Kottakinoona Awaahkapiiyaawa

“Bringing the Spirits Home”

The Blood Tribe Addiction Framework
November 2019
Bringing the Spirits Home

A person living with addiction may experience many challenges including a loss of or disconnect from their spirit. By implementing this framework as a start to addressing addiction within the Blood Tribe community, we are committed to inviting the spirits of those living with addiction back to the community and back to the person. We also acknowledge the spirits of those who have lost their lives to addiction in the past.

By sharing this document we ask that you respect the voices of the Blood Tribe community and hold it in your hands as gently as you would another person’s heart.
The Blood Tribe people and community are relentlessly affected by the terrible and traumatic effects of addiction, including the immense impact of the opioid crisis. In particular, the opioid crisis has an impact on every aspect of life to the point where it feels like the very fabric of the community is disintegrating.

Addressing addiction and the opioid crisis feels overwhelming as everyone is impacted personally, professionally or socially. Yet, we know that there is knowledge, strength and readiness to start making the community whole again. Several projects, initiatives, and programs are already underway. Many people are working to make a difference for themselves, for their loved ones, for their patients and clients, and for their community. The passion, knowledge, expertise, and wisdom that exists in the community is inspiring.

It is apparent that solutions already exist within the people and the community.

This document is the result of listening to the voices of individuals and the community as a whole. It also includes overlaying those voices with evidence to create a set of recommendations. Through this work, we have developed a community-wide, comprehensive, addiction framework for the entire Blood Tribe community.

As a result the community can work together to address the effects of addiction, with the support of courageous leadership from all parts of the community and the Blood Tribe. By working together towards a common goal, leveraging resources and integrating expertise, changes can impact the community broadly and over the long-term.

This framework is based on the Siksikaitatsiapi (Blackfoot) teachings and culture, as well as context related to the Blood Tribe population, geography, needs and resources, with thorough attention given to opioid addiction.
Understanding

The Blood Tribe has existed since time immemorial in the geographic area of the current territory in Southern Alberta.

The traditional territory of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot Nation) extended in the north from the North Saskatchewan River to the Yellowstone River in the south, and from the Rocky Mountains in the west to the Eagle Hills in the east.

The Blackfoot culture is rich in history, connectedness to the land, storytelling and traditional ceremonies. This relationship with the land and universe is based on a belief in the connectedness of everything.

The source of traditional Blackfoot spirituality is the Creator, Æ pistotooki.

Knowingness has been developed throughout the thousands of years that the Blackfoot peoples have lived on this land. The Blackfoot language is still known, learned and used by many. The Blackfoot language is founded in a strong oral tradition with communication practices that include the use of signs, drawings and markers. Structures, including societies and the role of Elders, ensures that traditions and beliefs are passed along among generations.

Long before contact with outsiders, the Blackfoot people had their own medicine people. Medicine people would use many healing methods to address mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional ailments or issues.

Spirituality, language, knowledge, and the relationship with the land, nature and the universe are fundamental to the Blackfoot People.
Approach

The Blackfoot and Blood Tribe people are proud, strong and wise. Our rich stories, collective knowledge and deep wisdom were used to develop the comprehensive structure of the Blood Tribe Addiction Framework.

Many people provided feedback during interviews, community sessions and conversations. We heard from Elders and Knowledge Keepers, on and off-reserve departments, service providers, organizations, youth, individuals who are living with addiction, and family members of those living with addiction.

We collected detailed and wide-ranging information using research, from literature and available evidence, relevant to addiction in First Nation communities or within Indigenous populations. Where possible, we looked for information specific to the Blackfoot culture and beliefs.

This work is intended to create continuity with the past and the present while changing the path towards our desired future. By Knowing the Past, in the context of Seeing Today, we can Change the Path going forward. We can then we take stock, tell our story and pass it along to future generations as A Winter Count.
The Blackfoot and Blood Tribe people have been impacted by loss; loss of language, food sources, culture, traditions, land, territory, identity, purpose, and control. In addition to loss, the Blackfoot and Blood Tribe people have been impacted for generations by the introduction of “different ways”, such as language, culture, religion and laws. While the introduction of horses, guns and tools, provided benefits to Indigenous life, the introduction of alcohol, disease, and residential schools have had traumatic and long-lasting negative impact. These changes are not separate and distinct. They are interrelated and like ripples in the water have far-reaching and continuous effects on every aspect of life, sometimes spanning generations.

One of the most impactful examples comes from residential schools, which were established to assimilate Indigenous peoples. Not only did these schools mean the loss of children for parents and communities, the children themselves experienced significant disruption and harm. They suffered horrifying abuse, neglect and a sense of abandonment. They lost the love, nurturing, support and guidance from their parents, family, and community.

Residential school experiences have had long-lasting impacts resulting in significant and ongoing multigenerational trauma, mental and physical health challenges, and for many Indigenous people, addiction.
When planning for any new service or program, it is important to understand the problem, gather evidence, analyze data, scan the environment, and validate with stakeholder input. For the development of this framework we looked beyond:

- The problem, to consider the role of culture and spirituality.
- Evidence and literature, to explore oral history and indigenous ways of knowing.
- The data, to adhere to ethical considerations about how the data is collected, used and shared.
- Environmental scans, to understand jurisdictions, treaties and peace alliances.
- Stakeholder input, to develop the art of truly listening to the stories and wisdom.

