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NEW ★ TRIBE

MAGAZINE



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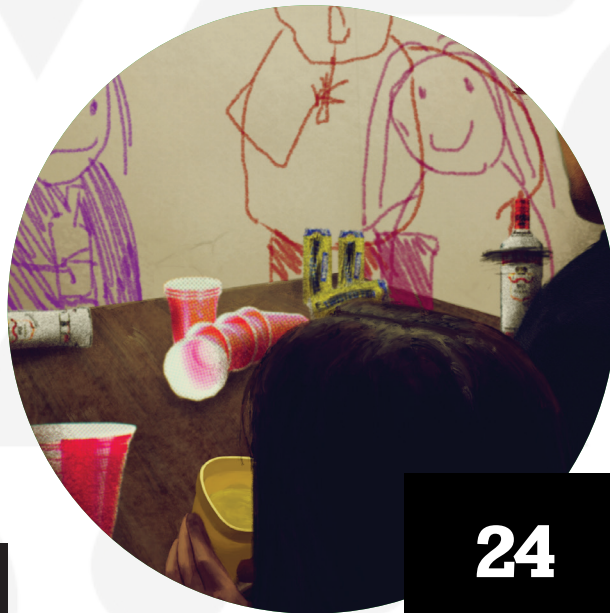
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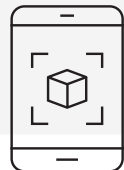
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EDITOR'S NOTE

There are stories we inherit and there are stories we are forced to survive. This Special Edition of New Tribe Magazine exists in that space between the two.

Addiction in Indigenous communities is too often spoken about in isolation, reduced to statistics, stereotypes or silence. But the truth is more complex and more human. Substance use does not begin with the individual; it is rooted in histories of displacement, in the impacts of colonization and in the unresolved trauma carried across generations.

Within these pages, you will find voices that refuse to be reduced. Survival stories that speak honestly about pain, resilience and the long road back. Reflections that honour the ongoing commitment to the Red Road. Teachings from respected Elders who remind us that healing is not new, it has always existed.

We are honoured to feature a powerful conversation with Braden Kadlun, whose sobriety journey speaks to both struggle and possibility. Contributors offer deeply personal reflections on breaking cycles and choosing a different path. Writers such as Julius Hirsch challenge us to confront the historical systems that continue to shape present realities.

Through film, literature and art, contributors including Shaye Trudel, Sydney Hamilton, and others expand this conversation, showing how storytelling itself becomes a form of healing.

My wish is that these stories meet you where you are. That they challenge you, support you and remind you of what is still possible.



Stacey Carefoot (she/her)
Editor, New Tribe Magazine

NEW ★ TRIBE

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About USAY

The Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth (USAY) is a not-for-profit charitable organization located in the heart of Calgary. By nurturing self-empowerment and fostering healthy collaboration and communication USAY strives to enrich the lives of all urban Indigenous youth to ensure healthy future generations. USAY provides free services and programs to Calgary's Indigenous youth.

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USAY would like to thank everyone who helped make this project possible including the members of our Youth Creative Team.

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in the articles are those of the writers and not necessarily those of USAY (the publisher) and the Government of Canada. The publisher accepts no liability or responsibility for plagiarism in the works in this magazine, all writing is presumed to be the original work of the writers.

Alternate Nouns Disclaimer

USAY recognizes that this document contains a number of different nouns when referring to the original inhabitants of Canada. While our preferred noun at USAY is Indigenous, USAY recognizes First Nations, Inuit, and Métis as Indigenous People, we also honour and respect the writing and preferences of our contributors therefore have not made adjustments to their choices. We endeavour to not offend any individuals or groups with this decision.

NTM is a publication distributed free throughout the city of Calgary and beyond. NTM's mission is to promote a positive outlook on Indigenous people living in an urban setting by promoting information sharing within the Indigenous and youth communities.

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GREETINGS FROM USAY

At Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth (USAY), we believe in the strength, resilience and leadership of Indigenous youth. Every story shared, every voice uplifted and every connection made is part of a larger movement toward healing and understanding.

This Special Edition of New Tribe Magazine reflects conversations that are deeply important to our communities. Addiction is not an isolated issue, it is tied to lived experiences, histories and systems that continue to impact Indigenous youth and families today. At USAY, we see firsthand how these challenges are carried, but also how strength and healing show up in everyday ways.

We are continually inspired by the young people who choose to speak their truth, support one another and walk paths of healing. Whether

through culture, community, creativity or connection, Indigenous youth are leading change in ways that deserve to be recognized and supported.

This issue is part of that work. It creates space for honest dialogue, for reflection, and for the sharing of stories that might otherwise go unheard. It also reminds us that healing is possible and that no one walks that journey alone.

We extend our gratitude to all contributors, Elders and community members who shared their voices and teachings. Your words carry knowledge, courage and hope.

To the youth reading this: you are not alone, your story matters and your future is powerful.

For more information about New Tribe Magazine, please reach out to info@usay.ca.

New Tribe Magazine is evolving and we can't wait for you to learn more. Follow the AR instructions to see our New Tribe commercial!



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Blessing

Shared By Elder Doreen Spence
(Bald Eagle Woman Who Leads)

Creator and sustainer of all life,

I humbly ask you to help us as the human family to address and heal the harsh reality of addiction and vitality of the Indigenous culture - colonization, unresolved trauma and systemic barriers that fuel substance abuse among Indigenous youth.

Colonization is still the primary cause of most Indigenous issues. Give us strength to acknowledge our true history of our countries and face those realities.

Please help our youth and all individuals to understand and address these damaging barriers. When one heals, we all benefit and it makes our ancestors happy.

Life is a gift and not a given. Grant our next generations the courage and strength to lead the way forward.

We have many who possess the wisdom and medicine it takes to be that authentic leader. We thank you for hearing and answering our prayers, Hiy, hiy,

Elder Grandmother Dr. Doreen Spence (Bald Eagle Woman Who Leads)



Remember Who You Are

By Julius Hirsch with Elders Reg and Rose Crowshoe

I recently sat down with my grandparents, Reg and Rose, to talk about alcohol and our history. When I was in grade five, a teacher told us that Indigenous people struggled with addiction because our bodies weren't built to handle alcohol. I remember wondering quietly: is something wrong with us? Are we inferior? Are we as Blackfoot people inherently bad?

Growing up in Calgary in the late 2000s, that kind of thinking was always there. But as I've gotten older, I've come to understand that the issues in our community are far more complex. We come from strong, resilient people who have endured countless hardships. We cannot let settlers define who we are or erase our history.

I wanted to learn the truth about our relationship to alcohol—not the imposed narrative but the knowledge carried by our Elders.

Reg explained that before contact, our people already understood intoxicants through natural plants and medicines. These substances were treated with respect. They had spirit and their use was governed through oral laws. Each intoxicant had a song which carried the right and responsibility to use it properly. Without that knowledge, there were consequences. This was our own system of regulation.

Our people also practiced fermentation, creating berry-based drinks. Míini means berry, and aohkii is a liquid. So they call it Míiniaohkii. That was the understanding of alcohol. "The old people identified it as berry liquid. But when they introduced us to stronger stuff like whiskey, it burned our throats. It was hard to drink," explains Reg.

Cont'd >

Mehkskeme-Sukahs, a Blackfoot ancestor depicted in a 1840 print by Swiss Artist Karl Bodmer, whose work remains one of the earliest visual records of the Blackfoot people.

When European alcohol arrived, it was something different—unregulated and unfamiliar. What began as introduction soon became exploitation. By the 1800s, alcohol was used to take advantage of Indigenous people alongside disease and colonial expansion. Populations declined drastically. Even at treaty signings, alcohol was used manipulatively to force agreement.

“At the signing of the treaty, there was one Chief holding out. They got him drunk, so he wouldn’t hold out. It wasn’t just the whiskey traders, it was the government and the priest taking advantage of the alcohol, by getting the Chief drunk,” says Reg.

Rose shared that alcohol was seen as a foreign substance. When it became legal in the 1960s, its impact was devastating. Communities that had once been economically strong began to suffer as addiction spread and lives were lost.

“I heard my parents say, ‘Napiikwaks (white people), grew up with alcohol. Their bodies were used to it. But for Nitsitipiiks (Blackfoots), it was foreign drug’. That’s why some of them lose their minds, and keep drinking and drinking and get cirrhosis. When liquor became legal in the 60s, our grave yards filled up from people dying from drinking,” says Rose.

Both of my grandparents emphasized that what we see today is not about weakness but about disruption—of culture, governance and support systems.

When I asked what they would say to young people struggling today, their answers were clear.

Rose spoke about the importance of support and belief: young people need to know they have a spirit, that they matter and that they are not alone.

