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**Harm Reducation &  
Organizational Safety  
Planning**

**Presented by Mat Adams and James Demers**

# Land Acknowledgement

**Let's take a moment before we begin to acknowledge the land on which MAX operates. We acknowledge that we are on the traditional, unsurrendered and stolen territories of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg people. As an uninvited settler of European descent, it is important to recognize and speak out about the violence and harm colonization had and continues to have on the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island.**

**The war on drugs, has caused compounding, intergenerational harms to many people and has been used as a tool by the government to punish, capture and imprison marginalized people including, and in particular, Indigenous peoples, As made clear by the fact that Indigenous adults make up 30 per cent of Canada's prison population despite only representing five per cent of the Canadian population.**

# Land Acknowledgement

**As we work to decolonize harm reduction at MAX, we need to recognize, the autonomy, wisdom, practices and traditions of the First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples living in our community.**

**We strive to create a space where all our community members are safe and have access to competent and culturally informed services and be aware of the roles we play supporting Indigenous created and led programming. We aim to listen, learn and improve our knowledge and understanding of the true history and present of Indigenous peoples so we can actively and properly support a future where everyone living on Turtle Island are mentally, physically, sexually, financial, socially and spiritually healthy and well.**

# Topics for Today



## Areas for Consideration in Emergency Planning

- **Administrative Issues**
- **Personelle Risk**
- **Outreach and Communication**

## Common Types of Emergencies

- **Flood & Fire**
- **Occupation & Riot**
- **Bomb Threats & Active Shooters**
- **Considerations for Minority Owned & Public facing queer Organizations**



# Administrative Issues



- **Can you access your computer files from offsite?**
- **Are your team's files backed up automatically or manually?**
- **Safety plan is integrated into staff and board orientation packages**
- **Are hard copies of critical paper files maintained and where?**
- **Is there computer hardware available for use offsite, in the event your building(s) are destroyed or inaccessible?**
- **Is your insurance coverage adequate, and do you know who to contact to initiate a claim?**

# Personnel Risks



- **All for one and one for all- teams in crisis**
- **Do staff and volunteers know how and where to evacuate and convene safely in the event of a crisis during work hours?**
- **Do you have a plan for quickly assessing how many people may remain in your building(s) after a hazardous event?**
- **Do staff and volunteers know where to get post-event status updates?**
- **Do staff and volunteers have contingency plans for adjusted work hours or work off site?**
- **Who on the team is certified in first aid and CPR?**
- **Does everyone staff member and volunteer have an Emergency contact?**

# Outreach and Communication



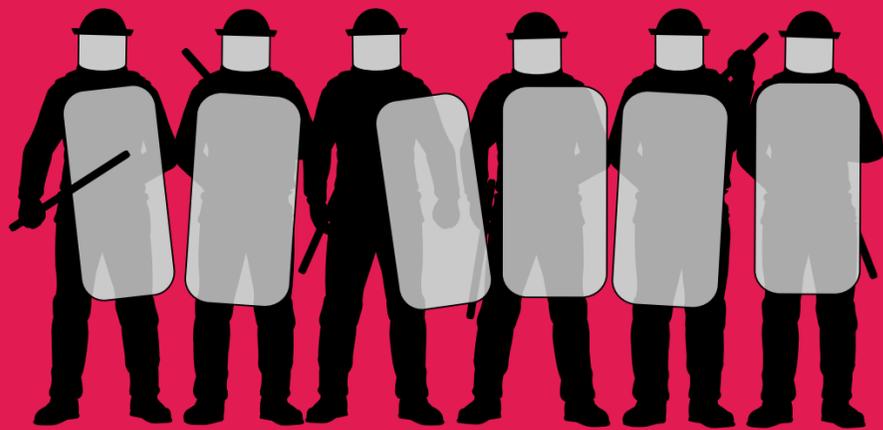
- **Do you have a communication plan in place that can be deployed quickly if vital assistance is needed, either in the form of donations or volunteers or product?**
- **Do you have a way to contact clients in the event of a change in services?**
- **Have you formed partnerships with other local organizations to provide mutual assistance in the event of an emergency?**
- **What is your social media strategy for long term and shortterm messaging?**

# Flood & Fire



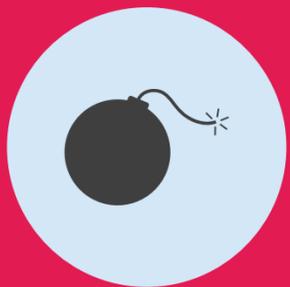
- **Review building inspection records for smoke and carbon monoxide detectors**
- **Confirm site backups for electronic record and devices**
- **Safety plan, reviewed annually with on site staff and volunteers**
- **Alternate location (Plan B) service provision for programs**
- **Alternate access or satellite site for volunteers and staff resources**

