



# B.C.'s Response to the Overdose Emergency

Dr. Bonnie Henry  
Provincial Health Officer

Massachusetts Harm Reduction Committee  
December 17, 2018

# Scope of the Ongoing Overdose Emergency in B.C.

*Illegal drug overdoses are the leading cause of unnatural death in B.C.*

## Key Facts from 2017

- **1,452** suspected illegal drug overdose deaths in B.C.
- **1/3 of overdose deaths in Canada, occurred in B.C.** and B.C. represents 1/7 of the population in Canada
- **82%** of those who died, were **male**
- **3 communities, Vancouver, Surrey and Victoria,** had the highest # of overdoses

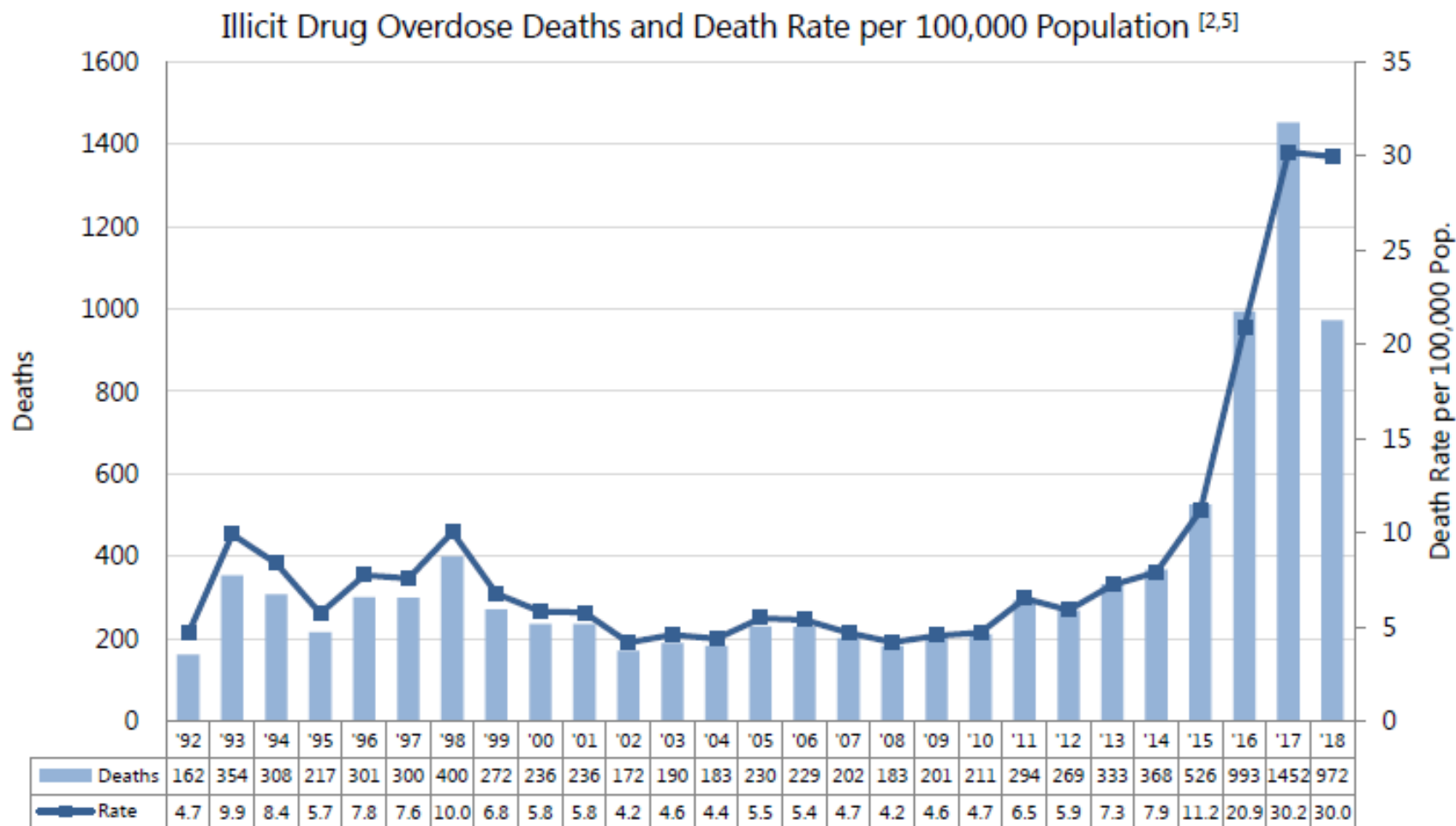
## Using Inside and Alone Elevates Risk of Death

