

Leading an Extraordinary Life:
Wise Practices for an HIV prevention campaign with
Two-Spirit men



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**Prepared for *Two-Spirited People of the First Nations*
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Executive Summary

While Two-Spirit men possess strong and accurate knowledge of the various modes of HIV infection, not all members of the culture consistently practice safer sex. It is a mistake to think that if you provide people with enough factual information about HIV, they will automatically change their behaviours. Behaviour change is also contingent upon the elimination of social and structural barriers that obstruct people's ability to adopt safer sex behaviours.

This study identifies the unique and complex barriers that hinder 2-Spirit men from transforming their knowledge of HIV into the adoption of consistent safer sex behaviours. The critical findings are that Two-Spirit men have lived lives of family and community shaming, estrangement, and abuse, caused in large part by Aboriginal community homophobia. These experiences have greatly diminished Two-Spirit men's self-esteem. An individual's self-esteem is directly linked to their ability to change risky sexual behaviour. In other words, low self-esteem and Aboriginal homophobia are fundamental barriers to Two-Spirit men's adoption of safer sex behaviours. The study asked: how can social marketing tools be applied to eliminate these barriers?

In the second component of this study, the consultant presented a Powerpoint© presentation of a cross-sectional sample of HIV/AIDS prevention posters to focus groups of Two-Spirit men across Canada. The emphasis was to engage the focus groups in a consumer-centered, collaborative problem solving process reliant on their frontline expertise and experiences. The results are a series of recommendations for new social marketing strategies designed to eliminate barriers to Two-Spirit men's adoption of safer sex behaviours.

The study includes a large historical chapter that documents the fact that Two-Spirit people were widely accepted, dignified, and led "an extraordinary life" in traditional times. It identifies how colonizers applied calculated methods to instill homophobia in Aboriginal communities and destroy the dignity and respect of Two-Spirit people. Today, Aboriginal community re-acceptance of Two-Spirit people is the most concrete incentive for Two-Spirit men to adopt safer sex behaviours

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Leading an Extraordinary Life: **Wise Practices for an HIV prevention campaign with Two-Spirit men**

1 Discussion of the problem

1.1 The research problem

Two-Spirit people are special. They are neither male nor female, but represent an alternative indigenous gender and sexual identity in which they embody the co-existence of male and female spirits.¹ The Two-Spirit identity does not match the western concepts of gay, lesbian, or bisexual, nor does their cultural history or personal life histories.

Health Canada studies and *2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations'* frontline knowledge show that in spite of 20 years of information campaigns about HIV, the virus continues to spread in the Two-Spirit men's community.² The HIV infection rate is reaching a level where it threatens the cultural survival of Two-Spirit men's unique indigenous gender, culture, and knowledge.³

Two-Spirit men do not lack knowledge about how HIV is spread. Studies show that Two-Spirit men possess strong levels of knowledge about HIV and high motivation to change risk behaviours such as unprotected anal sex. The question is why, with strong knowledge and motivation, not all Two-Spirit men consistently adopt safer sex behaviours?

This study identifies barriers that hinder Two-Spirit men from transforming their knowledge and motivation into the adoption of consistent safer sex behaviours. The focus is on social marketing (defined below). The study investigates several aspects of

¹ Susan Beaver, *We Are Part of A Tradition: A Report to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People*, 1992, in G. Deschamps, *We Are Part of A Tradition: A Guide on Two-Spirited People of the First Nation Communities*, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations, Toronto, 1998.1992; Marcel Dubois, "Native People, Two-Spiritedness, and the effects of colonization" (1998), in G. Deschamps, ed., *We Are Part of A Tradition: A Guide on Two-Spirited People of the First Nation Communities*, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations, Toronto: 18-19.; Gilbert Deschamps, ed., *We Are Part of A Tradition: A Guide on Two-Spirited People of the First Nation Communities*, (Toronto: 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations).

² 2-Spirited People of the First Nations, "Proposal for an HIV Prevention initiative among Two-Spirit men", submitted to Health Canada, HIV/AIDS Policy, Coordination and Programs Division, 2006.

