

---

# Event Agenda

2025 Circle of Harmony HIV/AIDS Wellness Conference

---

## Tuesday, August 26, 2025

### Registration Open

7:00 AM – 5:00 PM

### Breakfast

7:30 AM – 8:30 AM

### Exhibit Hall Open

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

### Opening Plenary

8:30 AM – 10:30 AM | Location: Grand Ballroom

### "Ceremony first and business later", I'm Indigenous and I'm Ready, the journey of working together.

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM | Location: Grand Ballroom

The I'm Ready Program provides access to HIV self-testing across Canada via mail delivery or local pick-up from community organizations. Launched in June 2021, the program initially faced limited participation from Indigenous peoples. In 2022, REACH Nexus partnered with CAAN Communities, Alliances, and Networks (CAAN) to explore alternative methods to engage Indigenous communities in HIV self-testing. This led to the launch of the "I'm Indigenous and I'm Ready" sub-study, which investigated the impact of HIV on Indigenous populations and examined how self-testing could be integrated with traditional healing practices and ceremonial approaches. By implementing culturally sensitive initiatives, the project has significantly improved the distribution and use of HIV self-testing resources within these communities. This approach not only respects Indigenous traditions but also encourages greater participation in health practices, ultimately aiming to reduce barriers related to HIV testing and improve health outcomes for Indigenous peoples across the land.

### Speakers



**Kristin MacLennan**

Unity Health Toronto



**Angelique Carriere**

Wahkohtowin Project Coordinator | CAAN

### Lunch

12:00 PM – 1:30 PM

### Aging Well with HIV: Weaving Cultural Pathways of Wellness among Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ People

1:45 PM – 3:15 PM | Location: Grand Ballroom

This presentation explores narratives of aging well with HIV among Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ people across the U.S. and Canada. Utilizing a Two-Eyed Seeing framework that weaves Indigenous cultural wisdom with Western research methods, our qualitative study engaged 15 participants aged 35 and older through in-depth life review interviews. Participant narratives reveal that cultural connectedness promoted wellness regarding participants' aging trajectories, including for early acceptance of diagnoses, adherence to antiretroviral treatment, and increased Indigenous cultural generativity (e.g. passing down knowledge to younger generations). By weaving personal stories with community values, the study illustrates how HIV can be reframed as a catalyst for purpose, transformation, and activism. The findings advocate for culturally anchored HIV care that leverages Indigenous pathways of wellness, affirming that deliberate cultural engagement is essential for promoting wellness among Indigenous 2S/LGBTQ+ people living with HIV.

### Speakers



**Chase Bryer**

PhD candidate | Brown University



**Trudie Jackson**

Two-Spirit Transgender Elder | Dine' (Navajo Nation)

### Rez Talk About Sex

3:30 PM – 5:00 PM | Location: Grand Ballroom

### Speaker



**Danielle Brewster**

Director of External Affairs | Women's Health Specialists/Northstate Women's Health Network

---

## Wednesday, August 27, 2025

### Registration Open

7:00 AM – 5:00 PM

### Breakfast

7:30 AM – 8:30 AM

### Exhibit Hall Open

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

### I Ola No Ka Lahui: Decolonizing HIV Care

8:30 AM – 10:30 AM | Location: Grand Ballroom

#### Speaker



**Kekoa Kealoha**

Ryan White Administrative Manager | Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center

### HIV/STI Testing & Harm Reduction Outreach in the Bois Forte Community: Lessons from a Mobile Testing Campaign

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM | Location: Grand Ballroom

The Bois Forte Reservation, located in northeastern Minnesota, is home to the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, a community that faces unique challenges related to testing access and harm reduction services. Harm reduction services are limited on the Bois Forte reservation, with the nearest comprehensive syringe service program being about 60 miles away from the reservation. Moreover, the stigma surrounding HIV remains a barrier to testing and treatment in this community, with people expressing concerns about being recognized by relatives or other community members when seeking services at the Indian Health Board. Native communities continue to experience the burdens of colonization, including health disparities and medical mistrust. The aim of this campaign was to integrate comprehensive HIV/STI testing and education in tandem with harm reduction services through mobile testing efforts to address the needs of the Bois Forte Community.