As we listened to each story, we not only heard of the pain and heartbreak, we felt it. However, we also learned of the widespread hope for a new future. Utilizing the stories and wisdom we built a framework that now resonates deeply with the people and the community.
Seeing Today: Engagement

Blackfoot culture and language is reflected in this framework. Engagement with the Blood Tribe was initiated in May 2018 and continued through November 2018.

We heard from people on the frontline of the addiction crisis – service providers, departments, and agencies, first responders, and other groups who provide care and services for people with addiction. We also heard from other agencies that are not on the frontline, nor specifically involved addiction services, but they provide programming and services on reserve to members of the Blood Tribe.

We heard from people who are addressing the use of opioids and addiction in general, including off-reserve services in communities such as Lethbridge and Cardston.

We heard from Elders and Knowledge Keepers about their recommendations, actions and strategies that would help heal the community.

Most importantly, we heard from individuals living with addiction, people in recovery, and individuals who have recovered from addiction, as well as their family members.
"This framework is the voice of the people and the community. Because this framework is the voice of the community, it means our people have spoken. Because the people have spoken, we must make it law."

Reflection from Council Member

Matapii ákaipoiyi
"The people have spoken"
Changing the Path: The Framework

This framework is unique to the Blackfoot culture and Blood Tribe people, and includes four pillars:

- Prevention & Harm Reduction
- Detox
- Treatment, and
- Aftercare

These are represented as the poles of the Tipi.

The strength of the Tipi comes from

- Community
- Healing
- Wellness, and
- Blackfoot Culture

Moving around the base of the Tipi are 8 key supports to ensure that all needs related to addiction are considered:

- Addressing the needs of the person
- Providing the full range of services required
- Including the family’s role
- Care providers include traditional & non-traditional disciplines
- Engagement is ongoing
- Services are integrated
- Infrastructure needs are continually addressed, and
- Implementation is supported
Changing the Path: When Implemented...

The Person will have:
- Access to required programs and services sooner, closer to home and after-hours.
- A single and coordinated point-of-care entry ensuring those with the most urgent needs are seen sooner, and people and providers will know referral requirements.
- A care pathway that is coordinated and seamless from entry to discharge, across entities, including both on- and off-reserve programs and services.

Programs & Services will:
- Be healing centered, trauma informed and founded in the understanding that individual experiences and circumstances shape the person physically and mentally.
- Attempt to meet the needs of the individual, and not separate care between mind and body.
- Adhere to principles of care where traditional and non-traditional healing practices are braided together.

System Improvements include:
- Establishing a Department of Health and Social Services and an Ethics Committee.
- Focus on addressing determinants of health and root causes of addiction in the community.
- Blood Tribe departments working together to address housing, employment, education, skills training, social supports, transportation, and the physical environment.
- Connecting programs and services in which clinics with an area of expertise are integrated with other clinics, including outreach.

A focus on healing and wellness, and the individual’s spiritual beliefs are core to all encounters.

Care is patient-centered and family-centred, whole-person and culturally relevant so each person receives the right care or service, at the right time, in the right place and by the right provider.

Care includes physical, mental, emotional and spiritual options that may be both traditional and non-traditional.
Changing the Path: When Implemented...

Personal Support include:
- Development of a Personal Care Plan addressing both medical and spiritual needs.
- Navigation, advocacy and support services with recovery coaches, champions, navigators and liaisons will support the person both on- and off-reserve.
- Multi- and Inter-disciplinary Team Care with access to traditional, non-traditional, clinical and non-clinical providers working together to ensure everyone is grounded in the same principles, including:
  - Elders and an Elder Council
  - Cultural and traditional healers and practitioners
  - Specialists, especially psychologists and pediatricians
  - First Responders, including police, paramedics and crisis workers.

Community is included:
- Prevent future addiction from pre-natal care through to children and youth, using Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) approach to mitigate childhood trauma and the effects of trauma.
- Access to the Blood Tribe Harm Reduction Project.
- Establish Community Participation and action to empower youth, and involve them in solutions.

Infrastructure:
- Review existing buildings and functions to determine possible restructuring and repurposing in order to optimize utilization of all resources.
- Determine the need for new infrastructure where the community can access information, help and support.
- Provide access to after care locations and options that include self-care, education, skills building, sobriety support, and social connections.

Kainayssini, the Elder Declaration, provides the foundation for cultural care.
A Winter Count

Winter Counts for Blackfoot people are a mixture of oral history and pictographs passed on from one person to the next and used to record events and track time. The importance of the information captured in the Winter Count is not about the chronological order, but the story itself.

The Winter Count is painted on buffalo hides, with symbols illustrating the most significant event that occurred, starting in the centre and spiraling outward in a counter-clockwise direction.

As we move forward in history, the story of this project and framework will be told by the number of people who are helped, in the form of stories told by service providers and individual clients. We will evaluate the project based on a totality of that information. This will be our Winter Count.