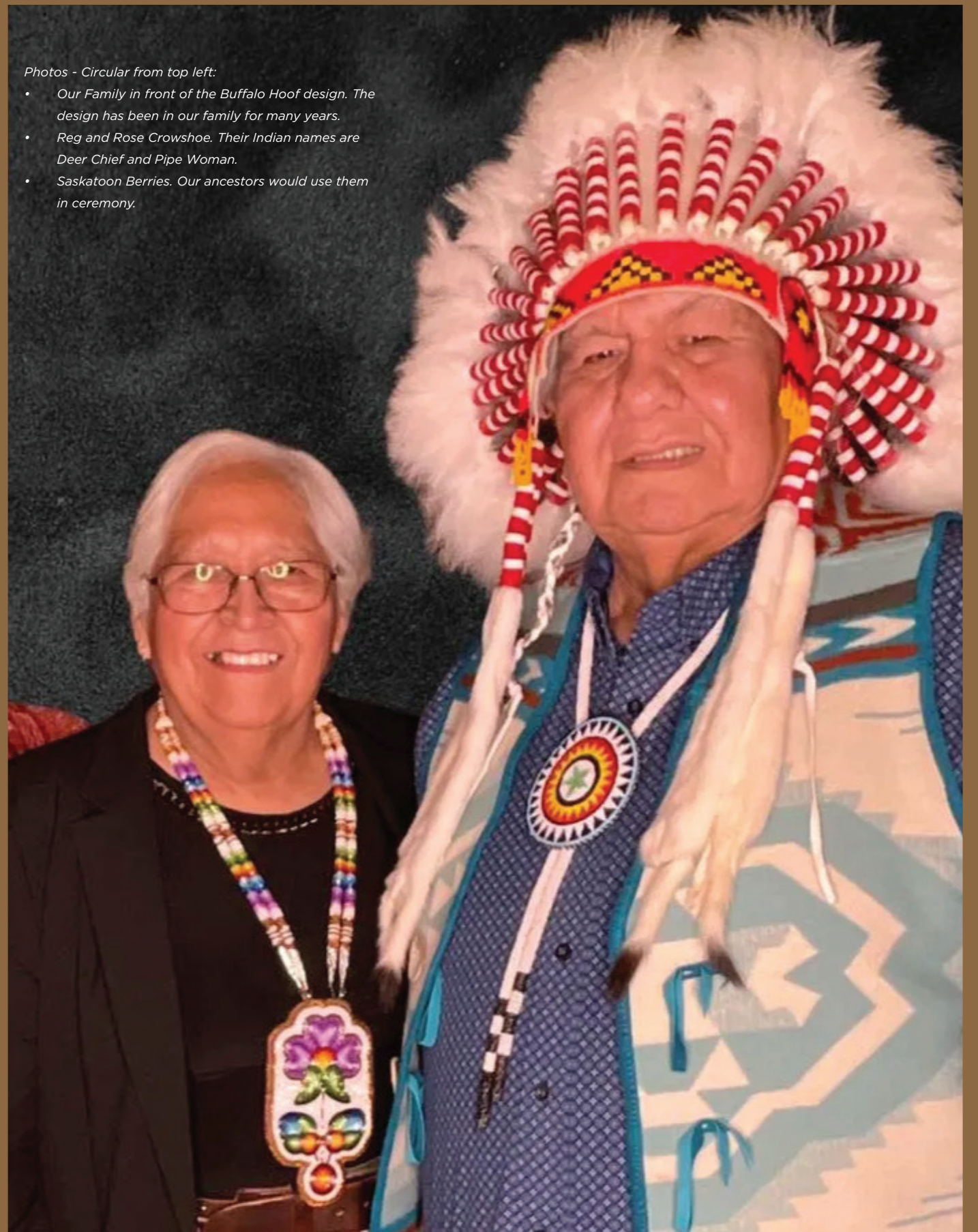
Reg emphasized connection—to language, to relatives and to the spirit world. Even in chaos, he said, you are never alone. There is always something to guide and support you.

This conversation reminded me that our story does not begin with trauma and it does not end there either. It is rooted in knowledge, responsibility and resilience.



Photos - Circular from top left:

- Our Family in front of the Buffalo Hoof design. The design has been in our family for many years.
- Reg and Rose Crowshoe. Their Indian names are Deer Chief and Pipe Woman.
- Saskatoon Berries. Our ancestors would use them in ceremony.



"Just One"

A Poem by Katrina Slack (Fire Hawk Woman)

One drink always seems to turn to four,

Then 5, 6, 7 and a dozen more

My heart is racing I'm on the floor

At least I've quieted that painful roar.

My past is haunted, jaded and torn.

A childhood robbed from Me- I've yet to mourn.

My People are broken, and this is Our way.

We drink, We smudge, go to sweats and pray.

Drunkin Indians, broken homes, it's just Our path You see.

How can You expect better?
We were robbed of Our Families.

Sent to the schools to be battered and die
To be robbed of Our culture, Our language, Our might.

Then came the "Scoop" to make Us less savage

From schools to homes for Us to be ravaged.

Still battered and raped, Molested and used
A paycheck to white folks for tolerating a People now permanently bruised.

We've learned to numb or escape with a vice
Be it sex, drugs, or alcohol

None of them are nice

Now the stigmas are fading,
But the labels remain
Our People still hurting
Are learning to refrain

Still reconciliation seems to be just a nice name.

The system that broke Us demands We give Grace & just be

But They overlook the chaos and indignity

The damage is done,
Generations suffering this very day.

But We're growing and healing though it means feeling the pain.

Walk the Red Road beside Me,
Find Your Sobriety

It's the only way to regain Our stolen Identity.

Compassion is a virtue We must learn to embrace,

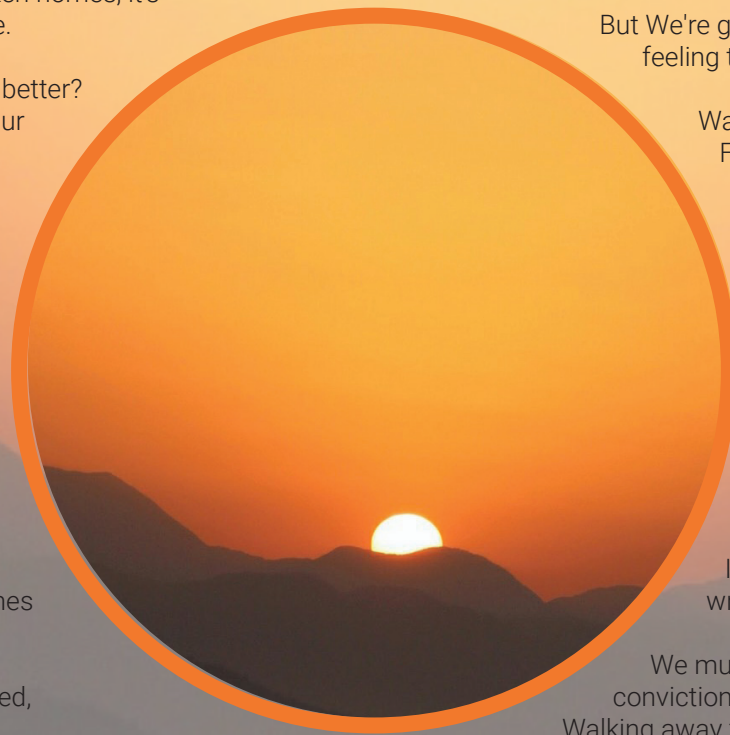
We cannot die a People the system tried to erase.

Our power is in the truth, in Our voices, Our song
In every good thing We've been told is wrong.

We must continue this work with Our conviction unwavering
Walking away from the vices We've gotten so used to taking.

Our way as a People is healthy and free,
United and Loving

We are one Family.



A Chronology of Colonial Alcohol in Blackfoot Territory

From ceremonial regulation to colonial commodity
Alcohol, trade and control on the Plains

By Julius Hirsch

Before European contact, alcohol use in the Americas varied widely by region and was often socially and spiritually regulated. In Mesoamerica, fermented beverages such as Balché were used in ceremonial and religious contexts. Among Plains nations, including the Blackfoot, oral histories describe rare seasonal fermentation of berries used in ceremonial settings. These practices were governed by Elders and ceremonial authorities, ensuring controlled and purposeful use rather than daily consumption.



1534

First Recorded Exchange

Jacques Cartier documents early encounters in which alcohol is introduced to Indigenous peoples in present-day Canada. Cartier documents that an intoxicated Chief was warm, friendly and expressed affection towards the French. Upon his departure, Cartier leaves behind excessive amounts of alcohol.



1684

Trade Networks Expand

The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) establishes York Factory, centralizing fur trade routes across the region. This draws Indigenous economies into a centralized, European-controlled trading system that reshaped movement, exchange and regional power dynamics across the Plains and northern territories.



1742-1780

Diplomatic Trade Era

French and British traders introduce alcohol as a diplomatic tool and trade incentive during early contact with Plains nations. French fur trading brothers, the La Vérendrye's, were the first Europeans to meet the Blackfoot. While not a significant trade item itself, alcohol was used to entice trade and foster relationships. In the early years, the

Blackfoot would make two trips a year to trade with Europeans, during these visits, they would collectively drink and socialize with fur traders.

1811

Trade Integration and Early Addiction

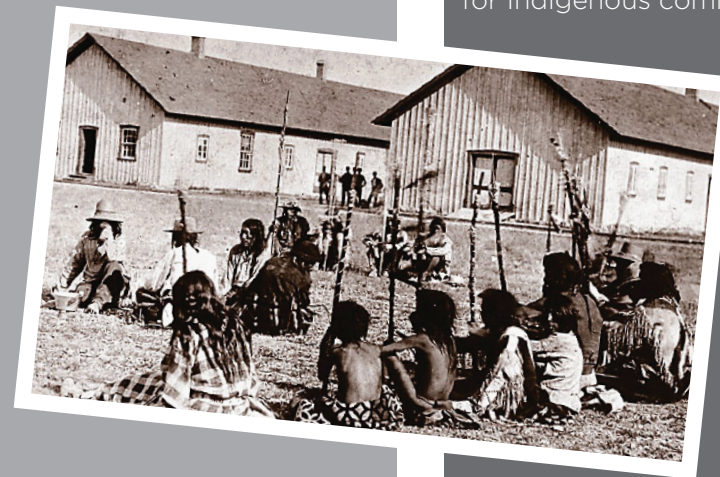


Alcohol becomes embedded in the fur trade economy and is increasingly exchanged for pelts and robes. The fur traders understood that alcohol addiction was a means of control.

1846-1855

Whiskey Trade Expansion

American traders increase alcohol distribution in the region. Treaty efforts to restrict alcohol sales are inconsistently enforced. Whiskey traders mixed liquor with harmful substances such as rubbing alcohol, ink, and chewing tobacco intensifying social disorder and violence among Blackfoot communities.



