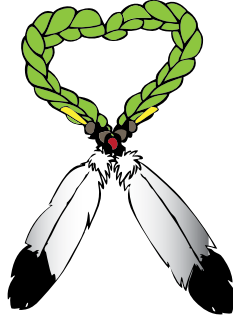


STRONG VOICES

stories of struggle & strength

LIVING WITH HIV





atsimoihkan

Ayo Apistotoki,
Ispomokinnaan:
Nahkayistsiysinnaan,
Nahkaikimotsiyisinaan,
Nahkayikakimahsinnaan,
Nahkokamotohsinnaan,
Nahkawatoyiitaksinnaan.
Ohtokinnaan, Apistotoki;
Kimmis kokosiks,
Iksikimmatapsiya.
Kaamotaani.
Niistawatsimaani
Naapiio'sini.

a prayer

Creator,
Help us:
To listen,
To be kind to one another,
To try hard,
To be honest,
To be Spiritual.
Hear us, Creator;
Have compassion for your children,
They are in need.
Grant us safety.
Help us to raise our families
So that they may live long lives.

contributors

The stories shared in this project are the real-life experiences of four Aboriginal people from the Prairies. We honour the strength, courage, honesty and love that our Storytellers Michelle, Krista, Aaron and Bill have offered to this project and the community.

Special thanks to Cultural Resource Adrian Wolfleg for his wisdom, patience and kindness. This project would not be possible without his participation.

artists:

Grant Smith – Michelle’s Story
Lydia Prince – Krista’s Story
Tank Standing Buffalo – Aaron’s Story
Keegan Starlight – Bill’s Story

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The Strong Voices Program is a project of HIV Community Link. HIV Community Link’s mission is to reduce the harm associated with HIV and hepatitis C for all individuals and communities that we serve.



This project has been funded through the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.



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Second edition

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the medicine wheel

Scattered across the southern plains of Canada and the northern United States lie circles of stones left behind by early Native people. Some of these sacred rock circles resemble a wagon wheel lying on its side - a Medicine Wheel.

Most are made of a central marker surrounded by one or more circles. Lines of radiating stones are sometimes over 25 meters long. Less than an hour's drive from Calgary lays a site older than both England's Stonehenge and the pyramids in Egypt. This Medicine Wheel marks the changing seasons and the phases of the moon with greater accuracy than our current calendar. In the words of retired University of Alberta professor Gordon Freeman "Genius existed on the prairies 5,000 years ago".

Genius indeed. The circle, crossed by an 'X' creating four equal quadrants, is the basis of Medicine Wheel teachings. Each quadrant represents a colour, element, stage of life, state of being, season, power base and personality style. Their interplay provides a series of life lessons.

There are over 600 Aboriginal groups across Canada. These groups speak of over 50 languages and hundreds of dialects. In the same way, there are differences in the flow and traits of the four quadrants and the circle itself. The teachings shared here are Alberta plains version.

Beginning with the East, the four aspects of self are the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. All are present in every part of our life, though in different degrees.

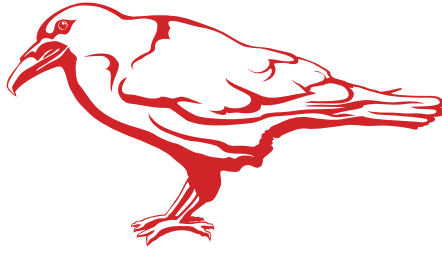
We start in the East with birth and childhood. We know children are gifts from the Creator, are blessed spiritually, are quick to learn and bring strong emotions. It is their Physical aspect however, for growth and development that categorize this aspect.

The South is the youth aspect. Youth actively seek belonging and Emotional connections through groups, peers and relationships.

In the West we find adults. Adults intellectualize, thinking and planning ahead. The Mental aspect includes planning, saving, organizing and budgeting.

The North is the stage of our seniors. Using their collective experience and knowledge gained, they weigh their decisions on the basis of a more Spiritual state of being.

These aspects of self are gifts for managing ourselves. They are also gifts to be used as a power base. Journey with us through the lives of four remarkable individuals who have not only experienced great struggle and sorrow, but who have come through those events as survivors and role models for their families and communities.



*We start in the East with birth and childhood.
We know children are gifts from the Creator, are blessed
spiritually, are quick to learn and bring strong emotions.
It is their Physical aspect however, for growth and
development that categorize this aspect.*



MICHELLE'S STORY
ARTWORK BY GRANT SMITH

MY MOTHER AND GRANDPARENTS ALL
COME FROM RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL.



SO I BECAME A
CHRONIC ADDICT.
IT'S HOW I DEALT
WITH LIFE.



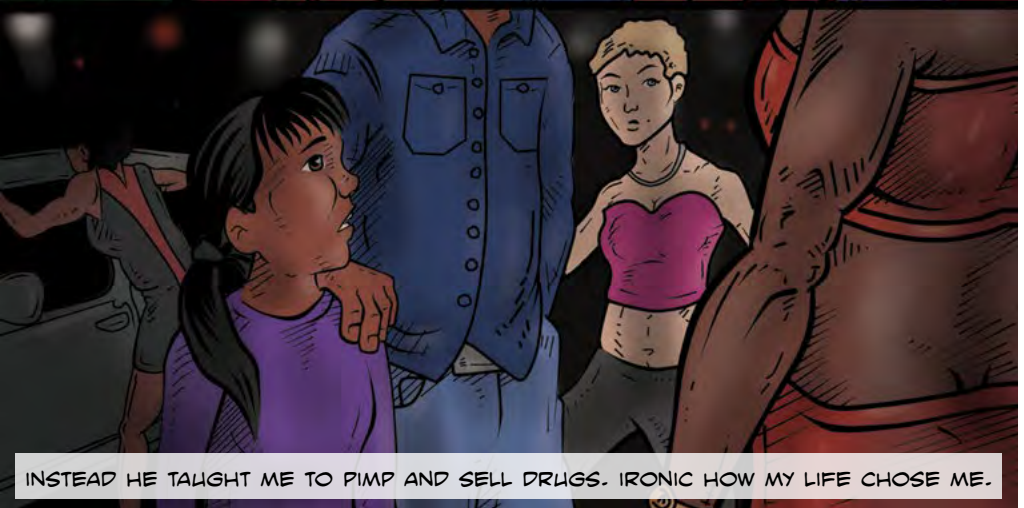
BY THE TIME
I CAME ALONG
MY MOTHER
WAS A CHRONIC
ALCOHOLIC. ALL
I KNEW WAS I
DIDN'T WANT TO
BE LIKE HER.