- **88% of deaths occurred inside**  
(59.2% inside private residences and 28.2% inside other locations)

## First Nations People are Affected Disproportionately

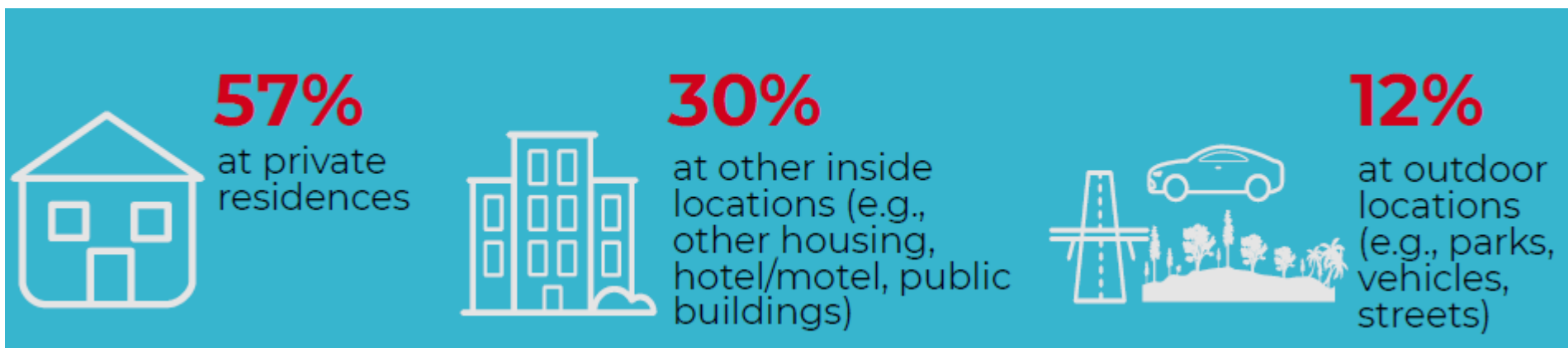
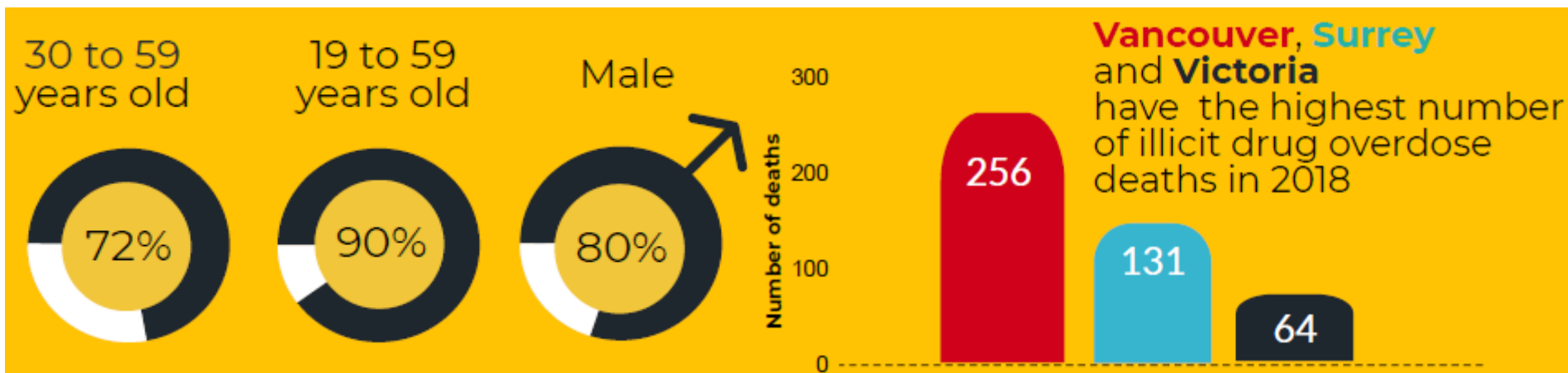
- **5x** more likely to **experience an overdose**
- **3x** more likely to **die from an overdose**
- **Indigenous women** are **equally impacted** as Indigenous men

