



Environments of Nurturing Safety (EONS)

Aboriginal Women In Canada – Five Year Strategy on HIV and AIDS (2010 – 2015)

Direction for addressing systemic, structural and societal barriers affecting Aboriginal women living with and/or affected by HIV and AIDS.

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network Voices of Women Standing Committee (CAAN VOW)
Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN) www.caan.ca

CAAN VOW: Members of the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network Voices of Women Standing Committee includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis women and is equally represented by *PAW and Service Providers from CAAN member organizations.

Kecia Larkin – Co-chair, British Columbia
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Background: On December 3rd, 2010, *Environments of Nurturing Safety (EONS) – Aboriginal Women in Canada Five Year Strategy on HIV and AIDS* was released by the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network during the 2010 Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week campaign.

This strategy is about increasing and broadening the base of support for Aboriginal women and girls by:
creating safe spaces, building capacity and increasing prevention strategies. By implementing EONS, we will begin to see a decrease of HIV over the next five years.

HIV and AIDS Among Aboriginal Women:

High incidence rates of HIV are continuing to impact Aboriginal women indicating a strong need to scale up a response grounded in culturally relevant, gender specific approaches that recognize the unique needs of Aboriginal women.

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) in their *HIV/AIDS Epi Update* of July 2010 reported that HIV and AIDS has a significant impact on Aboriginal women in particular. The report further highlights:

- Of positive HIV test reports with known sex among Aboriginal people, the proportion attributed to females ranged from 43.0% to 52.8% between 1998 and 2008, with a high of 56.6% (99/175) in 2005.

- Between 1998 and 2008, females made up nearly half (48.8%) of all positive HIV test reports among Aboriginal people, whereas only 20.6% of positive HIV test reports were reported among non-Aboriginal females for

Safe Spaces for Aboriginal Women:

The title of this strategy reflects what PAW across Canada said they needed to continue and/or begin their healing journeys: space to talk about their experiences with HIV and AIDS and to be able to do this with other women. (15/08/2011)

They suggest that any strategy to address their needs must be built on a strong foundation that embraces issues of 'safety' and the creation of 'safe spaces' where Aboriginal women are respected.

Who are PAW?

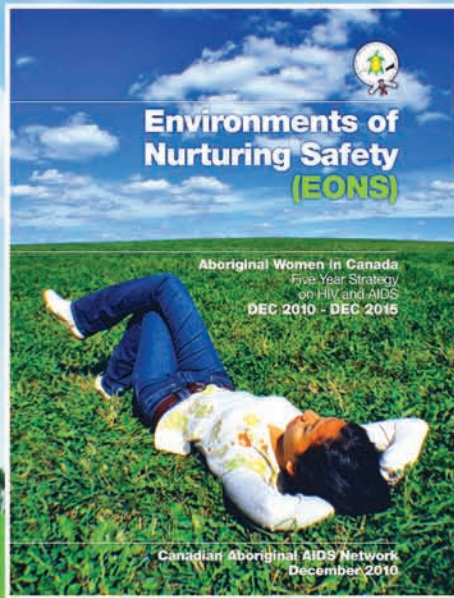
PAW are:

POSITIVE ABORIGINAL WOMEN

Our Sisters, Mothers, Daughters, Grandmothers, Granddaughters, Nieces, Cousins and community members.

PAW imparts a dual meaning to 'being positive' and effectively breaks down a first barrier in how Aboriginal women impacted by this epidemic would like to be portrayed.

PAW utilizes a strengths – based approach.



Factors that influence risk and vulnerability :

Poverty & low socioeconomic status

Gender-based violence

Historical Trauma

Biological susceptibility

Gender imbalance & inequities

Colonial depiction of Aboriginal women

Racism, stigma, discrimination and sexism

Unresolved trauma related to sexual abuse

Social exclusion

Unequal opportunities for education

Unequal opportunities for access to healthcare

EONS – VALUES:

FREEDOM – To speak or be silent; to make choices that fit for us

RESPECT – Accepting where people are at

COURAGE – To disclose, share, speak or act without fear of repercussion

GENEROSITY – To take care of our whole self in order to care for others

EONS – Guiding Principles:

Aboriginal women are diverse but can demonstrate unity amongst each other to benefit their children, themselves and the communities in which they live.

Aboriginal women are nurturers, healers, keepers of women's knowledge and keepers of culture. We must honour these gifts in how we work with each other, our children, and our communities. Aboriginal women are resourceful, flexible, and responsible for themselves, their children, and their communities. For these reasons are self-determined in their work for and with each other.

EONS – Strategic Objectives:

Strategic Objective 1 – Strengthen the network and support for PAW and their children in every region

Strategic Objective 2 – Increase the availability and accessibility of culturally appropriate care, treatment and support services for PAW in every region

Strategic Objective 3 – Lobby for policy shifts to remove and/or alleviate existing systemic barriers for PAW and their children in every region

Strategic Objective 4 – Increase prevention, education and awareness on HIV and AIDS for 'at risk' populations of Aboriginal women and girls in every region across Canada

Strategic Objective 5 – Increase Aboriginal women – specific community based research

Responding as a Community – Making The Circle Complete

Environments of Nurturing Safety is about Aboriginal women taking their rightful place and being meaningfully engaged as equal partners. It is vitally important to Aboriginal women that there be an equal representation of women at every table that reflects the current high prevalence rates of HIV and AIDS impacting our sisters. Systemic barriers that hinder meaningful engagement of Aboriginal women needs to be addressed, and we all have a role to play to ensure that this happens.

"We cannot heal alone as women, our men also need healing, because we have to relate to each other in healthy ways. Don't forget the men; our men also need to heal".

Elder Betty Smith – Piikani Nation (CAAN Aboriginal Women's Consultation – Red Deer AB.)

"When Aboriginal women flourish, as well as their children, family and community, then the whole world gains."

Krista Shore CAAN VOW Standing Committee and CAAN Board Member