I WAS 13 WHEN
MY SISTER TRIED
TO PIMP ME.

NO!



MY DAD STOPPED HER



INSTEAD HE TAUGHT ME TO PIMP AND SELL DRUGS. IRONIC HOW MY LIFE CHOSE ME.

AT 13 I FIRST STUCK
A NEEDLE IN MY ARM.



MAYBE IT'D BE DIFFERENT
IF I GREW UP ON A
RESERVE INSTEAD OF
THE CITY? WOULDN'T
HAVE GONE TO HARDCORE
DRUGS RIGHT AWAY?



MAYBE SOME STUFF WOULDN'T
HAVE HAPPENED.

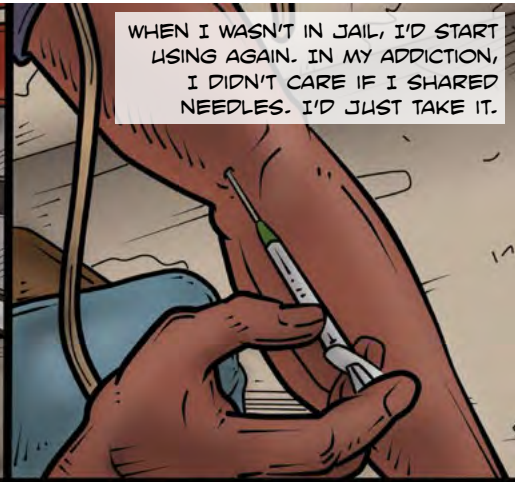
AT 17 I WAS CHARGED
WITH MANSLAUGHTER
FOR KILLING MY MOM'S
ABUSIVE BOYFRIEND.



I WAS IN AND OUT OF
JAIL FOR 14 YEARS.



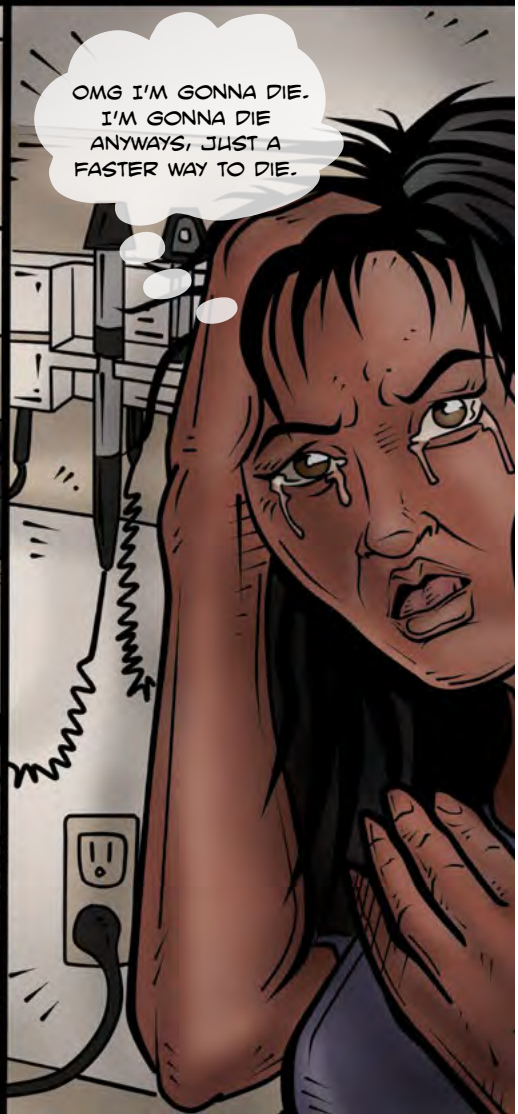
I WISHED FOR FAMILY CONNECTION BUT NEVER HAD IT... MOSTLY BECAUSE OF MY DRUG USE.



WHEN I WASN'T IN JAIL, I'D START USING AGAIN. IN MY ADDICTION, I DIDN'T CARE IF I SHARED NEEDLES. I'D JUST TAKE IT.



AFTER BEING SICK FOR A WHILE I WAS DIAGNOSED HIV POSITIVE. I WAS SO ANGRY.

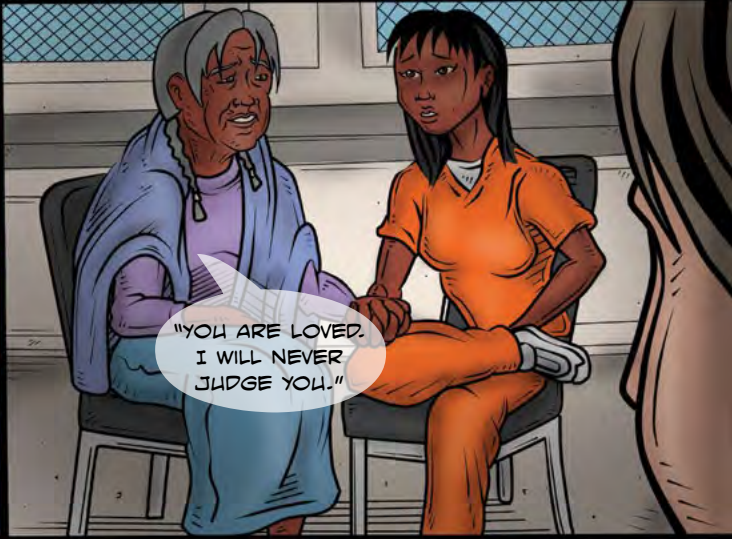


OMG I'M GONNA DIE. I'M GONNA DIE ANYWAYS, JUST A FASTER WAY TO DIE.