# People Who Have Died From Overdose Due to Illicit Drugs, BC



Coroners Service

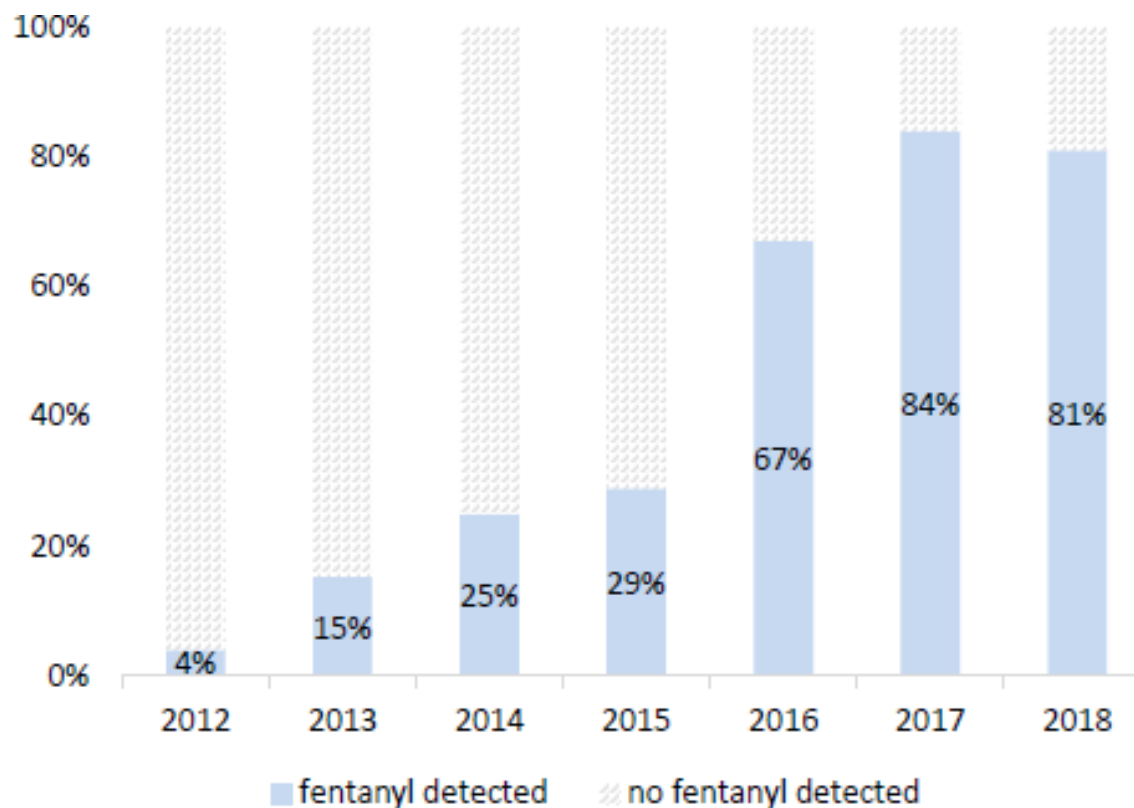
# Description of People Who Died (Jan - Aug 2018)



