



Creating Safer Spaces

CAAN

Communities, Alliances & Networks

Knowledge Bundle 1



Dr. Peter
Centre



ᑭᓯᐅᑦ ᐱᓴᑎᑦᐅᑦᐅᑦ miyo-pimâtisiwin
(good life in Cree language)

The ancestors practiced this way, it was a way of life and was not something you had to think about, they were always praying for this understanding to live the good life.

– Margaret Kiskaw Piyesis, okimâw of CAAN
Communities, Alliances & Networks



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Gender-Based Violence & Colonial Violence

Link to HIV & Substance Use

Indigenous women and gender-diverse people were respected, valued, and viewed as sacred and equal in their communities. However, after European contact, settlers imposed their patriarchal views, forcing Indigenous women and gender-diverse people to have their rights disposed of, their social roles devalued and exposed to systemic abuse and exploitation.

The following colonial legacies of cultural disruption, discrimination, racism, marginalization and intergenerational trauma are linked to the rates of violence, substance use, and HIV infections today.

Gender-Based Violence Facts

- **75-85 % of two-spirit people** experience gender-based violence, including physical and sexual violence.
 - Two-spirit men report a **lifetime prevalence** of physical violence of **36%**
 - Two-spirit women reported being **assaulted by multiple perpetrators**, both strangers and people they know.
- **84.8%** of Indigenous women reported experiencing forms of violence stemming from intergenerational trauma.
 - **15.2%** of Indigenous women reported having experienced sexual violence.
- In treatment services, **65%** of Indigenous women experienced gender-based violence.
 - **50%** reported experiencing violence from their current partner.
- Due to prioritizing their safety, Indigenous women and two-spirit peoples are **less likely to successfully receive HIV-related care.**



HIV-Positive Status Increases Risk

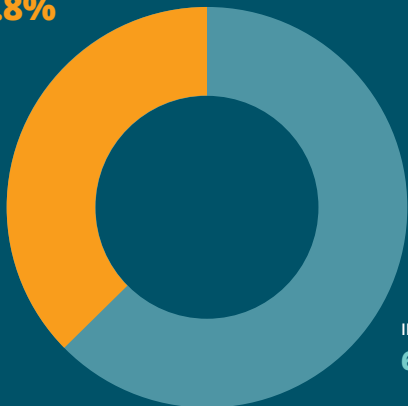
Having an HIV-positive status only increases the risk of violence among Indigenous women and gender-diverse people. IPHAs reported experiencing abandonment, discrimination, and ostracism by their own family, community, or partner. Indigenous women further experience physical and sexual violence, intimidation, threats of legal action, robberies, and stereotypes.

Substance Use & HIV

- Indigenous women and gender-diverse peoples report **turning to substances to help them cope** with existing experiences with violence.
- The intersectionality between their race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and social exclusion impacts their social determinants of health, **making them vulnerable to HIV.**
- **Majority of Indigenous women** who reported HIV exposure are linked to **injection drug use.**