1869

Fort Whoop-Up Era

Illegal whiskey trade intensifies near present-day Lethbridge. Alcohol is often diluted or contaminated, worsening social harm. Fort Whoop-Up was not just a trading post, it was a frontier engine of harm. Built on unregulated whiskey trade, it concentrated exploitation into a single site where alcohol, profit, and colonial neglect converged with devastating consequences for Indigenous communities.

1873-1874

Enforcement Era Begins



The North West Mounted Police are formed and deployed to the Plains. Fort Macleod is established to suppress the whiskey trade and impose federal authority. While framed as "law and order," their presence also advanced colonial control, restricting Indigenous mobility, enforcing federal policy over Indigenous governance systems and accelerating the broader displacement of Blackfoot and other Plains Nations from their territories.



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Across this timeline, what moves through Blackfoot territory is not just liquor, but a shifting instrument of control, coercion and enforcement following the path of colonial expansion itself, a legacy that is inseparable from the history of colonization.



Lysandra Nothing is an Anishinaabekwe (Oji-Cree) storyteller, consultant and creative rooted in Bearskin Lake First Nation and raised in Sioux Lookout, Ontario. Her work bridges Indigenous relations, content creation and community-building, helping Indigenous businesses share their stories authentically.

From Ceremony to Responsibility:

Embracing the Red Road

By Lysandra Nothing

The moment I received the spotted eagle feather, I understood that ceremony is not something you attend, it is something that begins to watch you. The room was still, but my body felt the weight of what had just been placed in my hands: not an honour to display, but a responsibility to uphold. I stood there in my ribbon skirt, in a room full of people, having just broken for lunch during the cultural awareness training I was facilitating.

Time seemed to slow. My mind returned to the drum song our Elder had shared earlier that morning, the drum song of the Eagle. He shared the creation story of the Eagle, and the teachings of the Eagle: self-love. There I stood, with a spotted eagle feather in my hands. I knew

by accepting this feather, I had to begin embodying self-love because the feather did not soften my life or offer reassurance, it marked a turning point, asking me to live in a way that could withstand being seen by my ancestors, by the teachings and by the generations still on their way.

So came the part in my journey that called upon my spirit to do the difficult inner work. What did self-love really mean? How could I transform the cultural teachings surrounding self-love into true embodiment? A ritual that I could practice and remain rooted in? This is the demand of the Red Road. It asks you to become a version of yourself that is not yet born. I knew that to move forward, I would have to begin by making space—by letting go. Letting

go was not about rejection; it was about honesty. Some identities I carried were forged in survival, not truth—shields I once needed to move through unsafe spaces.

The Red Road asked me to examine which parts of myself were rooted in fear, and which were rooted in responsibility. Carrying the feather reshaped my understanding of sobriety. It was no longer a personal preference, but a relational responsibility. The work I was stepping into required me to be dependable to myself, to the teachings and to those who trusted me.

Sobriety supported that steadiness. The Red Road does not imply sobriety as shame or struggle, but instead frames it as accountability if you allow it to. Releasing old patterns, habits and relationships that no longer served me felt like raw exposure. Habits that once dulled pain, relationships that thrived on proximity rather than reciprocity, roles that kept me needed but not whole. Each had to be named and set down.

I learned that protection is not the same as alignment, and that what once kept me safe could not accompany me into the life I was being asked to live. Attending ceremony didn't make life gentler; it made it more honest. I attended my first sweat lodge ceremony in a long time, a few months after receiving the feather. It was not a planned decision. I woke up that morning with a heaviness in my chest and an insistence I could not ignore. I went. What followed were rapid changes: my car broke down, my apartment flooded and my relationship ended. When I returned to ceremony and shared what had happened, the Elder responded with joy.

"Yay my girl! It's time for self-love. It's time for validation." His words caught me off guard. How did he know I was walking this path of self-love? Later, alone in my new space, I sat with the word validation. I realized it did not mean approval or reassurance. It meant confirmation.

My life was responding to the choices I was making. Ceremony was no longer symbolic—it was active. The Red Road doesn't ask how I feel, it asks how I live. It followed me out of the ceremony and into ordinary mornings, into conversations where I could no longer pretend not to know better. That was validation. Healing became a series of small, disciplined choices: what I consumed, what I tolerated, what I turned away from, even when it cost me comfort or belonging. This was not a soft path. It was a narrowing one, asking me to walk in alignment with what the feather had already named as true forms of self-love.

I am still walking. Still returning. Still learning that healing is not a destination but a responsibility—to spirit, to those who came before me, and to those who are still coming. Ceremony did not give me answers. It gave me a standard. And each day, I choose again to live up to it.

What is the Red Road?

We asked New Tribe Magazine staff writer Lysandra Nothing to tell us about the history of the term Red Road and how it came to be a specific term for Indigenous centered sobriety.

At its heart, the Red Road represents living in a good, balanced and respectful way—in right relationship with yourself, your family and community, the land and all living beings and the spirit world. It is often described as the good path, a lifelong journey rather than a destination. The Red Road strengthens Indigenous sobriety by restoring balance, identity and belonging, making sobriety a sacred responsibility rather than a lonely struggle. Choosing the Red Road is an act of sovereignty. **Sobriety becomes a personal commitment and, in some cases, a cultural responsibility while also becoming a contribution to future generations.**

Rather than viewing addiction as an individual failure, the Red Road understands substance use as often linked to historical and intergenerational trauma, including the impacts of colonization, residential schools and cultural disruption. Sobriety, therefore, becomes part of a broader healing journey—one that restores relationships with self, community, land, and spirit. This shifts recovery from "staying clean" to protecting life—your own and others'. The Red Road becomes a way of life, a cultural identity, a return to self. The Red Road is not a metaphor or wellness trend. It is a living teaching rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems. How it is practiced, named, or taught depends on the nation, Elder guidance and cultural context.

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The Cycle Ends With Me

*Contributor has chosen to remain anonymous

My memory about my childhood comes in pieces but never in full stories. Growing up in an addiction lifestyle, I was not able to live my childhood like a normal child should. I was often left alone with my siblings while my mom went to look for my dad who left to drink. Even though I didn't personally struggle with my own addictions; addictions still affected me in a way. From a young age **I was taught to grow up fast, read people's emotions, stay quiet and to live in survival mode.** I was not taught about what healthy looks like or how to love.

Becoming a mom at 19, I had to teach myself what I needed and wanted as a child. During my son's first year I did not have a healthy relationship with alcohol. I would drink every weekend with nights becoming long or end in arguing. I didn't realize how unhealthy this was because this felt normal to me.

Becoming a mother made me face my own truths. I did not want my children to live the same way I did and experience the pain. All I want for them is to be children, not forced to grow up too fast. My partner and I work hard to create a safe and stable home for our children. It was not perfect

by any means, but one thing that we did differently from our parents was show up, learn and choose better for our children.

One teaching from the Elders that helped me growing up was being taught that addiction is a spirit. They say when people drink, their spirit leaves while the spirit of addiction steps in. Therefore, people have a hard time recognizing their loved ones when they are in active addiction. Growing up, I saw this too often. People who I love became unrecognizable which was scary as a child.

Today, ceremony plays a big role in my healing journey. Whenever something comes up for me whether that is positive or negative, I turn to ceremony. It could be something as small as smudging with my children. Sweat lodge ceremonies help me stay grounded and connected not only to myself, but to my children.

Even though I grew up surrounded by addictions, my partner and I fight every day to make sure that our children don't live the same life as us. Though my childhood memories may come to me in pieces, my purpose is clear. The cycle of addiction ends with me.



ADDICTION'S RIPPLE EFFECT:

How It Shaped My Family and Relationships

By Sage Carriere

A personal reflection on how a sibling's addiction transformed daily life, reshaped trust and hope, and taught the family about empathy, resilience, and the importance of support.

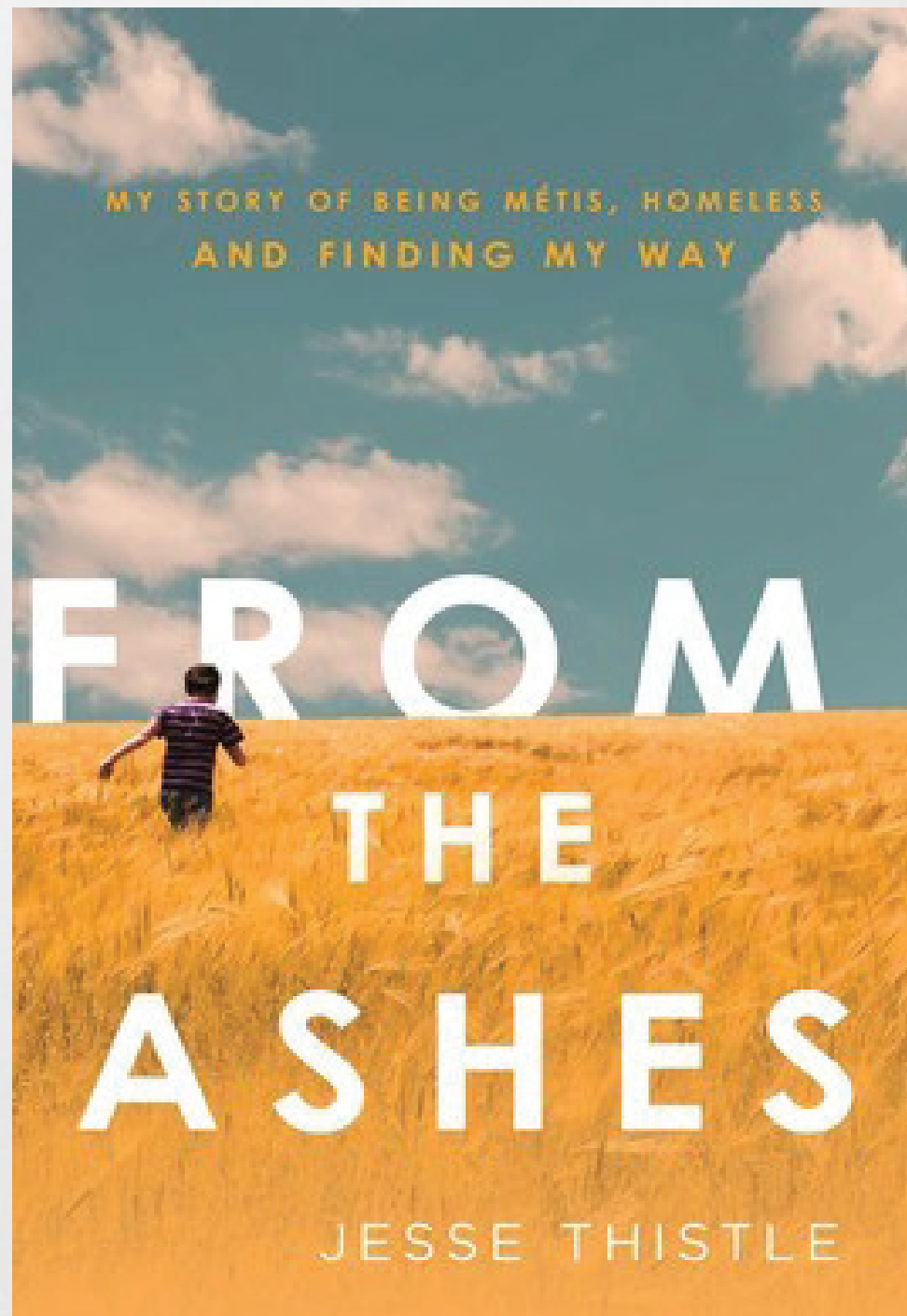
No one is ever prepared to manage the hardships of how an addiction problem can impact yourself and or the ones you love. Addiction does not just affect one person it ripples outward, touching family, friendships and every relationship in between. It changes the atmosphere in a home, the way conversations are held, and even the way I have slept at night. Always feeling the fear of uncertainty and wondering what the next phone call might bring.