³ Laverne Monette and Darcy Albert, *Voices of Two-Spirited Men: A Survey of Aboriginal Two-Spirited Men Across Canada*, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations and Judith Waalen from the Centre for Quality Service Research (Toronto, 2-Spirited People of the First Nations: 2001): 57.

safer sex campaigns, developed by the dominant Western culture, ethnic minorities, and indigenous organizations to determine: 1) what elements of some campaigns motivate Two-Spirit men's adoption of safer sex behaviours, 2) what elements inadvertently reinforce or create barriers to Two-Spirit men's adoption of behaviour change, and 3) what elements are missing and needed in new campaigns to break down barriers and motivate behaviour change.

This study recommends wise practices for the implementation of new HIV prevention initiatives to limit the spread and social impact of HIV in the Two-Spirit community. Our goal is to make consistent condom use the norm among Two-Spirit men.

1.2 Social Marketing

A primary tool in the prevention of HIV infection is social marketing. It is important here to outline the principles of social marketing. First, it is useful to think about commercial marketing or what is more simply called "advertising". Advertisers have refined their ability to make us want to buy something into a science. Whether it is a pair of jeans, SUV, or plasma TV, advertisers use sophisticated research methods to figure out whom ("target consumers") they want to buy this object and how to sell it to them. One of their primary methods is to assemble "focus groups" of targeted consumers (i.e., teens, yuppies, African-Canadians) and try out a variety of prepared messages and approaches to receive feedback and refine their ad until the message achieves its maximum power. Their goal is to figure out how to motivate consumers to make this product an essential part of their lifestyles. The aim of all advertising agencies is to turn a consumer item into a fetish item, or in the very least, something fashionable, trendy, or desirable. Of course, their other goal is to sell products in order to make a profit. Advertisers work hard to avoid a worse case scenario in which their message offends segments of the population and leads to avoidance or even a boycott of their message.

A wide variety of not-for-profit organizations have adopted and reformulated the methods of advertisers to sell particular "social behaviours" to the public.⁴ Health

⁴ A.R. Andreasen, *Marketing Social Change: Changing behavior to promote health, social development, and the environment* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass: 1995).

workers were among the first to coin the term “social marketing”: to sell people information and ideas about how to change behaviours to reduce their risks of personal harm and improve personal health. Examples include the promotion of seatbelts, anti-smoking, and safety around electrical systems. The key principles are that social marketers seek to change a particular social behaviour by advertising useful knowledge that encourages people’s adoption of less harmful behaviours. The idea is that the individual and society will be the ones to profit from improved health and safety.⁵

In the case of HIV/AIDS, governments and ASOs rely on social marketing as a key tool to educate people about HIV/AIDS and encourage the adoption of safer sex behaviours.⁶ All government agencies and ASOs surveyed offer similar definitions of social marketing. Perhaps the clearest and most concise definition is the one developed by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS):

Social marketing is the adaptation of commercial marketing techniques to social goals. Using traditional commercial marketing techniques, social marketing... encourages the adoption of a healthier lifestyle and identifies links to service providers and products that will assist with knowledge and products to facilitate that behaviour change.⁷

In this study, the target population is Two-Spirit men and the social or health problem addressed is unprotected anal sex. One goal is to recommend new poster content that will motivate Two-Spirit men to adopt safer sex behaviours. These posters must also contain information about how Two-Spirit men can access the services of *2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations* with the human resources and products that will further assist them with their adoption of safer sex behaviours.⁸

⁵ Andreasen 1995; Emma Nilimaa “Social Marketing and Effective HIV/AIDS Campaigns: Case Study of Afikagrupperna”, (B.A. thesis, Lulea University of Technology, Social Sciences and Business Administration Programmes, Sweden: 2004): 1; Turning Point, *The Basics of Social Marketing: How to Use Marketing to Change Behaviour* (Seattle, Washington: Social Marketing National Excellence Collaborative: 2004): 4.