Coroners Service

*Illicit drug overdose deaths in BC: Jan 1, 2018 to Aug 31, 2018. BC Coroners Service*

# Description of People Who Died (Jan - Aug 2018)



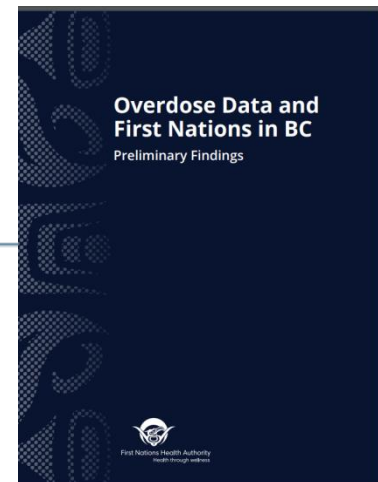
Coroners Service

*Illicit drug overdose deaths in BC: Jan 1, 2018 to Aug 31, 2018. BC Coroners Service (Fentanyl detection available June 2018)*



First Nations people are **5X** more  
likely than non-First Nations to  
experience an overdose event

First Nations people are **3X** more  
likely than non-First Nations to  
die due to an overdose



#### THE OPIOID EMERGENCY HAS EQUALLY AFFECTED FIRST NATIONS MEN AND WOMEN

Across BC, First Nations population overdose events have affected: **52% men** and **48% women**.

Non-First Nations overdose events in BC have affected: 71% men | 29% women

#### FIRST NATIONS OF ALL AGES ARE AT A HIGHER RISK OF OVERDOSE EVENTS AND DEATH

**1,903** First Nations OD Events between January 1, 2015 - November 30, 2016

**60** First Nations OD Deaths between January 1, 2015 - July 31, 2016



# Saving Lives

- A key priority is increasing access to naloxone
- Naloxone is a life-saving medication which quickly reverses the effects of an opioid overdose
- Take Home Naloxone(THN) program has been essential as only 51% of people call 911 during an overdose
- **61,824 THN kits distributed in 2017** and 29,021 to September 15, 2018
- For **every 10 THN kits used, one overdose death** is estimated to have been prevented

## Key focuses going forward:

- Continue to increase access to Naloxone
- Expand drug checking services

# BC Take Home Naloxone sites

**1,459**  
ACTIVE THN  
DISTRIBUTION  
LOCATIONS IN BC  
INCLUDING:

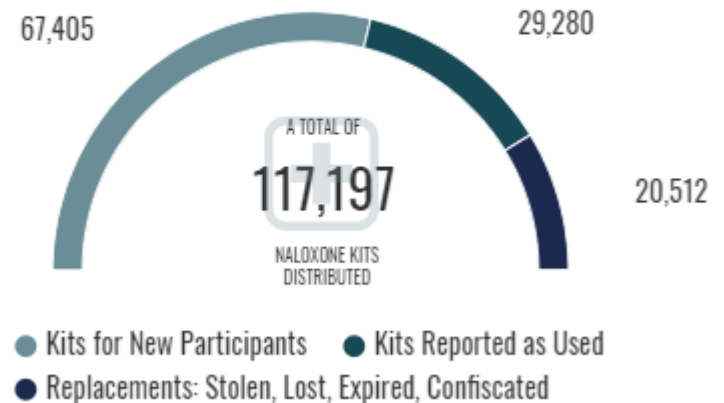
**17**  
CORRECTIONS  
FACILITIES

**87**  
HOSPITALS &  
EMERGENCY DEPTS.

**598**  
COMMUNITY  
PHARMACIES

**140**  
FIRST NATION SITES

## DISTRIBUTION OF KITS



<http://towardtheheart.com/naloxone/>

Data to September 15, 2018



# Saving Lives and Connecting People to Treatment

B.C. provides safer spaces for drug consumption and monitoring for signs of overdose through Supervised Consumption Services and Overdose Prevention Services

