

2025



More Than a Safe Space

HOW THE SUPERVISED CONSUMPTION SITE SUPPORTS
WELL-BEING & DIGNITY

2025 BLOOD TIES SUPERVISED CONSUMPTION SITE (SCS) EVALUATION

“This place is here to help us and it's helped me.”

Acknowledgments

Blood Ties Four Directions Centre Society would like to acknowledge that this project took place on the traditional territories of the Ta'an Kwächan Council and the Kwänlin Dün First Nation. We are grateful to live and work on these lands and to the communities who continue to steward them.

Blood Ties would like to formally thank the individuals who participated in this project. Our organization recognizes the strength and courage it took to share your stories and experiences. We thank you for your honesty and applaud your bravery. Thank you for your contributions and allowing our organization to share your experiences with the greater community.

Introduction

The Yukon, like many regions across Canada, continues to face the devastating effects of the toxic drug crisis. **The 2021 report “One Death Is Too Many: Grappling with the Overdose Epidemic in the Yukon”** highlighted the urgency of this crisis and the pressing need for compassionate, community-based responses. Participants spoke of losing loved ones, of widespread stigma, and of the need for trauma-informed supports across the territory. The message was clear: one death is too many, and meaningful change requires listening to those most affected.¹

This crisis has deeply impacted families and communities, and health care systems are under strain. Behind every statistic is a person - someone's friend, neighbour, or family member - whose life has been shaped by stigma, isolation, and barriers to care.

Harm reduction services play a critical role in addressing these challenges. **Blood Ties Four Direction Centre's Supervised Consumption Site (SCS)** provides a safe, confidential, and non-judgmental space for people to use their own substances. Since opening in 2021, the site has become a cornerstone of harm reduction and community health in Whitehorse. Grounded in harm reduction principles, the SCS offers much more than overdose prevention and supervision - it provides connection to health and social supports, daily stability and consistency, and most importantly, dignity and respect.

To build on ongoing learning and accountability, Blood Ties Four Direction Centre conducted an evaluation in early 2025 to better understand how the SCS supports participants' health, safety, and overall well-being. This report presents findings from the perspectives of the people who use the site - highlighting both measurable outcomes and the lived realities behind them.

One Death Is Too Many: Grappling with the Overdose Epidemic in the Yukon. A Report from Getting to Tomorrow Yukon: A public health dialogue on the territory's drug toxicity crises, 2021. Available at: <https://www.bloodties.ca/resources>

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What is the Supervised Consumption Site (SCS)?

Blood Ties' Supervised Consumption Site provides a safe and confidential space where people can use their own substances under the care of trained staff. The site reduces the risk of fatal overdose and infectious disease while connecting participants to health care, housing, and social supports.

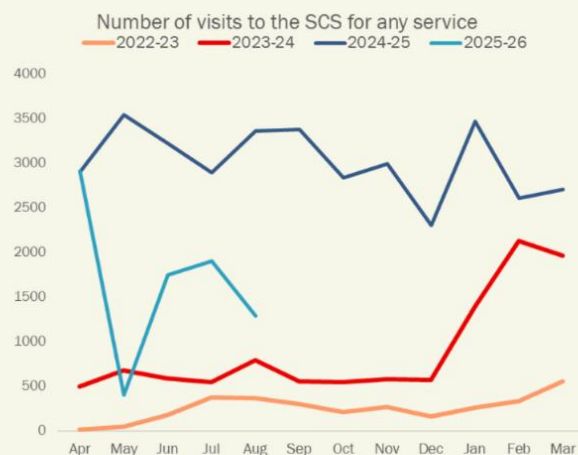
At the SCS, people can consume drugs by injection, inhalation (smoking), snorting, or swallowing in a clean, monitored environment. Staff are trained in overdose response, first aid, and harm reduction education. The SCS distributes sterile needles, pipes, and other supplies, provides drug checking using an FTIR spectrometer (a device that identifies drug content) and strip testing, and connects people to medical care, housing, and other community services when requested.

The site is co-located with Blood Ties' Drop-In Centre, which offers a meal program, wellness groups, housing services, and education and prevention programming. This integrated model creates a welcoming space where people can meet their basic needs and build trusting relationships with staff and peers. Naloxone and other harm reduction supplies are also available.

