

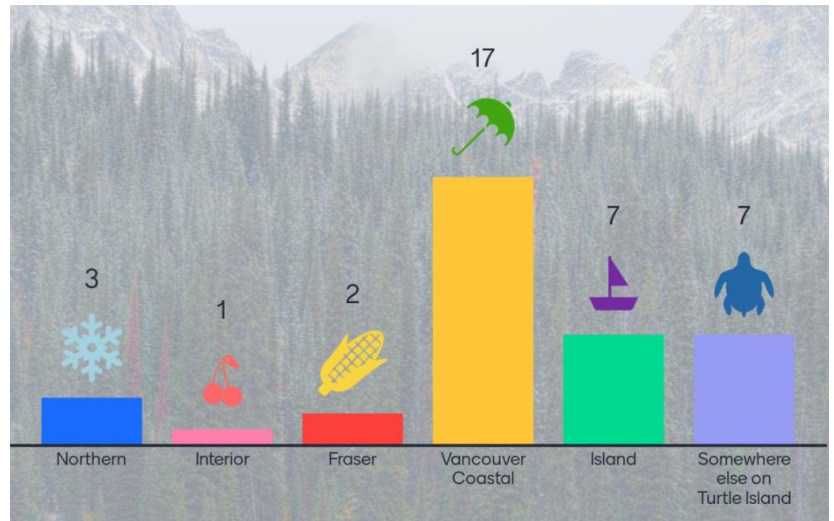


## Event Summary

### Who was there?

Attendees included people with lived and living experience(s), people from community-based organizations and provincial agencies, researchers and people who fill a number of these roles! In line with our focus for the day, attendees worked in a wide variety of sectors, allowing us to break down silos and begin to make more connections of where our work intersects.

Each health area of the province was represented and we had people join us from other places across Turtle Island.



### The Morning



The day began with a beautiful Kayachtn (Welcoming) by Elder Sempulyan Stewart Gonzales of Musqueam & Squamish. This was followed by a fireside chat with Sekani Dakelth, Jessy Dame and Charlene Burmeister, moderated by Anita David. You can read the bios of Sempulyan, Sekani, Jessy and Anita [here](#).

Our morning session was described as fierce, impactful, motivational and inspiring. Our speakers spoke about stigma as it is experienced by different people in different places, how detrimental stigma can be to people's health and access to services, how the drug war and bad policy perpetuate stigma and how we can all act to disrupt stigma. As Charlene put it...

"I challenge people to sit in their discomfort. Quite often I hear from people [working in agencies] that they are feeling unsafe, because we're angry. I don't believe that you're unsafe in this space, I believe you feel uncomfortable. And I need you to sit with your discomfort. And I need you to work through that. And I need you to understand why we're angry, and that you have an obligation in your role to hear us out and to give us the respect that we deserve and help us to make effective change."

This rich discussion set the stage for the rest of the day. We hope this will continue in conversations and work that others are doing across stigma reduction work outside of this event. You can watch the recording of the Fireside Chat [here](#).

