

Examining land-based and Indigenous approaches to HIV and STI prevention with Northern and Indigenous Young Women in the Northwest Territories

Candice Lys, Carmen H. Logie, Shira Taylor, Hiedi Yardley, Kayley Inuksuk Mackay, Nancy MacNeill, Laura Warren





Background and Research Questions

- ▶ Land-based and Indigenous approaches are important for decolonization and have been associated with wellness¹
- ▶ The Northwest Territories (NWT) is home to among Canada's highest rates of sexually transmitted infections (STI)
 - ▶ In 2015, gonorrhea rates were 14 times higher in NWT than in all of Canada²
 - ▶ In 2015, chlamydia rates were 6 times higher in NWT than in all of Canada³
- ▶ Nationally, rates of HIV are higher among Indigenous populations than non-Indigenous populations⁴
- ▶ This inequity is rooted in intergenerational trauma and effects of colonization⁵
- ▶ Gap in research: potential for land-based approaches for HIV prevention
- ▶ Study aim: to evaluate whether Indigenous and Northern young women demonstrated increased leadership, emotional empowerment, HIV knowledge, and safer sex self-efficacy following a land-based retreat in comparison to pre-retreat levels

Methods and Analysis

- ▶ Methods
 - ▶ 10-day land-based peer leadership training at a fly-in only location in the NWT
 - ▶ Training content included daily arts-based and Indigenous knowledge practices (including drumming, smudging, beading, working with Elders, hiking), combined with leadership training and HIV information
- ▶ Population and sample size:
 - ▶ Young women aged 13-17 from across the NWT were purposively invited to apply for the retreat
 - ▶ 42 participants, mean age 14.0 years (SD=1.1; range: 13-17), most (n=33, 78.6%) Indigenous; two-thirds from smaller communities (n=28, 66.7%), one-third (n=14; 33.3%) from Yellowknife, the capital city
- ▶ Analysis:
 - ▶ Univariate analyses to test associations between sociodemographic variables and pre-retreat total scores across scale scores
 - ▶ Pre- and post-retreat differences compared using paired sample t-tests

Results and Implications

- ▶ Statistically significant increases ($p < 0.05$) in post-retreat scores vs. pre-retreat scores were reported across variables, including:
 - ▶ Increased HIV knowledge (6.95 units, $p < 0.00001$)
 - ▶ Leadership skills (3.08 units, $p = 0.03$)
 - ▶ Emotional empowerment (5.13 units, $p = 0.0004$)
 - ▶ Safer sex self-efficacy (0.87 units, $p = 0.001$)
- ▶ Findings suggest that land-based and Indigenous approaches hold promise for nurturing protective factors to reduce HIV vulnerabilities through building HIV knowledge, leadership, empowerment, and safer sex self-efficacy

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Contact info:
Candice Lys, PhD, M.S.M.
Co-Founder & Executive Director, FOXY/SMASH
candice@arcticfoxy.com

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