

Sexual Health: Resources for Inuit and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada

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Ajunnginiq Centre

The Ajunnginiq Centre of the National Aboriginal Health Organization shall promote practices that will restore a healthy Inuit lifestyle and improve the health status of Inuit, through research and research dissemination, education and awareness, human resource development, and sharing information on Inuit-specific health policies and practices.

The Ajunnginiq Centre's five main areas of focus are to:

- Improve and promote Inuit health through knowledge-based activities;
- Promote understanding of the health issues affecting Inuit;
- Facilitate and promote research and develop research partnerships;
- Foster participation of Inuit in the delivery of health care; and,
- Affirm and protect Inuit traditional healing practices.

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The Ajunnginiq Centre requests your feedback

This listing of sexual health resources is a 'living document'. From time to time, the Ajunnginiq Centre will add new resources to the listing. If you know of resources that should be included in this listing, please send us the information.

You can provide feedback to the Ajunnginiq Centre through phone, fax or e-mail.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this literature search is to summarize information gathered about sexual and reproductive health and sexual health literacy among Inuit. This search also contains a small listing of sexual health information about other Aboriginal peoples in Canada and the United States, as well as Indigenous peoples.

Sexual health is a priority for Inuit. Sexual identity, sexuality, sexual behaviors, safe sex, sexually transmitted infections, among other issues, are important aspects of sexual health. The Ajunnginiq Centre's literature search aims to provide readers with a listing of some of the research, studies, public health information, and health promotion materials that exist on Inuit, Aboriginal and Indigenous sexual health. The scope of this literature search does not include information related to sexual violence or sexual abuse.

The Ajunnginiq Centre searched the following sources of information:

- Electronic databases including: ERIC, MEDLINE, CINAHL, PAIS, and Canadian Electronic Publications Database.
- Web sites (non-profit and non-governmental organizations and associations, health agencies, private organizations, governments, etc.)
- The University of Manitoba's Aboriginal Health Collection and Information Services, provided by the Neil John Maclean Health Sciences Library (via the Canadian Institutes of Health Research Team in Circumpolar Chronic Disease Prevention).

The materials related specifically to Inuit have been compiled into one section, "Inuit and Sexual Health". Aboriginal, First Nations, Métis and Indigenous information is contained together in the "Aboriginal and Indigenous Sexual Health" section. Each resource in this listing is accompanied by a brief description of its contents. If the resource is available online, the web url is provided. In some cases only the abstract, rather than the full article or report, is available online.

This literature and Web site search was conducted in August 2007.

LISTING OF RESOURCES

Inuit and Sexual Health

Billson, J.M. (2007). *Inuit women: their powerful spirit in a century of change*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield.

Summary:

This book focuses on Inuit women in Nunavut: their traditional roles in Inuit society; traditional Inuit concepts of male and female, family structure, arranged marriages, relationships, and childrearing; gender roles and identity today; women's social life and customs; and some of the social conditions that Inuit women face.

Cole, M. (2004). Youth sexual health in Nunavut: A needs-based survey of knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. *International Journal of Circumpolar Health*, 63 Suppl 2, 270-273.

Summary:

According to study's objectives, this survey "attempts to address the need for culturally specific data on beliefs and behaviours in order to design and implement appropriate public health interventions. The goal of the health promotion booklet that followed the study is to give youth a tool that will promote healthy choices and give non-judgmental information about sexuality." Online Access: [International Journal of Circumpolar Health, 63 Suppl 2](#)

Healey, S. M., Aronson, K. J., Mao, Y., Schlecht, N. F., Mery, L. S., Ferenczy, A., et al. (2001). Oncogenic human papillomavirus infection and cervical lesions in Aboriginal women of Nunavut, Canada. *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*, 28(12), 694-700.

Summary:

"The high rate of cervical cancer among aboriginal women of northern Canada has prompted the search for more aggressive methods to augment Papanicolaou (Pap) screening in this population. Nearly all cervical cancers result from oncogenic human papillomavirus (HPV) infections. This has generated interest for incorporating HPV testing into the current screening program" (from the study's summary).

