

The CBRC update

Friend,

In this month's newsletter: new COVID-19 Community Reports, learnings from HIV self-test distribution programs, impacts of newly proposed organ and tissue donation policies on 2S/LGBTQIA+ people, and more.

THE LATEST

1. Seeking to recognize and attend to the diversity of 2S/LGBTQQIA+ communities across Canada, we have prepared a series of **community reports from the Our Health 2022 study**. The latest of these reports capture the experiences of 2S/LGBTQQIA+ [youth](#), [people with disabilities](#), and [trans and nonbinary people](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Previous reports focused on 2S/LGBTQQIA+ [older adults](#), [people of colour](#), [people living in rural areas](#), [people who use substances](#), [newcomers](#), and [Black people](#) in Canada. Stay tuned for more community reports on 2S/LGBTQQIA+ communities!
2. **Our newest community-based research survey, Our Bodies, Our Health, is available both online and in-person at a Pride festival or event near you this summer!** The survey explores different aspects of our communities' sexual and reproductive health, such as gender-affirming care, sexual behaviour & health, sex & pleasure, family planning, abortion, cancer prevention, and sexual violence. Complete the survey online now, or in-person at different events this summer. To take the survey or check out our tour schedule, please visit cbrc.net/ourbodiesourhealth.



Photo: Lane Bonertz

Take the Survey

3. In 2020, HIV self-tests (HIVST) were licensed for use in Canada. HIVST kits allow users to test themselves for HIV using a drop of blood, with results provided in minutes, and without the need for a healthcare provider, making it easier for people to learn their HIV status. In 2022, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) provided a short-term financial investment in community-based HIVST distribution across the country. Having previously led smaller HIVST distribution activities, CBRC leveraged this increased investment to distribute tens of thousands of HIVST kits to 2S/LGBTQIA+ communities across Canada from 2022 to 2024. **Read our latest report, [Good Times Getting Pricked!](#), for learnings from CBRC-led HIV self-test distribution programs. You can also watch the recording of our recent webinar, HIV Self-Testing: Reflections and Wrap-Up, on [CBRC's YouTube channel](#).**

THE READ

2S/LGBTQIA+ people have long experienced discrimination in blood, organ, and tissue donation in Canada. Guest blogger Dr. Murdoch Leeies writes about **the evolution of organ and tissue donation policies, and how newly proposed organ and tissue donation policies will end discrimination for some—but not all—2S/LGBTQIA+ people.** “While these new guidelines will make organ and tissue donation more inclusive of many 2S/LGBTQIA+ people, the policy will still include some stigmatizing elements that impact our communities,” he explains, “For example, donors who have recently used HIV PrEP and/or have had any sexual contact with a person living with HIV in the past 3 months—even if they are undetectable and cannot pass HIV through sex—will continue to have their organs treated as ‘increased risk’ and their tissues rejected.” Read the full blog post [here](#).

OUR COMMUNITY: Finn St. Dennis

Finn St. Dennis (he/they) is a trans-masculine mixed European settler living in Edmonton, Alberta, who has long been dedicated to community-based research. Holding a BA in Anthropology and an MA in Community Engagement, they currently serve as Research and Evaluation Manager at the [Queer and Trans Health Collective](#) (QTHC).

“The organization has grown exponentially since I started,” says Finn, who over the last seven years has seen the organization jump from one full-time employee to nine. “We went through a similar journey to CBRC, in terms of shifting the focus of who we work with. Originally, we were the Edmonton Men’s Health Collective. Earlier in my transition, I didn’t know if there was a place for myself here, as I am not a cis man. I ended up sitting down with a friend on the board and asked if this was going to be an okay place for me to work. He assured me, ‘Absolutely.’”

Since joining the team, Finn has been the main driver for QTHC to further develop their research capacity. “Our research work started with Investigaytors. Through facilitating the Investigaytors program, I developed my own research capacity, along with my graduate studies and mentorship from the folks at CBRC.” From their offices, Finn is currently leading a national study on substance use and harm reduction practices within the 2S/LGBTQIA+ community. “To me, research is a story, and I think it’s important that organizations like QTHC and CBRC are ensuring that the story is being told directly by the community, and it’s community members that are holding these stories and amplifying them as well.”

Finn and the QTHC team have been centrally involved with the current CBRC-led [Our Bodies, Our Health](#) survey, developing some of the survey questions and leading community consultations and focus groups in Alberta. “One of the things that excites me about Our Bodies, Our Health is that it takes a holistic look at sexual and reproductive health. There are portions of our community that are often underrepresented in sexual and reproductive health data, especially queer women. So, I’m really excited to have access to that data and use it to make sure that we’re showing up for community in the ways that they need us.”