IN JAIL I WAS FORCED TO GET CLEAN, TAKE DRUG AWARENESS AND SELF-ESTEEM PROGRAMS.



I MET A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN WHO BECAME MY ELDER. SHE KNEW EVERYTHING AND STILL ACCEPTED ME.




"YOU ARE LOVED.
I WILL NEVER
JUDGE YOU."

SHE RECONNECTED ME WITH OUR TRADITIONAL GIFTS



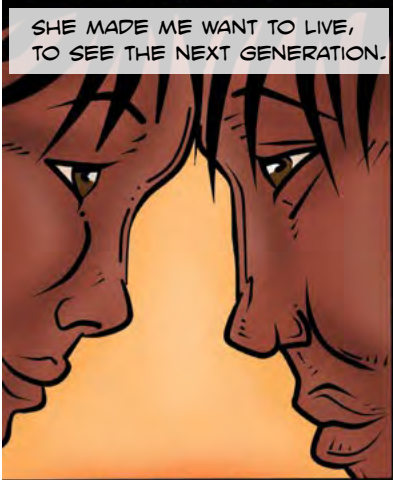
...AND TEACHINGS.



MY THEN 8 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER
SNAPPED ME OUT OF MY SELF-PITY TRIP.




MOM
YOU'RE NOT
GONNA DIE.



SHE MADE ME WANT TO LIVE,
TO SEE THE NEXT GENERATION.



GRANDMA!!!



I LOOK FORWARD TO WATCHING MY
GRAND-CHILDREN GROW UP. LIVING LIFE
TO ITS FULLEST. TODAY I'M VERY SPIRITUAL.
I'VE FOUND MY TRADITIONS AND CULTURE.



MICHELLE'S STORY

Michelle's decision to learn more about living with HIV and the physical effects are in line with the teachings of the **Physical Aspect** of the Medicine Wheel: getting to know yourself and how to help your body's natural healing processes.

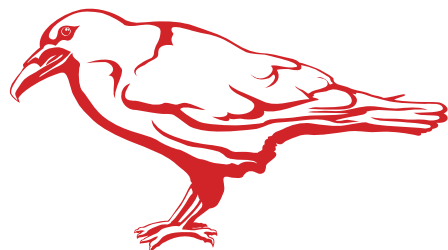
Michelle shares that she grounds herself through Aboriginal teachings and ceremonies like the Sweat Lodge: "I've found my traditions and culture. I smudge and pray every day and I participate in a Sweat Lodge ceremony whenever I can". Michelle says it brought her back to her senses so she can live life to its fullest. She looks forward to watching her grandchildren grow up.

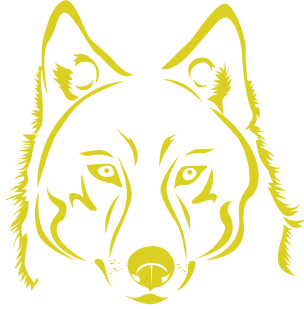
Michelle says she had some side effects when she started her treatment for HIV, which doctors say is not unusual. Sometimes it was so intense that she couldn't work. Today she has a better balance and feels healthy. Michelle says this is possible because: "I'm not using, I don't drink, I'm on my medication, I eat right - I'm OK". Taking more interest in her health has Michelle involved with programs at AIDS Saskatoon and HIV Community Link.

Michelle still faces discrimination. She shares how someone she was trying to build a relationship with is "more ashamed than me". This person asked her: "Why do you tell people about your HIV status?" Michelle's answer: "Because it's important and people need to know".

Michelle says it is important to get tested for HIV because anyone can have it. "Just because you don't look sick doesn't mean you don't have it".

Her advice for someone who has just found out they are HIV positive: "Even though it may seem too late, have hope that everything's going to be OK". For everyone else: "Get tested. Make sure to take care of your body and your health".





*The South is the youth aspect.
Youth actively seek belonging
and Emotional connections through groups,
peers and relationships.*



KRISTA'S STORY
ARTWORK BY LYDIA PRINCE

I WAS IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM FROM A YOUNG AGE



MY FAMILY WAS IMPACTED BY THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS. DRINKING WAS HOW THEY COPEd. FOR ME, IT WAS A GAME OF SURVIVAL...

STARTED WITH DRUGS AND ALCOHOL THE YEAR MY MOM WAS MURDERED. I WAS 12. IT TOTALLY CHANGED MY LIFE. SOMETIMES I WISHED I COULD JUST BE A KID.




IT WASN'T HAPPENING FOR ME. I KEPT PARTYING, BUT I STILL HAD DREAMS...





I WANTED TO BE A LAWYER. WHAT AM I GOING TO DO WITH MY LIFE, THAT DOOR IS SHUT TO ME NOW.




I WAS INTRODUCED TO
HARDCORE DRUGS.



MY BABYDAD CAME HOME.
I THOUGHT I COULD
CHANGE THIS MAN...BUT
ALL HELL WAS UNLEASHED.



I FELT VULNERABLE, TRYING
TO BE THE WOMAN I WAS.
MANAGED TO STAY SOBER
WHILE PREGNANT... BUT THEN
I JUST WENT OVERBOARD IN
DEPRESSION AND ADDICTIONS.



SOBER NEARLY 3
MONTHS WHEN I
LEARNED MY BABIES
WERE TAKEN AWAY.



