



“One day, I decided that I’m more important”

59-year-old Yurok Tribal member Richard identifies with this painting as he honestly shares his experiences with addiction. At the age of 13, Richard started drinking and smoking marijuana daily. By the time Richard was 20, he started working and attending continuation school but he used his money to buy alcohol and eventually other drugs.

Richard developed what is known as polysubstance use disorder. Alcoholism increases the likelihood of developing co-occurring conditions such as a substance use disorder. For example, according to the National Survey of Drug Use and Health, people who are addicted to alcohol are two times more likely to be addicted to heroin.

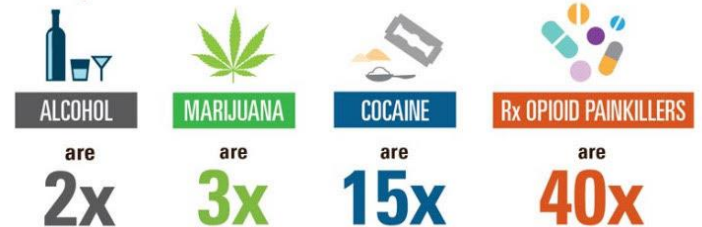
Heroin use is part of a larger substance abuse problem.

Nearly all people who used heroin also used at least 1 other drug.

Most used at least **3** other drugs.

Heroin is a highly addictive opioid drug with a high risk of overdose and **death** for users.

People who are addicted to...



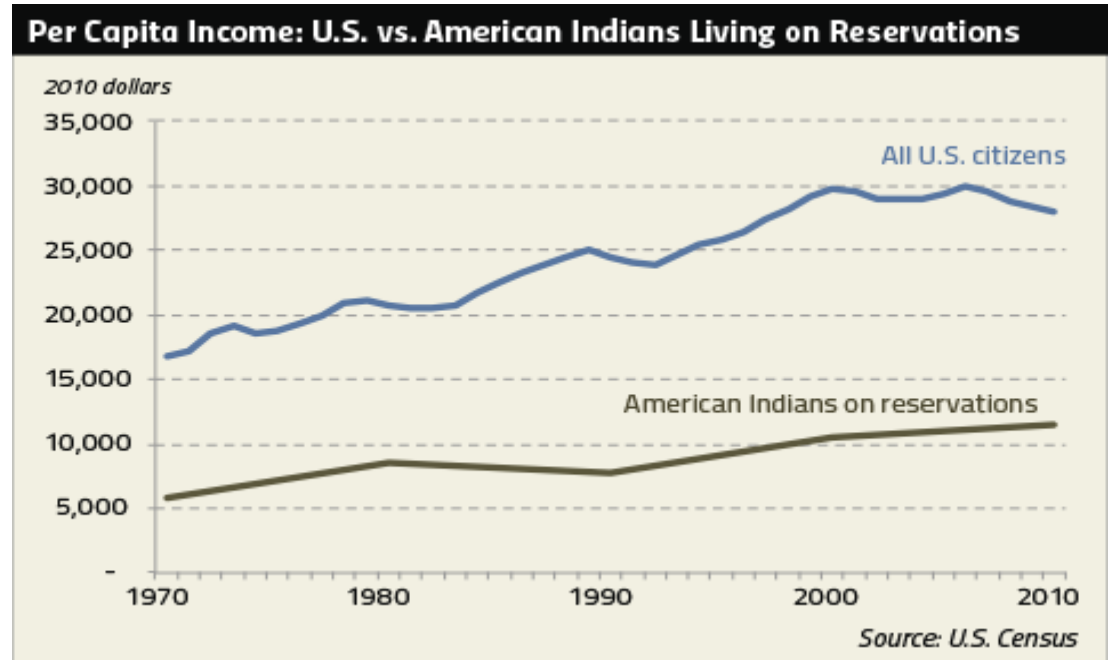
...more likely to be addicted to heroin.

SOURCE: National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 2011-2013.





By the time Richard was 25 years old, he was selling on the streets to support his lifestyle. On native reservations, the lack of income and employment opportunities stimulate drug use and drug dealing.



In 2011, Richard went to prison for 2 years and when he got out he spent a significant amount of time in and out of rehabs and treatment facilities. One New Year's Eve, he decided to quit, and he says that "quitting was the hardest thing I've ever done." He reassures me that "when you decide to do it for yourself, you're guaranteed to stay clean and sober because when you do it for someone else, what will happen if they leave you?" Now, Richard enjoys spending time with family, fishing, swimming, and playing baseball with friends. He continues to share his story to celebrate sobriety with a proud and spirited demeanor.

The Yurok Tribe Wellness Coalition is a branch of Yurok Tribal Wellness Court which aims to support individuals impacted by substance and polysubstance use disorders. Follow the Yurok Tribe Wellness Coalition page on Facebook to learn more information.