Heterosexual Contact

34.8%



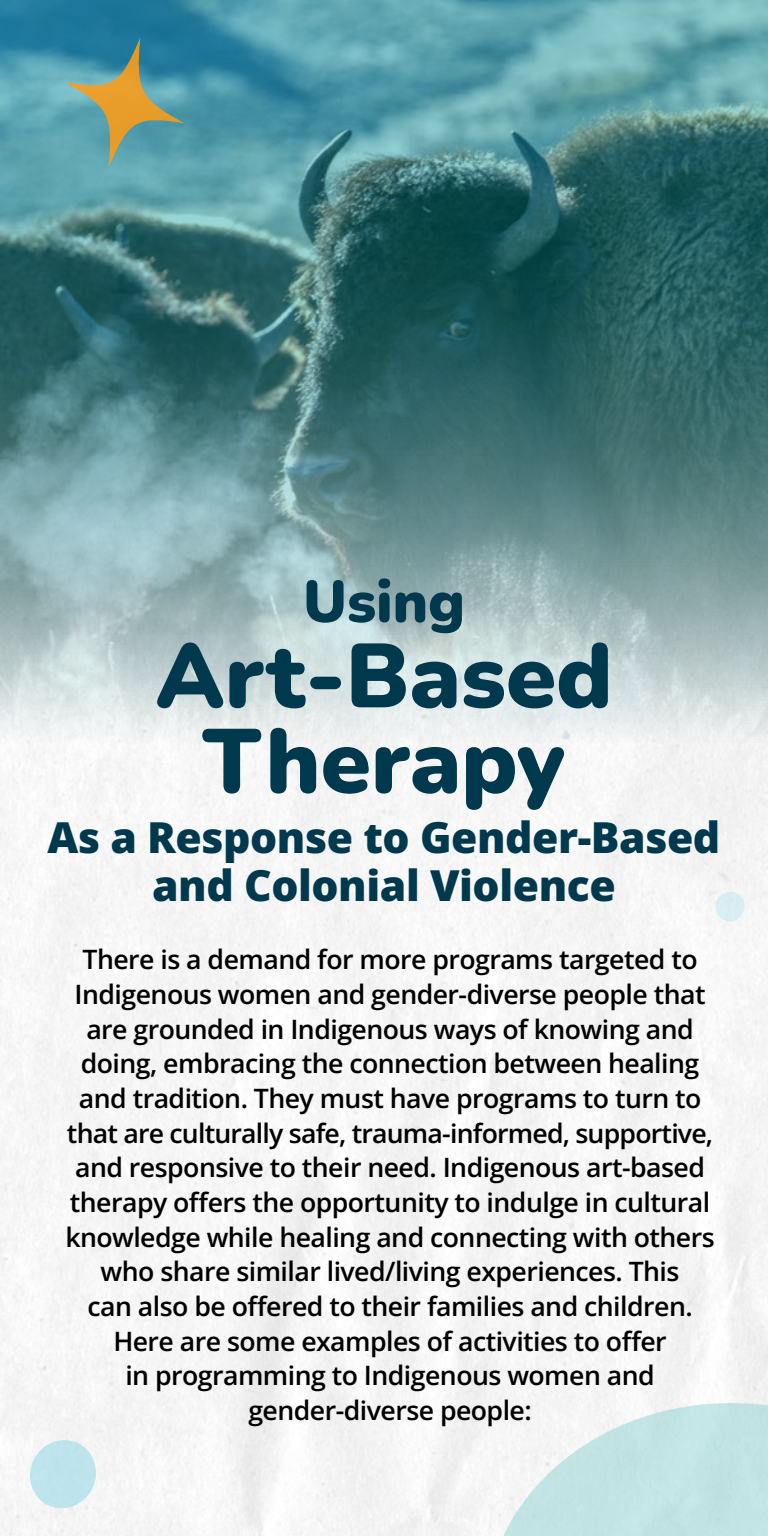
IDU

63.6%

*Due to the lack of acknowledgement of gender and sexual diversity in national health statistics, there is no available data on HIV/AIDS for gender-diverse Indigenous people.

- Within substance use treatment, **67% of Indigenous women have a history of abuse.**
 - 50% were experiencing abuse from their current partners.
 - COVID-19 has exacerbated both experiences with violence and substance use.





Using Art-Based Therapy

As a Response to Gender-Based and Colonial Violence

There is a demand for more programs targeted to Indigenous women and gender-diverse people that are grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, embracing the connection between healing and tradition. They must have programs to turn to that are culturally safe, trauma-informed, supportive, and responsive to their need. Indigenous art-based therapy offers the opportunity to indulge in cultural knowledge while healing and connecting with others who share similar lived/living experiences. This can also be offered to their families and children.