Even closer to home, my own brother battled with addiction. My mom and I were always tense, constantly looking out for him and checking in. Every unanswered call, every change in mood felt like a warning sign. Our home often felt not like home and it was like a balance between hope and fear. We wanted to trust him, to believe in his strength, but we also knew how powerful addiction can be.

My mom took college courses to understand addiction as well so she could try to have a better understanding of how to help. Living through that experience changes you. It teaches you how fragile

stability can be and how quickly life can spiral in an instant. Especially knowing how fast an overdose can happen and that we would only find out through the hospital calling. I'm glad that my brother is now five years sober and in his own words, 'battled a vicious cycle' stating you have to want to stop for your own self.

Through it all, I have learned that addiction is not just about substances, it can be coping, pain, mental health and the need for support. It affects many families like mine, not just individuals. The fear, the sleepless nights, the constant anxiety are burdens shared by everyone who cares and loves the person who is struggling. And while the experience has brought heartache, it has also brought awareness, empathy and a deeper understanding of how important support truly is for those battling addiction and it can even be your own family and experience through addiction and no one really knows until they live through it themselves.



BOOK REVIEW: From the Ashes

Book By Jesse Thistle

Review by Sydney Hamilton

Addiction, substance use, harm reduction and homelessness are just a few of the terms often used to interpret, analyze or unpack the story that Jesse Thistle tells in *From the Ashes*. The book is composed of fragments from throughout his life—memories of his youth, retellings of moments when the haze of intoxication faded and glimpses of spaces where he felt a sense of safety.

This is not a monolithic narrative about Métis peoples meant to reaffirm stereotypes. Rather, it is a deeply personal account of understanding the world as Thistle experiences it: as a Métis man living with addiction who, at times, was unhoused. His story is not beautified for the reader. Instead, we are confronted first with a child struggling to find the language to explain what is happening around him, then a teenager grappling with instability, and finally an adult navigating life amid ongoing challenges.

Métis culture is interwoven throughout the book; however, it may remain invisible to readers who are unfamiliar with Métis traditions and lived experiences. While Thistle occasionally identifies certain elements as uniquely Métis, he does not explicitly explain or center cultural context for the reader. Instead, it exists in the margins—subtle but ever-present. These margins also illuminate the roles of survivance, silence and masculinity in shaping his world and his story.

As the narrative unfolds, readers come to understand the cyclical nature of addiction: how seemingly small choices, such as accepting free drugs, can lead to dependency and how that dependency reshapes priorities until the pursuit of the next high becomes all-consuming. Underlying this is a critical examination of how carceral and governmental systems intersect with addiction and homelessness—sometimes exacerbating these conditions, and only occasionally providing temporary relief.

From the Ashes is not a book for those seeking a surface-level introduction to addiction. Rather, it is for readers willing to engage with the depth and complexity of its impacts on individuals, families, and communities, as well as the ongoing labour required to support those living with addiction and/or homelessness.

Perspective

By Angelo



This digitally created piece is inspired by the artist's childhood. It represents how the influence of alcohol and constantly being in that environment can cause a child to normalize it. It also shows how drinking can change how a child develops and how children internalize the use of alcohol. "It may seem like they're having a great time on the outside, but deep inside, there is something disturbing that's lurking underneath it all," says Angelo.

About The Artist:

Angelo is a 16-year-old transgender Cree artist who enjoys art, writing, gaming and music (he even plays two instruments). Angelo is also a very cultural person, he is in tune with the land and people through the various events and ceremonies he attends with family.

Book Review: In My Own Moccasins

By Helen Knott

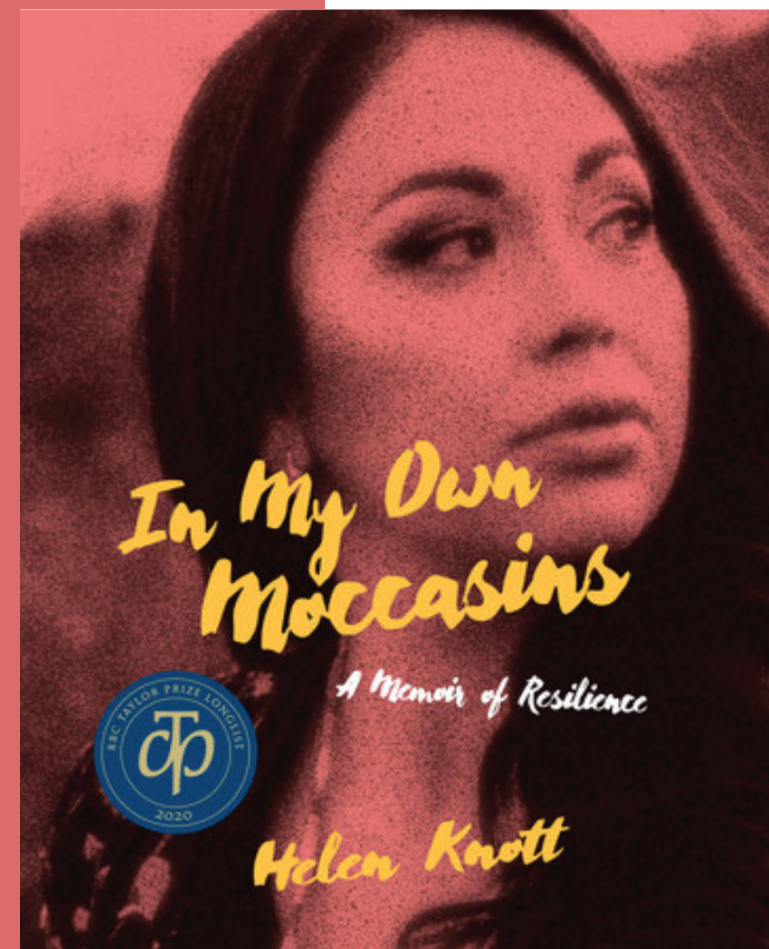
Review By Shaye Trudel

Helen Knott is a raw and powerful writer. Her background as a poet shows in her work – her words carry rhythm and emotion, and she doesn't hold back.

In My Own Moccasins takes place in Treaty 8 territory in northern Alberta. The land is not just a backdrop – it is shaped by colonization, trauma, addiction and broken promises. Treaty 8 was meant to protect Indigenous land and rights, but many promises were not kept. Indigenous people were forced onto reserves, and their culture was disrupted through residential schools. Over time, this led to a loss of connection to land and tradition.

Her memoir is not only about addiction. It also reflects the "soul wound" left by residential schools. While the schools are gone, the trauma remains and has been passed through generations. It appears in shame, addiction, silence and strained family relationships. Her experiences with Western rehab programs suggest they often fail to address root causes. By turning to Indigenous ceremony, she not only heals but reclaims knowledge, culture and strength. Her recovery becomes both survival and resistance.

Overall, *In My Own Moccasins* is more than a story of addiction and trauma. It connects personal experience to colonization and intergenerational trauma in Treaty 8 territory. Through ceremony and storytelling, Knott reconnects with her culture and identity. Her memoir makes the pain visible, while showing how healing can be a form of resistance and survival.



By Thunder Warrior

A portrait of a woman with long dark hair, a nose ring, and a lip ring, wearing a black top. The portrait is framed by several overlapping white borders, creating a layered effect. The background of the portrait is a muted teal color.

Are the old ways the best way?

A personal story of addiction, shame and healing, and how returning to Indigenous traditions offers a path back to spirit, community and self.

I was told by Elders that there never used to be a word for addictions because we possessed ways to work through our traumas and hardships, we had crying ceremonies and sweats and most importantly we had our people. The introduction of reservations separated us and made us withdraw from each other, they tried to outlaw our ceremonies by silencing our traditional ways, we didn't have funerals, we had celebrations of life, now we mourn in isolation. Losing our traditional ways of healing has many of us feeling lost and in that void turning to addictions can seem like the only way out.

