

# Developing a PrEP Research Agenda Related to Indigenous Peoples in Canada: A Research Planning Exercise

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Feast Centre for  
Indigenous STBBI Research

**OPTIONS LAB**  
Collaboratory in HIV/STI  
treatment and prevention science

## Background

- Limited data suggest that PrEP use in Indigenous communities is low although HIV incidence is significantly higher than in non-Indigenous peoples.
- We sought to identify research priorities related to PrEP and Indigenous peoples in Canada from the perspective of key stakeholders.

## Methods

- We conducted exploratory interviews over Zoom with First Nation, Inuit and Métis community leaders identified through the FEAST Centre for Indigenous STBBI Research and its network of engaged community-based, clinical, academic, and policy-maker stakeholders.
- We used a semi-structured interview guide based on a theoretical framework regarding access to healthcare. Our work was intended as a research planning exercise to determine community priorities.
- Began each interview with a personal introduction in my Ojibwe language.
- Each interview was closed with signifying to the guests that tobacco would be appropriately placed outside to give thanks for their time and the knowledge they shared.

## Results

Ten participants (7 male, 3 female) offered unique perspectives on PrEP from their lived experiences as Indigenous health researchers, cultural facilitators and healthcare providers in ON, BC, QC, MB and NS.

Fourteen themes emerged from the interviews, in three groups.

- Seven themes involved areas of research that have previously been explored in other populations but not exclusively in Indigenous populations, including stigma affecting PrEP usage, optimal methods for knowledge translation about PrEP with Indigenous people, community awareness of HIV status/risk, optimal rollout strategies for PrEP, affordability, wariness of PrEP services, and risks to consider when promoting PrEP.
- Five themes were specifically associated with Indigenous populations, including community knowledge about PrEP/HIV, access to knowledgeable health care professionals in Indigenous communities, the role of Elders in PrEP-related work, Indigenous community champions for PrEP, and the importance of self-efficacy.
- Two themes related to topics for which relevant biomedical knowledge exists but may not have been adequately disseminated in Indigenous communities, including effectiveness of PrEP among women and people who inject drugs.

## Results - Potential Research Questions

From the fourteen themes that emerged from the interviews, three that are specifically associated with Indigenous populations have been selected to illustrate potential research questions:

Theme: Community Knowledge Level of PrEP and HIV

Questions:

- What degree of knowledge do Indigenous people in Canada have about HIV and its modes of transmission?
- What degree of knowledge do Indigenous people in Canada have about PrEP?

Theme: Access to Knowledgeable Health Care Professionals

Questions:

- What are the knowledge, attitudes and practices of healthcare providers serving Indigenous communities regarding PrEP?
- What tools could empower Indigenous people to discuss PrEP with their healthcare providers?

Theme: Elders and Community Champions

Questions:

- Does the involvement of community champions and Elders increase the uptake of PrEP in Indigenous communities?
- What are the best ways community champions and Elders can be involved in the rollout of PrEP?

## Conclusion

Research and knowledge translation on these themes may improve how PrEP usage can be increased in a culturally sensitive way to Indigenous peoples in Canada.

“(PrEP) Should be characterized as a lifesaving drug and we are not treating it like one in Indigenous communities” – quote from participant

**Note:** This work is preliminary in nature and intended as a research planning exercise as opposed to a formal research project; as such, Research Ethics Board approval was not sought out. In keeping with existing principles relating to Indigenous data such as OCAP® and Item 19 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s calls to action for reconciliation, all aspects of this work was conducted in full partnership with relevant Indigenous leaders (FEAST Centre for Indigenous STBBI Research), who own the information collected.



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