Here are some examples of activities to offer in programming to Indigenous women and gender-diverse people:



Beading

Beading is a form of cultural value, resiliency, and identity. It acts as a form of meditation to conquer trauma, allowing participants to forget about their troubles and embrace freedom while focusing on their creativity. Participants can (re)discover their history, culture, and pride. Incorporate an Elder to hold a smudging ceremony before the beading takes place and to provide additional support.

Ribbon-Skirt Making

You may be familiar with seeing ribbon skirts used to express remembrance to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and 2-Spirited People. Ribbon skirts are a symbol of reclaiming one's identity, survival, and resiliency. It can be seen as an expression of womanhood, strength, and sacredness. Although nations share similarities behind the symbolism of the ribbon skirt, each nation has its unique history, teaching, and meanings with different colors designs, and materials used. Reach out to Knowledge Keepers and Elders to teach participants more about their cultural traditions.



Making Drums & Drum Bags

Drums are a sacred object and one of the oldest form of communication, as it sends a message to anyone who can hear it. Drum-making symbolizes the interconnectedness of all, including the Creator, animals, plants, and spirits. While participants are making their drum, a Knowledge Keeper can pass down traditional knowledge surrounding its history, importance, and meaning.

Visual Journaling & Painting

Visual art, such as visual journaling and painting, embraces creativity and self-esteem. It is recognized as a form of storytelling, playing an important role in conveying life experiences, values, and cultural and historical knowledge. Visual art stimulates thoughts and memories, keeping participants engaged (w)holistically. A Knowledge Keeper and Elder can be present to pass down traditional knowledge, while also introducing young children to drawing and the symbolic power of the animals.



How to Create Safer Spaces for Indigenous Women & Gender-Diverse People Who Experienced/ Experience Violence

A HARM REDUCTION FRAMEWORK

1

INTEGRATE HIV services into services that target gender-based violence

2

PROVIDE culturally safe and trauma-informed training to health-care & service providers to reduce stigma and barriers.

3

OFFER (W)holistic practices to address one's mental *emotional, spiritual, social,* and *physical* well being

- such as healing circles, smudging, being on land, etc.)

4

PROVIDE educational services for Indigenous youth that focus on empowerment, healthy relationships, and safe sex practices.

5

DECOLONIZE by honouring self-determination, pronouns, names, and contributions of both Indigenous women and gender-diverse people.

6

DISCLOSE policies on protecting confidentiality and display your commitment to ensuring a safe space for service users (language, behaviour, and posters.)

7

HIRE staff with lived experiences to offer peer support services, conduct research, and create policies.

8

PROVIDE small group dialogue opportunities for participants to feel open to safely discussing their hiv status, experiences with violence, and feelings.

9

HAVE an elder, spiritual healers, and/or indigenous counsellor present to offer additional support.

10

IMPROVE accessibility and offer transportation or virtual services in northern, remote, or isolated communities.

Want to Learn More?

Visit our website www.caan.ca to learn more about harm reduction services and promising/wise practices when working with Indigenous peoples, their families, and their communities.

Additional Resources on Creating Safer Spaces for Indigenous Women & Gender-Diverse People

- Binesikwe, Z. & Hardy, C. (n.d.). Indigenous LGBTQ and Two-Spirit Health. Caring for LGBTQS People: A Clinical Guide, Second Edition.
- Lamontagne, M. (2011). Violence Against Aboriginal Women: Scan and Report. Canadian Women's Foundation.
- Ristock, J. (2019). Impacts of colonization on Indigenous Two-Spirit/LGBTQ Canadians' experiences of migration, mobility and relationship violence.
- (2011). Report on Violence Against Women, Mental Health, and Substance Use. Canadian Women's Foundation.
- (2017). Indigenous Women, HIV, and Gender-Based Violence. Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network.



How to Create **Safer Spaces** for **Indigenous Women & Gender-Diverse People** in Harm Reduction Services



Background on Colonial & Gender-Based Violence

Before European contact, Indigenous women were seen as equal. They were honored for nurturing life and seen as leaders. Similarly, gender-diverse people were respected and their uniqueness was embraced. This drastically changed when colonial settlers imposed their patriarchal views, subordinating Indigenous women and gender-diverse people.

