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## Overview

The Manitoba Harm Reduction Network Inc. (MHRN) works toward:

- equitable access
- systemic change
- reducing the transmission of sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBI)
- reducing the harms related to substance use and criminalization.

We do this through:

- advocacy
- policy work
- education
- research
- relationships.

We believe that harm reduction, equitable access, and safer service delivery are important parts of supporting communities.

We believe that the expertise lies in the community and support local experts in rural, remote, Northern, and Indigenous communities.

MHRN is a registered charitable organization in Canada.

## Mandate

Our mandate is to coordinate efforts and support harm reduction within and across jurisdictions.

## Guiding Principles

1. Rather than making judgments about where they should be, the MHRN meets people where they are at.
2. MHRN focuses on promoting evidence-informed services that respect people's choices.
3. The MHRN is peer-informed, ensuring that people have a voice in the creation of programs and policies designed to serve them.
4. Recognizing that the realities of social inequality impact STBBIs and substance use, the MHRN advocates for social justice and decolonization.

## Land Acknowledgement

The MHRN and all of our sites are located on Indigenous land. Specifically, we are located on Anishinaabe, Ininew, Anish-Ininew, Dene, and Dakota land and are also in the homeland of the Metis Nation. Our central office is in Treaty 1, and we have been invited to work in Treaty 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 territories. As a non-Indigenous organization we are committed to the principles of reconciliation and are committed to integrating the TRC calls to action into our work.

HARM REDUCTION IS NO JUDGMENT  
HARM REDUCTION IS CLEAN NEEDLES  
REDUCTION IS CHANGING OLD SYSTEMS  
HARM REDUCTION

## Locations

1. Brandon
2. Dauphin
3. Flin Flon
4. Northwest Interlake  
(Eriksdale/Ashern)
5. Portage la Prairie
6. Powerview-Pine Falls/Sagkeeng
7. Selkirk
8. Swan River
9. The Pas/OCN
10. Thompson
11. Winnipeg

## Who is a peer?

Peers are individuals who use drugs, are impacted by colonial and structural violence, and are working in their communities to improve health and mitigate the harms of the War on (People Who Use) Drugs.

People who use drugs (PWUD) are the experts in drug use. No one knows more about the highs and lows than a person who is experiencing them. People are experts in their own lives and identifying what they need. That's why the MHRN partners with PWUD in everything that we do.

## What we do

MHRN administers 11 regional harm reduction networks that provide services, education, advocacy and outreach events that are relevant to their specific communities. We could be described as a network of networks!

Networks are comprised of healthcare providers, service providers, people who use drugs, and community members.

**“NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US”**

Regional harm reduction networks are advised by Peer Advisory Councils of people who use drugs in their area. The Peer Advisory Councils focus on engaging the people who use drugs who are the most impacted by colonial and structural violence, such as people who are BIPOC and racialized, living in manufactured poverty, and 2SLGBTQ\*.

These Peer Advisory Councils are an integral part of the leadership and planning on both a regional and provincial level at the MHRN. They advise their local networks, take on research and projects, organize events and inform services in addition to increasing their own skills and capacity as advocates and leaders in their community.

We also do workshops, community projects, support organizations in improving policy and services, and partner with peer-based organizations and groups of people who use drugs. We focus on harm reduction, access, community building, and the inclusion of people impacted by substance use in the services and decisions that affect them.

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## History

The Manitoba Harm Reduction Network was established in 2002 in Winnipeg.

In December 2001 Manitoba Health produced a discussion paper - "Towards a Provincial Harm Reduction Philosophy". In 2002 Manitoba Health funded the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) to conduct a Roundtable discussion on Harm Reduction for Manitoba. Nine Circles Community Health Centre carried out the work and produced a final report with recommendations. Manitoba Harm Reduction Network was established based on the recommendations from this report.