The SCS operates under an exemption from sections of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, meaning participants cannot face legal consequences for possessing or using drugs while on-site. **Since opening in September 2021, the SCS has provided critical support within Yukon's harm reduction network, offering safety, connection, and dignity for those most affected by the toxic drug crisis.**

Key Facts

- 59,045 visits since the site opened in September 2021
- The site has served more than 1,061 people
- 538 referrals to health and social services, including treatment services
- Using the up-to-date definition of overdoses used by other SCSs, reversed more than 439 overdoses with no losses. **That's 439 lives saved.**



★ The number of monthly visits has dropped since the site had to close on weekends April 30, 2025 due to safety concerns and staffing shortages.

About the Study

This evaluation used a **mixed-methods design** carried out over six weeks in early 2025. The goal was to understand how the Site impacts the health, safety, and well-being of the people who use it.

Data collection combined two approaches. First, **53 participants** completed a structured 32-question survey. Participants were recruited directly at the SCS over a two-week period in February 2025. Anyone who had accessed SCS services was invited to take part, ensuring the survey reflected the active user population.

Following the survey, **13 participants** were randomly selected to participate in **confidential, semi-structured interviews** conducted in March 2025. Selection used stratified sampling to ensure the interview group reflected the demographics of the broader survey population. These conversations explored personal experiences with substance use, harm reduction knowledge, relationships with SCS staff, and perceived impacts on physical, mental, and social well-being. Participants also offered feedback and suggestions for improvement

The findings in this report reflect the experiences and voices of people who use the SCS - stories that show how compassion and evidence-based practice can save lives and strengthen communities.

Why this Matters

This approach combines quantitative data (percentages, trends) with qualitative insights (stories, lived experience).

It provides both numbers and narratives, providing a fuller picture of how the SCS impacts health, safety, and community well-being.

Most participants were people who experience housing instability and/or identify as Indigenous, which reflects the reality of who is most affected by the toxic drug crisis in Yukon.

How We Gathered the Information

53 participants completed a 32-question survey (February 2025).

13 participants took part in confidential, in-depth interviews (March 2025).

Survey results were analyzed statistically, and interview responses were coded thematically using MAXQDA, combining numbers and stories to show how the SCS supports participants well-being.

Snapshot of Participants & Key Findings

The following section presents findings from the evaluation, combining survey data with the voices and experiences of participants. It begins with an overview of who took part, key outcomes at a glance, and the immediate life-saving impact of the SCS.

Who Took Part

Age: Participants ranged from 21 to 64 years, with most (57%, n=30) in their 30s and 40s.

Gender Identity: 55% identified as male (n=29), 40% as female (n=21), 2% as Two-Spirit (n=1), and 4% did not disclose (n=2).

Ethnicity: 67% identified as First Nation (n=36), 23% as European descent (n=12), 6% as Métis (n=3), and 2% as Inuit (n=1). One participant (2%) did not disclose their ethnicity.

Housing: Two-thirds of participants (66%, n=35) reported experiencing housing instability, including homelessness, shelters, couch-surfing, or staying with family or in hotels. For many, the SCS provides not only harm reduction services but also a rare source of stability and safety.

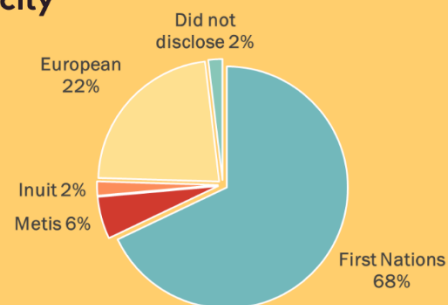
Who participated?

- 53 participants who use the SCS
- Age 21 to 64 years of age
- 66% reported experiencing unstable housing

Gender Identity



Ethnicity



Data Highlights

Fewer Overdoses

- ⇒ **47%** of participants reported fewer overdoses outside the SCS since beginning to use its services.
- ⇒ Among those who previously overdosed multiple times per year, **58%** reported no longer overdosing outside the SCS.
- ⇒ **87%** reported not requiring emergency medical services for overdoses outside the SCS since starting to use the service.

Safer Substance Use

- ⇒ **53%** reported sharing needles, pipes, and other supplies less often since they use the site.
- ⇒ **85 %** either reduced sharing or maintained safer practices.