During the height of my addiction, I was consumed by shame. I felt I had failed not only my family but my people. I'd tell myself, 'I'm just a stereotypical native now.' At the time, I didn't realize that suppressed grief and trauma were vibrating through every part of me; my body, my mind and my spirit. I used my past as a shield, telling myself, 'I'm only using because I went through _____,' using my pain as an excuse rather than seeing it as a wound that needed healing.

Healing began when I returned to my roots. Through ribbon skirt making, powwows and Sundance, I realized that tradition was the medicine I had been searching for. There is a phrase in my language for addiction that means 'when the soul leaves the body.' That is exactly what active addiction feels like—you are a shell. People on the outside looking in often judge or offer simple solutions but they don't understand that in that state, you aren't just mentally struggling, you are spiritually displaced. You cannot find your way until your spirit finds its way back home.

"Through ribbon skirt making, powwows and Sundance, I realized that tradition was the medicine I had been searching for."

I had brought my spirit home through ikimm (kindness). I had to learn to offer kindness to myself first. I had to stop punishing the 'shell' I had become and start nurturing the spirit that was trying to return. By finding my voice and sharing this story, I am reclaiming the space that was once silenced. I am no longer mourning in isolation; I am healing in the open. The Elders were right, we didn't need a word for addiction when we had each other. Now that I have brought my spirit home through ikimm, I realize that I am not a stereotype or a statistic. I am a testament to the fact that while our ways were suppressed, they were never truly gone; they were simply waiting for us to come back to them.

SHAYE'S SOCIAL SUGGESTIONS



Indigenous creators are using social media to share sobriety journeys, uplift their communities and redefine what recovery looks like online.



Follow

Message

CREATORS TO FOLLOW



Owen Unruh

Instagram & Tiktok

TikTok: [@owen.unruh](#)

Instagram: [@owen.unruhh](#)

Owen is a Two-Spirit creator who shares both silly and motivational content with his followers. He openly documents his sobriety journey, the ups, the downs and everything in between.



Shalen Fox

Instagram & Tiktok

TikTok: [@shalenfox11](#)

Instagram: [@shalenfox](#)

An Indigenous recovery and wellness creator, Shalen shares motivational quotes, personal stories and educational content about addiction and recovery.



Darla Daniels

TikTok

[@dammit.darla](#)

Darla is a Métis/Cree musician from Buffalo Lake Settlement. She creates country-inspired music that speaks to the modern struggles of Indigenous peoples, including addiction and healing. I recommend her song "DNA." I believe that music heals and her music carries that power.



Thundermaker Wellness Center

Instagram

[@Thundermaker.Wellness.centre](#)

This is a wellness foundation focused on addiction recovery and men's mental health advocacy. Their platform has strong potential to build supportive online networks for men in recovery.



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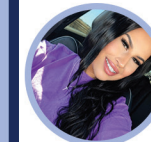


James Jones

Instagram & Tiktok

[@notoriouscree](#)

While I usually try to spotlight smaller creators to help grow their platforms, he absolutely belongs on this list. He openly shares his own journey through addiction and recovery, along with traditional teachings and Indigenous healing practices. He's also incredibly funny and humour during hard times can be medicine.



Alisha Ledoux

TikTok

[@Alishaledoux](#)

A recovery coach who openly shares her personal healing journey. She offers funny, motivational advice that is honest yet gentle. Her content is perfect for anyone trying to take sobriety one day at a time.



The Sober Junkie

Instagram

[@soberjunkieofficial](#)

A singer-songwriter who creates motivational music and content for people in sobriety or recovery. He's energetic, boldly positive and genuinely uplifting. You can't help but smile when watching him hype up his community with encouragement and strength.



ABOUT OUR SOCIAL EXPERT

Shaye Trudel has been involved with USAY for over 15 years, first as a youth and now as a senior writer for New Tribe magazine. A passionate reader and storyteller, Shaye is dedicated to

writing about topics that matter deeply to Indigenous communities while honing their craft. Through New Tribe, Shaye has had the opportunity to publish work in a professional magazine setting and is working toward the goal of becoming a published author. Her standing connection with USAY reflects both commitment and pride in supporting Indigenous voices and storytelling.

I got into drugs when I was 15. Addictions affected my relationships not only from doing drugs but from living with people who do as well. The entire time, while using, we thought it brought us closer together when it was slowly tearing us apart.

Living with someone who used every day was difficult, especially when they're supposed to be a big part in your life. It mentally affected me in many ways, but it is very draining never knowing what to expect next. It pushes you to a limit because you care so much for this person but not only are they affecting themselves there also affecting the people around them in negative ways and it slowly drains the relationships around you.

Drugs detached me from everything in life, things that matter, that will help improve my future, I lost contact with

almost all of my friends, closed myself off because my main focus was the drugs.

Drugs destroyed my mental health, kept me from doing all the things I love. My ex and I went from managing it, thinking it would never affect us negatively, "we can stop whenever we want to," it was a spiral we fell into at a young age, we tried maintaining our lifestyles and this new secret lifestyle we were creating and the secret one started taking over.

We weren't the same people. We became, selfish and had poor mindsets, we thought it brought us closer but we would fight when we didn't have any and it started creating barriers in our relationship. We were dependant on drugs and on each other.

I closed off from my family because I didnt want them to know. I was embarrassed for them to find out but I lashed out at everyone around me. I shut myself out and went down a dark hole, for a long time. I stayed there not caring. One day I slowly started getting myself out of that hole, but I did it alone, I was the only one who wanted to quit because the drugs were destroying who I was as a person and all the goals I had for myself. It took time and it was a very hard thing to go through mentally and physically.

Choosing to quit was choosing myself, my future and the life I knew I was capable of having. At the time addiction took a lot from me. It took my relationships, my mental health and parts of who I was but it didn't take everything. Not anymore. I'm still here, still growing, and still learning. No matter how far gone it felt at the time, I proved to myself that I could come back from it.



What Addiction Took and What I Took Back

*Contributor has chosen to remain anonymous

Empowering Wholistic Wellness



Indigenous-led recovery in Treaty 7 is redefining addiction care by centering culture, community and connection—showing that true healing happens when the whole person is supported, not just the substance use.



Indigenous-led organizations are changing the way addiction recovery is understood in Alberta. Groups in the Mohkinstsis area, such as the Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary (AFCC) and Nanâtawihô Kamik Healing Lodge, focus on the whole person rather than just stopping substance use.

While each has its own programs, both show that healing is strongest when it is grounded in culture, community and connection. Their approach shows that holistic healing needs to be the new standard in recovery care.

"The narrative is often about the struggle, but the real story is the strength of our people when given the space to heal in our own way" says Winter Copeland, AFCC director of programs, services and housing.

The Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary grounds its recovery model in an approach that moves beyond treating substance use in isolation. Staff emphasize that addiction cannot be separated from the broader conditions shaping a person's life. "In the context of addiction recovery, we don't just treat the substance use. We look at the whole person. This means our approach is not linear. It involves housing stability (like our Elders' Lodge and Bromley Place), cultural reconnection, community belonging, and addressing basic needs. You cannot expect someone to focus on sobriety if they are hungry, cold, or spiritually disconnected. Our philosophy is that recovery happens in the circle of community, not in isolation." says CEO Shane Gauthier

Honouring local Blackfoot, Tsuut'ina and Stoney Nakoda protocols and cultural teachings are not treated as optional extras; they are central to healing. For example, AFCC incorporates specific ceremonies such as pipe ceremonies, smudging, face painting, language classes and traditional feasts into its programming.

AFCC also plays an important role in supporting Indigenous people who are experiencing homelessness in Treaty 7 territory.

Rather than viewing homelessness as simply a housing issue, AFCC understands it as part of a larger imbalance that can include trauma, poverty and cultural disconnection. Their Encampment Team was gifted the Blackfoot name Sapaatsimaitapiks, meaning a responsibility to care for those outside. AFCC builds trust with individuals living rough by approaching them as relatives, not case files. Staff provide practical supports such as housing navigation, food, clothing and referrals, while also offering cultural connection through ceremony, Elders and community gatherings. This relationship-based approach recognizes that stable housing is more likely when a person's spirit and sense of belonging are also supported.

By combining practical assistance with cultural care, AFCC helps individuals move from survival toward stability and reconnection.

For example, the AFCC's Encampment Team recently supported a couple who had been living unsheltered for years by helping them transition into stable housing. Within a conventional Western system, the couple might have been separated or excluded due to the complexity of their needs. However, by prioritizing consistent, relationship-based care and approaching them as relatives rather than case files and integrating cultural practices into the trust-building process, the team helped create a sense of safety. This approach enabled the couple to take the step toward housing, ultimately reconnecting with community supports and demonstrating the impact of addressing spiritual well-being alongside practical needs.

Miskanawah and its Healing Lodge, Nanâtawihô Kamik, root their work in connecting families, youth and individuals with culturally led mental health and addiction supports. Their holistic approach recognizes the interconnection of wellbeing with community, ceremony and Mother Earth, with an emphasis on land-based healing and wellness practices. This includes partnerships with Elders and using the medicine wheel



to provide invaluable knowledge and protocols through meaningful ongoing relationship-building.

This is often where non-cultural models fall short. "Understanding holistic wellness most closely aligns with the teaching of miyo-pimâtsiwin. Miyo-pimâtsiwin refers to "the good life," well-being, balancing the holistic elements of mind, heart, head and spirit. This teaching refers to the changes that people make to achieve balance, specifically ways that bring about positive and long-lasting social change."

Reflecting on the significant work of the AFCC and Nanâtawihô Kamik within Mohkinstsis and Treaty 7 territory, it becomes clear that addiction is a multifaceted issue that mirrors the complexity of the individuals it affects. Addiction cannot simply be reduced to a singular behaviour or confronted through a limited perspective. The experiences of those struggling with addiction are deeply intertwined with various factors, including their environments, backgrounds, and personal histories.