I TRIED TO KILL MYSELF. HOMELESS,
ALONE, WANDERING IN AGONY.
DRUGS HELPED NUMB MY PAIN.



...HIV POSITIVE.

I WAS ON THE STRAIGHT & NARROW. HEALING BEGAN. I THOUGHT I HAD MY SECOND CHANCE...THEN JUST LIKE THAT I FOUND OUT.



11 YEARS TO THE DAY I LEARNED MY MOM WAS MURDERED...



LUCKILY MY SISTER WAS THERE. I DIDN'T GO BACK TO USING.

A NEW OUTLOOK, A NEW RELATIONSHIP AND A NEW LIFE. WE FOUND OUT I WAS PREGNANT ON VALENTINE'S DAY! BUT UNFORTUNATELY...



IN THE CASE OF ONE NURSE - OLD ATTITUDES.

HOW COULD YOU WANT TO GET PREGNANT?



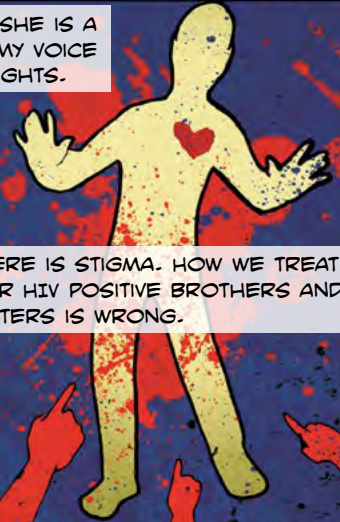
I HELPED EDUCATE MY DR.'S AND NURSES. WITH ACCESS TO TREATMENT AND SUPPORT...

...THE RISK OF HIV PASSING FROM A MOM TO HER BABY IS ONLY 1%



MY CHILD IS HIV NEGATIVE. SHE IS A TRUE BLESSING. I FOUND MY VOICE AND ADVOCATED FOR MY RIGHTS.

THERE IS STIGMA. HOW WE TREAT OUR HIV POSITIVE BROTHERS AND SISTERS IS WRONG.



IMAGINE HOW WE FEEL..



NOT ONE OF US IS INVISIBLE. HIV IS A GREAT TEACHER THAT CAN BRING OUR COMMUNITIES TOGETHER. GET RID OF THE LABELS.

GIVING A HUG, EVEN SAYING "HELLO" AS YOU WALK DOWN THE STREET MAY BE WHAT IS KEEPING THAT PERSON ALIVE.



I HAVE AWOKEN TO THE TRADITIONAL TEACHINGS: MY CHILDREN AND MY FUTURE GENERATIONS DEPEND ON ME. AWOKEN TO BE THE MAMA BEAR.

I'VE DEDICATED MYSELF TO HELPING PREGNANT HIV + ABORIGINAL WOMAN FEEL SAFE AND SUPPORTED THROUGHOUT THEIR PREGNANCY, TO GIVE THEM THE BEST FIGHTING CHANCE POSSIBLE.



MY CHILDREN: THEY FEED ME SO MUCH LOVE AND GOOD ENERGY. EVERY DAY IS A BLESSING...



KRISTA'S STORY

Krista shares how “getting supports for my loved ones and my community empower me to be the woman I am and will continue growing to be”.

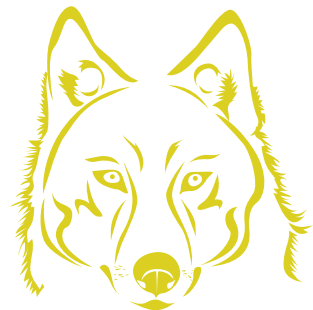
Taking stock of who you are, your relationships, supports and the systems and services in your community are part of the teachings of the second quadrant of the Medicine Wheel: the **Emotion Aspect** of self. There is power and resilience in knowing yourself, knowing your circles and the role you can play in your world. Krista draws on the strength of being a Positive Aboriginal Woman (PAW), educator and activist. Strength enables her to work hard for her children and community

Giving birth and having more children was a desire of Krista’s heart and Creator blessed her. Other PAWS and people in the HIV community helped Krista understand what her rights were so she could self-advocate and take her power back. Sixteen weeks into her pregnancy she was “riding the tails of her doctors to get her started on the meds” to prevent passing HIV to her baby. Finding her voice worked – her children are healthy.

Krista knew choosing not to breast feed was the healthiest choice. She used other ways to have the same bonding with her baby, like regular snuggling and lots of close skin contact. Today Krista is a leader in the creation of a Formula Program in Saskatchewan where HIV positive moms can get formula free of charge.

Today Krista shares with her community, “Educate yourself on your rights. Stand up for yourself and ask for help if you need it.” Something she continues to do through great involvement in the HIV awareness movement, presentations at workshops and conferences and with regional and national Board positions.

Krista started out as a mother who fought to get her children back. Today she is an advocate, educator, activist, researcher and co-author, using her story to share her truth in our larger community “for our children’s children”.





In the West we find adults. Adults intellectualize, thinking and planning ahead. The Mental aspect includes planning, saving, organizing and budgeting.



AARON'S STORY

ARTWORK BY TANK STANDING BUFFALO

I BLEND WELL IN WHATEVER ENVIRONMENT I'M IN.

THAT'S HOW EVERYONE SHOULD BE. WHATEVER SITUATION YOU ARE IN - DEAL WITH IT.



IF YOU'RE GONNA LET IT GET YOU DOWN, SEE YA LATER. IF YOU'RE GONNA DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT, HEY LETS BE FRIENDS.



I SPENT TIME TRAVELING, HITCHHIKING.



HEADING TO VANCOUVER?



WASN'T LONG TILL ONE GUY STARTED CALLING DOWN INDIANS. I'M ONLY HALF, BUT I LOOK NATIVE.



I LOST MY BAG & EVERYTHING I HAD, BUT LUCKY I GOT OUT OF THAT CAR.

