.

Without an outreach van, it would be impossible to meet and support sex workers outside of WISH. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you.



Photo: Iman Baobeid/Megaphone



One of our biggest annual fundraising events is back! This year's Charity Challenge (formerly the Scotiabank Charity Challenge) is back as an in-person event on June 26, 2022. If you're not quite ready to join in person, you can also participate virtually and run or walk any day between May 27 and June 26!

You can register as an individual or as a team, and ask your friends, family and co-workers to support your fundraising goal. Or, if walking/running isn't your thing, you can still make a donation to the WISH Team. You'll be making a positive impact in the lives of women and gender diverse folks involved in Vancouver's street-based sex trade.

Regardless of how you participate, you'll be raising funds for a cause you care about.

Please support our team in this year's Charity Challenge and help us reach our goal of \$30,000!



Scan the QR code to get started.