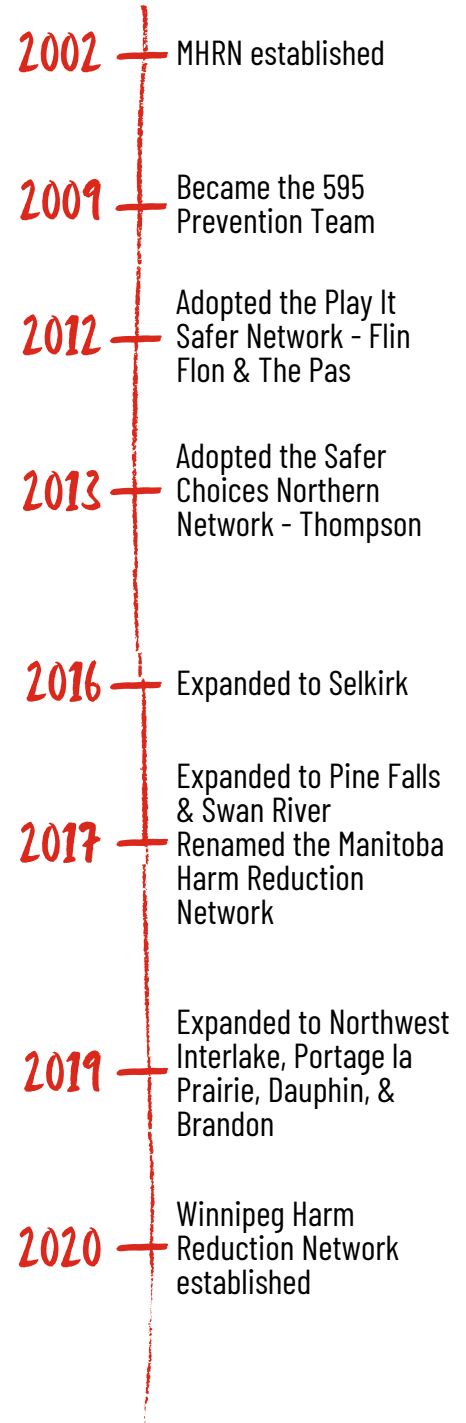
From 2009 to 2017 MHRN was known as The 595 Prevention Team. The organization worked on many projects in this time including a Peer Secretariat Project consisting of supporting multiple advisory councils of people impacted by substance use and STBBI, and several large peer-led research projects.

In 2012 MHRN adopted the Play It Safer Network in Flin Flon and The Pas, which was previously a project of the Northern Regional Health Authority (NRHA). Safer Choices Northern Network in Thompson, another NRHA project, became a part of MHRN in 2013.

MHRN expanded its network to include seven additional rural Manitoba communities:

- Selkirk in 2016
- Pine Falls and Swan River in 2017
- Northwest Interlake, Portage la Prairie, Dauphin, and Brandon in 2019

The Winnipeg Harm Reduction Network was established in 2020, building on the peer-led work already being done by MHRN in Winnipeg.



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## About the Executive Director

Shohan Illsley is the Executive Director of the Manitoba Harm Reduction Network and has worked in harm reduction since 2000. Her work experience has included working with people who use drugs that are impacted by structural and colonial violence. Shohan works from the foundation that people are experts in their own lives.

Shohan has been facilitating harm reduction training since 2007 and the training has evolved to be delivered through an anti-racism and anti-oppression lens. Focusing on system harms, this training looks at more than individuals' substance use and is called "Harm Reduction 2.0, Beyond the Needle!"

Shohan completed a Master's of Science at the University of Manitoba. She was the recipient of a CIHR grant which funded a community-based research project titled "What goes around: How peers use their social networks to share STBBI education and information." Shohan has since been the recipient of two additional CIHR grants.

Shohan Illsley was raised in Northern Manitoba; The Pas, Opaskwayak Cree Nation; and Churchill. Her grandparents are settlers from Iceland, Scotland, and England. Shohan acknowledges that her grandparents participated, witnessed, were complicit and benefited from colonial violence on these lands.



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**HARM REDUCTION IS CHANGING OLD SYSTEMS**  
**HARM REDUCTION IS KEEPING PEOPLE ALIVE**  
**HARM REDUCTION IS MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE**  
**HARM REDUCTION IS CHECKING PERSONAL BIA**  
**HARM REDUCTION IS SAFE INJECTION**