Improved Well-Being

- ⇒ **55%** reported improved physical health.
- ⇒ **43%** reported improved mental health.
- ⇒ **37%** reported that they had accessed healthcare services more frequently since starting to use the SCS.

Participants who faced housing instability reported poorer physical and mental health than those with stable housing, underscoring how the SCS provides stability and safety for people managing multiple challenges at once.

Those who used the SCS regularly - daily or several times per week - were more likely to report fewer overdoses outside the facility and a stronger sense of safety. This suggests that consistent engagement with the site builds cumulative benefits over time.

Participants who had been accessing the SCS for more than a year were also more likely to describe improvements in both physical and mental health and to report safer substance use practices. These findings show that the positive impacts of the SCS deepen the longer people remain connected to the service.

These results highlight how the SCS functions not just as a harm reduction program, but as a comprehensive well-being resource that supports safety, stability, and health for people facing complex life circumstances.

The SCS promotes safer use and reduces risks related to the transmission of HIV, hepatitis and other blood borne infections.

53% reported sharing drug paraphernalia less often since they started using the SCS.

32% reported that they have never shared supplies and continue this practice.

53% indicated that their awareness of health risks has increased since using the SCS.

This means 85% either reduced sharing or maintained safer practices.

The SCS reduced the frequency and severity of overdoses in the broader community.



47% reported fewer overdoses outside of the SCS since using its services.



Among those who previously overdosed multiple times per year, 58% reported never overdosing outside of the SCS anymore.



87% reported that they did not require Emergency Medical Services for overdoses outside of the SCS since starting to use its service.

The SCS as an Immediate Lifesaver

The life-saving impact of the SCS stems from its comprehensive harm reduction approach that addresses multiple risk factors simultaneously. The provision of sterile needles, pipes, and other supplies reduces infection risks, while naloxone training empowers participants to respond to overdoses in their communities. Access to food, drinks, and hygiene supplies supports overall health and reduces the daily survival burden that can lead to risky behaviors. This integrated approach creates a safety net that addresses both immediate life-threatening situations and the underlying conditions that contribute to mortality risk among people who use drugs.

Several interviewees directly attributed their continued survival to the presence of the site and its staff. When asked what their life would look like without the SCS, one participant's response was unequivocal

“I’d probably be dead.”

The most immediate life-saving function of the SCS involves overdose prevention and emergency response. The supervised environment, combined with trained staff and readily available naloxone, creates a safety net that is absent in other consumption settings. Participants recalled powerful moments when staff intervened during overdoses:

“I thought she was just having a good toke and then she wasn’t responding all of a sudden. And yeah, the staff was quick to get in there and, uh, and handled it.”

“And then I was just watching them work, and I was, like, I just felt so, like, so safe, you know, and I realized how much we need this place, and that, um. I don’t know. That, that’s when I realized that, you know, this, how, how good this place is.”

In addition to preventing overdoses, the SCS plays a vital role in supporting mental health. Participants described how the caring presence of staff and the safe, welcoming atmosphere have helped them through moments of deep distress. Even preventing suicide in some cases:

“Well, there was one time in my life that I was actually going to commit suicide, actually, and I came here, and I talked to somebody, and it made me feel like a human being, and like I was worth something, and I actually changed my mind about what I was going to do, and it pretty much saved my life.”

Well-Being Outcomes

The findings show that the SCS plays a vital role in strengthening the overall well-being of its participants. By offering a safe, respectful, and caring environment, the site supports people's physical, mental, and social health in everyday ways that matter - helping them stay safer, feel valued, and stay connected to others.

The SCS supports well-being on multiple levels:

Physical

Safer consumption practices, reduced health risks, warmth, and nourishment.

Mental

Relief from stigma, restored dignity, and access to emotional support.

Social

Belonging, trust, and community connection.

The following sections explore the impact of the Supervised Consumption Site (SCS) that emerged from both the survey and interview data. Together, they paint a picture of why people use the SCS, how it affects their well-being, and the critical role it plays in addressing trauma and stigma.

Participants described the SCS as far more than a place to use drugs safely. It is a space of care and belonging, where people can access harm reduction supplies and education, food, warmth, and non-judgmental support. For many, the SCS has become a stabilizing presence in their lives.

These themes show that the SCS operates not just as a harm reduction service, but as a comprehensive support environment that restores dignity, promotes well-being, and provides a foundation for healing through compassion and respect.

