

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Local harm reduction and drug policy organizations seek solutions to Yukon’s overdose crisis at territory’s first-ever public health dialogue on drug policy-related harms

Leading public health officials in the province have signalled their support for “safe supply” and decriminalization.

Whitehorse, YT—Blood Ties Four Directions Centre in partnership with the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition is hosting Yukon’s first-ever public health dialogue on the overdose crisis and COVID-19. The two-day event, [Getting to Tomorrow: Ending the Overdose Crisis](#), is being held on Tuesday, June 8 and Thursday, June 10. **It will gather leaders from diverse sectors of society to identify and move towards policy solutions to the overdose crisis in the context of two public health crises.** Participants will include leaders from health care, government, First Nations, and law enforcement, to people with lived/living experience, and harm reduction.

“The Yukon has experienced a heartbreaking increase in overdose deaths since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. We need an end to these preventable deaths. We need to implement sensible drug policy and services that will address the root causes of the crisis: access to safe supply, the decriminalization of drugs, and access to safe consumption sites,” said Bronte Renwick-Shields, executive director of Blood Ties Four Directions. “Blood Ties is very excited to be engaging in a dialogue with people from across the Yukon on how we can find solutions that work for our communities.”

More specifically, Getting to Tomorrow has three main goals.

1. Accelerate the adoption of public health- and human rights-based drug policies in Canada, which includes “safe supply” and decriminalization
2. Empower decision makers and the public to take evidence-based actions by providing the latest research on policies that could end the overdose crisis
3. Engage the public in dialogue on issues related to substance use and drug policy

“The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the illegal drug toxicity death crisis as a catastrophic failure of Canada’s current approach to drugs. Governments have moved mountains in response to the COVID-19 pandemic while a coherent pan-Canadian approach to over 20,000 overdose deaths in the past five years has failed to materialize,” said Donald MacPherson, executive director of the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition. “We hope Getting to Tomorrow will inform, engage, and inspire Canadians to become more involved in building a new approach to drugs based on principles of public health and human rights, and lead to improved health and safety for all in our communities.”

WATCH VIDEO: [Getting to Tomorrow](#)

Never before in Canada’s history have communities confronted two concurrent public health crises like the overdose crisis and COVID-19 pandemic. Among those at greatest risk are people who use drugs. Overdose deaths have risen across Canada and individual health and safety is more precarious than ever because of a disrupted drug supply and public health guidance that makes it harder for those affected by substance use disorder to access services.



Getting to Tomorrow: Ending the Overdose Crisis is supported by Health Canada.
www.gettingtomorrow.ca

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About Blood Ties Four Directions Centre

Our mission is to eliminate barriers and create opportunities for people to have equal access to health and wellness and to live in our community with dignity. We believe a community is diminished when people who need health and wellness are marginalized. We believe in equitable delivery and availability of health services. We believe that people who use drugs, people who are challenged with stigmatizing health conditions, people who are incarcerated and people who are insecurely housed are especially at risk for not having equal access to health & wellness and a life in our community with dignity. We believe in the power of Yukon’s cultural diversity and the richness of its First Nation, Inuit and Metis tradition and roots. <https://bloodties.ca/>

About Canadian Drug Policy Coalition

The Canadian Drug Policy Coalition (CDPC) is a coalition of 50 organizations and 6,000 individuals working to support the development of progressive drug policy grounded in science, guided by public health principles, and respectful of human rights. The CDPC operates as a project within Simon Fraser University under the Faculty of Health Sciences. The CDPC seeks to include people who use drugs and those harmed by the war on drugs in moving toward a healthier Canadian society free of stigma and social exclusion. www.drugpolicy.ca

