



# Living Your Best Life: Understanding what it means to live *well* with HIV



P. Ahluwalia<sup>1</sup>, J. McBane<sup>2,3</sup>, M. Kazemi<sup>2,4</sup>, K. Murzin<sup>1</sup>, **M. Habanyama**<sup>2,5</sup>, T.C. Yates<sup>1</sup>, & J. Brophy<sup>6,7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Realize <sup>2</sup>CIHR Canadian HIV Trials Network <sup>3</sup>The Ottawa Hospital/Ottawa Hospital Research Institute

<sup>4</sup>Women's College Research Institute <sup>5</sup>Canadian Foundation for AIDS Research <sup>6</sup>CHEO <sup>7</sup>University of Ottawa

---

## Acknowledgements:

Thank you to the LYBL speakers, panelists, community consultants and meeting participants for your significant contribution to this work

CAN LhIVE WELL: The CIHR Canadian HIV Trials Network (CTN) Canadian HIV Wellness Research Initiative received funding for this work from The Canadian Institutes of Health Research

# Before the National Dialogue

*Living Your Best Life*



January 2020  
Planning Commences

A partnership is established between Realize and the CTN CAN LhIVE WELL research team



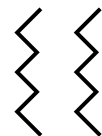
HIV policy needs to plan beyond viral suppression

What are the multi-level factors affecting the well-being of people living with HIV?

The Research Question:  
*What does wellness mean to people living with HIV in Canada?*



COVID-19



Summer 2021  
*Living Your Best Life* goes virtual

Six people living with HIV hired and trained to conduct community consultations to explore the meaning of living well with HIV



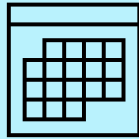
Community consultations engaged *d* five communities of people living with HIV:

Middle-Eastern, East/South/Southeast Asian Men  
Women  
People with experience of drug use and/or sex work  
Youth aged 16-29 years old  
The Francophone community

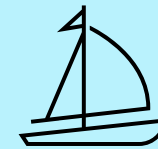
Responses were analyzed and informed the agenda for the National Dialogue

# An Engaging Virtual National Dialogue

Living Your Best Life



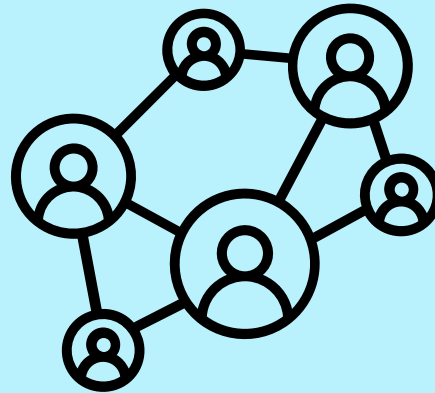
Four sessions  
over one week



Sailboat analogy used to  
facilitate discussions on  
optimal well-being



Approximately 60  
participants/session



Synchronous online  
brainstorming



Speakers, moderated  
panels, facilitated chat,  
live polls

# Six Themes Emerged as Central to Well-being in LYBL



realize FOSTERING POSITIVE CHANGE FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV AND OTHER EPIDEMIC DISEASES

réalise EN MOTIVANT LE CHANGEMENT POUR LES PERSONNES VIVANT AVEC LE VIH ET D'AUTRES MALADIES ÉPIDÉMIQUES

the CTN Canadian HIV Truth Network

le Réseau Réseau canadien pour les virus VIH des BRSC

COVID-19 was frequently referenced across LYBL, both for its direct impact on the health of people living with HIV and because the pandemic illustrated existing structural inequities that limit wellbeing for people living with HIV.

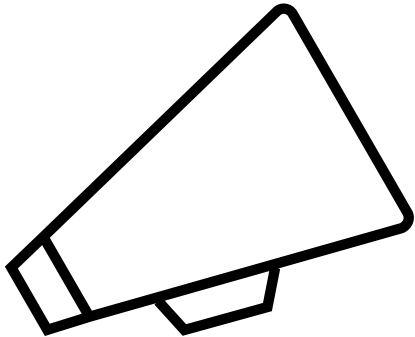
# Calls to Action & Next Steps

## Living Your Best Life



**Move research to action** through practice and policy change

When defining wellness and responding to wellness needs, **involve community meaningfully**, starting with understanding what community wants



**Take an intersectional approach to wellness**, acknowledging that each person embodies multiple social/personal identities and these intersect to impact their wellness. Combat racism and other stigmas to ensure inclusive and equitable spaces and services

**Address the basic needs** (housing, income, food etc.) of people living with HIV as a pre-requisite to optimal well-being

Move beyond a clinical focus on HIV to **address wellness more wholistically**

COVID-19 has provided policy makers, health practitioners, and researchers with an opportunity to consider wellness more wholistically and engage PLWHIV to formulate responses at the individual, community, and structural levels.