

update

December 2021

Friend,

This month: CBRC and more than a dozen Canadian HIV, Hep C, and STBBI community organizations launch a campaign to pressure the federal government to provide more funding; we share preliminary Sex Now data on U=U; and we report back on CBRC's first Two-Spirit Gathering.

THE LATEST

1. CBRC, along with fourteen other community and health-based organizations, [launched a letter writing campaign last week](#) to lobby the Canadian government to **better fund its response to HIV, hepatitis C and STBBIs**. Alarmed by rising HIV infections (up 11% in the past decade), outbreaks of syphilis and gonorrhea, and stagnant federal funding, we are asking the Minister of Health to take three priority actions: increase HIV funding to \$100 million annually; increase national STBBI funding; and make commitments to collaborate with the HIV, hepatitis C and STBBI sector. [Click here](#) to read more about the request and add your name to the petition.
2. Last Wednesday was **World AIDS Day**. We took the opportunity to share some preliminary Sex Now 2021 data on U=U, a highly effective HIV prevention strategy where consistent use of antiretroviral therapy (ART) leads to an undetectable viral load and the inability to pass on the virus. "The U=U campaign has done more than just prevent new HIV infections; it has also had a positive impact on many people's lives," writes Chris Draenos, CBRC's National STBBI Testing and Linkage Implementation Manager. [Find out about](#) how queer and trans men have been impacted by U=U, and what more needs to be done.
3. It'll still be a few weeks before Summit 2021's entire Content Library is up, but for now we have uploaded recordings of the three **Pre-Summit events** and all **poster presentations**. Watch [last year's keynote speakers](#) reflect on the previous twelve months, discover the "HIV in My Day" oral history project, and learn about the [current state of PrEP](#) options and access. Twenty-four [poster presentations](#) have also been posted, exploring topics such as the experiences of young sexual and gender minority men who use crystal meth, to an analysis of public opinion data on the health interventions that people in Canada prefer to fund.

THE READ

In this month's edition of The Read, CBRC's Two-Spirit Program Manager, [Jessy Dame](#), discusses October's **Two-Spirit Day and Gathering** held as part of Summit 2021. "It was an overwhelmingly successful event," says Dame. "Even though it was virtual, you could feel the electricity in the conversations and see the excitement in people's faces." More than 70 Two-Spirit and queer Indigenous people took part in the online activities, and Dame shares some of the key takeaways from the event—from the need for more networking opportunities to the possible creation of a Two-Spirit database.



Photo: Two-Spirit photoshoot in Vancouver, BC. Photo by Toonasa Photography (2021).

OUR COMMUNITY: Lane Bonertz

Originally from Pincher Creek Alberta, **Lane Bonertz** is one of CBRC's Test Now Buddies and a member of the Two-Spirit Program team. Blackfoot, of Piikani (Aapátòhsipikáni) First Nation in southern Alberta, Bonertz grew up in a rural agricultural town where he recognized from a young age the power that comes with support and collaboration within one's community. He continues to be a positive force from his present home in Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal where, as part of his job at CBRC, he provides peer education and counselling to people who may have acquired HIV.

"Many people are looking for someone to support and affirm their choices," he says. "In my role, I try to put their words and needs first, and provide some knowledge or insight that can allow them to self-determine, self-empower, and self-advocate through their own lived experience."

That kind of affirmation is something he has found for himself, working as part of CBRC's Two-Spirit Program. "Growing up, I never felt insecure about who I was as an Indigenous person," he says. "But when I moved to the city, that changed. Suddenly, I didn't have the same networks. But now, for the first time in my work life, I feel like I'm able to connect with others who know exactly where I'm coming from."

Other than his work, Bonertz is a big James Bond fan (Sean Connery is his favourite Bond). He is also super passionate about languages. In addition to speaking English, French, German and some Russian, Bonertz is now part of an online class of students learning Blackfoot from an Elder. "There are few fluent speakers of Blackfoot alive today, and to be a part of that preservation means a lot. I've learned more about myself in the process."



Photo: Lane Bonertz

"What I appreciate most about the Test Now Buddy Program is that it eliminates barriers. You're not speaking to a doctor or a healthcare professional or someone that might come into the conversation with a preconceived judgment or notion about who you are, what you're doing and how you should be doing it."
~Lane Bonertz

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

- Last month, we shared news about **CBRC's new mission**. Read about how our organization has grown to become more [inclusive and responsive](#) to the diversity in the community.
- We also published "[Five Ways Canada's New Government Can Improve Life for Queer and Trans People](#)," identifying **core areas the federal government should prioritize** to strengthen the health of the 2SLGBTQ+ community.
- [A new report](#), which aims to identify **gaps and opportunities in crystal meth harm reduction services and treatment** for GBT2Q people in metro Vancouver and the surrounding areas, was recently published on our website.

CBRC IN THE MEDIA

- Knowledge Exchange and Policy Development Director Michael Kwag [travelled to Ottawa](#) last week for the tabling of **Bill C-4** (photo below), the proposed federal conversion therapy law, which was passed unanimously by the House of Commons on December 1. Data from Sex Now 2019/2020 demonstrates the ongoing impacts of conversion therapy in Canada, and was referenced in the Government of Canada's [press release](#). [Watch the press conference here](#) and read Kwag's comments on the bill in [The Excalibur](#).
- Executive Director Jody Jollimore spoke with [CKPG in Prince George](#) about our new **HIV funding advocacy campaign** on World AIDS Day.
- Jollimore also spoke with [CTV news](#) about the legacy of gbMSM using **off-label medications** to prevent STBBIs in light of recent findings that suggest a meningitis vaccine might actually prevent gonorrhoea. "Because of HIV, it's made gay men acutely sexual-health aware, and therefore we see these pockets of knowledge that happen, and we continue to lead the way in prevention," he says.



Photo (from left to right): lawyer and human rights advocate, Brittany Whalen; author, conversion therapy activist and survivor, Gemma Hickey; Director of Litigation, Department of Justice, Bennett Jensen; Knowledge Exchange and Policy Development Director, Michael Kwag.

COMING UP...

- We are working on getting the full Summit 2021 Content Library up and running for the beginning of the New Year.
- The Creators Project was once again a part of Summit 2021. About a dozen artists were engaged to attend this year's conference and create a piece of content directly influenced by what they've learned. We hope to share their creations in January.

Get Involved

We are seeking Community Advisors for **The Future of PrEP is Now** project to prepare for the arrival of long-acting PrEP in Canada. Advisors assist by providing input on research projects, including how we design the research studies, questionnaires, and reports based on the data. [Click here to learn more.](#)



Community-Based Research Centre (CBRC) promotes the health of people of diverse sexualities and genders through research and intervention development. To learn more visit www.cbrc.net.

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