

PHAC CAAN: Canoe Project

Year 1 To-date & Moving Forward

Reporting period: April 1, 2023 to Sept 30, 2023

Overview

Project Goal: The PHAC CAAN: Canoe Project, a collaborative effort between CAAN and the Dr. Peter Centre, is dedicated to enhancing the capacity of frontline healthcare professionals, service providers, and organizations. Our primary aim is to deliver stigma-free and culturally safe harm reduction services for Indigenous communities. This project embodies the principles of decolonization by reshaping harm reduction services at non-Indigenous organizations and 'Indigenizing' harm reduction by weaving Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing into our programming. The project's core pillars are as follows:

1. Tailored, Strengths-Based Training: Providing capacity-building training for frontline workers and organizations serving Indigenous people in 12 communities.
2. National Community of Practice: Creating a platform for frontline service providers and organizations to share expertise and resources in Indigenous harm reduction.
3. Online Resource Repository: Establishing a digital repository for our audience to access tools and information to support their work.

Success Stories of the PHAC CAAN-Canoe Project:

- Lloydminster Showcase: We joined forces with local partners, including PWLLE, artists, and the Saskatchewan Health Authority (manager and director of PH), to showcase the Canoe project, harm reduction resources, and opportunities for PWLLE in Lloydminster. Focus groups for PWLLE are scheduled to commence in late October/early November 2023.
- Nine Circles Sharing Event: We attended a sharing event with Nine Circles in Winnipeg, where we shared opportunities and resources, with plans to collaborate further in early 2024.
- National Gathering for Survivors: Our project leads participated in a National Gathering for Survivors and established connections with Dr. Tailfeathers from Blood Reserve on Treaty 7 Territory. This event provided education on vital topics such as "The Drug Crisis That Just Won't Go Away," "Exposing The Truth: Journalism's Role In Reconciliation" by Connie Walker, and "Indigenous Liberation Through the Revival of Kinship" by Colby Tootoosis. Colby Tootoosis will be presenting on a Community of Practice Call in February 2024, emphasizing the importance of kinship in Indigenous families experiencing substance abuse disorders. During this event, our project leads were also invited to participate in a local Full Moon Ceremony with Indigenous Peoples and community members, promoting Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Doing and strengthening allyship.
- Addressing Northern Ontario Crisis: Our connection with Indigenous Consultant, Dr. Robyn Rowe, revealed that the Chiefs of First Nations in northern Ontario are calling for a public emergency and social crisis declaration due to disproportionate mental health and addiction issues facing their communities. We are actively working with the Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority to develop innovative support solutions for this ongoing crisis. Our project leads also attended the Healing Our Spirit Worldwide Conference, where they gained valuable insights into Indigenous cultures and international Peoples. Post-COVID supports, such as the utilization of Virtual Reality



technology, were demonstrated to facilitate knowledge translation on traditional approaches to addressing the drug crisis in northern rural and remote First Nations Communities.

- Strong Partnerships: We have established robust working relationships with our partner organization, CAAN, to ensure the efficient completion of the project.

Projects in Progress

- Steering committee meetings are scheduled for the remainder of the fiscal year.
- Community of Practice Calls are planned for the remainder of the fiscal year.
- Peer-led community engagement and communications strategy, including focus groups.
- Peer-led interventions targeting HIV communities based on survey findings (e.g., community engagement and communications strategies).
- Community-based research with SHA to complete asset mapping and community readiness frameworks.

Community Selection Process

Our community selection and prioritization process are based on several key criteria:

- Previously existing connections.
- Identifying gaps in service, particularly in territories and northern communities.
- Proximity to Indigenous reserves.
- Geographically remote smaller cities/communities.
- Identifying "High Need" communities through networking, research, and consultation with Elders, and Knowledge Keepers.

We are committed to advancing these initiatives and continuing to make a positive impact on Indigenous communities in the coming months. Your support is instrumental in achieving our project's objectives. Thank you for your continued partnership.