

# HIV Prevention through Arts-Based Sexual Health Workshops for Northern and Indigenous Adolescents

## What we know from other research:

Northern and Indigenous Canadians are disproportionately affected by sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV. <sup>[1]</sup>



Indigenous people in Canada are more likely to be diagnosed with HIV at a young age than those who are Non-Indigenous. <sup>[1]</sup>

Arts-based youth programs are linked to increased STI knowledge and safer sex efficacy among Indigenous youth in NWT. <sup>[4]</sup>



Art-based methods can help youth to learn in accessible and novel ways, to remember what they learned, and to have dialogue on stigmatized topics. <sup>[5]</sup>

## Key Terms

**Sexual Health:** Physical, mental, emotional, and social wellbeing as it relates to sexuality.

**Safer Sex Efficacy (SSE):** Feeling confident about making safer sexual choices.

**Sexual Relationship Equity:** Balance of power in a sexual relationship.

**STI:** Sexually transmitted infection.

**HIV:** Human immunodeficiency virus.



## Gender is an important factor:

Indigenous girls and young women have higher rates of diagnosed HIV than Indigenous boys and young men <sup>[1]</sup>, possibly related to having less decision-making power over sex and condom use. <sup>[2]</sup>



Boys and young men are often less encouraged to do STI testing. <sup>[3]</sup>

## Our Research Questions:

- What is the impact of arts-based sexual health workshops on Northern and Indigenous youth in the NWT?
- What factors promote or hinder their sexual health?
- What is the role of gender in shaping sexual health and wellbeing for these youth?

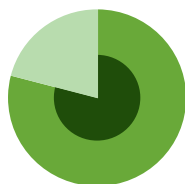
## How We Conducted This Research:

- 344 youth aged 13-18 attended Indigenous-led arts-based workshops in school settings.
- FOXY/SMASH workshops are interactive sexual health education programs that address HIV and STIs, sexuality, and healthy relationships through various activities including arts-based methods such as body mapping, writing, and role playing.
- Before and after workshops, participants completed surveys exploring HIV/STI knowledge, risk perception, safer sex efficacy, condom use, and equitable sexual relationship attitudes.

## What We Found:

# 79%

Most (79%) participants identified as Indigenous.



# 49%

Women

# 49%

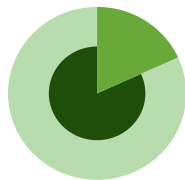
Men

# 02%

Non-binary

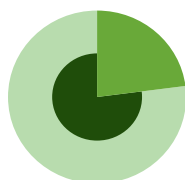
# 18%

Were living in an urban setting (Yellowknife).



# 23%

23% indicated being sexually active.



# 66%

Most (66%) had previously attended a FOXY/SMASH workshop.

First time workshop participants had the biggest score increases. Still, participants repeating the workshops continued to show increases in STI risk perception and SSE.

Completing the FOXY/SMASH workshop produced significantly higher scores on STI knowledge, HIV/STI perceived risk, and safer sex efficacy (SSE).

Youth with higher resilience scores had greater increases in STI knowledge.

Girls/young women and non-binary participants had improved post-workshop scores on equitable sexual relationship attitudes.

## Discussion

- Youth-centered, arts-based HIV prevention strategies hold potential to promote sexual health and wellbeing in Northern and Indigenous communities.

## Recommendations

- Support arts-based sexual health programs for NWT youth and provide annual booster workshops to provide continued benefits.
- Bolster resiliency among Northern and Indigenous youth to support sexual health knowledge uptake.
- To improve young men's attitudes toward equitable relationship norms, implement gender-transformative sexual health programming tailored to their needs.

### References

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5. Lys C, Gesink D, Strike C, et al. Body Mapping as a Youth Sexual Health Intervention and Data Collection Tool. Qual Health Res 2018; 28: 1185–1198.