I WAS A STREET KID. HANGING OUT, MAKING MONEY, DOING DOPE.

STARTED HANGING OUT WITH A BUDDY WHO DID HEROIN.

WHAT'S THE HARM 'EH?



PEOPLE TOLD ME HE WAS SICK...TO WATCH MYSELF.

FIRST HE DENIED IT, BUT EVENTUALLY HE TOLD ME HE HAD HIV.



WHEN I FOUND OUT I HAD HIV... I WAS JUST SAD, THAT'S ALL I REMEMBER.

MY DRUG USE WENT UP.
I DIDN'T SEE ANY REASON
TO CHANGE.

EVENTUALLY I ENDED UP IN JAIL.



WAG WAG WAG WAG WAG WAG WAG

DON'T WANT HIM AROUND. WHAT IF
HE TOUCHES MY TOOTHBRUSH?
WHAT IF HE SNEEZES?"



I DIDN'T WANT HIV MEDS BECAUSE I
DIDN'T WANT OTHER INMATES TO KNOW.



I WAS A STUCK UP WHITE KID;
PRISON HELPED ME OPEN UP.



I REALIZED THERE ARE COOL
PEOPLE EVERYWHERE.

...AND THAT TRANSFERRED INTO OTHER CHOICES. I STARTED HIV MEDS.



I WANNA LIVE LONGER THAN 30, SO YA LET'S DO IT!!



TODAY I DRAW STRENGTH FROM MY FAMILY & PEOPLE WILLING TO HELP ME. I HELP EDUCATE OTHERS.



I'M NOT DYING ANYTIME SOON. I'LL BE HERE ANOTHER 20 YEARS UNTIL THEY FIND A CURE. I JUST WANNA BE THE FIRST GUY ON THE LIST.



AARON'S STORY

Aaron shares his frustration when people think they can get HIV from touching. “People are very ignorant and it’s only because they aren’t taught”. Aaron says there should be more education and workshops “with coffee and cookies to get people to go”.

Taking stock of who we are, what we have, where we want to be, and what we need to get there are teachings of the **Mental/Intellectual Aspect**. There is power and resilience in knowing yourself, your needs, your supports, your challenges and your resources. Knowing the systems and services in your community goes a long way towards healthier living. There is power in knowledge. This power can be shared to supplement, complement and create a healthier whole.

Aaron believes we shouldn’t worry about detractors, like the stigma around HIV. We shouldn’t allow them to bring us down. Aaron says “everybody has their flaws and their own issues. They don’t feel good about themselves in some way”.

He admits he didn’t know much about HIV/AIDS growing up, being naïve “like people are nowadays”. Aaron shares that he got tested as part of a project in BC. When he found out he was HIV positive at 17, he didn’t know about different services and support groups.

Aaron is blessed that his family supported him from the very beginning. His mom was the first person he called when he found out he was HIV positive. Aaron would tell someone who has just found out they are living with HIV: “there’s so much help out there, so many caring people willing to lend a hand, touch your hand even, to help you out and make you realize it’s not the end of the world”.

Aaron says, “Educating yourself on what is out there is the same as survival. We all have choices”. According to Aaron “Life is not a country song – it can still be a rock song if you want”.





The North is the stage of our seniors. Using their collective experience and knowledge gained, they weigh their decisions on the basis of a more Spiritual state of being.



BILL'S STORY

ARTWORK BY KEEGAN STARLIGHT



THE FIRST TIME I INJECTED DRUGS WAS IN 1971.

HIV WAS UNKNOWN. WE THOUGHT NOTHING OF FIVE OF US SHARING A NEEDLE.



I HAD UNPROTECTED SEX WITH MULTIPLE PARTNERS.



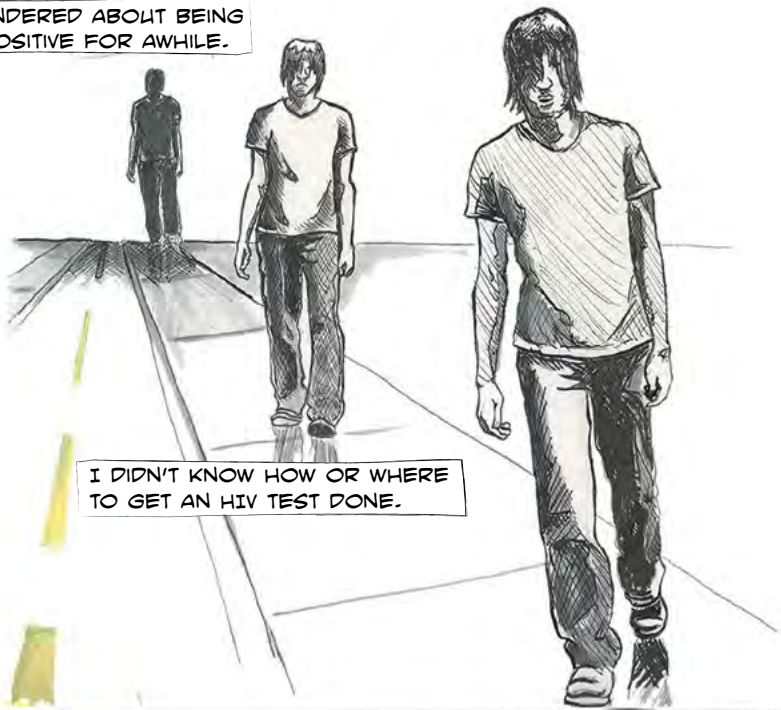
I HAD A RELATIONSHIP WITH A WOMAN, SEX AND SHARED NEEDLES.

I LATER HEARD SHE OVERDOSED.



I DON'T KNOW IF I GAVE HER HIV, OR SHE GAVE IT TO ME... I DON'T KNOW.

I WONDERED ABOUT BEING HIV POSITIVE FOR AWHILE.