Staff able to connect clients to treatment and recovery services as well as counselling and medical care

## **9 Supervised Consumption Sites are operating in B.C.**

- Vancouver- based **Insite**, first legal location in North America, received **175,464** visits by **7,301 individuals** in 2017 and **zero deaths**

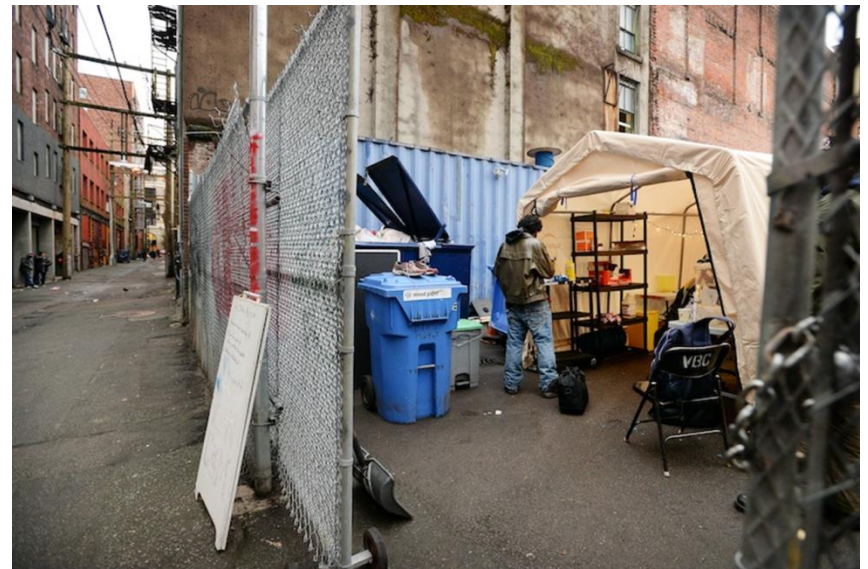
**Overdose Prevention Services** have expanded and are operating in 21 standalone sites across the province. There are also other models of Overdose Prevention Services including housing-based services in BC (more than 25 such sites in Vancouver Coastal Health

- At 21 locations, at least **826,064 visits**, **5,386 overdoses survived** and **no deaths**

## **Key focuses going forward:**

- Expand access to overdose prevention and supervised consumption services
- Accelerate access to treatment and recovery

