

# GET TO KNOW YOUR ED PATIENTS

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## The Stories and Life Journeys of People Who Use(d) Substances

"When I was in my addiction, nothing else mattered."

"Thank you for your dedication and passion for caring for others. You're doing good care."

"You have all these labels on you as soon as they hear your address is in the Downtown Eastside."



Proud grandmother,  
HIV Patient Advocate,  
Researcher



MS. N



Ms. N, of Mi'kmaq and Haida descent, grew up on the Island and had to learn to overcome obstacles from a young age. Dealing with past trauma and the challenges of being a single mom, she was introduced to cocaine as a way to cope with her significant demands. When her kids graduated high school, she moved out to the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver and starting using other substances. She then got diagnosed with HIV and lost her housing. She recalls a moment where she heard the banging of drums on East Hastings. She rushed over and found an Indigenous ceremony in progress. She began to weep, and from that moment, her life turned around. Now, she is a proud grandmother and health advocate for people who use drugs and those living with HIV. She works to support others as they navigate the health system and spearheads research projects to improve the care of people who use drugs. She strongly believes in the power of words and has worked to de-stigmatize and remove labels. When she visited the St. Paul's Hospital Emergency Department, she felt most respected when the staff "treated [her] as a human" and interactions were "reciprocal and respectful". Looking forward, Ms. N is excited to continue her international advocacy work and bring awareness to health challenges experienced by those living with HIV and people who use drugs.