I DIDN'T KNOW HOW OR WHERE TO GET AN HIV TEST DONE.

THERE IS A GOOD POSSIBILITY I GOT IT FROM INJECTION DRUG USE.



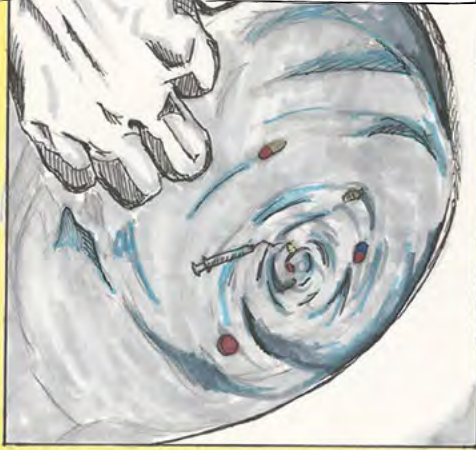
I AM THANKFUL MY WIFE IS HIV NEGATIVE.

WHEN I WAS FIRST DIAGNOSED I WAS SUICIDAL.



SCARED I WOULD GIVE IT TO HER.

I HAD A FEW BUMPS IN THE ROAD STAYING CLEAN, BUT I KNEW IT WAS FOR THE BEST.



I DID UPGRADING AND THEN A SOCIAL WORK DIPLOMA - AT 50 YEARS OLD.



I WORKED IN CHILD WELFARE AND AS AN EMPLOYMENT COUNSELOR.

I'VE HAD FRUSTRATIONS WITH MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS.

YOU DON'T SEEM TO BE LISTENING TO ME.



DOCTOR



HIV POSITIVE

YOU SHOULD HANG YOUR HEAD IN SHAME



THANKFULLY SHE NEVER ATTENDED TO ME AGAIN. I THINK SHE WAS MOVED.

GOOD.

THEY DON'T HAVE THE LIVED EXPERIENCE. I DO, SO I EDUCATED MYSELF.



I JOINED PEER SUPPORT: 1ST AND ONLY ABORIGINAL PERSON THERE.



I STARTED TALKING TO GROUPS OF PEOPLE.



I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU FEEL. I'VE BEEN THERE TOO.

IT MAKES ME HAPPY WHEN I CAN TALK WITH PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY YOUNG PEOPLE.

I JUST NEEDED SOMEONE TO TALK TO. NOW I KNOW I'M NOT ALONE.



WHERE DO I FIND
MY STRENGTH?

MY FAMILY, MY CHILDREN.

I READ BUDDHIST BOOKS.



PRAYERS ARE STRONG.

MY WIFE - AND HER MAINTAINING
AN HIV NEGATIVE STATUS.

LIVING POSITIVE
IS NOT A NEGATIVE.





BILL'S STORY

Bill reads Buddhist teachings finding that it “helps me stay grounded and teaches me to embrace my hurts”. Bill doesn’t consider himself religious, but he embraces the traditional Aboriginal way of life, including prayer, as a basis of daily living.

Knowing that others are there for him, praying for him as he is for them, is the basis of the **Spiritual Aspect** of self. Melding the physical, emotional and mental aspects of self through experience, insight and knowledge yet being able to step back and see the bigger picture and ground yourself through faith.

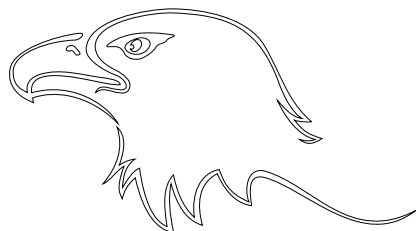
Bill has been living with HIV for 28 years. He didn’t know he was HIV positive for about 10 years. Bill tries to stay healthy and not worry about it too much. Bill says it can sometimes be hard to take his HIV treatment when other health issues are going on, “so I just keep pushing myself to get up and go”. A balance that works - the HIV in his body is well controlled and his immune system is getting stronger.

Bill draws strength and support from his family, especially his wife of 43 years. “All the things she’s done for me...she’s been through a lot”. Although sometimes Bill worries about being a burden, his children check-in every day, phoning to see how he is. Bill is thankful knowing his family is there for him and praying for him. It helps him focus on being healthy.

Bill knows there is not enough awareness about HIV/AIDS in Aboriginal communities. This creates a fire in Bill to educate! To go into the community, to talk to people, to tell his story. He says this work “gave me the strength and courage to get more involved”.

Bill is now involved with the National Aboriginal Council on HIV/AIDS, goes to leadership trainings and conferences across Canada, and continues to educate his community. “I’m still learning and still willing to learn. I’ve met a lot of wonderful people who live healthy lives and are active in the HIV community. They are people who inspire me and I know I’m not alone. Living positive is not negative”.

Bill’s advice: “People need to get tested for HIV. It’s your life. You’re the only one who can control it and take care of it”.



storyteller bio & acknowledgements

The stories shared in this project are the real-life experiences of four Aboriginal people from the Prairies. We honour the strength, courage, honesty and love that each of our Storytellers has offered to this project and the community. Each person is on a unique journey living with HIV. Two of our Storytellers have chosen to share their acknowledgements and personal biographies, while two have chosen to remain anonymous. We respect these choices and send many thanks.

KRISTA SHORE, a 30 year old mother of four, belongs to the Peepeekisis First Nation and has been involved in the HIV movement since her diagnosis in 2007. Krista is currently the Vice Chair of All Nations Hope AIDS Network (ANHAN) and recent Board Secretary of the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN). She has also been the Honorary Mentor to the National Aboriginal Youth Council on HIV and AIDS (NAYCHA), sits on CAAN's Voices of Women (VOW) Standing Committee, and has been actively engaged in indigenizing the HIV Pregnancy Guidelines for HIV+ Positive Women in Canada.



