

Talking Stick is an anonymous chat platform that connects First Nations individuals to culture-based peer support and confidential conversations.

Highlights from this edition

- » Talking Stick turns 2 - the path forward with data
- » Bomb Threat! Talking Stick was there
- » Pinehouse – a community embracing FirstAlerts
- » Outcomes by the numbers

Year 3 Growth is Being Driven by DATA

Talking Stick has entered its third year of operation, and its outcomes are now clear. As the data accumulates, the story of the program's positive impacts is more tangible. There is no longer any doubt that Talking Stick is a very good investment and is saving lives.

With maturity comes opportunity. We can now demonstrate, with data, that the program is making a difference, and we are using it to share the message.

We are seeing more returning guests, longer chats, and more downloads. These indicate that Talking Stick is now a trusted resource for its Indigenous guest users.

The data shows that Talking Stick is accessible – the average time between the first click and a connection to a peer is 29.4 SECONDS! Talking Stick is spreading its net – 21.1% of the target audience in Saskatchewan has been reached. Talking Stick is trusted – Indigenous youth are FIVE times more likely to use it than the Kids Help Phone. Talking Stick is reliable – one in three guests are repeat users. With the support of Talking Stick's peer advocates, 138 incidents of suicidal behaviour have been averted. Talking Stick provides good jobs for First Nations people: in its first two years, Talking Stick offered training and paid employment to over 200 people in Saskatchewan. The numbers are compelling!

And word is getting around. Talking Stick is now in active conversations with Nations in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, and Yukon Territory.

Year 3 will see the addition of new features that will solidify Talking Stick's position as THE PLACE TO GO TO KNOW!



Real Support in Real Time – Bomb Threat

On July 17, the Saskatchewan Health Authority issued an emergency bulletin notifying the community that a “Code Black” – Bomb Threat – had been issued at the Royal University Hospital and the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital. Both hospitals were locked down as the investigation and response was unfolding. Thankfully the threat ended without serious incident, but it was obviously a stressful time for the staff, patients, family members, and visitors to those facilities.

We learned that during the lockdown, a Talking Stick peer advocate received a chat request from someone who was caught in the activities at the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital and was terrified. The peer advocate remained on the chat, providing comfort to the guest until the lockdown was lifted about three hours after it began. The guest was relieved and appreciative of the friendly, compassionate connection facilitated by Talking Stick.

Northern Village of Pinehouse: A Novel Approach to Community Safety

As the fire season begins to impact First Nations in Saskatchewan, more and more Nation leaders are looking to FirstAlerts to ensure their members receive timely, trusted communications when minutes count.

The Talking Stick team is crisscrossing Saskatchewan to bring information about FirstAlerts to dozens of Nations and communities. Over 20% of Saskatchewan First Nations are now actively using FirstAlerts and that number is expected to push past 30% by the end of July.

The Northern Village of Pinehouse adopted FirstAlerts on July 4 and sent out its first alert only days later. The community has proactively encouraged members to download the Talking Stick app and activate FirstAlerts. Shana Hansen, the Administrator for the Municipality explained that she heard about FirstAlerts and brought it to the Council, where it was supported with interest. She also noted that Pinehouse is the first municipality to adopt the service – the rest are First Nations.

"I take care of the town – I know everything that is going on and I have the authority to send out alerts when things happen," Shana explained. "The training and onboarding were easy. I got the training with two other girls in my office."

While she uses several tools to share information, Shana sees particular utility for FirstAlerts when there are house fires, to activate the volunteer firefighter brigade, and to alert people to watch for "brown water" in their systems after a municipal fire response. She shared that wildfires are burning within a half hour of the town, "It is smoky here today," and she was in regular contact with the Department of Highways regarding imminent road closures, which she would share using FirstAlerts.

The Northern Village of Pinehouse has about 1,500 residents and Shana and her municipal colleagues are prioritizing community safety. In fact, they have used a clever approach to promoting the use of FirstAlerts by incentivizing the residents to download and activate the service. She posted the challenge on the Community Page and each person who downloads the app and sends Shana a photo of FirstAlerts activated has their name placed into a draw for a gift certificate at the town's Coop. Uptake has doubled in the past week as word gets out!

Innovation and community engagement in the Northern Village of Pinehouse is keeping its community members safe and informed, and Shana's vigilance and creativity are to be commended!



Talking Stick visits the Northern Village of Pinehouse for the Northern Indigenous Leadership Conference.

Speaking of Outcomes..

37% SK First Nations that have committed to adopting FirstAlerts.

1,600+ Talking Stick users who have activated FirstAlerts on their device.

2.8 Million People Talking Stick has reached through its channels.

61% of Nations that have committed or expressed strong interest in FirstAlerts.

138 People averted from suicidal or self-harming behaviours by peer advocates.

Need to chat? You Talk. We Listen.

- » First Nations Peer Advocates are available now.
- » Always Anonymous.
- » Confidential. Safe. Secure.
- » 1 on 1 private conversations.



Download our free app:
Talking Stick-Indigenous



Or go to our website:
my.talkingstick.app

Thank you to our partners

Talking Stick was created in partnership with Saskatchewan's Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN), Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), and TryCycle Data Systems.

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