⁶ CAAN, *Foundations for a Good Practices Approach for Aboriginal Organizations in Canada: Integration of STI Prevention Education with HIV/AIDS and Addictions Programs*, (Ottawa: 2004): 3; Nilmaa 2004; Canadian HIV/AIDS Information Centre, “About: HIV/AIDS Social Marketing Campaign”, www.campaign.cpha.ca/about.htm (2005).

⁷ UNAIDS, *Social Marketing: An effective tool in the global response to HIV/AIDS*, Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (Switzerland, 1996, 2000).

⁸ Health Canada, *Best Practices Models for the Integration of HIV Prevention, Care, Treatment and Support Request for Proposal*, www.hc.sc.gc.ca/hppb/hiv_aids-can_strat/community/models.html, (2003).

It must be stressed that some social marketing messages, no matter how well intentioned, can backfire and have a reverse effect such as avoidance of the message.⁹ One question in this research is whether or not some safer sex campaigns create or reinforce barriers for Two-Spirit men's adoption of consistent condom use.

1.3 The need for a base of knowledge

Social marketing is not just the development of a “clever slogan” or an information blitz, nor is it a process that can be done quickly.¹⁰ For one thing, it is critical to possess information about the target population. As Kelly explains, we must understand what it is about someone's life that contributes to risk in order to build effectively tailored interventions.¹¹ A team of University of Toronto researchers states that, “Interventions should not simply consider risk behaviour but also the personal, social, and structural determinants of risk”.¹² In sum, any prevention initiative targeted at Two-Spirit men must be based in a thorough understanding of their unique life histories, experiences, values, and dreams.

Social marketers typically gather a solid base of information about the lives of a target population through knowledge, attitude, and behaviour (KAB) studies. In 2001, *2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations* published a comprehensive KAB study of the largest sampling of Two-Spirit men (n=189) entitled, *Voices of Two-Spirited Men*.¹³ It contains extensive quantitative and qualitative data about the lives of Two-Spirit men. It well fulfills its function as a solid base of knowledge from which to move forward with the development of wise HIV social marketing strategies for Two-Spirit men. Another KAB study of significance is Myers et al.'s study of a randomly selected sample of 658 Aboriginal people, largely heterosexual.¹⁴ Its data describes the broader Aboriginal cultural milieu in which many Two-Spirit men are raised and socialized.

⁹ Nilimaa 2004: 4.

¹⁰ Kaye Wellings and Becky Field, *Stopping AIDS: AIDS/HIV Education and the mass media in Europe* (London: Longman: 1996): 7; Turning Point 2004: 5.

¹¹ Jeffrey Kelly, *Changing HIV Risk Behavior: Practical Strategies* (New York: Guilford Press: 1995): xi.

¹² Ted Myers et. Al, *Ontario Men's Survey*, University of Toronto, HIV Social, Behavioural and Epidemiological Studies Unit, 2004: 82.

¹³ Monette and Albert 2001.

¹⁴ Myers et al., *Ontario First Nations AIDS and Healthy Lifestyle Survey*, Canadian AIDS Clearing House, Ottawa: 1993.

All in all, there is a lot that we already know about the lives of Two-Spirit men, but there is also a lot that we do not know. This report takes into account all that is already known from reports and manuals by Aboriginal ASOs, the medical health literature, academic periodicals, and conference reports.

1.4 Knowledge does not always equal consistent behaviour change

There is robust evidence that 20 years of HIV information campaigns have successfully communicated the message about how HIV is spread. Among Aboriginal people, in 1996, Dubois found Aboriginal knowledge about HIV to be high and accurate in the Montreal region.¹⁵ In 1998, The Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN) surveyed 126 Aboriginal people involved with injection drug use and the sex trade and found that 94% of the respondents possessed accurate knowledge of the various modes of HIV transmission.¹⁶ Myers found knowledge about HIV to be high in his randomly selected sample of 658 Ontario Aboriginals.¹⁷ The authors of *Voices of Two-Spirited Men* found, “accurate knowledge about HIV transmission is evident in all our respondents”.¹⁸ It is very clear that Aboriginal ASOs and health agencies have effectively reached and equipped Aboriginal people, including Two-Spirit men, with accurate knowledge about the risks of unprotected anal sex.