In recent years, Krista has become involved in Community-Based Research, first as a co-researcher on the Visioning Health project, and most recently as a Peer Research Assistant on the Canadian HIV Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health Cohort Study (CHIWOS). Krista is no stranger to the determinants of health and has risen above systematic barriers to be a leader for Positive Aboriginal Women in her community. In 2010, Krista was recognized by the Assembly of First Nations with the Young Eagles Challenge Award for her passion, dedication and commitment to the HIV movement in Canada.

I would like to thank the Creator, Ancestors and My mother Barbara Ann Shore. My father Garry Shore, siblings Tracey, Daniel, and Christopher. My four beautiful children who fuel me with focus and fire to pursue my passions. And my love who blessed me with my beautiful healthy baby girls. I would like to acknowledge the brothers and sisters that have passed on before us. The beautiful PAWS (Positive Aboriginal Women) and brothers in the movement still pounding pavement, as well as our respected allies.

Special thanks to Ron Horsefall, Doris Peltier, Kecia Larkin, and Shari Margoese for all their teachings and guidance through the years and All Nations Hope AIDS Network for presenting me with the opportunity to enter the doorway of healing. The Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network for the opportunity to feed myself the education knowledge I needed at just the right time.

Many Meegwiches

Krista Shore

Rolling Thunder Woman



BILL DANIELS identifies with the Métis People of Canada. Bill often refers to himself as a long term survivor of HIV. He has been living positive for 28 years, 10 of those years he was unaware of his status. Bill says that the good thing about living positive is that his spouse of forty-three years has tested negative all these years.

Bill returned to school at age fifty to get his high school diploma and a diploma in Social Work from Mount Royal College (MRU). He has worked as an employment counselor and as a case-aide in Child Welfare. Bill continues to be active in the Aboriginal communities and in the HIV/AIDS community. Bill has volunteered at HIV Community Link Calgary for several years and joined the Speaker's Network Program. Bill shares his time and skills as an HIV/AIDS Educator for a number of individuals and community groups including youth, service professionals and various Aboriginal groups and organizations. Bill is a human rights activist and a HIV/AIDS activist. Bill is committed to on-going learning and consistently seeks opportunities to broaden his understanding of the myriad of HIV related issues, including treatment and service access, human rights, stigma and prevention strategies. In 2010 Bill was appointed to the National Aboriginal Council on HIV/AIDS (NACHA) as a member of the Métis Caucus.

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Creator for watching over me all of these years. Many thanks to the mid-wife who helped bring me into this world. I never knew your name and had never thought to ask, I no longer have any elders left in my family that I can ask. Thanks to all of my grandmothers and aunts who nurtured me during those early years. To my spouse Marianne I can never express my gratitude for all of your love and caring for these forty- three years. To my children and grandchildren my undying love and thanks to you all. To all of my siblings I apologize for not revealing my status all of these years, I did not want to burden you with my issues, thank you all for your caring.

Special thanks Fox Morin - you were my little brother and at times you were my big brother. You were my mentor, best of all you were always my friend. You will always live on in my memory - Thank You. To the guys in peer support, you know who you are, thank you very much for your wisdom and showing me how to live with this illness. Thanks to all of the frontline workers and the behind the scenes people who make things happen. Thank You Workers everywhere. Thank you Andrea Carter for your inspiration.

*May the Creator bless and keep safe.
Bill Daniels*

HIV/AIDS - Basic Facts

Although we may not hear much about it, HIV is very real in our communities. HIV affects people of any and every gender, age, and culture. Sometimes people don't feel comfortable talking about HIV/AIDS. This makes the risk even greater. We need information to break the stigma, make healthy choices and support those living with HIV.

What is HIV?

HIV means Human Immunodeficiency Virus. It is a very small germ that can be passed from one person to another through direct contact with one of these body fluids:

- Blood
- Semen
- Breast Milk
- Vaginal & Anal Fluids

What does HIV do?

HIV attacks the body's immune system. When the immune system is weak from HIV, it is easier to get sick with dangerous infections and cancers. There is no cure for HIV.

Many people living with HIV do not get sick for many years and do not know they are HIV positive for many years. This is why getting tested is so important.

HIV weakens your body's ability to fight off infections or cancers. If you become very sick with certain infections, this may be called AIDS. AIDS means Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

Three common ways HIV is passed from person to person:

- Condomless sex - vaginal, oral, or anal
- Sharing needles, syringes, and other works for injecting drugs or tattooing
- Mother to child during pregnancy, birth, or breast feeding

Ways HIV is NOT passed from person to person:

- Sharing food or cups
- Hugging & kissing
- Urine
- Saliva
- Toilet seats
- Living with or caring for people

Preventing HIV:

1. Use condoms when having sex. Be sure you and your partner are tested for HIV and don't have other risk activities if you decide to stop using condoms. If you are drinking or using drugs, plan ahead to make healthier choices to protect yourself and your partners.
2. Don't share needles, syringes, or other works for injecting drugs or tattooing. Always use new, sterile equipment every time. See the resources section for information about where you can get free safer injection supplies in your area.
3. Get tested. The test for HIV is a simple and free blood test. You have the right to keep your testing information and result private and confidential. It can take 3 weeks to 3 months after HIV gets in the body before it will show up in a test. This is called the window period.
4. Protect your baby. If you test HIV positive, get treatment and talk to your doctor about breastfeeding.
5. People who are at high risk for HIV can take a medication that works very well to lower the chance of becoming HIV positive. This is called PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis). Get in touch with us or talk to your doctor for more info.

HIV and Pregnancy:

There are medications a woman can take to greatly reduce the risk of passing HIV to her baby. These medications are free.

Talk to your doctor about breastfeeding. It may be safe to breastfeed if your medication is working well.

HIV Treatment:

Medications (HIV treatment) can help people living with HIV lead long and healthy lives. HIV treatment can also stop the virus from being passed to other people. This is called U=U (Undetectable Equals Untransmittable). Talk with your doctor about what it means to be undetectable.

