

The CBRC update

Friend,

In this month's newsletter: Summit 2025 registration, introducing our new Research Director, highlights from a PrEP convening in Montreal, and more.

THE LATEST

1. In response to rising homophobia and transphobia in Canada and around the world, queer, trans, and Two-Spirit people are showing up for each other. When we pool our resources and spheres of influence, we emerge stronger and more able to advance our community's health and well-being. We will explore this and more at **Summit 2025: Convergence & Emergence** from November 20–22. Learn more about this year's theme [here](#), and register for Summit [here](#). Early bird registration is available from now until October 10.
2. **CBRC is proud to announce Dr. Jad Sinno (they/them) as its new Research Director.** Jad joins the team as a Banting Postdoctoral Fellow at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto, with expertise in mixed-methods research, critical social theory, and digital health. As a queer, Shami Arab, and trans-nonbinary scholar, Jad's experience centres health systems for queer and made-marginalized populations. Read more about the announcement [here](#).
3. **Applications to attend this year's Two-Spirit Symposium (November 18–19) are now being accepted.** Part of Summit 2025, the Two-Spirit Symposium is exclusively for Two-Spirit and queer and trans Indigenous folks. This year's event will take place in Tiohtià:ke/Montreal, unceded Indigenous lands of the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) Nation. The Symposium will include ceremony, traditional medicines, motivational mentorship, and interactive community presentations. For full details, click [here](#).
4. For years, many 2S/LGBTQIA+ people have been excluded from donating blood because of a discriminatory and outdated policy from Canadian Blood Services (CBS). After decades of advocacy from 2S/LGBTQIA+ activists and researchers, CBS established a gender-neutral and behaviour-based approach for screening blood donations, and adopted a new, more inclusive donor screening questionnaire in 2022. This means that **more 2S/LGBTQIA+ people are able to donate today since the "blood ban" was first instituted.** However, there are still **important limitations on who can donate and when**, with many of these rules **impacting 2S/LGBTQIA+ people in particular.** [Our latest resource](#) details what you need to know about the rules as they are today.

THE READ

On July 26, CBRC convened community leaders, health system stakeholders, researchers, and public health professionals in Montreal to **address inequities in HIV PrEP access in 2S/GBTQ+ communities across Canada**. While CBRC develops new PrEP mobilization resources for community members and healthcare providers based on the findings, we asked some of the participants to share their reflections on the experience [here](#).



OUR COMMUNITY: Malhar Shah

Malhar Shah (she/her) is CBRC's Data Analyst. A graduate with a BSc in Microbiology and Immunology from the University of British Columbia, Malhar spent time working in wet labs before realizing her heart was in public health research, and went on to study epidemiology at McGill University.

“Public health felt more real and tangible than looking at a protein or cell,” she shares. “I wanted to explore how our abilities to live healthy lives are affected, constrained, and facilitated by different systemic factors—how those factors affect how we move through the world.”

Malhar joined the CBRC team in 2024. Since then, she has been involved in survey programming and cleaning data, as well as producing graphs, tables, and written interpretation of statistical results for reports, publications, and other knowledge products. “I like that I get to work on a very diverse set of topics—I’m always learning something new about different research areas, through data. I just really love getting nerdy about numbers!”

Malhar is especially interested in centring trans women and trans-feminized people in research. “I’m really interested in troubling our preconceptions around biological sex, and how we think about gender and sex, especially when it comes to healthcare.” She is particularly passionate about gender affirming healthcare — “especially in this climate, it’s so politicized. It’s one of the key points that politicians and folks in power are applying pressure on,” she says.

“I want to do right by transfeminine communities, to collect better data and analyze it in ways that are reflective of our experiences.” Malhar stresses the importance of research by and for our communities. “We need to do health research in ways that allow us to advocate for better access to lifesaving care.”

