

Longitudinal Findings From a Land-Based HIV Prevention Study With Northern and Indigenous Youth in the Northwest Territories, Canada



Article Link

What we know from other research:

Northern and Indigenous youth in Canada are disproportionately affected by sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV.¹



These challenges are shaped by social and health inequities caused by historical and ongoing colonialism.²

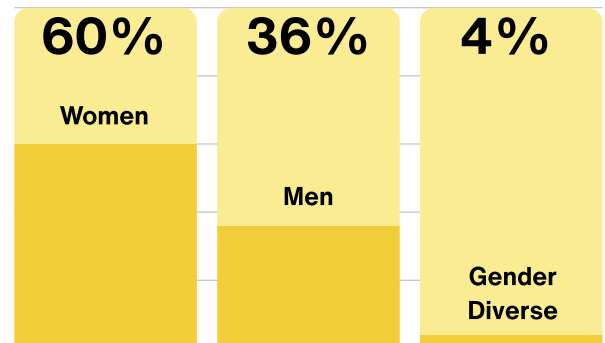
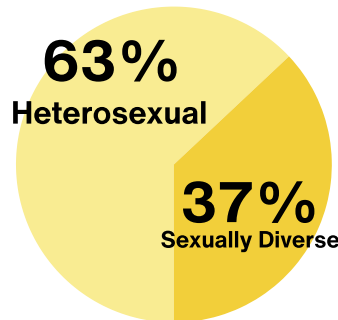
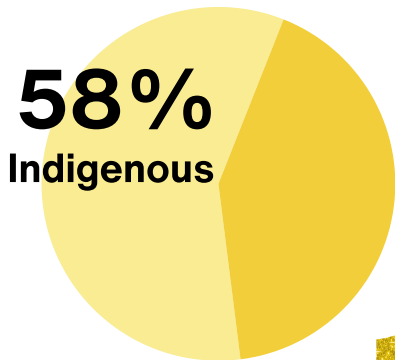


Safer sex self-efficacy (SSSE) and condom use self-efficacy (CUSE) are associated with increased condom use and other preventive practices.³

There is growing support for centering Indigenous ways of knowing in promoting the health and wellbeing of Indigenous youth.⁴

Land- and arts-based approaches have been shown to strengthen young peoples' connections to community, culture, and self.⁵

Participant demographics:



Average age: **15**

52% attending a Retreat for the first time

48% attended one or more times before

Our research question:

What changes in HIV knowledge, safer sex efficacy, and condom use self-efficacy are observed following Peer Leader Retreat participation among Northern and Indigenous youth in the NWT aged 13-17?

How we conducted this research:

- FOXY (Fostering Open eXpression among Youth) held one-week youth Peer Leader Retreats (PLRs) focused on HIV prevention and leadership, using Land- and arts-based approaches.
- 122 participants aged 13-17 completed surveys before, immediately after, and six months after Retreats to explore changes in safer sex self-efficacy [SSSE], condom use self-efficacy [CUSE], and HIV knowledge.

Key findings:

Overall, HIV knowledge scores and SSSE scores increased after the Retreat and continued to increase six months later

Overall, CUSE scores improved after the Retreat and stayed the same six months later

Score increases were smaller in boys, non-Indigenous participants, and sexually diverse participants.

Discussion

- Culturally relevant, community-driven peer leadership interventions have the potential to promote sexual health and prevent HIV for Northern and Indigenous NWT youth
- FOXY's PLRs using Land- and arts-based approaches may prepare Northern and Indigenous youth with practical, actionable knowledge to support their sexual health
- The improvements noted on the six-month follow-up surveys suggest that this type of programming is feasible for youth-focused programming in remote and Northern regions
- Not all participants appeared to benefit equally from PLRs. Boys, non-Indigenous, and sexually diverse participants had smaller improvements after Retreats

Recommendations



Use Land- and arts-based approaches in HIV prevention strategies for Northern and Indigenous youth



Prioritize Indigenous leadership, youth engagement, and culturally relevant content when designing sexual health initiatives



Use tailored strategies that consider gender norms, cultural expectations, and lived experiences in future PLRs



Continue engaging with youth through follow-up or refresher trainings

References

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