Many initiatives are already successfully underway. These include:

• Bringing the Spirit Home Safe Withdrawal Management Site in Standoff
• Blood Tribe Paramedics provide the care at the Bringing the Spirit Home Site
• Access to Elders at the Bringing the Spirit Home Site
• Creating a Coordinated Access Approach
• Enhancing and Expanding Blackfoot Cultural Programs at the Levern Clinic
• Integrated and Holistic Service Approach at the Kainai Wellness Centre

“When I walked into Bringing the spirit home, I knew I had left my spirit in the streets of Lethbridge and I called it back to me.”
Comment from a client during her treatment.

Ribbon cutting at opening of the Bringing the Spirit Home Site
January 2019.
### Additional Information

When we **Know the Past** in the context of **Seeing Today**, we can **Change the Path** forward.

This page and the following page contain descriptions of the **recommendations** that make up the Bringing the Spirits Home Addiction Framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prevention</th>
<th>Principles of Care</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Pre- and post-natal care to minimize and mitigate exposure to substances and traumatic events.</td>
<td>• Founded in the Kainayssini Elder Declaration and includes traditional, non-traditional, healing and wellness principles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Full Facility</th>
<th>Determinants of Health</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Prepare for a future that includes development of a full-scale, on-reserve facility</td>
<td>• Address root causes of addiction and determinants of health, such as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- housing, -employment, -education/job skills, -transportation, -social supports, and the physical environment.</td>
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<th>Harm Reduction</th>
<th>Safe Withdrawal</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Support spread and growth of the Blood Tribe Harm Reduction Approach.</td>
<td>• On-reserve safe withdrawal management site.</td>
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<th>Role of Community</th>
<th>After Care Facility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Continue to include community members in seeking solutions to opioid and addiction problems.</td>
<td>• After care services to include self-care, education, and life- and job skills development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Build resiliency in the community with infrastructure such as parks, playgrounds, and community kitchens.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Healing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Work collaboratively to optimize the role of the provincial healing lodge on-reserve.</td>
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*When we **Know the Past** in the context of **Seeing Today**, we can **Change the Path** forward. This page and the following page contain descriptions of the **recommendations** that make up the Bringing the Spirits Home Addiction Framework.*
**Whole Person**

- Services are offered where needed and when needed.
- The person will be supported by varied providers through a collaborative care plan that includes physical, mental, emotional and spiritual care.

**Elder Role**

- Elder care may include 1:1 visits and group circles for cultural teachings, ceremonies and healing, accessed where other care is provided.

**System Transformation**

- Health and social services are united by a single mission, vision and values that produce healthy public policy.

**Coordinated Process**

- Collaboration among all services for access to care results in a coordinated and easy to navigate system, with seamless communication and referral.

**Advocacy**

- Navigation support and advocacy by recovery coaches, champions and liaisons.

**Family Supports**

- Resources, information and assistance is available to support family members.

**Healing Centered**

- Focusing on trauma informed care, and addressing experiences that shape how we approach life, is important; as is a focus on a healing centered approach that involves culture, spirituality, civic action and collective healing.

**Cultural Roles**

- Cultural supports include knowledge keepers, traditional healers, social workers and others with traditional knowledge.

**Hub and Spoke**

- Expand access to services by connecting specialty providers using telehealth, mobile services and outreach.
- Bring care to the patients to address transportation challenges.

**Youth**

- Involve youth to help identify opportunities to change the milieu for future generations.

**Disciplines**

- Multi-disciplinary care is available through a variety of care providers, including traditional, non-traditional clinical and non-clinical services.
- Interdisciplinary care ensures all services core principles are aligned.
- A person living with addiction requires access to Elders, cultural and traditional healers, general practitioners and specialists, primary care teams and first responders.
- Where possible, care takes place on the reserve, or close to home.

**Western Ways**

- Transcendence
- Self actualization
- Aesthetic needs
- Need to know & understand
- Esteem needs
- Belonging & love needs
- Safety needs
- Physiological Needs

**Niitsitapi Ways**

- Cultural perpetuity
- Community actualization
- Self actualization
Acknowledgements

“We have created a framework that speaks for the community as one voice.”

This document is the common and collective voice of hundreds of individuals:
• Living and working in the Blood Tribe community,
• From the Blood Tribe community living elsewhere, and
• Those serving Blood Tribe members in surrounding communities.

While the information is broad and the translations may vary, the intent is that we captured as many voices and thoughts as possible.

This initiative was developed in 2018 on behalf of the Blood Tribe Administration, Blood Tribe Department of Health, and with support from Alberta Health Services.

The work was supported by significant contributions from many individuals. Of special notice, many thanks are extended to the following individuals:

Rebecca Many Grey Horses
Liaison and Blood Tribe Expert, Blood Tribe Chief & Council

Lene Jorgensen
Director Planning, Planning & Performance, Alberta Health Services

Visuals and graphic design support by:
• Christina Matisons, Alberta Health Services
• Aaron Russell, Alberta Health Services
• Christina Jorgensen, Chrissy Jay Visuals

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