SCS Utilization & Experiences - Reasons for Using the SCS

As highlighted in the key findings, participants frequently described the SCS as lifesaving, through overdose prevention and the emotional support offered during crises. Yet people come to the site for many reasons. Its flexible, non-judgmental approach allows people to come as they are and access what they need, whether that's a safe place to use, harm reduction supplies, a cup of coffee, or someone to talk to.

Safety

Safety was the most common reason participants gave for using the Supervised Consumption Site. Across both the survey and interviews, participants described the SCS as a protective environment that shields them from the everyday dangers of using in public or isolated settings. 85% of participants reported in the survey they feel safe when using substances at the site, making it one of the strongest themes across all data sources.

“I’m happy they’re part of my life. I feel safer. I don’t feel in endangerment or getting scared.”

For many, the fear of overdose, violence, or arrest shaped their lives before the SCS opened. Using in an unsupervised or outdoor environment meant constant risk, not only of an overdose but also of being robbed or assaulted.

“I got robbed, I got jumped, I got ripped off.”

In contrast, the SCS provides a **“safe place to go”** and a **“safe environment,”** free from the fear of assault, theft or arrest. This legal and physical protection reduces stress and enables safer consumption practices. Participants explained that being able to use without fear of police intervention allowed them to focus on using safely, and many emphasized how crucial this sense of safety felt to them.

The site's harm reduction approach includes supervised use, overdose response, sterile supplies, access to warmth (especially important during Yukon winters), and basic needs. This creates an environment where safety is not just the absence of danger, but an active, daily practice of care.

“They just want to make sure you’re safe.”

The SCS provides a protective space that makes people feel safer.

Overdose Participants emphasized how fear of fatal overdose previously dominated their life.

Violence and theft Participants frequently described dangerous experiences in other settings. One participant said, “I got robbed, I got jumped, I got ripped off.” In contrast, the SCS provided a “safe place to go” and a “safe environment.”

Legal risks Participants also described the legal protection from arrest for simple possession as an important factor in their decision to use at the SCS, accessing a less stressful environment enabled safer consumption practices.

“ I’m happy they’re a part of my life. And I feel safer. I don’t feel in endangerment or getting scared. ”

Harm Reduction and Health Care Access

Convenient access to sterile needles, pipes, and other supplies played a crucial role in participants' utilization of the SCS. The ready availability of clean equipment was a major draw for many, significantly reducing health risks associated with sharing

“It's nice knowing that there's a safe place to go with [...] the things that I need readily available.”

In addition to supervised consumption and sterile supplies, participants valued access to harm reduction education, drug checking, and health care connections. One participant noted that they **“wouldn't have gotten [...] help”** for pneumonia without the SCS.

Drug checking services were particularly important to participants, allowing them to test substances for contaminants such as fentanyl. This service was seen as a crucial tool for staying safe and making informed decisions about use. Participants explicitly linked their knowledge to harm reduction education received at the SCS, indicating the site's direct educational impact:

“Well, just getting the [...] information that I didn't really even think about before [...] I honestly didn't know that you could catch something by sharing a snorting tool.”

Meeting Basic Needs

The site offers a comprehensive range of services that address participants' holistic needs. The provision of hygiene supplies, clothing items, and personal care products meets immediate material needs while supporting participants' self-care. Access to food and beverages emerged as particularly crucial, especially for participants experiencing homelessness. The consistent availability of nourishment addresses a fundamental need that is often precarious in participants' daily lives.

“I come here for snacks or, like, tampons. Sometimes I need socks or underwear. [...] I grab a coffee, I go to the bathroom, I go to the room, I smoke something, sometimes I get clean pipes, I grab my naloxone kit, I say hello to people.”

One participant emphasized that their visits weren't solely about drug use: **“Sometimes I just come here for snacks. Sometimes I need socks or underwear. But it's not always for drugs.”**

Emotional Support and Lay Counselling

Although the SCS is not a formal counselling program, participants described accessing mental health supports and lay counselling when they needed it at the site. For some, these exchanges have the same value as formal counselling sessions, grounded in care, trust, and understanding.

“I talk with a lot of the staff, and it helps my mental health and decision-making in my life. It's almost like having counsellors in a way.”

