

# CROSS-CUTTING THEME: WOMEN

## NNADAP RENEWAL NATIONAL FORUM



Sharon Acoose, First Nations University of Canada  
Colleen Anne Dell, University of Saskatchewan

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# WHO KNOWS THE ANSWER?

1. Who is more likely to develop alcohol-related liver disease after a shorter history of use - men or women?
2. Is it true that women are less likely to seek treatment in comparison to men?
3. HIV rates are higher among female injection drug users than males, with disproportionate rates among Aboriginal women. True or false?



## IN GENERAL, WE NEED TO CONSIDER...

- Social attitudes about women and girls affect their substance use
- Pathways to substance use are unique for girls and women
- Health consequences of substance use differ for girls and women in comparison to males
- Specific challenges faced by pregnant women and mothers who use substances
- Trauma, violence and abuse are linked to substance use for girls and women



# MORE SPECIFICALLY, WE NEED TO CONSIDER...

- There is a relationship between historical control and oppression of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and their current disadvantaged position (Monture-Angus 2000; Dua 1999).

***For Aboriginal women:*** This includes, for example, disproportional rates of family violence, sexual harassment, discrimination, low health status and poverty.

- There is a link between traumatic experiences of colonization and problematic substance use (Chaussaneuve, 2007; Shannon, Spittal, & Thomas, 2007).

***For Aboriginal women:*** A 2002 forum on Aboriginal women's health and addictions services in Canada concluded that "little focused attention has been paid to the issue of providing gender-specific support to Aboriginal women with substance use problems" (Poole and Trainor 2000:2). A similar conclusion was reached in a 2009 Forum; there is a need for greater understanding (Public Health Agency of Canada 2009).



# ABORIGINAL WOMEN DRUG USERS IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW: A STUDY OF THE ROLE OF SELF-IDENTITY IN THE HEALING JOURNEY

- Research partnership began in 2005:
  - Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA)
  - University of Saskatchewan
  - National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation (NNAPF)
- Applied Aboriginal methodology and a community-based participatory approach to research
- Mainly First Nations as well as some Métis and Inuit women shared their stories



# THE HEALING JOURNEY

**Identity Transformation**

+

**Cultural Understanding**

=

**The Healing Journey**



## The role of the treatment provider in Aboriginal women's healing from illicit drug abuse

In 2005, a community-based collaborative research project was initiated by the National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation, the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and the University of Saskatchewan. The project examined the role that identity and stigma have in the healing journeys of criminalized Aboriginal women in treatment for illicit drug abuse at National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program centres across the country.



### RE-CLAIM

#### Empathy

- Relay *empathy* for the struggles that women face due to their problematic substance use (for example, loss of custody of their children).

#### Acceptance / Having a non- judgmental attitude

- Be *accepting* and *non-judgmental* about women's past behaviours (for example, women's involvement in prostitution for survival).

#### Inspiration

- Provide *inspiration* by acting as a role model (for example, when appropriate share parts of your own healing journey to show it is possible to gain further education as an adult and secure meaningful employment).

#### Recognition

- *Recognize* the impact of *trauma* in women's healing (ranging from the intergenerational effects of colonialism through to the disproportionate rates of inter-personal violence faced by Aboriginal women).

#### Communication

- Open lines of *communication* for two-way, non-hierarchical dialogue with the women.

#### Care

- Show *care* for the women and passion for your own role as a treatment provider.

#### Link to spirituality

- Support the link to *spirituality* in women's healing through Aboriginal culture as well as any other traditions and teachings with which the women identify.

#### Momentum

- Promote *momentum* in the women's healing journeys; that is, assist the women in *moving toward the future* after *acknowledging the past* (promoting accountability). For example, assist the women in developing healthier relationships and parenting skills. Fostering the women's ties to their communities will help break generational cycles.

# SUMMARY OF GENDER-RELATED THEMES: REGIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- Targeted prevention and treatment for women (BC, AB, MB, SK, Atlantic) (continuum of care)
- Targeted prevention and treatment for women at risk of drinking or using drugs during pregnancy (priority for accessing services, especially if pregnant) (BC, AB)
- Raise political awareness of the situations of women and the effects of colonization and systemic oppression, with specific attention on present day violence (AB, Atlantic))
- Re-profile one NNADAP treatment centre specifically for women (AB)
- Attend to childcare needs for women accessing services (AB)
- Community prevention & aftercare support in varied areas, including financial management, housing, family violence , parenting, (AB, Atlantic)
- Provide gender specific training for NNADAP workers (AB)





## TO CONTACT US:

- **Email:** [fromstilettoptomoccasins@live.com](mailto:fromstilettoptomoccasins@live.com)
- **Website:**  
<http://www.addictionresearchchair.com>  
Click on 'creating knowledge' and then 'national'
- **Phone:** 306 966 5912
- **You tube video:**  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QRb8wA2iHs>