As such, healing must adopt a holistic approach that acknowledges and addresses these layers of complexity. Recovery should not be viewed solely as a series of sobriety milestones; rather, it encompasses the broader journey of restoring a person's dignity and rebuilding essential connections with themselves and their communities.

When our community honours and integrates the entirety of the human experience, encompassing physical health, mental well-being, emotional stability and spiritual growth, it creates a supportive environment where individuals can engage in healing processes that are not only thorough but also meaningful and enduring. This comprehensive approach fosters resilience and nurtures lasting change, ultimately empowering individuals to lead fulfilling lives beyond the struggles of addiction.

What participants have to say...

"Reconnecting with my culture has helped me a lot. I was adopted into a non-Indigenous home, so I've always struggled with identity and feeling a part of a community. Taking part in this program has made me feel like I belong and I can be myself."

"I've learned to let my anger go, and to be kind to my spirit. I've made more progress in the past 2 months than I have in the past 6 years! Through this program, I've been gifted with coping methods, and it has saved my life. I feel free of all the anger I held onto for my whole life. I feel the love I haven't been giving myself. I like how we can smudge too during our counselling sessions. It doesn't feel cold or colonial like I have felt with other therapists. I can't wait to see where my healing journey goes."

"I have loved having an Indigenous mental health therapist, especially as someone who has gone through much of my life being disconnected from my culture. It's been extremely helpful having someone who understands this and who has been able to encourage me in my reconnection journey. These services have been immensely helpful for my mental health and healing journey."

ADDICTION IS NOT A CHOICE — IT'S A STORY

What Indigenous Youth Want You To Understand

"It's not a do-or-don't situation. It takes time and compassion."

Forty two Indigenous youth participated in a survey to better understand their perspectives on addiction and its impact on their communities. Their responses reveal a complex reality shaped by experience, environment and emotion — and a clear call for greater compassion, understanding and support.

By The Numbers:

83.3%
of respondents identify as Indigenous

73.8%
say addiction affects their community a lot or very much

64.3%
say youth are most impacted

85.7%
say compassion is very important

79%
agree addiction affects the entire community

50%
strongly agree compassion is essential

69%
turn to family and friends for support

THIS ISN'T ABOUT BAD CHOICES

Youth are clear: addiction is misunderstood.

“Most addictions are far more complicated than just choosing.”

“That it’s the person’s experiences that led them there.”

“A child under addiction doesn’t make them bad or from a bad home.”

Addiction is shaped by pain, experience, and environment — not just decisions.

IT AFFECTS EVERYONE

79% of youth agree addiction impacts the entire community.

“It truly impacts everyone.”

“It tears families apart.”

“It affects the next generation.”

Addiction doesn’t stay with one person — it moves through families, relationships and communities.

ITS HARD TO ESCAPE

73.8% say addiction heavily affects their community.

“It’s not easy when everyone does it around you.”

“The easy access makes it worse.”

“How hard it is to quit.”

Environment matters — addiction is often surrounding, visible, and normalized.

SUPPORT ISN'T ENOUGH - YET

Only 35.7% feel there are strong supports available.

“I hope we can provide more supports.”

“Teach us how to stop or not get into it.”

“Support financially.”

Youth are not just pointing out the problem — they are asking for solutions.

YOUTH ARE FEELING IT THE MOST

64.3% say youth are the most impacted group.

“It affects the youth and the next generation.”

“We go through so much more than adults realize.”

Young people aren’t just witnessing addiction — they are living alongside it.

COMPASSION OVER JUDGMENT

85.7% say compassion is critical.

“Have compassion at the start.”

“Listen before trying to fix.”

“I wish people understood those struggling better.”

Youth are asking for one shift: Be human first.

WHERE PEOPLE TURN TO

- 69% Family and friends
- 33% Health services
- 31% Community organizations
- 26% Cultural/spiritual supports

The first line of support isn’t systems — it’s people.

BREAKING THE STIGMA

“I wish addiction wasn’t so stereotyped for Indigenous communities.”

“Anybody can be addicted to anything.”

“It’s a real thing — and it hurts people.”

Youth are pushing back against stigma and labels.

WHAT YOUTH ARE ASKING FOR

- More compassion
- Better understanding
- Stronger role models
- Prevention and education
- Real, accessible support
- “Watch out for your loved ones.”

“It’s a work in progress — and it takes time.”

Youth are not asking for perfection. They’re asking to be heard, understood, and supported.



If you or someone you know has been triggered by the contents of this magazine, please know that support is available.

Alberta Addiction & Mental Health Helpline: 1-866-332-2322
Hope for Wellness Help Line (First Nations & Inuit): 1-855-242-3310

Both available 24/7, free and confidential.



From addiction to empowerment, Braden Kadlun reflects on the lessons, challenges, and gentle reminders that guide his journey.

Sobriety, Spirit and Self-Discovery: A Conversation with Braden Kadlun

Braden Kadlun is an Indigenous author, motivational speaker and advocate for Indigenous youth, sobriety and mental health. After getting sober at 21, Braden started a journey to support and inspire other Indigenous people.

His work is rooted in lived experience and a deep commitment to helping others navigate sobriety with honesty, compassion and accountability. In his book, *A Guide to Sobriety: 10 Gentle*

Reminders, Braden offers thoughtful reflections on what it takes to stay sober every day, reminding readers to be gentle with themselves while still showing up fully for their journey.

Braden Kadlun opens up to New Tribe staff writer Olivia Condon Storey about his experiences, his book and the lessons that shape his work with Indigenous youth and communities.

Q&A

NTM: For readers who are just meeting you, how do you introduce yourself and how does sobriety fit into your identity today?

A: I'm Braden Kadlun. I'm originally from Kugluktuk, Nunavut, and I grew up in Yellowknife. I currently reside in Treaty 7 Territory in Calgary, Alberta. Sobriety, for me, was a second chance at life. It was an opportunity to redefine who I was and also who I would become. In sobriety I found purpose and passion and the tools to give my life meaning. I think that's just a short way of saying sobriety gave me everything. Without my sobriety I wouldn't have my family, I wouldn't have a career; I wouldn't be here now without it.

NTM: How has your connection to your Indigenous identity shaped your understanding of wellness and sobriety?

A: I was never really disconnected from my Indigenous culture but I was never confident in it. Getting sober got me to a place where I could accept my Indigenous identity so for me it was kind of the other way around: My sobriety helped me connect deeper to myself and my identity. If it wasn't for my sobriety, I don't think I would have grown into someone who is so into his culture.

NTM: For Indigenous youth who feel disconnected to their culture how can that sense of loss show up in addiction or self-destructive patterns? How did that manifest for you?

A: I've heard people say that the opposite of addiction is connection and when you isolate yourself - as people do in addiction - you



remove yourself from the connection of Indigenous community. Even if you're not connected to that community, you remove the opportunity. But, one of the most beautiful things about Indigenous communities is that we understand there are differences across Turtle Island and yet we can find commonalities in our shared histories. So even if you're physically removed from your community, Indigenous people are accepting and willing to share their community values.

NTM: What role, if any, did ancestry or honouring those who came before you play in your ongoing sobriety journey?

A: The understanding that over 90 per cent of the original inhabitants of the Americas were effectively wiped out during colonization through disease and colonial harm - but our people survived. They endured so that we could be here right now and have the future we have. If they were able to overcome that impossibility, then surely I can overcome the hardships I face in my life. I have the strength of my ancestors who fought so hard for us to be here.

NTM: What have you learned about yourself since getting sober that stays with you today?

A: I ran away from the idea of myself as a whole when I was in active use and avoided everything that I really enjoyed in life. I've gotten to know my basic interests like what kind of music and TV shows and books I like and I've also learned my bigger interests and passions like philosophy and helping people find sobriety. I've also gotten to know the cultural side of me; who I am as an Inuk man and really connect with that identity and my community. I've learned where I fit in this world, understanding my position here and the role that I play. I've gotten to know who I am as a husband and father. I've gotten to know myself on a fundamental level of who I am and in a broader sense of who I want to be.

NTM: How have you cultivated vulnerability and acceptance of yourself in this experience?

A: Vulnerability is how we show strength. The moment I was most vulnerable was when I called my parents and told them I needed help. It was the first time I'd ever admitted I needed help. When we open up and let people in, we're stronger than when we're alone. When I accepted that I needed help it showed me that I'm not alone. There were so many people that loved me, it showed me I could love myself.

NTM: What advice would you give to someone struggling with addiction who might worry they will lose their identity in sobriety?

A: To someone who is curious about sobriety and is nervous or concerned their identity might be at stake, I'd say yeah, it does seem scary. Sobriety at first glance might seem scary and hard and challenging and it is all those things, I won't lie, but more than that, it's an opportunity to really learn about yourself. You don't have to lose the fundamental parts of who you are. And if you're sober-curious, what's the harm in trying? There's no more beautiful gift you can give yourself than self-discovery and learning who you are in a healing journey.

NTM: How can young Indigenous people begin their wellness and sobriety journey if they don't have access to community, ceremony or formal support right now?

A: A great place to start is find someone you can trust, confide in and who can help you. That might be a teacher or principal, or a guidance counsellor or even a community support member. Hospitals often have Indigenous community liaisons and the Sheldon Chumir Hospital specifically has the Elbow River Healing Lodge where you can get a ton of support for mental health and sobriety related issues. Friendship centres are another great place to look.

NTM: What does sobriety look like for you today compared to when you first started?