Online Access: [Sexually Transmitted Diseases, 28\(12\)](#)

Hodgins, S., Peeling, R. W., Dery, S., Bernier, F., LaBrecque, A., Proulx, J. F., et al. (2002). The value of mass screening for chlamydia control in high prevalence communities. *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, 78 Suppl 1, i64-8.

Summary:

This research looks at the rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in remote communities in northern Canada. It also examines the social context around STIs in these communities where there are high rates of gonorrhoea and chlamydial infections. The researchers emphasize the importance and value of mass screening of adults for controlling chlamydia.

Online Access: [Sexually Transmitted Infections, 78 Suppl 1](#)

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada. A proposed Inuit plan of action on HIV/AIDS: Community action for Inuit by Inuit. Ottawa: Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada.

Summary:

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada developed this Inuit action plan on HIV/AIDS through consultations with Inuit living with HIV/AIDS, people working in front-line health and health promotion, and representatives at regional and national Inuit organizations. It calls on regional Inuit organizations to make a five-year financial commitment to “provide the necessary human resources for skills transfer and capacity building to support HIV/AIDS community action work in the regions” (page 3 of the report). Executive summary available in Inuktitut and English.

Online Access: [A proposed Inuit plan of action on HIV/AIDS](#)

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada. (2006). *Action in Inuit communities: What does it take? Sexual Health Symposium Report*. Ottawa: Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada.

Summary:

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada hosted the first-ever Nunavut sexual health symposium in Iqaluit, Nunavut in February 2006, bringing together Inuit leaders and community members. This report captures their discussions about ways to help mobilize communities to address sexual health issues. Report available in Inuktitut and English.

Online Access: [Action in Inuit communities: What does it take?](#)

Steenbeek, A., Tyndall, M., Rothenberg, R., & Sheps, S. (2006). Determinants of sexually transmitted infections among Canadian Inuit adolescent populations. *Public Health Nursing (Boston, Mass.)*, 23(6), 531-534.

Summary:

“The purpose of this case report is to provide an overview of the STI crisis that exists among Canadian Inuit. More specifically, this case study is intended to assist public health nurses working in Inuit communities in understanding how certain determinants (e.g., Westernization, culture) may influence STI transmission among Inuit youth and, how to incorporate these determinants into nursing practice” (from the article’s abstract).

Online Access: [Public Health Nursing, 23 \(6\)](#)

Aboriginal and Indigenous Sexual Health

Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada. (1999). *Aboriginal round table on sexual and reproductive health*. Ottawa: Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada.

Summary:

This report captures the discussions that took place about sexual and reproductive health at an Aboriginal round table, held by the Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada in February 1999.

Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada. (2002). *Finding our way : a sexual and reproductive health sourcebook for Aboriginal communities*. Ottawa: Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada.

Summary:

Written for aboriginal communities, this guide provides educational information on sex, sexual and reproductive health, and hygiene. The Aboriginal Nurses Association collaborated with Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada and researchers and writers working in health promotion to develop this educational guide.

Asetoyer, C. (Ed.). (2003). *Indigenous women's health book, within the sacred circle: reproductive rights, environmental health, traditional herbs and remedies*. Lake Andes, SD: Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center.

Summary:

Focusing on the Indians of North America, this publication provides information on Indian women's health, health and hygiene, reproductive rights, medical care, health services for Indian women in the United States and related topics.

Bennett, M. (2005). *Annotated bibliography of Aboriginal women's health and healing*. Vancouver: Aboriginal Health and Healing Research Group.

Summary:

This annotated bibliography covers a range of Aboriginal women's health and healing research. Some topics related to Aboriginal sexual health include pregnancy, birthing and midwifery. Online Access: [Annotated Bibliography of Aboriginal Women's Health and Healing](#)

Boyle, J. S., Gramling, L. F., & Voda, A. M. (1996). Eskimo women and a menstrual cycle study: Some ethnographic notes. *Health Care for Women International*, 17(4), 331-342.

Summary:

This article looks at the ethnographic data that was collected from indigenous women in Alaska who took part in a menstrual cycle study. Interestingly, the article looks the findings of the menstrual cycle study, plus Eskimo women's experience of *being* studied. They note some cultural conflicts and the researchers' failure to recognize the traditional gender roles in Eskimo society.