For Malhar, statistics aren’t just a feature of her workplace. She is a huge hockey fan, and her love of statistics meets her love of the sport—she likes to analyze data from the Professional Women’s Hockey League and the National Hockey League. “I love making little graphs and trying to answer questions. I’m always thinking of different methods that I can use to answer them.” Some of her hockey analyses include a statistical exploration of the coaching bump phenomenon in the NHL, and whether or not winning a faceoff contributes to a team’s chances of scoring a goal.

In her spare time, Malhar also enjoys birding, exploring nature, and photographing wildlife. Her favourite bird is the belted kingfisher. “But I call them queenfishers!”



Photo: Malhar Shah

"Health is political. Queer liberation includes getting all the healthcare that we need."

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

- Last month, we published [Elbows up for trans people, too](#). In this piece originally published in [Policy Options](#), former CBRC staff Francesco MacAllister-Caruso writes that asserting our national identity means standing firm on the values that define us, and that **"Canada must not compromise on its leadership on trans rights."**
- In response to Canada's ongoing and regionally-varied syphilis epidemic, CBRC's Advance Alliance developed [a series of provincial Action Plans to address syphilis among 2S/GBTQ+ communities in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia](#). Meanwhile—and specifically in Alberta—**congenital syphilis is on the rise**, and it affects 2S/LGBTQIA+ communities. [Our latest guide](#) outlines what you need to know about the condition, information about testing and prevention, community-specific concerns, and frequently asked questions.
- **We celebrated Two-Spirit pride in August!** Jaylene Tyme, Two-Spirit Research Coordinator at CBRC, performed at [2S GLAM: A Two-Spirit Drag Celebration](#) at the Bill Reid Gallery, which we co-presented. She also performed at [Vancouver Pride's Two-Spirit showcase](#) at Numbers Cabaret. The rest of our Two-Spirit team was also present to share information on the Our Bodies, Our Health survey!
- On August 26, the Honourable Rechie Valdez, Minister of Women and Gender Equality, held an event in Vancouver to mark the third anniversary of the Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan, celebrating the progress that's been made while also recognizing the work still ahead. Michael Kwag, our Executive Director, and Ben Klassen, Research Director [were in attendance](#). CBRC is looking forward to working with Minister Valdez on **advancing the federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan, and strengthening support for 2S/LGBTQIA+ research and health promotion**.

CBRC in the Media:

- CBRC was [featured in IN Magazine](#)! Michael Kwag, our Executive Director, spoke about PrEP and making access to PrEP equitable.
 - Lane Bonertz, Two-Spirit Program Manager at CBRC, [spoke to Jared Monkman on CBC Radio's The Weekender](#) about the Our Bodies, Our Health survey at Pride in the Park in Yellowknife, NT (7:15-9:26).
 - [This article](#) written by frequent CBRC collaborator, Kevin Hurren, in *Xtra Magazine* on queer nightlife and substance use cites Sex Now data.
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COMING UP

We have been piloting our latest harm reduction project, **Smoke Break**, over the

past few weeks—check back next month for its national launch! In the meantime, if you're interested in helping to pilot the program, [sign up here](#).

GET INVOLVED

We are hiring a Content Development Specialist! This role will support the development of high-quality, accessible, and engaging health education and knowledge products that enhance the knowledge and capacity of 2S/LGBTQIA+ people and those who support them. For full details about the role and how to apply, please [click here](#).

Our Knowledge ZeekerS program is recruiting 12-15 Two-Spirit folks with an interest in community-based research! The program aims to equip participants with the awareness and knowledge to navigate research, academic, and community spaces. Participants will gather online over Zoom on a biweekly basis from October 7, 2025– May 12, 2026. Interested? Please email Skye Wilson, Two-Spirit Research Assistant for next steps—skye.wilson@cbrc.net.

CBRC is a partner on SHAPE+, a community-led project focused on centering the voices of 2S/LGBTQQIA+ people in Canada living with chronic pain. [Share your experiences](#) through a short, anonymous survey to help guide the co-development of research questions that truly reflect what matters most to 2S/ LGBTQQIA+ communities living with chronic pain.



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Community Based Research Centre · 808 Nelson St, 1007, Vancouver, BC V6Z2H2, Canada
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