A: When I first started it was just about staying sober, nothing more. Now it looks like being sober and healing. I really focus on a holistic approach to healing: are my mind, my physical self, my emotional self and my spirit in harmony with one another? Am I healthy in all those areas? Reminder number seven, about finding ways to stimulate yourself mentally, spiritually, physically, and emotionally, comes from that. This reminder was inspired by the medicine wheel and the idea is that substance use cravings come in four categories and it's when those four areas of our lives are not being properly stimulated or nurtured, there will be problems. Connect with yourself, take care of yourself, and good things will happen.

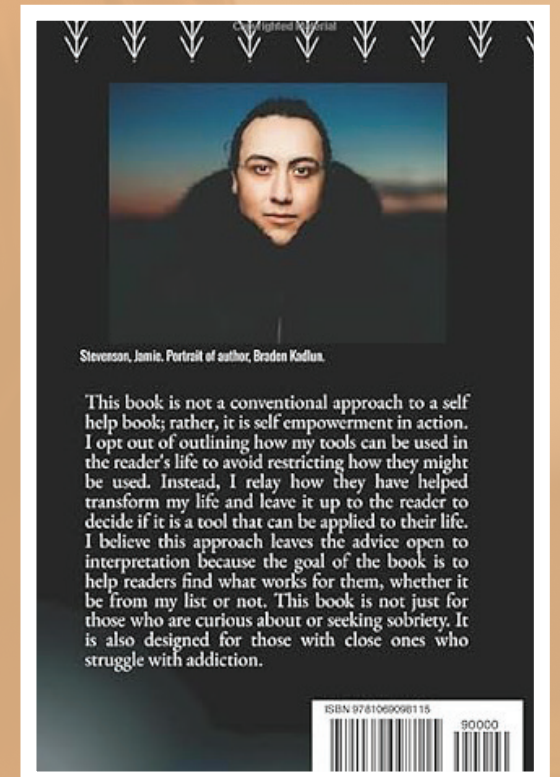
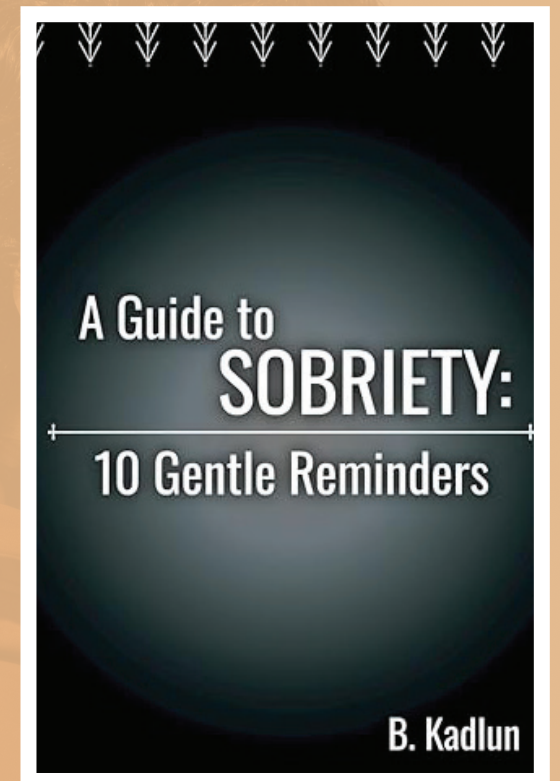
"Sobriety gave me everything. Without my sobriety I wouldn't have my family, I wouldn't have a career; I wouldn't be here now without it."

NTM: What inspired you to write A Guide to Sobriety: 10 Gentle Reminders?

A: The inspiration really came through my own journey. I had an interesting route where AA and NA weren't really accessible to me because the COVID lockdown had just started when I got out of rehab so I had to navigate sobriety on my own. Because of this I set out to find the one answer to sobriety that could be applied to everyone and, spoiler alert, I never found that answer, I just found what worked for me. I had these moments of clarity, I call gentle reminders, that really spoke to me. Everyone's answer to healing is going to look different because we all have different stories, nuances and things that make us who we are. I started public speaking about these gentle reminders and my own sobriety journey and there was a lot of acceptance of them and encouragement to do more.

NTM: The word gentle seems very intentional in the title and throughout the book. What is it about being gentle with yourself throughout the sobriety process that's so important to you?

A: I'm a firm believer that you don't always have to run into a wall to realize that you're going in the wrong direction. The point of the gentle reminders is embodying that idea that when you're in a state of sobriety, you might be easily triggered. That was the case for me - when it came to topics about sobriety or healing, I was easily triggered. So the idea is to come in gently and kind of nudge you back in the right direction. It guides you back into where you should be if you stray from the path.



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Indigenous Addiction Resource Guide

ORGANIZATION	LOCATION	CONTACT	SERVICES OFFERED	ACCESS & WAITLIST	DETOX BEFORE ADMISSION?	KEY FEATURES
Sunrise Healing Lodge Society	1231 34 Ave NE, Calgary, AB T2E 6N4	403-261-7921 (Admissions: 403-269-5567) admissions@nass.ca Nass.ca	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inpatient (98-day / 14-week residential) Outpatient (13-week and 4-week condensed programs, running Mon-Fri 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.) Family counselling program Cultural ceremonies & activities 	Waitlist: Yes — approx. 6-8 weeks for inpatient; 2-4 weeks for outpatient. Online application required. Medical portion required for inpatient. Intake team follows up weekly by phone until a spot becomes available	Yes — 3 days of clean time required before admission (both inpatient and outpatient). Medical detox must be completed prior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous Culture + 12-Step integrated model Blackfoot teachings & traditions Co-ed Smoke-friendly 2SLGBTQ+ inclusive 40 beds AHS funded (no cost with AB Health Care card) Open to all backgrounds
Miskanawah Healing Lodge (Nanâtawiho Kamik)	East: 2335 30 Ave NE, Calgary, AB T2E 7C7 West: 2340 1 Ave NW, Calgary, AB T2N 0B8	403-247-5003 info@miskanawah.ca miskanawah.ca	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health & addiction counselling (contracted therapists) Resource navigation & referrals to treatment centres Ceremony & cultural supports Land-based healing Weekly Holistic Recovery Program (12-week Turning Points) AA meetings (Fridays) Sharing Circles Youth programs Rapid access single-session counselling 	Self-referral via online intake form. Mental Health Lead triages requests. Not a residential treatment centre — community-based supports and outpatient programming.	Not applicable — community-based outpatient model. No residential beds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous led Cree cultural framework (Wahkotiwini) Land-based healing Elder and Knowledge Keeper access Connected to network of Indigenous and western therapists Open to First Nations, Métis and Inuit in Calgary
Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary (AFCC)	Outreach: 1944 10 Ave SW, Calgary, AB T2G4V1	403-270-7379 info@afccalgary.org afccalgary.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Navigation and support services (connecting to addiction/mental health, housing, recovery programs) Outreach to vulnerable and unhoused community members Cultural reconnection (Elders, sweat lodges, drumming, ceremonies) Encampment team Food and basic needs Status card clinic Employment and education support 	Walk-in / self-referral for most services.	Not applicable — not a treatment centre. Provides navigation and referrals to treatment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Many Nations. One Family." — pan-Indigenous, multi-service Culturally safe Elder-guided Trauma-informed Connects clients to sweat lodges and ceremonies Open to all urban Indigenous peoples

Indigenous Addiction Resource Guide Cont'd

ORGANIZATION	LOCATION	CONTACT	SERVICES OFFERED	ACCESS & WAITLIST	DETOX BEFORE ADMISSION?	KEY FEATURES
Tsuut'ina Spirit Healing Lodge (Tsuut'ina Health and Wellness)	240 Old Agency Rd., Tsuut'ina Nation, AB T2W 3C4	403-251-2082	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual and group addiction counselling • Prevention education; mobile outreach (city of Calgary and on-Nation) • Detox and treatment referrals • Wellness programs • Women's and men's shelter • Land-based healing and cultural/language programming • Grief and loss support group • Aftercare (Our House ladies aftercare and men's aftercare) 	Walk-in/in-person intake at Spirit Healing Lodge for NNADAP-funded referrals. AHS and NNADAP funding available to Nation and non-Nation members. Private treatment available to Tsuut'ina members only.	Detox referral provided as needed — clients referred to detox centre before treatment, when required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tsuut'ina Nation-based • Dene cultural model • Open to other Indigenous peoples, depending on program • Land-based and language programming • NNADAP & AHS funded
Elbow River Healing Lodge	Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre, 7th Floor 1213 4 St SW, Calgary, AB T2R 0X7	403-955-6600 elbow.riverhealinglodge@ahs.ca Ahs.ca/ihp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-range primary health care (by appointment, no walk-in) • Primary care: assessments, prenatal care, immunizations, foot clinics, nutrition • Traditional healing (Elders on-site, smudging, ceremony, sharing circles) • Specialist services: internal medicine, psychiatry, neurology, pediatrics, OB/GYN, dietician, rheumatology • Social resource referral and advocacy • Community outreach 	Appointment required — call to book. Self-referral is standard. Interpreter/translation services available. Mon-Fri 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.	Not applicable — primary health care clinic, not a residential addiction treatment centre. Provides referrals and wraparound care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AHS-funded Indigenous health clinic • Holistic, wraparound care • Elders and traditional wellness on-site • Open to First Nations (Status and Non-Status), Métis and Inuit and their families • Wheelchair accessible • On major bus route

NOTE: This guide reflects information available at time of publication. Programming changes and new offerings may become available — always check organization websites or call for the latest details.

MOVIE REVIEW:

Kímmapiiyipitssini: The Meaning of Empathy

A documentary film by: Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers

Reviewed by Shaye Trudel

Before watching the documentary, I was curious to see whether my personal definition of empathy would evolve by the end of the film. I felt I had a basic understanding of empathy, which I defined as the ability to understand how another person feels and, at times, experience those feelings yourself.

In this two-hour documentary, viewers are taken into the Kainai First Nation (the Blood Reserve) and the crisis the community faces due to substance abuse and overdoses. Since 2015, overdoses have increased significantly because of the rise of fentanyl use, a substance that is 50–100 times more potent than other opioids.