Bucharski, D., Reutter, L. I., & Ogilvie, L. D. (2006). "You need to know where we're coming from": Canadian Aboriginal women's perspectives on culturally appropriate HIV counseling and testing. *Health Care for Women International*, 27(8), 723-747.

Summary:

Through individual interviews and a focus group with Aboriginal women in western Canada, researchers gathered perspectives on culturally appropriate HIV counseling and testing. Key themes that emerged from this qualitative study were: Aboriginal women's life experiences that may influence their risk of HIV infection, barriers to testing, and the need for sensitivity towards Aboriginal women's history and their current life experiences. Online Access: [Health Care for Women International, 27\(8\)](#)

Calzavara, L. M., Burchell, A. N., Myers, T., Bullock, S. L., Escobar, M., & Cockerill, R. (1998). Condom use among Aboriginal people in Ontario, Canada. *International Journal of STD & AIDS*, 9(5), 272-279.

Summary:

This article describes the findings of a survey of 658 Aboriginal men and women living in 11 reserve communities in Ontario, Canada on their use of condoms. Based on the survey and an analysis of statistics, it was revealed that the people most likely to use condoms were: under the age of 30, male, did not have a long-term steady sex partner, had more than one sex partner, worried about pregnancy, were knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS, and were not embarrassed to buy condoms.

Online Access: [International Journal of STD & AIDS, 9\(5\)](#)

Clarke, J. N., Friedman, D. B., & Hoffman-Goetz, L. (2005). Canadian Aboriginal people's experiences with HIV/AIDS as portrayed in selected English language Aboriginal media (1996-2000). *Social Science & Medicine* (1982), 60(10), 2169-2180.

Summary:

This paper describes how HIV/AIDS is portrayed in 14 newspapers published between 1996 and 2000 that are geared towards Canadian Aboriginal readers. The results point out there are frequent references to Aboriginal culture and the political and economic position of Aboriginal Canadians when HIV/AIDS is discussed.

Devries, K. M., Free, C., & Jategaonkar, N. (2007). Factors associated with condom use among Aboriginal people: A systematic review. *Canadian Journal of Public Health. Revue canadienne de sante publique*, 98(1), 48-54.

Summary:

The authors conducted a comprehensive review of published and unpublished literature that focused on the factors associated with condom use among Aboriginal people. Their review included a look at the quality of the methodology used in these studies. The article concludes that more primary research about what encourages and prevents Aboriginal people to use condoms is needed "to inform effective condom promotion interventions for Aboriginal communities" (from article's abstract).

Online Access: [Canadian Journal of Public Health, 98\(1\)](#)

Duran, B., & Walters, K. L. (2004). HIV/AIDS prevention in "Indian country": Current practice, indigenist etiology models, and postcolonial approaches to change. *AIDS Education and Prevention: Official Publication of the International Society for AIDS Education*, 16(3), 187-201.

Summary:

As the authors note, many American Indian and Alaska Native communities have developed HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment services, but their efforts have not been well documented in the academic literature. Thus, the authors assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the published literature and discuss the need to “apply an indigenist etiology paradigm to HIV/AIDS risk and protection” (from the article’s abstract).

Online Access: [AIDS Education and Prevention, 16 \(3\)](#)

Fisher, D. G., Fenaughty, A. M., Paschane, D. M., & Cagle, H. H. (2000). Alaska native drug users and sexually transmitted disease: Results of a five-year study. *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research (Online)*, 9(1), 47-57.

Summary:

This five-year study sampled injection drug users and crack cocaine smokers in Anchorage, Alaska. The paper summarizes the results of the authors’ comparison of risk behaviour for sexually transmitted disease infection and HIV among Alaska Natives to non-Natives from this study.

Online Access: [American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research, 9\(1\)](#)

Foley, K., Duran, B., Morris, P., Lucero, J., Jiang, Y., Baxter, B., et al. (2005). Using motivational interviewing to promote HIV testing at an American Indian substance abuse treatment facility. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, 37(3), 321-329.

