

Fostering Empowering and Healthy Relationships with Indigenous and Northern Young People in the NWT



Article Link

What we know from other research:

The prevalence of intimate partner violence in the NWT is among the highest in Canada¹ and 2.2 times higher in NWT women and girls compared to men and boys.²



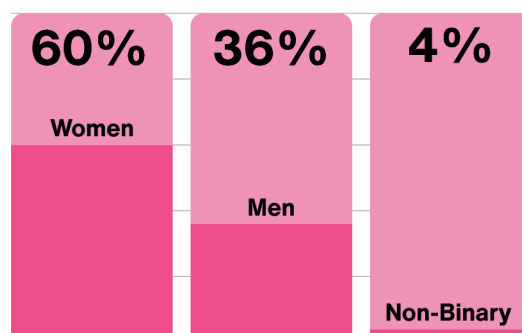
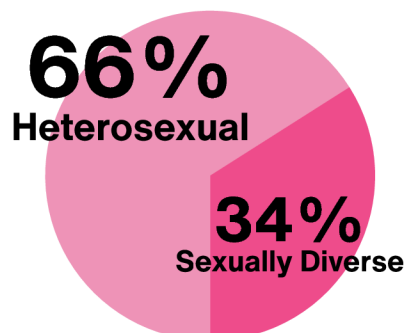
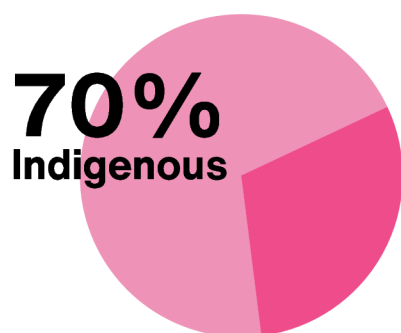
Experiencing IPV in adolescence is associated with adult experiences of IPV and depression.³

Indigenous youth continue to demonstrate tremendous creativity and resilience.

Approaches such as peer-led, art-, and land-based youth programming can be empowering and can support coping, resilience, connectedness, and self-efficacy.⁴



Participant demographics:



Key Findings:



The biggest impact was seen in young women, who showed significantly lower acceptance attitudes toward IPV after attending FOXY Retreats.

IPV attitude scores among young men were not significantly different after attending SMASH Retreats

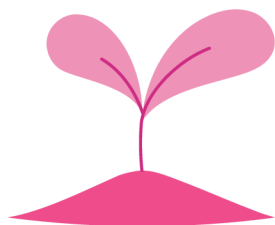
Our research question:

What role can Peer Leader Retreats play in supporting healthy relationship knowledge and skills for Indigenous and Northern young people in the NWT?

How we conducted this research:

- 240 adolescents aged 13-17 attended FOXY/SMASH Peer Leader Retreats
- Retreats included ceremonies, Elder teachings, sharing circles, grief circles, digital storytelling, rattle-making, beading, traditional hand drumming, photography, visual arts, Northern games, sexual and mental health education, journaling, personality mapping, and community leadership projects.
- Participants completed surveys before and after the retreats
- Focus groups were held with 165 individuals (Peer Leaders, Apprentices, and staff Peer Facilitators)

The focus groups highlighted three interconnected levels of healthy relationship promotion and violence prevention emerging



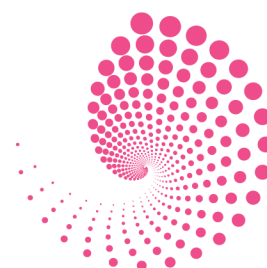
1. Individual Level

Cultivating knowledge, awareness, and skills



2. Interpersonal Level

Learning by seeing and doing in the Peer Leader Retreat environment



3. Community Level

Empowering healthy relationships communally, relationally, and intergenerationally

Discussion

- Retreats were effective in equipping youth with violence prevention and healthy relationship skills using a strengths-based, trauma-informed approach
- Results were gendered and suggest that program aspects may affect young men and women differently

Recommendations

Prioritize Peer Leader Retreat programming that is:



strengths-based



trauma-informed



gender-tailored



culturally relevant

to equip Indigenous and Northern young people with violence prevention and healthy relationship skills and empower their families and communities



Further explore components of effective IPV prevention programming with young men

References

1. Statistics Canada. Brief: Statistical profile of intimate partner violence in Canada. Ottawa; 2022.
2. Statistics Canada. "Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2019." 2021.
3. Lindhorst T, Oxford M. The long-term effects of intimate partner violence on adolescent mothers' depressive symptoms. Soc Sci Med [Internet]. 2008;66(6):1322–33. Available from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953607006326>
4. Gittings L, Malama K, Logie CH, Lys CL, Taylor SB, Mackay KI, et al. "Every day I grew stronger and stronger being there": empowerment through land-and art-based Peer Leader retreats with Indigenous and Northern young people. Int J Circumpolar Health [Internet]. 2022 Dec 31;81(1):2125489. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/22423982.2022.2125489>