First responders on the reserve are struggling to keep up. In some cases, people bring their overdosing friends or loved ones directly to emergency service buildings, begging for help. These scenes highlight how urgently our approach to substance abuse needs to change.

There are two main approaches to substance use. The most widely accepted approach is abstinence, which involves completely cutting off all drugs, alcohol and addictive behaviors. Twelve-step programs such as AA (Alcoholics Anonymous), NA (Narcotics Anonymous) and the Red Road to Wellbriety are among the most common methods of treatment. Many detox centers and residential

treatment facilities also follow this model.

The second approach, unfortunately far less accepted, is harm reduction. Harm reduction is an umbrella term that includes policies, strategies and practices aimed at reducing the harmful effects of substance use. In the documentary, several healthcare workers, including the filmmaker's mother, travel to Vancouver's downtown eastside to observe how harm reduction programs operate there. They visit several programs, each offering different forms of support.

Insite is Canada's first government-sanctioned supervised injection site. One quote from site manager Darwin Fisher stood out to me. "By no means is it (harm reduction) celebrating addiction, but what it does is celebrate the lives of people without judgement."

Crosstown Clinic provides a prescription heroin program for individuals with severe opioid dependence.

The Brewers Co-op, through the PHS Managed Alcohol Program, offers an illicit alcohol exchange. Individuals can trade in dangerous substances such as rubbing alcohol, hand sanitizer or mouthwash in exchange for regulated, consumable alcohol, preventing severe illness and death.

Spikes on Bikes is a mobile, peer-led overdose response

initiative. Volunteers travel by bike throughout the city, responding to calls for help, carrying naloxone kits. They also clean up used supplies such as wrappers and cookers. This initiative demonstrates community care and shows that people struggling with addiction are not abandoned, they have someone safe to call.

While these programs have proven effective in Vancouver's downtown eastside, introducing similar initiatives to the Kainai requires significant community support and understanding.

The documentary introduces us to Lori, a woman using opioid replacement therapy. She shares how this program helped her stop using opioids and begin living a stable life. She has since taken custody of her brother's three children and cares for them full-time.

Lori still requires daily support and visits a pharmacy each day to receive a controlled dose of suboxone, a medication that reduces opioid dependence without producing a strong euphoric effect. Although this treatment has helped both her and a close friend, some of her loved ones struggle to accept it, believing it simply replaces one drug with another.

Convincing community members is especially difficult because of the long-standing struggle with alcoholism on reserve. Historically, abstinence was the primary response.

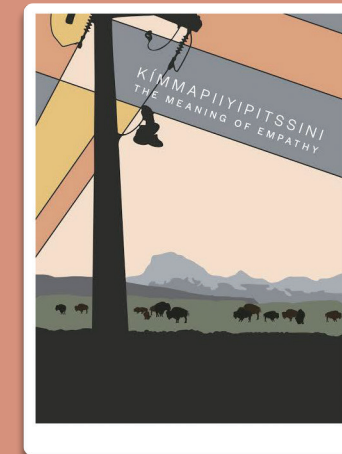
Times have changed, and we must now practice Kímmapiiyipitssini—the act of showing kindness, compassion and care—to support community members navigating new and increasingly dangerous substances.

What we see throughout the film is a loss of connection—to culture, loss of community and lack of sense of belonging. Loneliness is a major factor in continued substance use. Many people are searching for love, ceremony and a sense of purpose. There is an overwhelming sense of urgency.

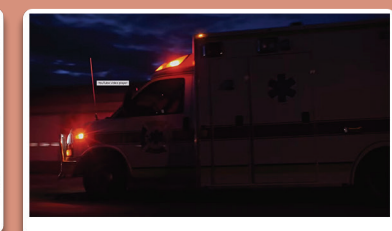
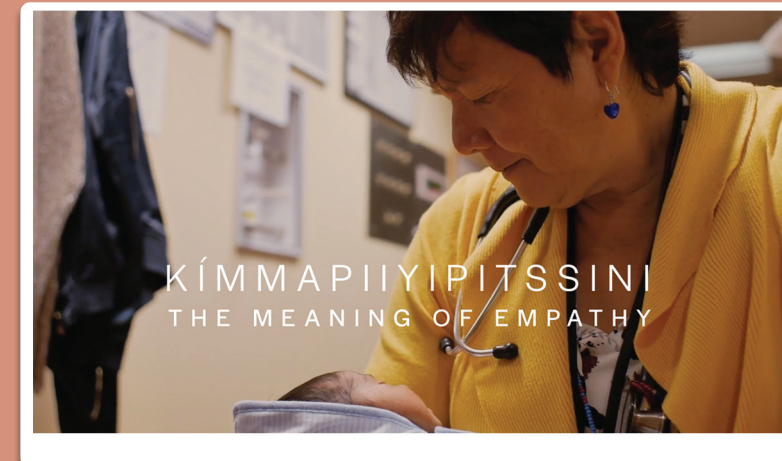
Overall, this documentary is eye-opening, I highly recommend it. It sheds light on the lived experiences of people struggling with addiction, as well as the dedication of volunteers and first responders.

After viewing the documentary I would define empathy as not only the ability to feel another's emotions, but to understand them, to see their circumstances and the history that shaped them, without judgement and from a place of love and compassion."

The film can be watched at <https://www.nfb.ca/film/kimmapiiyipitssini-the-meaning-of-empathy/>



Follow this AR Prompt to watch the film.



When Community **HEALS:**

Inside the New Tribe Healing Event



Selah Rayne



Selah Rayne & Elder Jackie Bromley



Braden Kadlun



Dwight Good Eagle Farahat



Alycia Two Bears

Photo Essay by Albert Woo

Stirring songs and drumming, precious cultural teachings, laughter, friendship and most importantly, hope, filled the Premier Room at the New Tribe Magazine Addictions Event, held at the Best Western Premier Calgary Plaza Hotel & Conference Centre spring, 2026.

Advocates, authors, and health professionals joined together in an uplifting gathering to share insightful stories and impactful poetry. Compelling personal stories were also shared, detailing struggles with addiction and trauma, and lessons learned on their journeys to healing.

USAY Creative Director and filmmaker Selah Rayne welcomed everyone for this special evening with her customary charm and warmth. Elder Jackie Bromley, a familiar presence at many

Indigenous gatherings throughout Mohkinstsis, blessed attendees with a powerful prayer in her Blackfoot language, and started the evening in a good way with words of compassion for the guests.

The first presentation was from Braden Kadlun, an Inuit public speaker, model, and actor, as well as a content creator who sheds light on Inuit culture, traditional food and language through popular online videos. He is the author of *A Guide to Sobriety: 10 Gentle Reminders*, copies of which were distributed to the evening's guests.

Braden spoke of his harrowing journey of addiction that began in his childhood, and the years that led to eventual healing, and of the tools that assisted him in his recovery. He offered encouragement and words of kindness

to those still struggling through similar experiences. As he wrote in his book, *"Each day, in each moment we are given a new opportunity to choose who we are and how to give our life meaning."*

Dwight Good Eagle Farahat, a social worker who is well known locally as a rapper and songwriter, and the CEO of Tribe Artist Society, took the podium next.

Dwight led everyone in a series of wellness activities, beginning with breathing and stretching exercises to focus on a sense of calmness. He spoke powerfully about the importance of positive influences and attitudes, and guests were encouraged to write down their dreams and aspirations on paper to help guide them. Another exercise was for guests to stand up and warmly greet

each other, to make new connections, to tell each other affirmations such as, "I'm glad that you're alive." Even simple interactions like these can have lasting impact.

Alycia Two Bears spoke next, a member of the Mistawasis Nêhiyawak First Nation. A mother of five, Alycia is a regular contributor to New Tribe Magazine and now a student at the UBC midwife program. Alycia read several selections from her recently published second volume of poetry, *The Feast*, which passionately and breathlessly ruminated on ideas of identity, intimacy and parenthood.

Next was Dr. Lana Potts, a medical director and Indigenous health advisor and consultant. She is the founder of the Aisokinaki Clinic, an independent

Cont'd >



When Community HEALS:

Inside the New Tribe Healing Event

centre offering services related to women's health and mental health, built through her years of planning, hard work, and dedication. Dr. Potts spoke about the causes of addiction, as well as Intergenerational trauma and the effects of colonization, including residential schools and the loss of cultural practices, parenting skills and family ties, and the loss of land and traditional medicines.

She also talked with great feeling about helping people to reconnect with their culture and traditions, learning about the bountiful medicines provided by the land, and how to wield that knowledge to heal from their trauma and addictions.

Spike Eagle Speaker Jr, an award-winning singer and drummer from Siksika, and a member of the famed Blackfoot Confederacy drum group was the final speaker. Spike shared stories of his youth, the power of song to build connections, to uplift and calm, to help those weather bad experiences, before performing several moving songs.

He also related a poignant story of how the gift of song can bring solace during the darkest of times, how music helped his family to survive a troubling period in their lives, and how song is prayer, how "Singing is Medicine," and ultimately, how songs can give hope.

Guests also enjoyed a dinner buffet and received gift bags, with a raffle to end the evening.



Dr. Lana Potts



Spike Eagle Speaker Jr.



Event Attendees



Redfoot, Alycia TwoBears, Dwight Farahat, Selah Rayne



Raffle Prize Winner



Raffle Prize Winner



Our Incredible Volunteers



Dwight Good Eagle Farahat leading a wellness exercise.





Sky Sisters

DOCU-SERIES

Sky Sisters is a youth-led documentary series exposing the systems that sustain the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people. Through powerful storytelling, it reveals the ongoing impacts of colonization, gendered violence, and systemic neglect –while amplifying the voices, resilience, and solutions of Indigenous youth and communities.



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