

CAAN: Keeping Our Fires Project

The Native Friendship Centre of Montreal



Native Friendship Centre of Montreal
Centre d'Amitié Autochtone de Montréal



Production of this booklet has been made possible through funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the view of the Public Health Agency.



Native Friendship Centre of Montreal (NFCM)
×
Communities, Alliances, and Networks (CAAN)



- The NFCM is a non-profit, non-sectarian, autonomous community development agency established in 1974 whose principal mission is to foster growth and nurture wellness by honouring culture and providing a place of belonging for First Nation, Inuit, and Métis community members living within Tiohtià:ke (Montreal).

- CAAN was established in 1997 and is an incorporated non-profit organization that has established its own research and program teams, providing a national forum for Indigenous Peoples to holistically address HIV/AIDS, HCV, STBBIs, TB, mental health, ageing, and related co-morbidity issues.

- CAAN is spearheading a project named *"Keeping Our Fires,"* which harnesses Indigenous perspectives on health to pinpoint community challenges and readiness for change, crafting enduring strategies to enhance community well-being. The NFCM was selected due to its alignment with the shared values. The NFCM project team comprises of Drayton Gilbert, Lucie Catherine-Ouimet, Ireland Moore, Hana Keightley, and Leona Shecanapish.

- The NFCM and other participating organizations are working toward enhancing their capacity to provide culturally safe and stigma-free STBBI testing, prevention, treatment, and ongoing care and services.



NFCMxCAAN: Keeping Our Fires Timeline

Upon completion of the KoF Community Readiness Model training, interviews were conducted within NFCM's community to gauge communal knowledge of HIV/AIDS, HCV, STI, STBBIs and screening.

All participants Nation-wide came together virtually in February 2024 hosted by CAAN and the Canadian Aids Society (CAS).

**KoF Community
Readiness Training
Day 1 & Day 2**

**Community Readiness
Assessment Interviews
& Scoring Consensus**

**Keeping Our Fires
Gathering #1
in Vancouver**

**Keeping Our
Fires Gathering
#2 Virtual**

Implementation

The NFCM participants and involved organizations convened for virtual training hosted by CAAN on the Community Readiness Model.

All participants Nation-wide came together in Vancouver November 2023 hosted by CAAN.

After completing and applying the insights gained from the KoF Gatherings and Community Assessment, the NFCM is implementing long-term solutions to bolster knowledge to further support our community.



Native Friendship Centre
of Montreal (NFCM)

Community Readiness Assessment and Scoring Consensus

1. Several interviews were conducted in the NFCM community to gauge community knowledge of HIV/AIDS, HCV, STI, STBBIs and screening accessibility. These results were taken and scored.

2. The biggest areas of improvement are to implement access to services and to provide resources in a culturally respected approach to increase community knowledge and conversations.

3. Our findings highlighted the necessity to prioritize community awareness of the issue and develop resources. Consequently, we have taken steps within the NFCM to raise community awareness and improve screening accessibility, with particular emphasis on integrating Indigenous culture.

4. The responses uncovered by our interviewees, based on the questions derived from the Community Readiness Model, highlighted certain aspects within our community, they are as follows:



Native Friendship Centre of Montreal (NFCM) Community Voices

Q Using a scale from 1 to 10, how much of a concern is this issue to the leadership in your community?

A 4-5, It is - it's dangerous but people don't take it seriously.

Q What are the misconceptions among community members about (issue), e.g., why it occurs, how much it occurs locally, or what the consequences are?

A Community members wouldn't want to attend because they don't have it...there is a stigma, they think that it's a personal attack against them when it's not, it's to help them in the future and to help everyone, I wish I knew more about it anyways.

Q Does the leadership support expanded effort in the community to address this issue?

A Need more testing, advertise about what the dangers are, how you contract it.

Q How much of a priority is addressing this issue to community members?

A This issue should be more discussed.

Q About how many community members would support expanding efforts in the community to address this issue?

A Yes! lots of community members, and they wouldn't be shy about it. They would be more open it, and say oh just in case it happens, and then they won't go crazy fighting about it.



Initiatives within the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal (NFCM)

- **Food and communal gatherings** play a vital role in Indigenous cultures. We have gatherings on Wednesdays at the KAIE:RI:NIKAWERA:KE day center called *“Cultural Night,”* hosted by our KA’WÁHSE street patrol team. These extended evening gatherings provide a space for community members to come together, enjoy traditional drumming sessions, share a communal meal, and often listen to community speakers such as Elders, Community Leaders, or Traditional Healers.

- Lucie Catherine-Ouimet, our resident Indigenous Nurse Practitioner (NP) at the NFCM, has organized testing sessions during our cultural evenings and community dinners, covering a range of tests such as HIV/AIDS, HCV, STI, and STBBIs.

- We’ve introduced on-site screening services ensuring confidentiality and accessibility to overcome healthcare access barriers. Additionally, testing services are available not only during events but also on all operational clinic day.

- Our collaborative full-time Indigenous Health Clinic, established in partnership with Médecins du Monde Canada (MDM) within the NFCM, has produced remarkably successful outcomes for our population. By offering a culturally focused and aware space at the NFCM, it cultivates an environment that recognizes and respects the unique needs and perspectives of Indigenous communities, while also addressing numerous barriers faced by the Indigenous population.

- We also have encouraged employees of Médecins du Monde Canada (MDM) who work in partnership with our centre, Monday to Friday, to help direct patients to come to the centre to our access health-care services at our Indigenous Health Clinic.

- Lastly, our front-line employees at the KAIE:RI:NIKAWERA:KE day center, who work closely with our urban Indigenous population, have taken significant steps to initiate conversations about sexual health and emphasize the importance of getting tested. They are well-versed in how HIV/AIDS, HCV, STI, and STBBIs can be transmitted, and they make a concerted effort to share this knowledge with clients whenever possible.



Continuous Initiatives within the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal (NFCM)



- ✓ Moving forward, the NFCM intends to cultivate long-term care by orchestrating workshops led by community leaders such as Elders and Healers to host intimate gatherings, or sharing circles. These initiatives will facilitate open dialogue amongst our community, creating ongoing conversations and fostering collective collaboration toward finding solutions and offering a culturally safe space.
- ✓ Offer printed materials readily accessible for our community members to sustain the ongoing conversation momentum.
- ✓ Continue to share the accessibility of our Indigenous Health Clinic to our partner organizations, encourage

our partner front-line workers to be conscious of the Indigenous Health Clinic and refer it to Indigenous community members seeking services. Continue offering long-term follow-up care services for medical treatment, peer-led support for diagnosed patients of the Indigenous Health Clinic

- ✓ We will further develop our Cultural Services at the NFCM with the addition of our newly recruited positions: Cultural Community Organizer and Cultural Community Facilitator. These roles will focus on organizing events, workshops, and gatherings for our community.
- ✓ Participate in World's Aids Day 2024, hosted on December 1st since 1988.





Native Friendship Centre of Montreal
Centre d'Amitié Autochtone de Montréal