This informal support system demonstrates how the SCS functions beyond its primary mandate, providing holistic care that addresses participants' emotional and psychological needs.

Community and Connection

Participants spoke about the sense of belonging they find at the SCS. For many, the site functions as a small community, a place to meet others and to feel part of something. Social connection with both staff and peers helps counter the isolation and stigma that often accompany substance use.

Participants frequently described the SCS as facilitating unexpected and valuable social connections, creating a sense of “**camaraderie**” among people who use the site.

The development of positive relationships with staff contributes significantly to participants' sense of belonging. These relationships provide stability and support that may be absent in other areas of their lives, creating a safe and accepting environment where individuals feel valued and understood. Many participants visit the site even when not consuming substances - some come for basic needs like food or clothing, while others are drawn primarily by opportunities for social interaction:

“Even if I’m not using, I’ll come by to say hi, grab a coffee, go on the computer, um, yeah, just talk to the workers. Cause I’ve, you know, I’ve built a relationship with the workers.”

The availability of computers at the SCS also supports connection by providing access to communication and information. For many participants, this represents their primary or only link to the broader world:

“When I didn’t have a phone, it was very, very [...] handy to be able to go on and use [...] messenger and stuff to contact [...] people.”

The SCS is a community.

- Participants described how the SCS facilitated unexpected and valuable social connections.
- Participants described the SCS as a community that creates a sense of belonging.
- People described social events at Blood Ties, such as barbecues, and how they provide people with opportunities to engage in recreational activities and connect with others in a relaxed setting.



“ I come here for snacks or, like, tampons. Sometimes I need socks or underwear. (...) I grab a coffee, I go to the bathroom, I go to the room, I smoke something, sometimes I get clean pipes, I grab my naloxone kit, I say hello to people. **”**

“ I really like, um, the barbecues, and feeling like a normal person again when things like that happen. And just to have fun and play games... we’re also, you know, people with feelings. **”**

Having a continuum of supports is important.

Participants spoke about how important it was to have services beyond supervised consumption and equipment distribution to address participants' holistic needs.

Trust, Privacy and Confidentiality

Several interviewees discussed the importance of having privacy and confidentiality in the space. The use of code names rather than real names was described as a key factor in contributing to the sense of safety and comfort. One participant explained how discretion extended beyond the walls of the site:

“It's a private place too, right? Like that's a big thing [...] keeping like discretion, right? And [...] that goes with the [...] having code names and non-judgmental and stuff. And like [...] if I run into one of the workers out in the real world [...] we kind of look [...] and give each other like the acknowledgement, but you know, there's no like, 'Hey, saw you at the consumption site, what's up?' You know, kind of thing.”

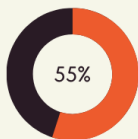
This discretion, paired with the respectful tone of staff interactions, helps create an environment where participants feel safe to be themselves, share openly, and seek help when needed. Confidentiality was seen as essential to building trust between staff and participants, reinforcing the SCS as a space of safety, respect, and belonging:

“The staff are very polite, very understanding. [...] They understand what you're there for.”

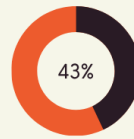
By protecting privacy and upholding discretion, the SCS demonstrates that it values not only physical safety but also dignity and respect. This approach builds trust and comfort, creating a foundation for meaningful connection and support.

Impacts on Participants' Well-Being

Participants described wide-ranging improvements in their physical, mental, and social well-being since accessing the Supervised Consumption Site. Beyond preventing overdoses and reducing immediate harm, the SCS contributes to participants' overall quality of life through daily stability, emotional support, and meaningful connection to others. The following sections explore how the SCS supports well-being across three interconnected dimensions: physical health, mental and emotional health, and social connection.



55% of participants reported that their physical health had improved.



43% of participants reported that their mental health had improved.

People who had used the SCS for more than 1 year were more likely to report improvements in physical health, mental health, and safer substance use practices, which suggests the site's impact on well-being strengthens over time.

Physical Well-Being

The SCS directly supports participants' health and safety through a combination of supervised consumption, access to harm reduction supplies, and basic-needs support. Using substances in a monitored environment reduces the risk of overdose and serious injury, while sterile equipment minimizes infection risks. Participants also credited the site's consistent access to **food, drinks, and warmth** as vital for their physical health, especially for those experiencing homelessness.