You can catch Finn and the Alberta Investigaytors collecting data for Our Bodies, Our Health this summer at pride events in Saskatoon, Lethbridge, Edmonton and Calgary.



Photo: Finn St. Dennis

"It's just such an incredible privilege to be able to work with my community. I feel like my work has deep meaning and purpose."

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

- **June was Indigenous History Month!** Last month, we took some time to celebrate our Two-Spirit Program team, who are making history every day. This team has made important contributions in supporting the health and wellbeing of Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQQIA+ folks across Turtle Island. The team [reflected on last year's Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQQIA+ Celebration and Awareness Day](#), while Jessy Dame, Director of Two-Spirit Health at CBRC, [appeared on CBC's Unreserved](#) to speak about Two-Spirit perspectives in healthcare, and on [APTN National News](#) about APRETUDE being covered under the NIHB program (6:15-9:40). We also released [Representation Matters](#), a report that captures the responses of 332 Two-Spirit and GBTQ+ Indigenous folks from the 2022 Our Health survey, and revisited the impacts of the groundbreaking [Medicine Bundle pilot program](#).
- The "What's Next in the Fight Against Conversion Practices in Canada" webinar was presented to foster awareness and critical discussions on strengthening protections, ensuring accountability, and building a nationwide movement to end conversion practices. Watch a recording of the webinar [here](#).

CBRC in the Media:

- Brook Biggin, Director of Education, Knowledge Mobilization, and Policy at CBRC, spoke to Xtra Magazine about the federal government's refusal to decriminalize HIV. "It's a shame that so many years have passed and that we, as a community, have, in some ways, been relatively silent about this injustice that's facing people living with HIV," he says. Read the full article [here](#).
 - Nathan Lachowsky, Research Director at CBRC, [spoke to CBC](#) about the Our Bodies, Our Health survey, highlighting the lack of data that exists on the sexual and reproductive health needs of 2S/LGBTQIA+ folks in Canada.
 - [Medicine Hat News](#) and [Lethbridge Herald](#) featured the Our Bodies, Our Health survey.
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COMING UP

Registration for Summit 2025: Convergence & Emergence will open soon! Stay tuned via our newsletter and social media channels to be the first to know.

Later this month, we will be looking for participants to pilot our upcoming smoking cessation program, **Smoke Break!** This free, virtual pilot program offers support to 2S/LGBTQIA+ folks in Canada who want to reduce or quit tobacco use. Keep an eye out for the announcement!

GET INVOLVED

1. **Join our Community Advisory Committee to advance social inclusion of 2S/LGBTQIA+ seniors across Metro Vancouver!** We are looking for folks to join the committee to help strengthen community connections, improve access to inclusive services, and guide development of senior-led programs with English-speaking 2S/LGBTQIA+ seniors. For more information and to apply, click [here](#).
2. **We are recruiting participants for a study that aims to identify key priorities for access to long-acting HIV treatments among people living with HIV in British Columbia.** Participation in this study includes a 1-2 hour confidential interview (over Zoom or in-person) to share your experiences with one of our trained community-based researchers, who are fluent in English, French, and Spanish. You will receive \$100 for your participation. If you are interested in participating in this study or for more information, please email lahivtreatment@cbrc.net.
3. **Become a community advisor to support a new research project that will explore the impacts of syphilis testing on 2S/GBTQ men in British Columbia!** As Community Advisors, individuals will play a key role in guiding project activities and will have the opportunity to learn about how mathematical modelling can be used in public health decision making. For more information, click [here](#).

4. Help improve HPV-related cancer care for 2S/LGBTQIA+ communities! We're **recruiting 2S/LGBTQIA+ community members for a Champion Network**, who will provide input, share lived experiences, and help guide the development of culturally relevant resources. **For those who want to contribute but can't commit to ongoing meetings, we are also seeking participants to join a virtual consultation.** Complete [this form](#) to sign up to participate in the Champion Network and/or a project consultation session.
5. **Help pilot a survey about long-acting PrEP options for preventing HIV!** To be eligible, you must identify as a man (cis or trans), nonbinary, or Two-Spirit; identify as gay, bisexual, queer, or non-heterosexual; be HIV negative or have an unknown HIV status; be 15 years of age or older; and be able to complete the survey in English. Participants will receive a \$20 gift card as a thank you for taking up about 30 minutes of your time. If you are interested in being a pilot participant, please email optionslab@unityhealth.to.



*Note: If you prefer to receive communication in either English or French,
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