1.5 Why Knowledge does not always equal consistent behaviour change

Many leading HIV/AIDS researchers are now showing that “it is a mistake to think that if you provide people with enough factual information, they will automatically change their risk behaviour”.¹⁹ Indeed, numerous studies are showing that increased knowledge of HIV does not automatically translate into a reduction of risk behaviours.²⁰

¹⁵ Marcel Dubois, “Survey of Montreal’s Aboriginal populations knowledge, attitudes and behaviours regarding HIV/AIDS”, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 87.1 (1996): 37-9.

¹⁶ Watershed Writing, *Joining the Circle: An Aboriginal Harm Reduction Model* (Ottawa: Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network: 1998).

¹⁷ Ted Myers et al., “Culture and sexual practices in response to HIV among Aboriginal people living on-reserve in Ontario”, *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 1.1 (1999): 19-37.

¹⁸ Monette and Albert 2001: 62.

¹⁹ Kelly 1995: ix.

²⁰ K. Basen-Engquist and G.S. Parcel “Attitudes, norms, and self-efficacy: A model of adolescents’ HIV-related sexual risk behavior”, *Health Education Quarterly* 19.2 (1992): 263-277; Wellings and Field 1996;

The same appears to be true for Two-Spirit men. In 1996, Dubois found that knowledge of HIV does not seem to be translating into the reduction of high-risk behaviours.²¹ In 2001, *Voices of 2-Spirit men* found that 50% of the sample acknowledged their need to change certain behaviours.²²

In sum, while Two-Spirit men possess strong and accurate knowledge about the methods of HIV infection, like other cultures around the world, this knowledge is not automatically translating into the consistent adoption of safer sex practices.

1.6 Condom use

A number of studies have examined condom use in the Aboriginal population and found much room for improvement.²³ In 1991, Calzavara *et al.* found 61% of a sample 400 aboriginal people did not use condoms.²⁴ Over ten years later, *Voices* found the same number (61%) among Two-Spirit men when the authors asked, “have you had sex without a condom in the past year”.²⁵ In 2003, the Métis National Council identified low rates of condom use.²⁶

1.7 Motivation

HIV/AIDS social marketers always take into account a target group’s readiness or motivation to adopt new behaviours.²⁷ Several studies show that Two-Spirit men do not lack the motivation to adopt consistent safer sex behaviours. In CAAN’s 1998 survey of 126 Aboriginal sex trade workers and injection drug users, the answers to a series of questions draws a picture of Aboriginal people who have excellent knowledge of HIV and wish to protect themselves and others from HIV infection. In 2001, the authors of

ACT, “Explore your sexual horizons”, <http://www.actoronto.org/website/home.nsf/pages/seseries> (2003); *Turning Point* 2004.

²¹ Dubois 1996.

²² Monette and Albert 2001: 2-3, 62.

²³ S.L. Bullock *et al.* “Unprotected intercourse and the meanings ascribed to sex by aboriginal people living on-reserve in Ontario, Canada”, XIth International Conference on AIDS, Abstract no. Mo.D.483, 1996.

²⁴ L.M. Calzavara *et al.*, “Condom use among Aboriginal people in Ontario, Canada”, *International Journal of STDs and AIDS* 9.5 (1998): 272-9.

²⁵ Monette and Albert 2001: 45.

²⁶ Métis National Council, *Following the Red Cart – Métis and HIV/AIDS: The Basic Facts*, (Ottawa: 2003).

²⁷ François Largarde, “Best Practices and Prospects for Social Marketing in Public Health”, speech at the 89th Annual Public Health Association on Best Practices in Public Health, Montreal, Quebec, 1998.

Voices of Two-Spirited Men heard multiple statements about peoples' concerns and desire to protect each other from exposure to HIV.²⁸ The research problem remains: why, with high knowledge about HIV and strong motivation, not all Two-Spirit men consistently use a condom during anal sex.