# Overdose Prevention Services



# Many Different Forms





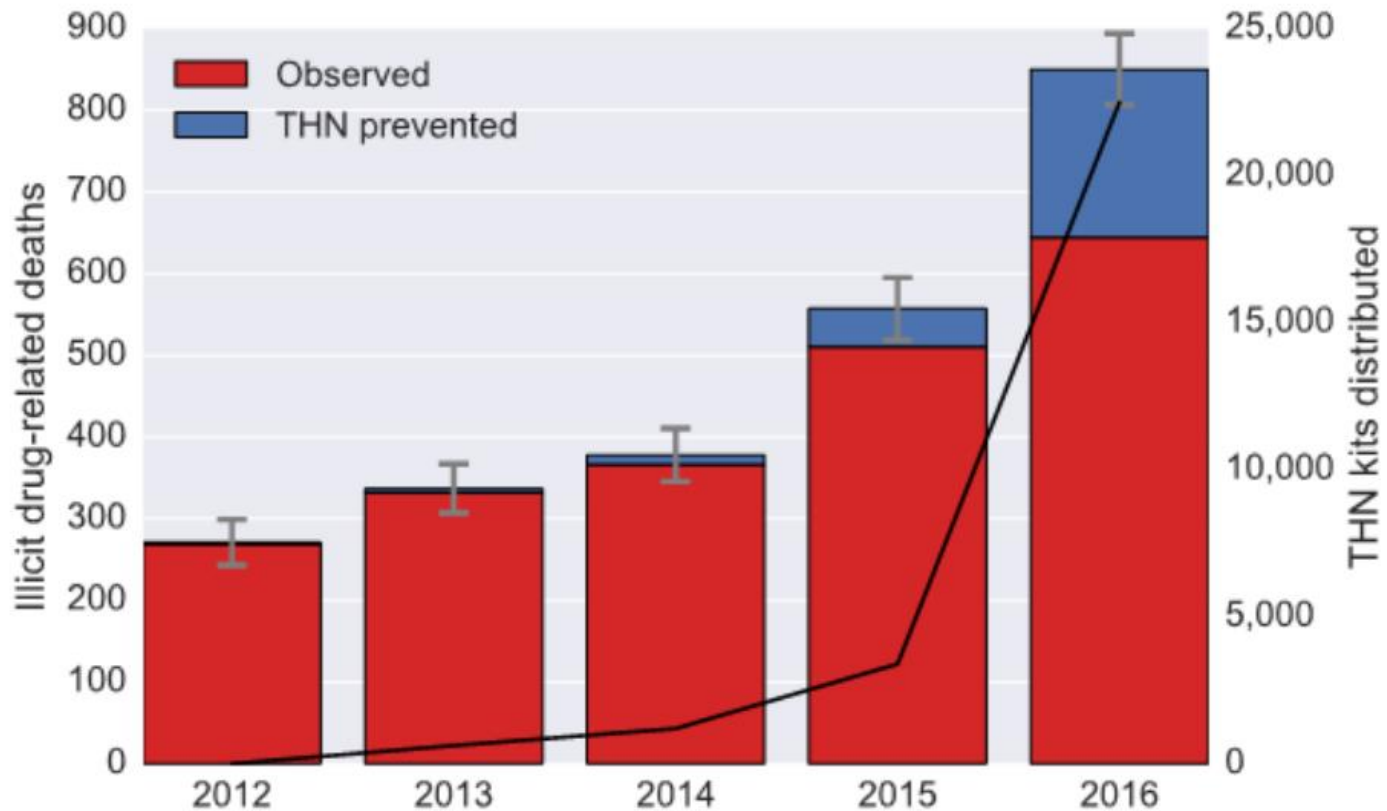
# Ending Stigma

- People who use drugs alone and in the absence of medical intervention are at the greatest risk of overdose death
- B.C. partnered with the Vancouver Canucks hockey team to launch an [overdose awareness campaign](#)
- 69% of adults report hearing or seeing at least 1 element of the campaign and those who have are significantly more likely to see people who use drugs in a more constructive and empathetic manner



