

## **INDIGENOUS YOUTH LEADING COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH = PART OF THE SOLUTION**

**The National Indigenous Youth Council on HIV & AIDS (NIYCHA) offers the following guidelines in regards to HIV, Sexually Transmitted and Blood Borne Infections (STBBI's), Sexual Health and Harm Reduction related research:**

- ★ Indigenous Youth want to be actively **leading** research, not just being the “subjects”. This means changing the structure of a research team and project to have co-investigators or leads to be young people themselves, as well as the support and infrastructure to have a Youth Circle or Advisory on the project that has a consistent and central leadership role for decision making continuously throughout
- ★ Indigenous Youth ask that AIDS Service Organizations (ASO's), and other relevant organizations offer experiences to participate in research projects, committees, and community based journals that will also be available and circulated to other youth and youth-serving organizations. This also means that the format and methodologies that young people are asked to participate in needs to be as open-ended as possible and not restricted to formal “academic” regulations only
- ★ Indigenous Youth ask to be involved in research that has to do with International Indigenous HIV/AIDS and other STBBI, sexual health and harm reduction initiatives to reach out to our Youth Council partners across the world
- ★ ASO's and other organizations spotlight the experiences of NIYCHA members and projects/research that they are involved in (i.e. invite Indigenous Youth to speak at plenary sessions at annual conferences, forums, etc)
- ★ Interact and mentor Indigenous Youth in a way that lets them draw from your experience and arrive at their own conclusions
- ★ Encourage Indigenous Youth to look around their community, and build on research supports that already exist to lead their own research
- ★ Share success stories, strategies and wise practices with Indigenous Youth. Avoid “deficit-based” or labeling Indigenous Youth as inherently “at risk”.
- ★ Address the gap in awareness about funding and resources available for Indigenous Youth research that is truly peer-lead
- ★ Reach out to Indigenous youth in spaces that they may already be in so they are aware of opportunities they may want to get involved in. This can include youth centres, drop-ins, shelters, group homes, as well as Indigenous Student Centres particularly if your project requires you to hire students.
- ★ Partner with Indigenous Youth to create youth-led sessions that are led by and for youth. Ensure your documents and any material you are using has language that is youth-friendly and accessible (and if it's not, work with youth to change this)
- ★ Pay youth fairly for their time and provide meaningful compensation for Indigenous Youth to participate in research (i.e. honorarium, travel money). This can also include a reference

letter, certificate of participation, or if there are required volunteer hours for their high school

- ★ Involve Elders and whole families in education and research about HIV/AIDS, STBBI's, sexual health, and harm reduction among Indigenous Youth, so we can learn together and across generations
- ★ Offer your skills and experience to Indigenous Youth in areas which they may want to develop their own skills (i.e. proposal grant writing, research design) while allowing them to maintain youth leadership on the project
- ★ Acknowledge different ways in which research is already being done by Indigenous youth themselves in ways that they gather knowledge and information with their peers that make sense to them, and build upon this expertise with them in your project or initiative (i.e. arts base, digital stories, videos, hip-hop, graffiti, conversations with friends, painting, graphic design, fashion, social media, photography, etc)
- ★ Recognize that Indigenous Youth listen to their peers and are best suited to be supported to work with them and can tell you what what needs to happen
- ★ Work with youth to facilitate something similar to a Taking Action! workshop in your community (arts based and community-based projects where youth talk about and do research on intergenerational impacts of HIV/AIDS, youth) [www.takingaction4youth.org](http://www.takingaction4youth.org)
- ★ Remember: Young people have inspirational goals, visions, and dreams. This isn't just about what's "wrong" with our communities or us. We have strengths too!

***Indigenous Youth Making Changes,  
Leading the Future through Transformative Action Research***

**This direction is a result of "Aboriginal Youth Doing Research" session at Wise Practices III in Halifax, NS, March 9, 2011 and was revised by NIYCHA in July 2015**