1.8 Barriers to behaviour change: The crux of the problem

Studies show that the gap between peoples' knowledge, motivation, and actual behaviour change is attributable to real and perceived barriers that prevent them from adopting safer sex behaviours.²⁹ Kelly explains that a person's effort and ability to change a risky sexual behaviour takes place "in the context of an individual's relationships, feelings of pride, self-esteem, and sense of life purpose and control".³⁰ For various reasons examined below, Two-Spirit men are a displaced people and self-esteem, along with a sense of life purpose and control are critical issues. A team of University of Toronto researchers states: "The important elements of diversity and subcultures that contribute to marginalization of individuals, whether HIV status, race, social position, or sexual practices, should be considered."³¹ In sum, the life experience and complex factors that have caused Two-Spirit people to become displaced in their society must be given careful study in order to develop effective and wise interventions.

The research problem comes down to this: in the life experiences of Two-Spirit men, what barriers have emerged to obstruct their transformation of high levels of HIV knowledge and motivation into the consistent adoption of protected sex? How can social marketing principles be applied to help them overcome these barriers?

²⁸ Monette and Albert 2001: preface.

²⁹ N. Freudenberg and U. Trinidad, "The role of community organizations in AIDS Prevention in two Latino communities in New York City", *Health Education Quarterly* (1992) 19.2:221-232; H.J. Walter and R.D. Vaughan, "Factors Associated with AIDS-related behavioral intentions among high school students in an AIDS epicenter", *Health Education Quarterly* (1993) 20.3:409-20; Kelly 1995; Largarde 1998; Northern Health Research Unit, "Research on HIV/AIDS in Aboriginal People: a background paper", Centre for Aboriginal Health Research, 1998:7; Turning Point 2004: 3; Nilimaa 2004.

³⁰ Kelly 1995: xii.

³¹ Myers et. al., *Ontario Men's Survey*, University of Toronto, HIV Social, Behavioural and Epidemiological Studies Unit, 2004: 82.

2 Methodology

2.1 What is a wise “practices document”?

A “best practices document” takes into account all that is known about a subject, takes stock of lessons learned, and adds new knowledge drawn through the application of sound and effective research methods. The expectation is that “best practices” in one situation can be replicated in a similar situation and have the same positive effects.

CAAN takes exception to the title: “best practices”. The term “best” is a hierarchical, non-Aboriginal construct. CAAN is also concerned that the emphasis on “best” studies tends to a reliance on the lessons learned in large, well-funded, academically directed studies and marginalizes Aboriginal knowledge learned on the frontlines through socio-cultural insight, ingenuity, intuition, long experience, and trial and error.³² Many academic researchers would agree and have long emphasized the critical importance of the community-based research model.³³ Ross succinctly states that the history of interventions without a community base “appear to be unsuccessful” and that “where cultures or subcultures are targeted, the close involvement of such groups in design and delivery of messages is critical to their success”.³⁴ In response, this study is community-based and relies strongly on the hard-earned expertise of street-engaged and frontline Aboriginal HIV/AIDS workers. It also takes into account all that Aboriginal ASOs have made known over years of hard work. This study therefore reflects the dual knowledge contributions of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people dedicated to understanding how to stop the spread of HIV. All groups share the goal to develop prevention initiatives that will be effective.

CAAN also holds that a “best practice” in one situation should not automatically be regarded as replicable in other similar situations given, “the variety of unique cultural and situational environments that characterize Aboriginal communities”.³⁵ CAAN describes this as an ill-founded “cooker cutter” presumption. Some HIV/AIDS researchers will agree. Kelly states that the elements of one person’s life that contribute

³² CAAN 2004: 4.

³³ Lagarde 1998.

³⁴ Michael Ross and Mark L. Williams, “Effective Targeted and Community HIV/STD Prevention Programs”, *Journal of Sex Research* 39.1 (2002): 58.62.