“Having this [...] benefited me a lot. To be able to come here, especially with the snacks and food programs.”

The importance of providing warm, indoor shelter during Yukon winters cannot be overstated as a factor in physical well-being. The SCS provides essential refuge from harsh weather conditions, directly preventing cold-related health complications and reducing the physical risks associated with consumption in unsafe outdoor environments. Participants emphasized how the SCS addresses the particular challenges faced by unhoused individuals during winter:

“Through the winter it's cold outside. Coming here, warming up, having coffee - that makes all the difference.”

“Because, you know, wintertime, it's, you know, really shady to find places to use sometimes. You can't. You know, being homeless, not everybody's houses are welcome and open.”

Having a safe indoor space also gives people the stability to care for themselves and their health more consistently.

“I’m actually doing a lot better than before. I eat properly now. Even when I don’t want to eat, I make myself, because I’m here anyway.”

Beyond providing warmth and meeting basic needs, the SCS serves as a bridge to health care services, facilitating access to medical care that participants might otherwise not receive. Reliable access to food and hydration further enhances health outcomes:

“I've noticed that I'm healthier because whenever I'm hungry, I can come and get food, and being homeless, [...] it's hard to have food at your fingertips all the time [...] so it's good to be able to come here and have snacks, healthy snacks, whenever you're hungry.”

Mental Well-Being and Restored Dignity

The SCS has a profound impact on participants' mental well-being through the creation of a non-judgmental, respectful environment that directly counteracts the stigma and shame typically associated with substance use. This atmosphere represents a transformative experience for many participants, who encounter dignity, respect, and acceptance within the SCS - conditions that contrast sharply with their experiences in the broader community.

The reduction in anxiety and stress associated with using substances in a supervised environment contributes significantly to improved mental well-being. The ability to consume substances without fear of judgment or legal consequences allows participants to focus on their well-being rather than the constant stress of hiding their substance use.

Staff at the SCS provide informal emotional support that participants access based on their individual needs. This flexible, relationship-based support has therapeutic benefits that extend beyond the immediate consumption experience:

“I think mental health is probably even better, too. Yeah. Just the fact that I have somewhere to go and talking to people [...] and not feel like this horrifying, disgusting thing.”

Within this supportive environment, participants described a deep sense of relief from the stigma they face in daily life. The non-judgmental atmosphere at the SCS plays a crucial role in improving mental health by restoring dignity and fostering respect:

“Being able to safely use, not feeling like I'm being judged... just being treated [...] like a human being and with dignity and respect [...] no judgment whatsoever.”

This sense of acceptance and validation was echoed by others who described feeling **“wanted and accepted”** and **“always [...] welcome, [...] heard, [...] understood”** within the SCS environment.

The overall experience of being treated with respect and compassion at the SCS serves as a powerful antidote to the pervasive stigma associated with substance use. This respectful treatment fosters a sense of self-worth and hope that many participants had lost in other areas of their lives. The opportunity to participate in social events organized by the SCS further contributes to this sense of normalcy and restored dignity, allowing participants to experience moments of joy and connection that affirm their humanity.

Social Well-Being

The SCS significantly enhances participants' social well-being by fostering community connections and combating the isolation that often accompanies substance use. The site functions as a social hub where participants can see familiar faces, share moments of normalcy, and experience belonging in a non-judgmental environment.

“Because it’s a place to go and see people [...] because being a drug addict [...] can be very lonely.”

Group activities such as barbecues or shared meals provide opportunities for connection and joy in a relaxed setting. These events help participants experience a sense of normal life and inclusion that many had lost elsewhere:

“I really like the barbecues, and feeling like a normal person again when things like that happen. And just to have fun and play games [...] we're also, you know, people with feelings.”

These everyday interactions help people feel visible and valued, reducing loneliness and reinforcing the idea that every person deserves care and connection. The SCS thus functions as a vital social support network, strengthening both individual well-being and community cohesion.

“Through the winter, it's cold outside and you coming to a place where you can sit down, warm up and get out of your winter gear for a second is pretty important.”

“I'm actually doing a lot better than what I was before. Due to the fact that I eat properly now even when I don't want to eat, I make myself eat because I'm here anyways.”



The SCS improves physical health and well-being.