# Occupation & Riots



- **Alternate transportation for staff to work locations as needed**
- **Review shifting in points of service contacts, program hours of operations and requirements for access (intersectional lens)**
- **De-prioritize outreach and public facing service outside of arranged appointments**
- **Follow up on building and emergency services updates monitoring crowd movements and red zones.**
- **Move all services to alternate locations for the short term (Partner orgs)**

# **Bomb Threats & Active Shooters**



- **Consider Plan B venues for event or program delivery**
- **Upon receipt of threat evacuate the building or area immediately**
- **Outside of office locations contact venue & local police immediately\***
- **Evacuate immediately if possible, leave any belongings**
- **If you cannot leave safely lock doors, turn off all lights, turn off radios and music players, cover windows to make office or site appear unoccupied.**
- **If confronted by an assailant commit to your actions**

# Minority Owned & Queer

## Organizations



- **Consider removing and replacing flags and cultural symbols over night or during lengthy closures**
- **Offer alternate transportation for staff to work if public spaces and/or transit safety is compromised**
- **Do not ever give out employees personal or contact information to clients or members of the public**
- **Consider that interns and summer students may not be out (cultural context applies)**
- **Consider training and support for employee managing social media and public facing forums (mental health)**

# **Harm Reduction Program**

**MAX**

**Ottawa Occupation**

# Tea 2 Go Harm Reduction



**MAX's harm reduction dispensing program carrying safer partying, overdose prevention, safer sex, and safer hormone supplies (coming soon menstrual hygiene products and gender affirming gear)**

# Tea 2 Go Harm Reduction



**Our dispensing normally runs Wednesdays and Fridays from 12pm to 8pm. Folks can order supplies through our online form for pick up, delivery or mail options to meet their confidentiality needs.**

# **Tea 2 Go Harm Reduction**

**As the occupation began, we had a few things we needed to address and make sure we stayed on top of:**

- Communication with our community members**
- Relocation of harm reduction dispensing**
- Asking for support from our colleagues**

# Communication

**We tried to keep our community members updated through:**

- **Updates on our online order form**
- **Social Media**
- **Signage posted around our building**
  - **Our signs also listed other local harm reduction and mental health resources**
- **Google Listings and Google blog posts**

# Relocation

**We didn't know how long the occupation would last and as the days turned into a week, we started contemplating about a satellite site:**

- Did we have partners who could temporarily host us outside of downtown?**
- If not, could we relocate to a private residence?**
- When should we have stepped in and decided to relocate?**
- Moving exclusively to mail only delivery to keep meeting our community member needs while pick up was unadvisable.**

# Relocation

**We relied heavily on the mail option to keep meeting our community member needs while pick up/drop in hours were unadvisable and or impossible.**

**We still had many mail orders during the convoy and even people living downtown opted for their orders to be mailed as they didn't want to leave their homes.**

# Collaborating

**Getting through the occupation was a team effort.**

**We got through it by:**

- **Taking the danger of travel to work into consideration for staff**
- **Acknowledging, checking in and making space**
- **Helping each other out, regardless of "department"**

# Collaborating

## Travel

**As both of the harm reduction workers live outside of downtown, getting in and out of the city center was difficult or expensive.**

**We were able to support getting staff home by paying for Uber so they wouldn't have to be walking downtown at night.**

# Collaborating

## Travel

**There was also a certain amount of "straight drag" I felt pressure to do to avoid or minimize interactions with the convoy.**

**We also coordinated with other staff who lived within walking distance of the office and willing to support harm reduction dispensing. This gave the space for staff to stay home if they felt unsafe being downtown or travelling.**

# Collaborating

## Making Space

**Many of our morning meetings were overtaken by discussions about the occupation. It was important for us to be able to talk to each other about the situation, especially as our downtown staff members had been isolating to avoid the convoy and that many of us were already isolating due to COVID.**

# Collaborating

## Making Space

**There were also many conversations between myself, James, Torin and Ahmed to check in with how we were doing, especially the days after coming into the office.**

**This also gave the opportunity to let staff take time off for their mental health, or work remotely from other cities.**

# Collaborating

## Helping Out

**I mentioned before about the other staff helping us out with our harm reduction dispensing.**

**This was by coming into the office so we always had 2 people, and was voluntary for staff who lived within walking distance of the office.**

# Collaborating

## Helping Out

**I also had my colleague Spencer, who is MAX's Mental Health Programs Coordinator, help me fulfill orders when I wasn't able to come to the office.**

**We were given very little notice before the plan to remove the convoy began, and since Spencer was in the office, he helped pack the order and mail it for us.**

# Collaborating

## Helping Out

**Helping out can mean different things to different organizations and different programs.**

**We have a great team who were all willing to step in and help make sure our organization's programs kept running, despite the convoy obstructing our lives.**

# Aftermath

**Looking back on what happened, and with the potential for more occupations, especially with some encampments of the convoy still operating in the rural areas around Ottawa, our need for a response plan hasn't gone away.**