³⁵ CAAN 2004: 3.

to risk vary greatly by culture and individual and that there are no perfect models that will fit all communities and cultures. Kelly does, however, hold that some principles of a social marketing study will always be applicable in similar situations.³⁶ In response, this study conducted focus groups across Canada to take into account the wide variety of cultural and environmental situations of Two-Spirit men. As CAAN predicted, the findings in one cultural region such as Saskatchewan, do not always agree with situations in Vancouver or Toronto, but numerous principles are identical across regions. This study therefore focuses its recommendations on the multiple findings shared by Two-Spirit men across Canada.

This study is written up in such a manner that other communities may replicate its methods. While other communities will arrive at the same findings identified below, the replication of this study will also identify especially unique situations that characterize each specific community. This is the final component of a “best practices” document. A “best practices document” must outline the design, methods, sources of knowledge, implementation, and outcomes of the study in sufficiently clear detail so that other organizations can implement it in other places.

In response to CAAN’s concern about the title “best practices”, this study adopts the term “wise practices” that is more reflective of Two-Spirit ontology (worldview) and epistemology (ways of creating knowledge) embedded in this study.

2.2 The community-based research model

The community-based research model is the wise practice for research in Aboriginal communities. It is particularly important when outside researchers are involved. For this study, *2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations* retained a non-Native consultant with 13 years of experience in community-based Aboriginal HIV/AIDS research. According to the principles of community-based research, *2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations* identified the research problem and objectives. We also established an Advisory Committee that set the community values and ethics to govern the study. The Advisory Committee and the consultant worked collaboratively in the design and execution of the project. Where possible, the consultant downloaded skills to community

³⁶ Kelly 195: xii-xi.

members to increase community capacity. Now that the project is complete, *2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations* takes ownership of the recommendations and the problems identified (i.e. barriers to safer sex adoption).

2.3 Study methodology

The consultant developed a Powerpoint© presentation of a cross-sectional sample of HIV/AIDS prevention posters drawn from Canadian and intercontinental sources that are representative of the content, styles, approaches, and messages, developed by Western governments and ASOs, ethnic minorities, and indigenous ASOs. The sample was inclusive of the two general global strategies: 1) abstinence/monogamy and, 2) universal condom use.³⁷ The first strategy is typically regarded as unrealistic and is inconsistent with CAAN's embrace of harm reduction, but a few samples representative of this strategy were included for objective testing. The preponderance of sample posters reflects multiple approaches to encouraging the normalization of condom use. The sample posters also reflect three other global strategies: 1) the targeting of specific groups or cultures, and 2) general information campaigns for heterogeneous audiences, and 3) targeting specific risk behaviours. An effort was made to include samples of award winning prevention posters such as Switzerland's groundbreaking campaigns (see Study Appendix samples #36, 40, 76 at www.2spirits.com). An effort was also made to include sample posters developed by internationally known advertising agencies for ASOs like the San Francisco AIDS Foundation (SFAF) that have been described as some of "the most effective, memorable and provocative HIV prevention and education campaigns in the world" (Study Appendix samples #4, 5, 6, 20, 21, 30, 40, 75 at www.2spirits.com). Likewise, an equal effort was made to include posters developed by less well-funded, smaller, grassroots ASOs. Finally, posters designed to reduce HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination, and the formation of solidarity with those infected, were included. The sample posters reflect a broad spectrum of tones, including humour, fear, and glamour, set in different styles from graphic art to photography. Lastly, the Advisory Committee recommended the addition of a photograph from The Two Spirit Society of Denver of

³⁷ Wellings and Field 1996: 30.

two Two-Spirit men in traditional regalia tenderly touching noses (#77). The photograph is not a poster, but inserted as a test image for thought and critique by the focus groups.

The Advisory Committee and the consultant refined the contents of the sample posters to ensure its comprehensiveness and removed over-represented themes. The presentation was then pilot-tested with a focus group in Toronto. Afterwards, the Advisory Committee and the consultant refined the sample to 76 sample posters and the test image #77. The final “research instrument” may be viewed at www.2spirits.com. The consultant and the Advisory Committee then arranged for focus group sessions to be held where Two-Spirit men with years of street-engaged and frontline expertise could be assembled.