- Participants described the SCS as a bridge to health care services, facilitating access to medical care that they might not have otherwise accessed.
- Having warm, indoor shelter during the cold winters was critical to participants well-being. People described how this provided refuge from harsh winter conditions, preventing cold-related health risks.
- Access to food and beverages emerged as a crucial service, particularly for participants experiencing homelessness.

“I'm healthier because whenever I'm hungry, I can come and get food, and being homeless, it's hard to have food at your fingertips all the time so it's good to be able to come here and have snacks, healthy snacks, whenever you're hungry.”

Trauma, Stigma, and the Role of the SCS - The SCS as a Safe Haven

The evaluation revealed a strong connection between trauma, stigma, and substance use in participants' lives. For many, traumatic experiences such as grief, loss, and accidents shaped both the onset and progression of their substance use. At the same time, stigma and social judgment made recovery more difficult, creating barriers to healing. Within this reality, the SCS offers a critical counterbalance - a place where people are accepted, supported, and treated with dignity.

Trauma as a Catalyst

A consistent finding across all interviews is the strong link between personal trauma, encompassing grief, loss, and accidents, and the initiation or escalation of substance use. Several participants explicitly connected their substance use to profound losses and traumatic experiences. They described how grief fundamentally altered their lives and choices:

“But really got into it [...] just after I had lost my first son.”

“I think after my dad’s passing, that’s kind of when, like, the hinges became loose, and instead of doing the right things, I did all the wrong things.”

Several participants reported turning to substances following family deaths, with one explicitly stating they began using fentanyl and heroin to numb their pain after losing their father. Another described how a critical condition of their child led to relapses into fentanyl use.

Beyond family loss, participants recounted other traumatic experiences that triggered or escalated their substance use. One participant described how a devastating house fire that destroyed everything they owned led to **“a downward spiral [...] with a lot more drinking and cocaine and eventually [...] smoking some crack.”**

These accounts reveal how participants often turned to substances as a coping mechanism for unbearable emotional pain across a wide range of traumatic experiences.

Living with Stigma

Participants consistently described experiencing pervasive stigma and judgment from the wider community, which intensified their sense of marginalization and reinforced feelings of isolation. This societal response often reflected a fundamental misunderstanding, seeing individuals not as people with complex personal histories and trauma, but solely through the lens of their substance use.

Stigma creates additional barriers to healing, with participants explaining how public misunderstanding affected their daily lives:

“Oh, the stigma of using drugs, if you let people know, I just have problems everywhere.”

The persistent weight of external stigma was frequently internalized, manifesting as profound guilt and shame that fractured participants' sense of self and strained their closest relationships. This constant judgment turned outward rejection into inward shame. For some, this internalized stigma became a barrier not only to seeking support but also to feeling deserving of connection, care, or even family:

“I chose not to have my daughter around it. So, right now I’m facing guilt and shame. [...] I want to see her but I feel like [...] I’m a piece of shit.”

These lived experiences of societal judgment and misrecognition reveal the deeply isolating and dehumanizing effects of stigma, creating a reinforcing cycle in which individuals feel increasingly marginalized and disconnected from the broader community.

A Different Experience inside the SCS

Yet within the SCS, participants described a very different experience, one defined by acceptance, safety, and belonging. In stark contrast to their experiences in the wider community, the SCS functions as a transformative environment that actively dismantles the barriers of shame and judgment they encounter elsewhere. The site offers more than harm reduction services; it provides a sanctuary where participants can simply be, free from the weight of societal condemnation.

“You don’t have to be ashamed of what you’re doing, [the SCS is] a place to get something to eat or warm up.”

“I know how judgmental people can be, but this place is here to help us and it's helped me. It's helped me be a better person and be more coherent and sober and, um, less depressed and stressed out and therefore we're a better part of society, I guess.”

The hesitant “I guess” in this participant's reflection reveals an ongoing struggle with self-worth. Even while recognizing their improvement, they remain uncertain about their place in society, highlighting how deeply stigma becomes internalized.

Within the SCS, participants find genuine care and recognition of their humanity rather than reduction to their substance use. The environment fosters safety and belonging that many have not experienced elsewhere. This atmosphere of acceptance stands in sharp opposition to the rejection and dehumanization participants face in their daily lives due to stigma.

The stark difference between the SCS environment and participants' broader community experiences reveals the profound impact that respectful, non-judgmental care can have on individuals who have become accustomed to societal rejection. Rather than simply providing services, the SCS demonstrates how therapeutic environments can actively counter stigma through their very operation.

