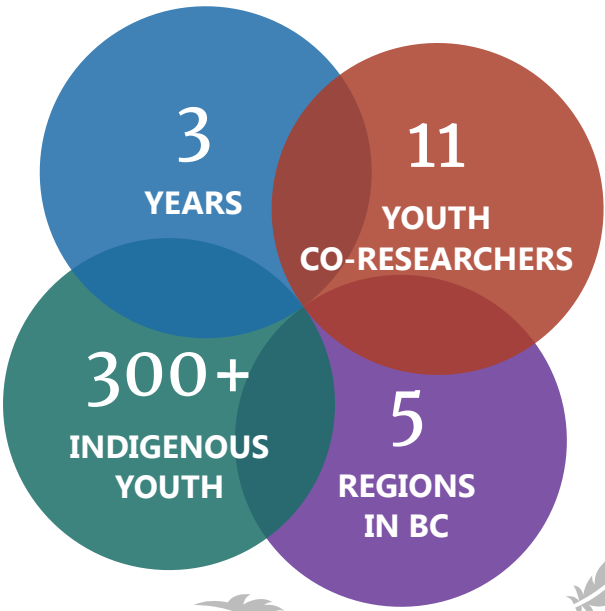


BEYOND A DREAMCATCHER:

Improving services for Indigenous justice-involved youth with substance use challenges

Between 2017 and 2019, a youth-led study explored how justice-involved Indigenous youth could be better supported when they experienced substance use challenges. Through this process, the voices and perspectives of Indigenous youth around British Columbia were gathered. This is some of what they had to say.



“ You need to hit rock bottom or they don’t take you seriously.”

“ Many youth are using drugs to deal with both individual and intergenerational trauma.”

“ The problem is programs have limited space. What we need is more places for youth to go.”

BARRIERS TO ACCESSING SUBSTANCE USE SERVICES

“ I thought it was going to be padded cells and really scary but if I had seen pictures of it, I might have gone to treatment sooner because it didn’t look like that at all.”

“ Culture is not a thing we do—it’s how we live.”

IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE

“ Culture is so important because it’s how you walk on a daily basis. It’s not just the times you dance in the big house where you need to be sober, it’s also before that...that deep culture is really important.”

“ Culture is the most important part for healing substance abuse in First Nations communities.”

“ Include the whole family in the healing process.”

IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS

“ There needs to be connection to family and community. There can’t be a disconnect.”

“ Be compassionately curious in those spaces and allow our Indigenous culture to show in that treatment program.”

“ If you can, you should involve sports and stuff.”

“ It is helpful to be out in nature, such as going for a walk on the beach.”

“ Diverse staff—you should have people who’ve been through drug use challenges, so they get it.”

SUGGESTIONS FOR TREATMENT PROGRAMS

“ Learning about intergenerational trauma and doing workshops can be good, because lots of us don’t know what happened and how it affects us.”

“ I think it has to be the bigger picture of changing your whole life, not just doing changes to make you sober.”

“ Yeah, Aboriginal staff can connect and understand us better [than non-Indigenous staff].”

“ [Youth] have to decide whether they want help. You can’t push or pressure them.”

“ Youth can mess up a lot in treatment and still change.”

“ It’s important to listen to what youth want.”



YOUTH RESEARCH ACADEMY

Download the full report at mcs.bc.ca/pdf/beyond_a_dreamcatcher.pdf



McCreary Centre Society

This project was conducted by members of McCreary Centre Society’s Youth Research Academy (YRA). The YRA is a group of youth aged 16 to 24 with experience of the government care system, including the youth justice system. Members of the YRA are trained to conduct research projects of interest to youth in and from government care and the agencies that serve them.

McCreary Centre Society is a BC-based not-for-profit organization committed to promoting the health of BC youth through community-based research, evaluation and youth-led projects.

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mccreary@mcs.bc.ca



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