

# **POSITION PAPER OF THE NATIVE ADDICTIONS COUNCIL OF MANITOBA: PRESCRIPTION DRUGS**

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BY THE NACM GOVERNING COUNCIL**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

**When we look at the incidence of drug abuse in Manitoba, there are startling facts to consider in view of the spectrum of the drug market which exists. For example, 53%, according to the highest reports, of the use of drugs in Manitoba. These prescribed drugs are all channeled through doctors, prescribed to First Nation People in the core area of Winnipeg or the North End of Winnipeg. We would not think for a moment, given the avenue of political correctness, that professionals are the cause for any of the abuse prevalent among First People. We are more apt to take the position that professionals are part of our healing segment of society. Moreover, it has also been recorded that one pharmacy, alone, and, in a certain town in Manitoba, can justifiably lay claim to contributing to approximately 7% of the drug use in Manitoba, the second highest being reported. Some of these statistics are astounding!!**

**However, they do provide us with a general perspective, if we were to attempt the containing and treatment of the problem, in spite of the nature of social problems, which have a tendency to mushroom rapidly over time. Are professionals too liberal in the dispensation of their pills to affected clients? Is there anyone among them who is financially benefiting through this dispensation? What solution can we provide to the many who flock to our doors every year in search of a better lifestyle?**

## **THE DRUG SITUATION:**

**The Native Addictions Council of Manitoba has been in the business of treatment for an adequate time now (39 years in February, 2011), that it can point out significant trends in the treatment of individuals who have taken treatment over the years. One of these reoccurring trends is that there is some prevalent tendencies to take prescribed drugs, even during treatment. We, at NACM, do not believe that this goes hand in hand with the noble aspirations of sobriety or serenity.**

**Leaving medical professionals alone for a minute, however, there are also political complications which exist which sustains the very nature of drugs and addictions. People in high places may, seemingly, be bought off in order to look the other way. For one reason or the other, we may not get 100% cooperation by some segments of our beloved society when we want to curtail a certain problem. Have you had the experience with a politician? How about the police? What about school personnel or, business people?**

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Such is the nature of the problem. There seems to be a whole network of interconnecting factors which contribute to the makeup of what we term “the drug culture”. At the roots, we sense that there is a growing conspiracy to make money and to feel better and that these are the major thrusts and values of the drug culture amidst the conditions of poverty and racism.

Just the other day, someone remarked that, in order to challenge the evolution of the gang system, we will have to create jobs which pay around \$5,000. per day. What other corporation or business can afford to pay this? Not too many, with the exception of certain multinational CEO positions. But, in all reality, can we financially compete, as a society, with providing an alternative to the drug business? If we did, we would be able to offer a glimmer of hope to the countless drug users and pushers, who use to feel better and who sell to make a living. When we observe that a former policeman recently got arrested for a gang incident in Ontario, it makes us wonder what the incentives of such an individual were in order to change his persuasion with society.

The drug culture occurs amidst the prescribed roles of medical and pharmaceutical professionals. Prescribed drugs, it appears, is the solution to many problems experienced in society today. For example, it has come to our attention that First Peoples are given medication even for grieving purposes. We realize, that there were certain cultures who practiced indulgence during bereavement times, but, the First Peoples were not one of these. It is common practice, as well, to give children such drugs as Ritalin when they are hyperactive. An extension of this practice is the fact that, in some remote communities, people have learned to put children to sleep through dozing rags and kleenex with gasoline and other solvents. It is suspected, too, that some jails administer such drugs as sedatives and even for anti-procreative reasons. The drugs prescribed for diabetics are also endless in scope.

Prescription drugs is doled out for many purposes today and it leads us to question whether or not ample medication and drug use is the answer to some of the pain we experience. We know that it could be the answer to someone else’s poverty. We also know, that, in a lot of cases, frequent use of prescription drugs paves the way for dependency and addiction, as a side effect. Prolonged drug use also leads to other social complications including family break-ups, legal problems, personal, social and family dysfunctionality, health deterioration, mental conditions, greater poverty and so on.

