

TRANSCENDENCE from STIGMA through ART:

Women* Living with HIV *Show Off*



Women's stories are important lenses to understanding life with HIV, both in popular culture and academia. But they are often missed - or mired in stigma.

Response: Women living with HIV decided to “Show Off” at an arts-based workshop & public art installation, Victoria, B.C.

These women's stories added to archived data from the “HIV In My Day” project - collaboration between academic researchers and community partners that produced a digital archive of 117 oral history interviews with long-term survivors of HIV and their caregivers in B.C.

*We use the term women broadly since we are a group that includes and welcomes women, trans people, and non-binary folks



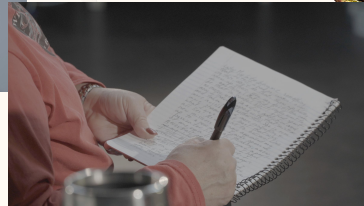
Collaborator reviewing collage materials



ARTS-BASED WORKSHOP & INSTALLATION

8 HIV+ women came together for a full-day arts-based workshop exploring movement, painting, collage, storytelling, stained glass creation, and poetry.

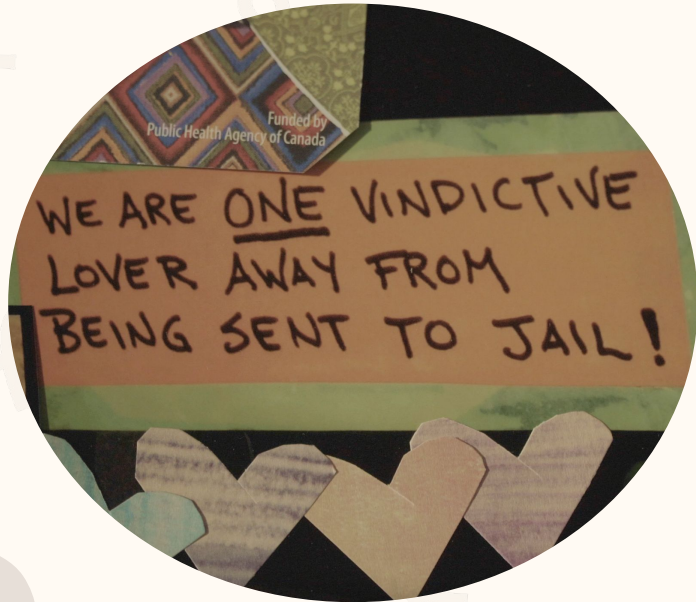
Artistic pieces were then curated into an public interactive art installation at a local theatre space in Victoria.



Installation and workshop augmented 21 women's oral histories (of 117) interviews from the "HIV In My Day" research. Trust was key to creating space for women to fully express their stories through art.

STIGMA: WHY DOES IT PERSIST?

Women's stories of living with HIV are often not shared because of stigma.



Collage created by collaborator

“Like no other ailment - HIV attracts stigma like honey attracts bears.”

- Peggy, co-facilitator & woman living with HIV

“Stigma = Shaming Taunts, Insults, Grievous Mental Abuse”

- Denise, collaborator & woman living with HIV

“Ordinary, intelligent people were ignorant. And it was ignorance, ignorance that was worse than anything I think. Ignorance fed the stigma. And I was ignorant at first.”

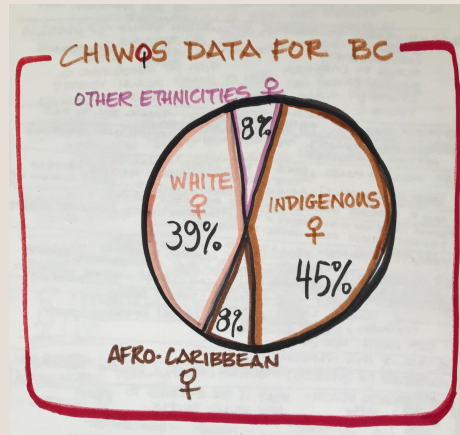
- Laura, from HIV In My Day Interview

“Stigma has made disclosure a can of worms.”

- Group Poem excerpt from arts-based workshop

INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Studies show that Indigenous women are disproportionately impacted by HIV in British Columbia.



Graphic depiction of CHIWOS* data for BC



Stained glass creation by Dawn, collaborator & woman living with HIV



Historic installation of Indigenous peoples involvement in the HIV pandemic by Kecia, collaborator & woman living with HIV

*Canadian HIV Women's Sexual & Reproductive Health Cohort Study

The highlight of the workshop was creating & performing a group poem

The dark in the beginning was the scariest, quietest abyss of secrecy and terror of stigma and death.

It's unpleasant to think on, and I'm not sure if there is a point to considering it, so I won't.

Kicked at my dark until it bled daylight.

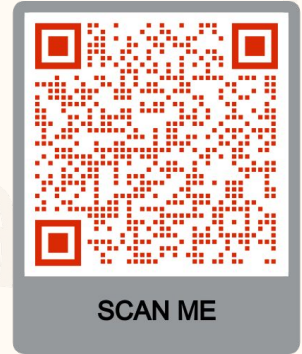
No hope exhausted sod.

My days are darkest at night.

Stigma has made disclosure a can of worms.

My darkness is the Raven's call reminding the death toll.

Contaminated dirty dangerous love and affection



Scan QR Code to
hear Group Poem