Other Support Services:

Taking care of the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual are all important parts of staying healthy. See Resources for organizations in your area that can help connect you to supports and services!

Calgary Resources:

HIV Community Link

(formerly AIDS Calgary)
#110, 1603 10th Avenue SW Calgary
Phone: (403) 508-2500
or 1-877-440-2437 (toll free)
Information, support, referrals, counselling,
education, outreach. Safer sex and injecting
supplies www.hivcl.org

Calgary STI Clinic

1213-4th Street SW, 5th Floor
Phone: (403) 955-6700
Free and confidential HIV & STI testing
& treatment

Safeworks (Calgary)

Mobile Van Phone : (403) 850-3755
Sheldon Chumir Phone: (403) 801-4453
Free and confidential HIV & Hep C testing
Safer sex and safer injecting supplies

Sexual and Reproductive Health - Clinical Services Calgary

1. East Calgary Health Centre: 4715 8 Avenue SE. Phone: (403) 955-1431
2. Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre: 1213 4 Street SW. Phone: (403) 955-6500
3. South Calgary Health Centre: 31 Sunpark Plaza SE. Phone: (403) 943-9510
4. Sunridge Professional Building: Room 406; 2675 36 Street NE. Phone: 403-944-7666

Free and confidential HIV & STI testing
& treatment (ages 24 and under)

The Alex Youth Health Centre

1318 Centre St. N. Calgary
Phone: (403) 520-6270
www.thealex.ca

The SHARP Foundation (Society Housing AIDS/HIV Restricted Persons)

Phone: (403) 272-2912
Supportive housing
www.thesharpfoundation.com

The Southern Alberta HIV Clinic (SAC)

1213-4th Street SW, Room 3223, 3rd Floor.
Calgary
Phone: (403) 955-6399
HIV treatment & medical services (referral
required)

Calgary Outlink (Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity)

223 12 Avenue SW
Phone: (403) 234-8973 www.calgaryoutlink.ca

Calgary Sexual Health Centre

700, 1509 Centre Street SW
Phone: (403) 283-5580
www.calgarysexualhealth.ca

Alberta Resources:

HIV Community Link Southeastern

Alberta (a program of HIV Community Link)
356 - 2 Street SE, Medicine Hat, AB
Phone: (403) 527-5882

Phone: 1-866-346-8858 (toll free)
turningpoint-ca.org

Lethbridge ARCHES

1206 6 Ave S. Lethbridge, AB
Phone: (403) 328-8186 lethbridgearches.com

Kimamow Atoskanow Foundation

The Silver Sage Healing Centre. R.R.1 Site 1
Comp 111, Onoway, AB
Phone: 1-866-971-SAFE (7233) (toll free)
www.treeofcreation.ca

Shining Mountain Living Community Services

4925 - 46 Street. Red Deer, AB
Phone: (403) 346-9794
www.shiningmountainlcs.ca

HIV West Yellowhead

152 Athabasca Avenue, Hinton, AB
Phone: 1-877-291-8811 (toll free)
hivwestyellowhead.com

Turning Point

4611 - 50th Avenue. Red Deer, AB

HIV North Society

9607 102 St, Grande Prairie, AB
Phone: (780) 538-3388 hivnorth.org

Alberta Resources (cont'd):

Northern Alberta HIV Program

11400 University Avenue, Edmonton, AB
Phone: 1-866-407-8371 (toll free)
HIV treatment & medical services
(referral required)

Living Positive

#33 9912 106 Street NW, Edmonton, AB
Phone: (780) 424-2214
living-positive.net

HIV Edmonton

9702 111 Ave NW Edmonton, AB
Phone: 1-877-388-5742 (toll free)
www.hivedmonton.com

Edmonton STI Clinic

11111 Jasper Ave, Suite 3B20, Main Floor
Edmonton AB
Phone: (780) 342-2300

Kairos House

8815 99 Street, Edmonton AB
Phone: (780) 454-2906

Streetworks

(c/o Boyle Street Community Services)
10116 - 105 Avenue, Edmonton, AB
Phone: 780-424-4106 (ext. 210 or 211)
Van Phone: (780) 990-6641
www.streetworks.ca

Saskatchewan Resources:

AIDS Saskatoon

1143 Avenue F North, Saskatoon SK
601 North Outreach Centre -
101 15th Street East
Toll Free Phone: 1-800-667-6876
www.aidssaskatoon.ca

All Nations Hope AIDS Network

2735 5th Ave. Regina, SK
Phone: 1-877-210-7622 (toll free)
allnationshope.ca

The Persons Living with AIDS Network of Saskatchewan

127C Avenue D N, Saskatoon, SK
Phone: (306) 373-7766, 1-800-226-0944 (toll
free) www.aidsnetworksaskatoon.ca

AIDS Programs South Saskatchewan (APSS)

1325 Albert St, Regina, SK
Phone: (306)924-8420
or 877-210-7623 (toll free)
www.aidsprogramsouthsask.com

STC Health & Family Services Inc.

#200 – 335 Packham Avenue
Saskatoon, SK
Asimakaniseekan Askiy Reserve #102A
Phone: (306) 956-6100 www.sktc.sk.ca

Prince Albert Métis Women's Association

Address 54 10th Street East, Prince Albert, SK
Phone: (306) 763-5356

National Resources

CAAN - Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network

6520 Salish Drive, Vancouver, BC
Phone: (604) 266-7616
or 1-888-285-2226 (toll free)
www.caan.ca

Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network

1240 Bay Street, Suite 600, Toronto, ON
Phone: 1 (416) 595-1666
www.aidslaw.ca

CATIE

505 555 Richmond Street West,
Toronto, ON
Phone: 800-263-1638 (toll free)
www.catie.ca

ASO411

Find HIV and hepatitis C services near you
www.ASO411.ca



Canada