Prescription drugs, in the long run, therefore, is not the enduring health solution for anyone. It appears that the major benefit would be financial for those who choose to distribute its effects to the population. But, pills and prescribed drugs cannot heal anyone, as a major rule. They are more conducive to getting rid of symptoms rather than dealing with the core causes of these sicknesses. That is not to say, however, that some of these medications are not helpful, in the short run, for some health conditions.

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**That is precisely what we need to understand about some of these prescribed drugs, however, is that they can be helpful for some conditions, in the short term, and are not meant for long-term conditions.**

#### **NACM's POSITION:**

**At the Native Addictions Council of Manitoba, we realize the great dilemma and that we need to take a stand against more drug addiction and social dysfunctionality. Whenever a participant chooses to act with significant responsibility and undergoes treatment, there are various conditions which we advocate as "a safety measure" for taking the treatment. One of these is the prohibition of prescription drugs to the greatest extent possible.**

**We also believe in the mechanism of prevention as an effective tool for the long term. We believe that a lot of First Peoples use and abuse because of the prevalence of such cultural and social pressures as colonialism and institutionalization. The residential school system is an excellent example of institutional, colonialist and assimilative practices which resulted in devastating consequences for a lot of First Peoples. The good things which we previously enjoyed in our cultural traditions through fluid structures have come to be institutionalized in greater society as solid structures. Health is institutionalized as hospitals, education, as schools, corrections, as jails, work, as businesses and companies, spirituality, as churches and so forth.**

**When First Peoples experienced the onset of such new structures, there was literally a mass experience of cultural shock and confusion. To many, this was a massive stress disorder. Many sought refuge in whatever would make them feel better. For many, this was alcohol and drug addiction. Today, legal and prescribed drugs offer a continuity to feeling good with the advance of major pains. As for grieving, there is a better way of handling grief. If you venture to some reserves today, you can see how First Peoples positively still deal with grieving with such events as ceremonies, feasts and other gatherings. Grieving therapies are built right into these events. For all intent and purposes, it is mandatory that we begin to look for more spiritual methods of treatment to our condition.**

**Such solutions may include examining our ancestral lineages for clues to some sicknesses we suffer today. After all, we must realize that any choices we make today will affect the seventh generation in the future. As well, we have been affected from the choices of generations past. We may need to acknowledge that all life is related and that we cannot get well unless our ancestors and those around us are well. We may need to acknowledge, as well, that the Creator supplied the earth's people with natural remedies for illnesses. We may need to acknowledge the cause to certain hardships and rekindle positive therapies that are curative and long lasting. We may need to be reeducated in the natural order!**

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**For the cause of long-term prevention, the Native Addictions Council of Manitoba proposes that participants who take up the challenge of regaining their health, need to address their own history and makeup which is the spirit, the emotions, the mind and physical capacities of the individual. They will need to journey on a road which offers such challenges as family reconstruction through shared values, shared nurturing, effective communication and family activities for bonding. They will need to journey, eventually, to create healthy systems for their communities through developing the spiritual foundation of the community, positive social networks, enhancing stronger economics and effective leadership. They will journey on a road of recovery which demands rigorous positive action for dealing with other cultures who are different from their own; relating healthfully with social groups at every turn in society; creating mutually-sustainable economic and ecological projects with their own and others; cooperating with the powers that be for mutual empowerment. In this type of strategy, there is no magic pill which can take us there. The fundamental truth which extends health to all of us and to those around us is that we need to work at it. Achieving this journey goes on eternally, however. But, for those who wish to accept it---to achieve it is to embrace it or, more realistically put, "Life is not a problem to be solved. It is a Mystery to be lived."...and, Oh Yes! We will need the Creator every step of the way! May the Creator bless and keep you on this journey. Meegwetch, Pidaunkiyapi and Ekosay.**

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