The purpose of the Powerpoint© presentation and the assembly of focus groups was to form a consumer-centered, formative problem solving process reliant on the expertise and experiences of people engaged on the frontlines. Unlike the commercial marketing approach, the consultant did not present a set of new ready-made Two-Spirit men’s prevention posters for a target group’s feedback. Rather, the consultant came to each focus group session somewhat empty-handed. He explained that the objective of the session was to develop effective posters, not yet made, that will effectively motivate Two-Spirit men to consistently adopt safer sex practices. The emphasis, therefore, was to engage the focus groups in a formative, collaborative research process in which they would critique the cross-sectional poster samples as a stimulus to proffer ideas about the elements to be avoided, the ones to be used, and the ones missing for the development of an effective Two-Spirit HIV prevention campaign.

At the beginning of each focus group session, the consultant straightforwardly explained the principles of commercial and social marketing with the use of examples (see Research Instrument at www.2spirits.com). Here, the consultant downloaded the fundamental principles of social marketing and the skills of media literacy to the focus groups to prepare them for a collaborative and creative process.

During each focus group session, the consultant presented each sample poster. Unstructured discussions stimulated the formative part of the study as participants constantly kept in mind the key question, “what sort of approach and what content would

work better to motivate my peers?’’ This methodology has support in the literature. In 1998, the Northern Health Research Unit recommended:

A review of international programs and interventions undertaken in different ethnocultural environments may provide useful insight into developing interventions for Aboriginal communities in Canada. While the situation of Aboriginal people with HIV/AIDS in Canada is unique, there are many lessons that could be learned from interventions in related areas and from the experiences of indigenous peoples and other ethnocultural communities in other countries.³⁸

The social marketing agency, Turning Point, states

Social marketing begins and ends with your target audience. In order to understand why your audience isn't doing what you want them to do, you must understand what barriers are getting in their way’’.³⁹

The study methodology was thus designed to place the members of the affected community (Two-Spirit men) at the centre of every decision.

The focus groups uniformly appreciated the fact that their participation was “not just another study exercise” by an outsider, but a process designed to lead to action. In structured evaluation forms completed by each participant at the end of the session, there was clear evidence that they found the process to be empowering.

2.4 The Focus groups

The Advisory Committee and the consultant organized six focus groups sessions through Aboriginal ASOs located in Winnipeg (*Nine Circles of Health*), Vancouver (*Healing Our Spirit*), Regina (*All Nations Hope*), Toronto (*2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations*) and at a pan-Canadian Two-Spirit gathering at CAAN's 2005 AGM. A total of 46 Two-Spirit men participated in the focus group sessions. Participants signed consent forms, were assured confidentiality, and were compensated (\$20.00) for their time and generous contributions of hard-earned expertise.

³⁸ Northern Health Research Unit 1998: 18.

³⁹ Turning Point 1998: 4.

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling. Host Aboriginal ASOs were encouraged to recruit participants who are Two-Spirited men, bi-sexual, transgender, and reflective of various ages, incomes, and educational levels, with a variety of backgrounds and experiences to bring to bear on the sessions.

The characteristics of the sample were drawn from a structured questionnaire.

Participants were largely Two-Spirits with 11% being transgender. Seventy-four (74%)

Characteristics of the sample			
Sexual self-identity		Income	
Two-Spirit	78%	Wages	35%
Transgender	11%	Disability	13%
Bi-sexual	4%	Social assistance	39%
no data	7%	No data	11%
Place of origin		Highest education level	
Reserve	33%	Elementary	7%
Rural community	22%	Some secondary	22%
City	40%	Completed secondary	28%
no data	5%	Some college/university	11%
		Completed college/ univ	22%
		Graduate education	2%
		No data	9%
Age bracket		HIV status	
20 or younger	0%	Positive	74%
21-30	7%	Negative	24%
31-40	50%	Never tested	2%
41-50	30%		
50 or older	7%		
no data	7%		

are HIV positive. Fifty-five percent (55%) grew up Reserves or rural settings while 40% were primarily socialized in cities. While many members of the sample are well educated, with 24% completing university or college, these numbers do not translate into higher incomes as the majority (42%) are on income assistance. The sample is heavily weighted to

persons over 31 years of age due to emphasis on drawing participants with years of experience and wisdom. Future studies should be more inclusive of youth.