### The Afternoon



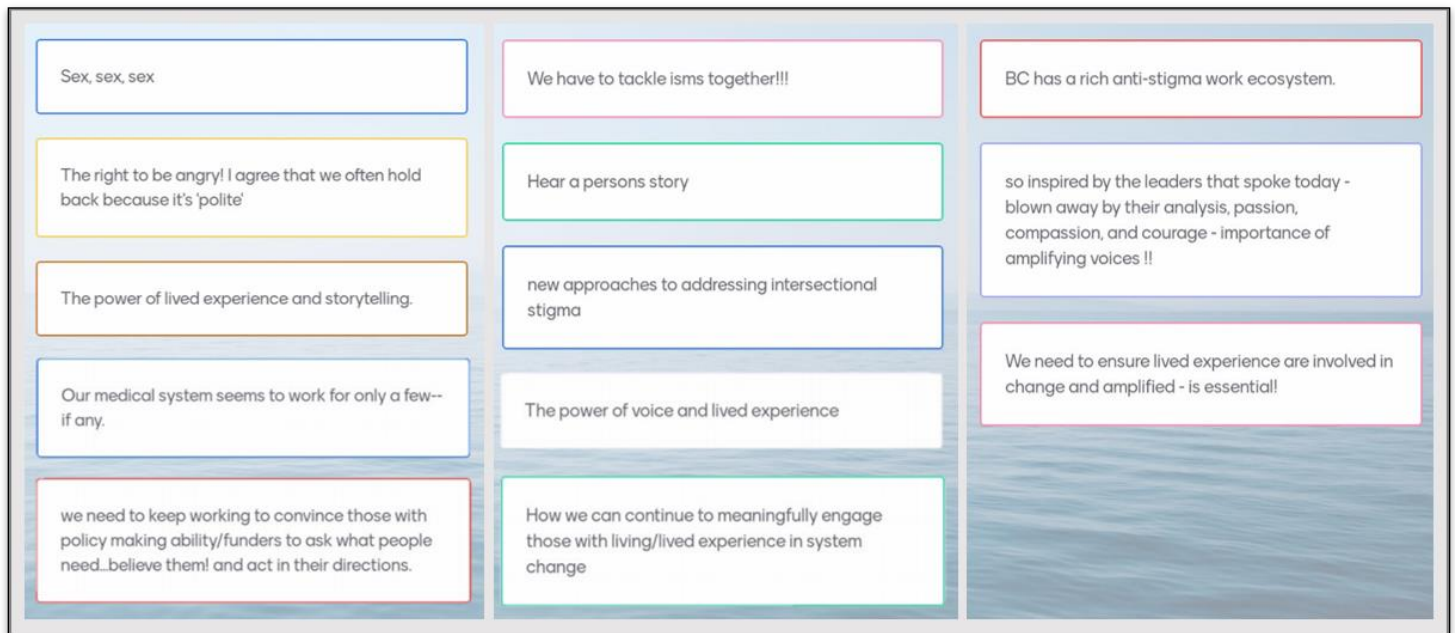
Candice Norris brought us back with drumming and prayer to begin our afternoon session. The afternoon was structured as a series of short presentations followed by a question and answer period with the presenters.

We had presentations by TJ Felix (Pivot), Heather McCain (Creating Accessible Neighbourhoods), Nicolas Crier (Megaphone/Speakers' Bureau), Scott Neufeld (Brock University), Laura "LT" Todd, Kathryn Proudfoot, and Victoria Maxwell (BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services), and Patience Magagula and a team of volunteers (Afro-Canadian Positive Network of BC). More speaker information can be found on [the event page](#).

Presentations talked about the strength of storytelling and sharing experiences to shift attitudes about stigma and the power of arts. We heard how we have to work together to address all the "isms" together, whether it be racism, ableism, sexism or other forms of oppression, and to do this we need to reach across organizations and push towards systems change. And lastly, the message echoed that people with lived and living experience must be included in this work as they are the experts who can lead real change. You can watch the recording of the afternoon presentations [here](#).

## Takeaways from the day

We asked attendees to answer, **“what is one thing you learned today?”** and heard some common themes, including around story-telling and centring lived experiences and the importance of working together to fight stigma.



The event evaluation reflected the overall very positive experience and opportunity for learning that the day provided. Some highlights were that over 90% of survey respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that:

- The event allowed us to move the conversation about stigma in BC towards action and intervention planning.
- The event allowed them to learn about successful stigma interventions happening in BC (and beyond).
- Provided them better understanding of the intersectionality of stigma.
- Helped them to identify new and creative approaches to address stigma.

## Reflections and Learnings from the organizers

- Listen, be uncomfortable and don't offer alternatives to someone's experience.
- *Nothing About Us Without Us* – this key phrase that we hear all the time refers to the importance of leadership from people with lived and living experience(s). This phrase comes from the disability movement, and has been adopted by many fighting against oppression, stigma and for self-determination in doing work in different sectors.
- Stop seeing basic care as exceptional (an example shared was giving someone a sandwich in the ER). We need to expect the essentials and demand better care overall.
- We need to stop working in silos – we need to reach out across organizations to do stigma work.

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Thank you to all our speakers, everyone who helped organize the event, and all attendees for your knowledge and experience that contributed to such engaging event. If you would like to stay in touch about PAN's upcoming work around stigma reduction please email [paul@pacificaidnetwork.org](mailto:paul@pacificaidnetwork.org) to let us know. And/or sign up for PAN's newsletter [here](#).

We would also like to thank the Provincial Health Services Authority and REACH Nexus for their support of this event.