The SCS provides a refuge from stigma, shame, and marginalization.

- Participants consistently described experiencing pervasive stigma and judgment from the general public, which intensified their sense of marginalization and feelings of isolation.
- The site has a profound impact on participants' wellbeing through the creation of a non-judgmental, respectful environment that directly counteracts the stigma and shame typically associated with substance use. This supportive atmosphere represents a transformative experience for many participants who encounter dignity, respect, and acceptance within the SCS that contrasts with their experiences in the broader community and dismantled the barriers of shame and judgment that they encountered elsewhere.
- Unlike other settings where participants often experienced shame and dehumanization, the SCS provides a space where they feel respected and valued as individuals. Participants described feeling “wanted and accepted” and “always welcome, heard, understood.”

“I think mental health is probably even better, too. Yeah. Just the fact that I have somewhere to go and talking to people and not feel like this horrifying, disgusting thing.”

“Being able to safely use, not feeling like I'm being judged... just being treated like a human being and with dignity and respect no judgement whatsoever. They just want to make sure that you're safe.”

“I know how judgmental people can be, but this place is here to help us and it's helped me. It's helped me be a better person and be more coherent and sober and, um, less depressed and stressed out and therefore we're a better part of society, I guess.”

Impact on Use Patterns

The supportive, stigma-free environment of the SCS creates space for healing from trauma. By providing a low-threshold, non-judgmental atmosphere free from shame, the SCS allows people to address the emotional pain that often drives their substance use. While participants continue to use, some reported subtle but meaningful changes in their consumption patterns:

“I think I slowed down on using since I’ve been going there.”

“It’s not worth the money. I’m starting to deal with my emotions better.”

These reflections illustrate a fundamental shift from using substances to numb traumatic pain toward developing healthier coping mechanisms. The SCS's non-judgmental environment enables participants to process the trauma that initially catalyzed their substance use, creating space for emotional healing alongside harm reduction.

Participants Call for Expanded Access

Throughout the evaluation, participants consistently emphasized the need for expanded access to the SCS, when other support services are often unavailable.

On weekends, when many health and social services are closed, people who use substances face heightened vulnerability. Without access to supervised consumption, individuals are forced to use alone and in unsafe locations where overdose response is delayed or absent entirely. This risk is particularly acute among the 66% of participants experiencing housing instability, who are more likely to use alone in isolated locations and rely on the SCS not only for supervised consumption but also for warmth, food, and basic safety.

“I think we should do more hours [...] a lot of people running around [...] they got no place to go.”

“Because people smoke all hours.”

The need for expanded access was particularly emphasized during winter months, recognizing the heightened risks faced during cold weather: **“definitely in the wintertime.”**

These requests have become particularly urgent following the recent weekend closures, which have created critical gaps in access. The closures run directly counter to participants expressed need for more, not less, availability.

The Stakes

The toxic drug crisis continues to claim lives across Canada. In this context, the SCS represents an evidence-based response that is working. The findings in this report demonstrate that the SCS is not only preventing deaths but strengthening community well-being. **Maintaining and supporting the SCS is an investment in compassion, public health, and the lives of Yukoners.**

Looking Ahead

The Supervised Consumption Site has become an essential part of Yukon's harm reduction response, a place that **saves lives** while promoting dignity, safety, and connection. The site offers a comprehensive range of services that address participants' holistic needs.

Findings from this evaluation show that beyond preventing overdoses, the SCS helps people meet daily needs, build trust, and regain a sense of belonging in community. They also show that **harm reduction and community well-being go hand in hand**. By preventing deaths, promoting safety, and fostering inclusion, the SCS strengthens both individuals and communities. It demonstrates that **compassion, connection, and evidence-based practice can save lives and build stronger, healthier communities**.

Participants' feedback also points toward ongoing growth. Continued collaboration with people who use the service, peers, and community partners will guide future improvements and ensure that the site remains responsive and grounded in lived experience.

Moving forward, the SCS will continue to evolve as a welcoming space where safety and compassion come together, strengthening well-being for people who are affected by Canada's toxic drug crisis.



Our mission is to eliminate barriers and create opportunities for people to have equal access to health and wellness and to live in our community with dignity.