**Ottawa is the center of political power in Canada, and honestly, we should have thought more about being prepared for occupations in the first place.**

# Aftermath

**A big question coming out of this is did we react enough? Not enough? Too much?**

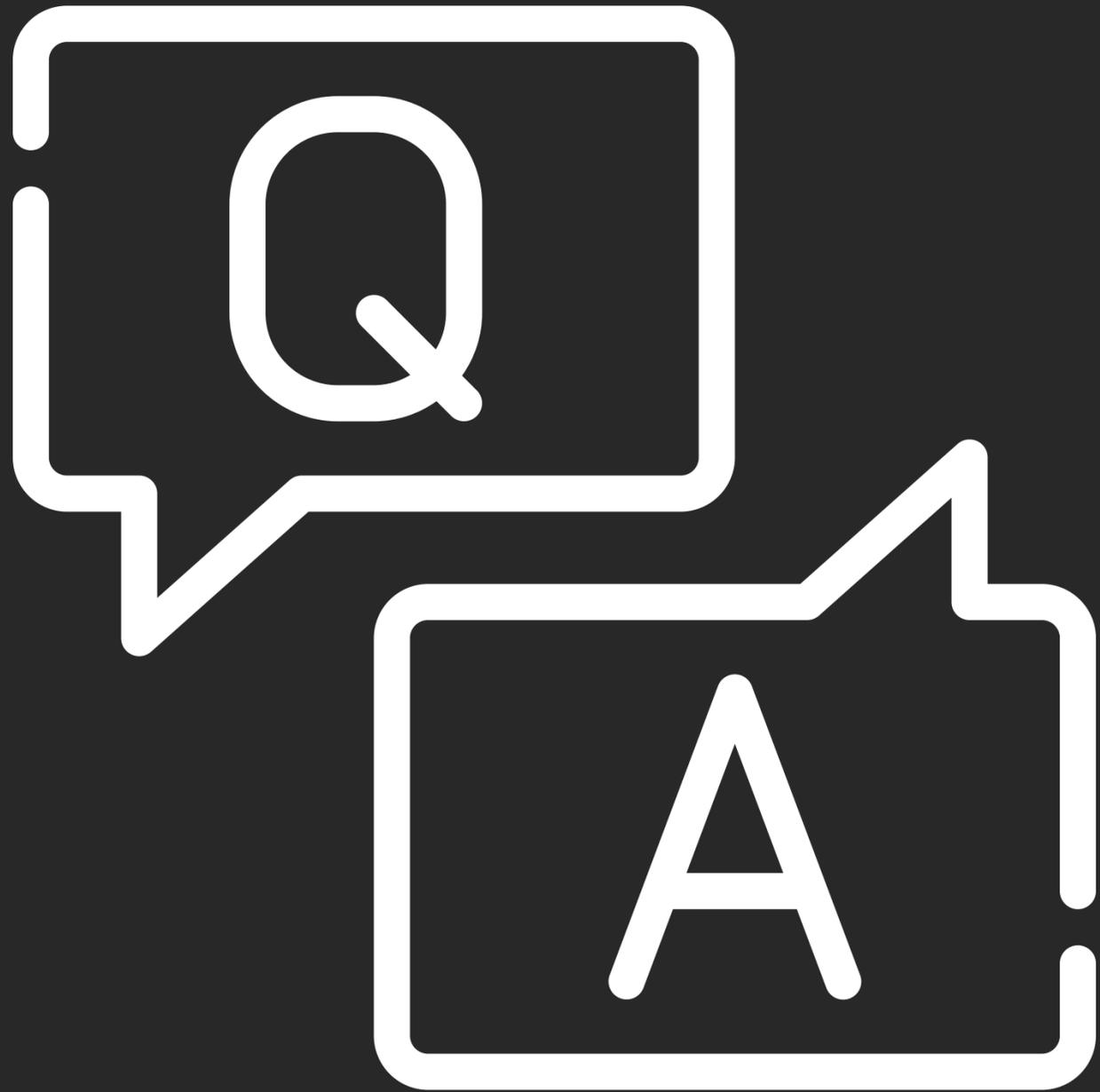
**Did we take action early enough?**

**We had no way to know how long this was going to last, but going forward with planning we need to consider at what point we make decisions or enact these emergency responses.**

# Aftermath

**It has really brought forward the need to be prepared for emergencies like this.**

**Unfortunately, we don't have the luxury of assuming something like this won't happen again.**



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## Resources

<https://volpro.net/nonprofit-emergency-plans/>

<https://www.getprepared.gc.ca/cnt/rsracs/mrgnc-mgmt-rgnztns-en.aspx>

<https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/mrgncmngmnt/index-en.aspx>

[https://acds.ca/resources/pandemic\\_planning\\_resources/business-continuity.html](https://acds.ca/resources/pandemic_planning_resources/business-continuity.html)

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/preparedbc/make-your-plan>