

Media Release



Time to remember loved ones and end drug poisonings (overdose)

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Communities in Timiskaming and around the world are coming together to remember those who have died or suffered permanent injury due to drug poisoning (overdose). Observed on the 31st of August every year, International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) seeks to create better understanding of drug poisoning, reduce the stigma of drug-related deaths, and create change that reduces the harms associated with drug use.

This year on IOAD, the Timiskaming Drug and Alcohol Strategy (TDAS) is putting a spotlight on three collaborative events.

- **Memorial Service** at Toburn Mine Property in Kirkland Lake. The service will start at 3:00pm and will have a free BBQ, naloxone kits, and information and resources available. This event is brought to you by Change for Timiskaming, Timiskaming Opioid Poisoning Prevention Task Force, Pavilion Women's Centre, Salvation Army, Northeastern Recovery Centre, No More Kirkland Lake, Timiskaming Substance Use Disorder Steering Committee, Addiction Recovery Support Group Northern Ontario, Timiskaming Health Unit (THU) and Canadian Mental Health Association Cochrane Timiskaming (CMHA-CT) Mobile Crisis Response Team.
- **Sacred Fire** at 109 Burnside Drive in Kirkland Lake from 12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Refreshments, snacks, and harm reduction supplies will be available on site. Mino M-shki-ki Indigenous Health Team and Keepers of the Circle are hosting.
- **Memorial Tree and Rock Painting** at the south end of the boardwalk by the volleyball courts in New Liskeard from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. A food truck, information and resources, and naloxone kits and training will be available on site. Pavilion Women's Centre is hosting this event, joined by Timiskaming Health Unit, The Salvation Army, CMHA-CT, District of Timiskaming Social Services Administration Board, Timiskaming Emergency Medical Services, and Mino M'shki-ki Indigenous Health Team.

Kerry Schubert-Mackey, Steering Committee Co-Chair of the TDAS, shares that "drug poisoning (overdose) can affect anybody; it does not discriminate. One of the messages of this day is that those who experience drug poisoning are our sons, daughters, parents, siblings, friends, neighbours and co-workers – they are loved, and they are missed every day."

The toll of drug poisonings claimed the lives of over 4,000 Ontarians* in 2021 together with countless more affected forever¹. From January to June of 2022, there have been 7 suspected drug-related deaths in the Timiskaming Health Unit region compared to 4 deaths during the whole of last year¹. The need for change and action is becoming ever-more critical.

"We encourage every Timiskaming resident to join us in recognizing International Overdose Awareness Day" says Gabriella Chie Chie, member of the People with Lived and Living Experience Advisory Committee. "There are many ways to show your support, start a conversation, share your experiences, wear purple and attend one of the local IOAD events. Now more than ever we need to end the stigma around drug use and addiction. Together we can make a difference and save lives."

If you would like more information on the local events, please visit www.timiskaminghu.com/90558/timiskaming-drug-and-alcohol-strategy-tdas or call 705-465-4895.

The TDAS is a multi-sectoral initiative with members representing mental health and addictions treatment services, Indigenous services, community members including those with lived experience, social services, family health teams, hospitals, school boards, police, and public health. Work is underway to finalize a strategy to prevent and reduce the harms associated with substance use and improve the quality of life of all Timiskaming residents.

www.timiskaminghu.com

For more information

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*Represents the number of suspect drug-related deaths as determined from the investigating coroner's preliminary notes and/or the preliminary findings from the autopsy.

¹ Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario. Monthly suspected drug-related deaths summary Table, Ontario. Data for 2019 to March 2022 was released July 22, 2022.