#### Speakers



**Deon Kirby**

Community Engagement Coordinator | Indigenous Peoples Task Force



**Grace Hernandez**

Program Evaluator | Indigenous Peoples Task Force

### Lunch

12:00 PM – 1:30 PM

### Consensus Workshop: What ways can we support each other or the work during this administration?

1:45 PM – 3:00 PM | Location: Grand Ballroom

#### Speaker



**Savannah Gene**

CHERP Program Director | Albuquerque Area Indian Health Board

### Break

3:00 PM – 3:15 PM

### Syndemic Approach, a way of Weaving Indigenous Perspectives into Evidence-Based Strategies

3:15 PM – 4:30 PM | Location: Grand Ballroom

The social, political, environmental, and cultural realities of HIV inform how we each combat the HIV epidemic in our communities. These realities also play a role in how the HIV epidemic intersects and compounds with other epidemics, making the health of underserved communities worse. By taking a syndemic approach, the HIV workforce can better respond to the holistic health and wellness needs of their community.

This presentation will engage attendees in group discussions around the impact that HIV-related syndemics have on the health outcomes and service delivery for their respective communities. Attendees will reflect on and report the active syndemics in their communities, considering how their programs and agencies can weave their resources (syndemic approach) to enhance their outcomes. This presentation will conclude with reviewing the process for accessing Capacity

Building technical assistance and sharing examples of technical assistance that have successfully been provided for indigenous communities.

#### Speakers



**Joy Mbajah**

Deputy Director, CBA Technical Assistance | Cicatelli Associates Inc (CAI)



**Jennifer Freeman Smith**

Curriculum Development Manager and Senior Trainer | Cicatelli Associates Inc (CAI)

#### Circle of Harmony Awards Dinner

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM | Location: Grand Ballroom

Honorees: Dr. Jonathan Iralu and Kerry Hawk Lessard

---

## Thursday, August 28, 2025

#### Registration Open

7:00 AM – 5:00 PM

#### Breakfast

7:30 AM – 8:30 AM

#### Exhibit Hall Open

8:00 AM – 12:00 PM

#### Facilitated Discussion: 2026 National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

8:30 AM – 9:30 AM | Location: Grand Ballroom

#### Checkout Break

9:30 AM – 10:00 AM

#### Weaving Together Systems: Indigenous Approaches to Care Coordination, Peer Navigation, and Advocacy

10:00 AM – 11:30 AM | Location: Grand Ballroom

Indigenous communities have long understood that healing happens in relationship—within our families, our communities, and our systems of care. This session explores how culturally grounded care coordination, peer navigation, and public health advocacy can advance HIV wellness through Indigenous frameworks of relational accountability and collective care. We will share tools and training modules designed for Community Health Professionals (CHPs) supporting relatives across the HIV syndemic, including culturally adapted education on PrEP, harm reduction, and living well with HIV. These strategies draw from the Indigenous HIV/AIDS Syndemic Strategy and strengthen capacity across Tribal and Urban Indian health systems.

The session will also feature the 2S SupportBoat, a digital care platform designed by and for Two-Spirit, trans, and gender-diverse Indigenous relatives. This initiative weaves digital sovereignty, warmline support, and community-driven advocacy into a responsive and relational model of care. Through shared stories, interactive activities, and community-informed solutions, participants will explore how Indigenous-led systems of support are advancing the goals of the Ending the HIV Epidemic initiative and affirming cultural approaches to HIV wellness.

#### Speakers



**Niki Graham**

Tribal Public Health Consultant | The Raven Collective



**Alicia Edwards**

Contractor | Turtle Island Media Group, LLC

#### Lunch

12:00 PM – 1:30 PM