# Evidence of making a difference

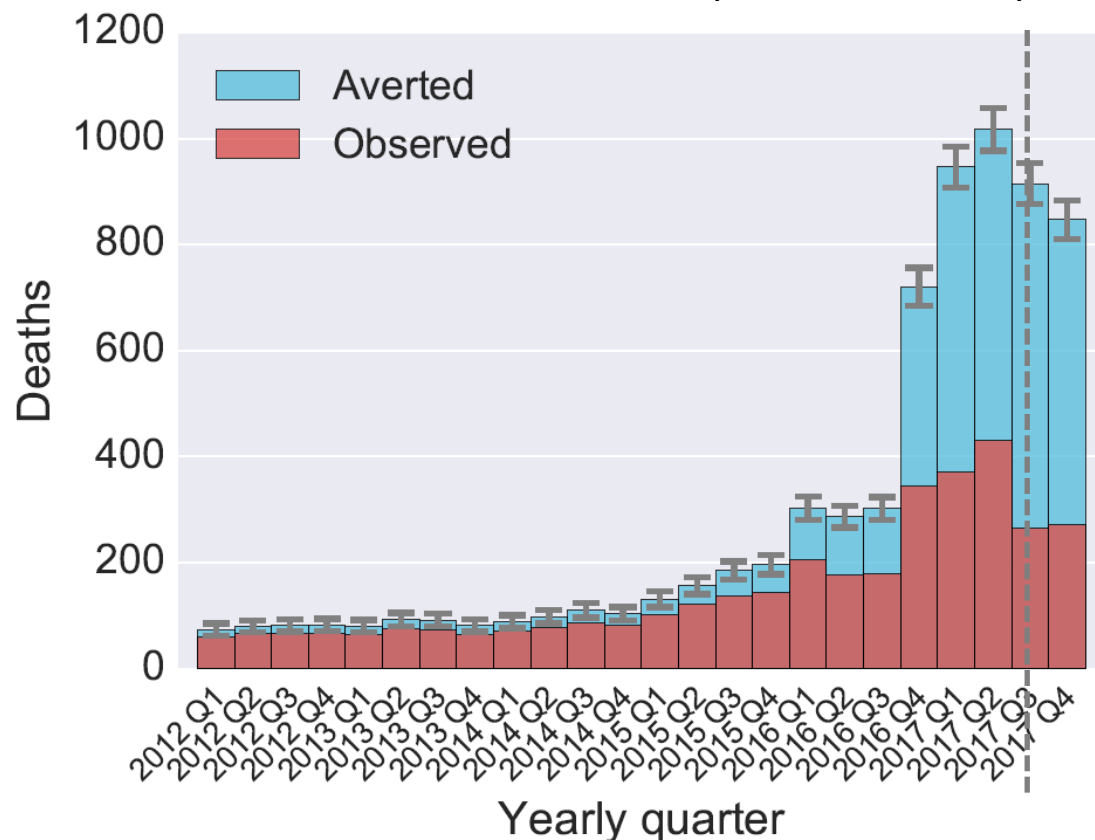
**Figure 1: Estimated impact of Take Home Naloxone (THN) Jan 2012 - Oct 2016 on overdose-related deaths.**



Red = Observed number of illicit drug-related deaths  
Blue = Deaths prevented by THN program  
Black = THN kits distributed