Summary:

Patients at a inpatient alcohol and drug treatment center attended an HIV prevention educational presentation, followed by one-on-one HIV counseling. In these counseling sessions, motivational interviewing was used to help patients recognize their risk of being HIV-infected and to make a decision to be tested for HIV.

Gilley, B. J. (2006). 'Snag bags': Adapting condoms to community values in native american communities. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 8(6), 559-570.

Summary:

Native peoples have one of the lowest recorded rates of condom use, partially because of their longstanding values about shame and publicly talking about sexuality. However, the researchers note that new ways of culturally integrating messages about safe sex and condoms into Native cultural ideals are very promising.

Online Access: [Culture, Health & Sexuality, 8\(6\)](#)

Hoffman-Goetz, L., Friedman, D. B., & Clarke, J. N. (2005). HIV/AIDS risk factors as portrayed in mass media targeting First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples of Canada. *Journal of Health Communication*, 10(2), 145-162.

Summary:

The purpose of this study was to see how HIV/AIDS is portrayed in newspapers targeting Inuit, First Nations and Metis people in Canada. The authors note that since the rates of HIV/AIDS are higher among Aboriginal Peoples than the general public, making local and community Aboriginal newspapers an important tool for sharing health information.

Online Access: [Journal of Health Communication, 10\(2\)](#)

National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2007). *Aboriginal People and HIV/AIDS: Some facts*. Ottawa: National Aboriginal Health Organization.

Summary:

This fact provides a summary of the known data about HIV and AIDS rates among First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in Canada. It points out that rates of infection among First Nations, Inuit and Métis is unreliable because many Aboriginal people do not get tested.

Online Access: [Aboriginal People and HIV/AIDS](#)

Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center. (1999). *A focus group report examining young Native American women's knowledge of reproductive tract infections*. Lake Andes, SD: Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center.

Summary:

Based on findings of focus groups, this report looks at the level that young Native American women in the Aberdeen area of South Dakota have been educated about common reproductive tract infections.

Online Access: [Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center](#)

Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center. (2003). *Indigenous women's reproductive rights: roundtable report on access to abortion services through the Indian Health Service under the Hyde Amendment*. Lake Andes, SD: Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center.

Summary:

It is extremely difficult for a woman to obtain abortion services in the state of South Dakota. Indian Health Service (IHS) is required by law to provide financial aide in cases of rape, incest, or life endangerment. Since 1981, the IHS has only performed 25 abortions nationwide. This report suggests that a high turnover of physicians at IHS has led to a situation where doctors are not culturally sensitive and Native women are being unfairly assessed and being refused necessary abortions.

Online Access: [Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center](#)

Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center. (2001). *SisterSong native women's reproductive health and rights roundtable: a report on moving forward the native women's rights agenda*. Lake Andes, SD: Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center.

Summary:

This roundtable report was developed by the Native American women's branch of the ethnic collective group called "SisterSong". The report includes recommendations on how to implement Native American women's right to education, knowledge, and policy development on reproductive health.

Online Access: [Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center](#)

Oman, R. F., Vesely, S. K., Aspy, C. B., Tolma, E., Rodine, S., Marshall, L., et al. (2006). Youth assets and sexual abstinence in Native American youth. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 17(4), 775-788.

Summary:

Native American youth, aged 15-19, are more likely to have had sexual intercourse, compared with youth of other races and ethnicities in the United States. This places them at greater risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases or having unplanned pregnancies. The study's purpose was to look at "the relationships among protective factors and sexual intercourse in Native American youth" (from the article's abstract).

Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres. (2002). *Tenuous connections: urban Aboriginal youth sexual health & pregnancy*. Toronto: Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres.

Summary:

The Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC) carried out this study to help policy makers to develop programs that promote healthy sexuality among Aboriginal youth. The OFIFC discovered that alcohol and drugs play a major role in the high rates of teen pregnancy. “The study points out that sex education has essentially been ineffective, as more than 50% of the 340 research participants reported little to no use of contraceptives” (from the article’s abstract).

Online Access: [Tenuous connections: urban Aboriginal youth sexual health & pregnancy](#)

Pelletier, C & Thibault, F. (1998). *La sexualite dans le cercle de la vie*. Montréal: Femmes autochtones du Québec.

