

*Keeping Our Fires*

# Circles of Practice

*Follow-Up Actions*

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## *In This Issue*

### Special Thanks To Our Participants

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CAAN Communities, Alliances and Networks would like to thank all of the participating organizations who joined the Keeping Our Fires project. Throughout the fiscal year, they dedicated their time to identifying challenges and strategies to provide sexual and reproductive health in their communities. They have done a tremendous job utilizing their training to perform environmental scans to determine the best steps to achieve their vision of change. They created and carried their knowledge bundle and will continue to strive to either build, start, stoke, and keep their fires going. We hope their learned lessons, stories, recommendations, and achievements inspire many who share similar paths and experiences.

### Action In Community

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### Request for Assistance

#### *INSTI HIV Self-Test Kits*

### Native Friendship Centre of Montreal (NFCM)

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The NFCM provides quality service around health, social services, education, training, employment referral, legal, and orientation/information to urban Indigenous populations of Montreal and their families, including those migrating to or through the city. Their staff utilized their tools, knowledge, training, and resources to provide stigma-free and culturally safe HIV and STBBI services to community members. Initiatives they've implemented included, hosting food and communal gatherings on Wednesdays called *Cultural Night* at their

KAIE:RI:NIKAWERA:KE day centre. This offers community members a space to come together, share a communal meal, enjoy traditional drumming sessions, and have guest speakers such as Elder, Traditional Healers, and Community Leaders present. Frontline employees at the day centre who work closely with community members initiate conversations around sexual health. Their Indigenous Nurse Practitioner has fostered a safe and trustworthy relationship with community members and has been making testing more accessible by offering HIV, HCV, and STBBI screenings during their operational clinic days, cultural nights, and community dinners. She ensures confidentiality and privacy to those seeking testing. They've also encouraged their partners at the Médecins du Monde Canada (MDM) to help direct patients to their Indigenous Health Clinic.

Photo credits: Britannica



## Interlake Reserves Tribal Council (IRTC)

The IRTC consists of a partnership of seven Manitoba Interlake communities, all working collaboratively together to advance the collective well-being of their members. The council focuses on climate change, community planning, economic development, education, emergency management, health services, social development, traditional/land use, and many more. The IRTC's Health Promotion, Prevention & Harm Reduction Supervisor's main priority was addressing stigma present in communities. A main barrier to HIV services in remote communities is fear around breach of confidentiality and social isolation. IRTC has been raising awareness around the local rates of HIV and has been raising awareness of the stigma-free health promotion, prevention, testing, treatment, and harm reduction services are available in each community. In partnership with CAAN, a pull-up banner will be

created speaking on the local statistics of HIV and the harms of stigma. The banner will be placed in health clinics who will offer stigma-free services and have the contact information listed for a PHNs or LPNs.

## Prince Albert Metis Association (PAMWA)

PAMWA and their programming are built on leadership and engagement with the Prince Albert Community. We have been working collaboratively with their Harm Reduction Coordinator and their Peer Support Worker to address the growing rates of HIV, HCV, Syphilis, and other STBBIs in their region. Past efforts to engage with youth have been challenging and they utilized this project to discover new appropriate strategies to increase community awareness, knowledge, and engagement. They have begun initiating conversations around sexual health with community members in group and individual settings. Their peer support worker has been sharing their story and connecting with those newly diagnosed, acting as a trusted peer and mentor in the community. Their team has dedicated their resource creation to creating an engaging HIV, HCV, Syphilis, and STBBI reflective and engaging workbook for youth framing sexual health as (w)holistic health.

Photo credits: Weidner Apartment Homes





Photo credits: CBC News

## Labrador Friendship Centre: S.H.I.E.L.D Program

The Labrador Friendship Centre is located in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, providing the best services to enrich the lives of the Indigenous Peoples of Labrador through initiatives focusing on social, cultural, health, educational, employment, and developmental. Their Sexual Health Information Exchange Labrador District (S.H.I.E.L.D) project is youth-led and adult-supported encouraging positive sexual health, health relationships, and personal wellness through Art, Culture, and Technology (ACT), empowerment opportunities, and life experiences. Their staff have been raising awareness of existing barriers to services in their region (e.g. STBBI services are only available at emergency hospitals and privatized healthcare) and advocating for service accessibility. In partnership with CAAN, they have been dedicating their resource development that aligns with the needs and interests of their community, followed by the new changes implemented by their health authority and school districts.

## Request For Assistance

As of March 31st, the federal government will be cutting funding for the INSTI HIV Self-Test Kits. At our gathering, many of our participating organizations raised concerns as they heavily rely on self-test kits, especially those located in remote and isolated communities. They raised concerns about what this means for the health and well-being of their communities in the future and stated they are on their last box of self-test kits. These kits play a crucial role in reaching those who are undetectable, as they make testing accessible, stigma-free, and private. We believe that these kits are essential in the strategic response to reducing transmission, providing early detection, and connecting IPHAs to wrap around services that benefit their (w)holistic health. Therefore, we are advocating for continued funding for INSTI HIV Self-Test Kits.



Photo credits: [Turning Point Society](#)