# Including Multiple Interventions

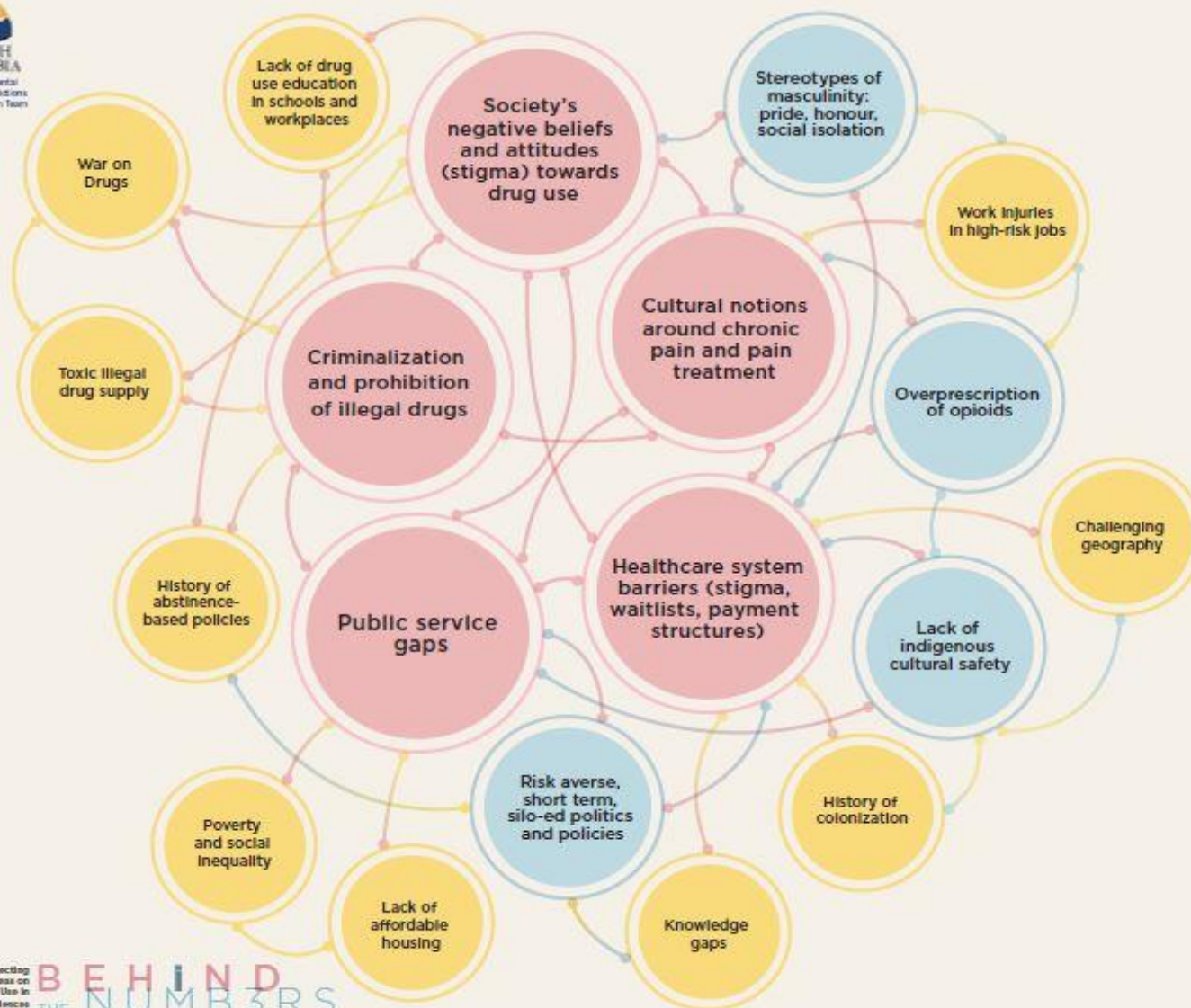
*Take home naloxone, overdose prevention sites, opioid agonist therapy. \*Preliminary*



Model estimates  
would have seen  
2.5 times more  
deaths if  
interventions not in  
place



# Much work still to do



## Systems Map

### Understanding the Complexity of the Overdose Crisis in B.C. and Leverage Points for Change

In 2017, 1,422 people died of a drug overdose in B.C. The B.C. Coroners' report (published January 31, 2018) shows that 4 out of 5 people who died were male and 9 out of 10 deaths occurred indoors, including more than half in private residences. First Nations are disproportionately affected by the crisis, with research from the First Nations Health Authority showing that First Nations people are five times more likely to experience an overdose event.

Behind these numbers, there are stories about people's lives and ideas for change. Through conversations with more than 100 people who use drugs (like heroin, cocaine, meth) and people in support provider roles, we found connections between parts of this complex problem, revealing root causes. Reframing the overdose crisis from these root causes shows the most significant leverage points for lowering overdose deaths in B.C. Collaboration among all stakeholders at these leverage points is an essential part of action and change.

### How to use this map

This map shows connections between problems. Some problems have more connections than others and can be viewed as root causes.

Think about how your initiative could influence the overdose crisis in B.C. How is it connected to other problems and what impact could it have?

7 or more connections

Pink circles show problems with the most connections to other problems. Initiatives focused here could influence multiple problems at once.

4 to 5 connections

Blue circles show problems with connections to several other problems.

1 to 3 connections

Yellow circles show problems with the least connections to other problems.





# COUSIN STUDENT DRUG USER FRIEND

People who use drugs are real people.  
**Get involved. Get informed. Get help.**

[StopOverdoseBC.ca](http://StopOverdoseBC.ca)

# Questions?