Summary:

Published by the Quebec Native Women, this report focuses on different aspects of sexuality and sexual health. Topics include sex education, healthy sexuality, sexual identity, self-esteem, Aboriginal women’s attitudes towards sexual health, and the affects of residential school on Native sexuality.

Speier, T. L. (2001). Community well being and infectious diseases among Alaska Native communities in the Chugach region. *International Journal of Circumpolar Health*, 60(4), 659-675.

Summary:

This study looked how the Native people of the Chugach Region of Alaska perceive their communities’ health, especially around infectious diseases. Through focus groups in seven communities, the researchers asked community members about health, well-being and their knowledge of infectious diseases such as AIDS.

Steenbeek, A. (2004). Empowering health promotion: A holistic approach in preventing sexually transmitted infections among First Nations and Inuit adolescents in Canada. *Journal of Holistic Nursing: Official Journal of the American Holistic Nurses’ Association*, 22(3), 254-266.

Summary:

Gonorrhea, Chlamydia and other sexually transmitted infections are a major health concern for

First Nations and Inuit youth in Canada. The author notes, “structure and content of health service programs are crucial considerations in STI prevention because even well-constructed and carefully implemented programs may have very little impact on Aboriginal youth if these programs are not culturally sensitive and specific to individual adolescent’s needs” (from the article’s abstract).

Online Access: [Journal of Holistic Nursing, 22\(3\)](#)

Thurman, P. J., Vernon, I. S., & Plested, B. (2007). Advancing HIV/AIDS prevention among American Indians through capacity building and the community readiness model. *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice, Suppl, S49-54.*

Summary:

While prevention efforts on HIV/AIDS has had challenges in the last 25 years, the authors note that it works – and works best when it takes into account the culture and nature of the community its targeting. An important aspect is building the community’s capacity to do its own prevention work. The authors present the ‘community readiness model’, which has been successful in building community capacity.

Online Access: [Journal of Public Health Management and Practice, Suppl, S49-54](#)

Web Sites and Online Sources

- **Aboriginal Health Collection and Information Services at the University of Manitoba**

The library provides links to Inuit and Aboriginal health resources, including items available in Inuktitut.

www.umanitoba.ca/libraries/units/health/aboriginal/index.html

- **Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network**

www.caan.ca

- LinkUp Connexion – an Aboriginal online HIV/AIDS information network.
www.linkup-connexion.ca
- Youth site – a branch of the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network’s Web site that is devoted entirely to Aboriginal youth.
www.caan.ca/youth

- **Irnisuksiiniq - Inuit Midwifery Network**

The Ajunginiq (Inuit) Centre at the National Aboriginal Health Organization developed this network and accompanying Web site in May 2006. Through a listserv and the Web site, it shares health promotion materials, research, reports, videos, training information,

news clips, and traditional knowledge on Inuit midwifery, pregnancy, birthing and infant care. Web site and resources are available in Inuktitut, English and French.
www.inuitmidwifery.ca

- **Nunavut Department of Health and Social Services**

- Fact sheets on communicable diseases, including “What is chlamydia?”, “What do you know about herpes?”, “What is HIV?”, and “What is syphilis?” are available in Inuktitut, English and French.

www.gov.nu.ca/health/cmoh.shtml

- Comparable health indicators for Nunavut

www.gov.nu.ca/health/hir.shtml

- **Nunavut Arctic College – Interviewing Inuit Elders series**

- Volume 3, “Childrearing Practices” provides Inuit elders’ perspectives on pregnancy, naming children, nutrition, and infant care. Available in Inuktitut and English.

<http://nac.nu.ca/OnlineBookSite/vol3/introduction.html>

- **Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada**

www.pauktuutit.ca

- Sexual Health, HIV/AIDS, and Hepatitis C – a key area for Pauktuutit is women’s sexual health. This section of the Web site provides a significant number of fact sheets, brochures and other resources on sexually transmitted infections and sexual health, available in several Inuktitut dialects and English. Topics include the AIDS cocktail, HIV treatment issues among women, tuberculosis and HIV, among others.

www.pauktuutit.ca/hiv/main.html