Colonial legacies of racism, discrimination, cultural disruption, intergenerational trauma, dispossession of rights, and devalued social roles made them vulnerable. We see these legacies continue to contribute to the ongoing rates of domestic violence, family violence, hate crimes, HIV, and substance use amongst Indigenous women and gender-diverse peoples today.

Statistics

- **75 - 85%** of two-spirit peoples 2 experience gender-based violence.
 - 36% report a lifetime prevalence of physical violence.
- **84.8%** of Indigenous women reported to experience violence linked to intergenerational trauma.
 - 15.2% reported to have experienced sexual violence.



Gender-Based Violence, Substance Use, & HIV

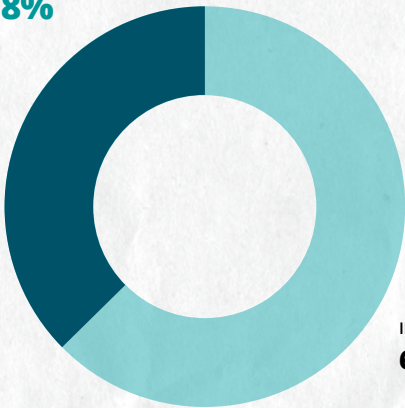


Indigenous women and gender-diverse peoples turn to substances to help them cope with their experiences with violence. Coupled with violence and their intersectionality between their race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and social exclusion, their social determinants are greatly impacted. Both factors make them vulnerable to HIV exposure.

For example, majority of Indigenous women (63.6%) reported to have contacted HIV from injection drug use, in comparison to heterosexual contact (34.8%).

Heterosexual Contact

34.8%



IDU

63.6%

*Due to the lack of acknowledgement of gender and sexual diversity in national health statistics, there is no available data on HIV/AIDS for gender-diverse Indigenous people.

Wise Practices

- Integrate HIV services into services that target gender-based violence.
- Provide culturally safe and trauma-informed training to healthcare & service providers.
- Offer (w)holistic practices to address one's mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being.
- Provide educational services for Indigenous youth that focus on empowerment, healthy relationships, and safe sex practices.
- Decolonize by honoring self-determination, pronouns, names, and contributions of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people.
- Disclose policies on protecting the confidentiality and display your commitment to ensuring a safe space. Hire staff with lived experiences to offer services, conduct research, and create policies.
- Provide small group dialogue opportunities for participants to feel open to safely discussing their HIV status, substance use, experiences with violence, and feelings.
- Have an Elder and/or Indigenous counselor present to offer additional support.
- Improve accessibility by offering transportation and virtual services in northern, remote, or isolated communities.



References

1. (2017). Indigenous Women, HIV, and Gender-Based Violence. Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network.
2. Robinson, M. (2022). Recent insights into the mental health needs of two-spirit people.
3. Binesikwe, Z. & Hardy, C. (n.d.). Indigenous LGBTQ and Two-Spirit Health. Caring for LGBTQS People: A Clinical Guide, Second Edition.
4. (2011). Report on Violence Against Women, Mental Health, and Substance Use. Canadian Women's Foundation.
5. Gray, M.J. (2017). Beads: Symbols of Indigenous Cultural Resilience and Value. University of Toronto's Department of Anthropology. 2.(n.d.). What is a Ribbon Skirt? The Ribbon Skirt Project. Indigenous Nouveau.
6. (2018). The Drum: Heartbeat of our Indigenous Cultures. Indigenous Tourism BC.
7. (2012). Dancing, Singing, Painting, and Speaking the Healing Story: Healing Through Creative Arts. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation.





To Learn More

Visit our website www.caan.ca
to access our information sheets that
provide wise and promising practices
recommendations to implement in
your services.



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