3. Colonization and Oppression: A life history

In order to build effective intervention messages, it is critical to understand the life histories of Two-Spirit men. As will be shown below, the critical findings of this study are that Two-Spirit men have lived lives of family and community shaming, discrimination, and abuse caused by Aboriginal community homophobia. These experiences have greatly diminished Two-Spirit men's self-esteem. An individual's self-esteem is directly linked to their ability to change risky sexual behaviour.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Myers et. al 2004: 82.

Homophobia is not a traditional Aboriginal value. Quite the contrary, for thousands of years, Two-Spirit people lived along a long spectrum of gender identities and held positions of respect and dignity in their communities. This is not the case today, however. The following historical research describes how the colonizers instilled homophobia and rigid gender roles into Aboriginal societies. The effect is that Two-Spirit people have become displaced people within Aboriginal and Canadian society. A study of how Two-Spirits became marginalized peoples is the starting point to understanding the motivational elements and barriers involved in their ability to adopt safer sex practices.

3.1 “Persons of consequence”: a history

Two-Spirit people were not invisible to European newcomers. Samuel de Champlain, the first European to publish his accounts of Canada, recorded that some Aboriginal men dressed like women and undertook female occupations.⁴¹ In 1674, on his voyage from Quebec to the Mississippi, Jacque Marquette recorded that among the Illinois, some Aboriginal men...

while still young, assume the garb of women, and retain it throughout their lives: There is some mystery in this, for they never marry and glory in demeaning themselves to do everything that the women do. They go to war, however, but can only use clubs, and not bows and arrows, which are the weapons proper to men. They are present at all the juggleries, and at the solemn dances in honor of the Calumet; at these they sing, but must not dance. They are summoned to the Councils, and nothing can be decided without their advice. Finally, through their profession of leading an Extraordinary Life, they pass for Manitous, that is to say, for spirits, -- or persons of Consequence.⁴²

Marquette’s passage is very significant. First, he notes that Two-Spirit men not only cross-dressed, but actually occupied a distinct gender with specifically defined, alternative gender roles, responsibilities, and functions in domestic, military, and ceremonial affairs. He also observed that the voices of Two-Spirit men were considered essential during council meetings. On another note, the passage reveals Marquette’s

⁴¹ L’Abbé Domenech, *La Vérité sur le Livre des Sauvages* (Paris: E. Dentu: 1861): 25.

⁴² Jacques Marquette “Of the first Voyage made by father Marquette toward new Mexico, and How the idea thereof was conceived” (1674), reprinted in Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, vol. 59 (Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers, 1900): 129.

sexist, patriarchal assumptions, when he notes that, in his European eyes, Two-Spirit men were “demeaning” themselves. His assumption stood in strong contrast to the Aboriginal worldview, in which, by his own account, the Aboriginal communities considered Two-Spirit men to be wise, spiritually gifted, and “extraordinary”.

French colonials continued to record the high visibility of Two-Spirit men. Without a suitable term for people who embodied male and female spirits, Europeans fell back on the term: “hermaphrodite”. In 1697, a missionary reported that there were numerous “hermaphrodites” among the Illinois who played major roles in traditional ceremonies and dressed their male children as women.⁴³ In 1704, Baron de Lahontan confirmed: “Among the Illinois there are several Hermaphrodites, who go in Women’s habit, but frequent the company of both sexes”. He added details about Two-Spirit women, “called Ickoue ne Kiouffa, that is to say, women of the hunt, because they normally go out with the hunters”. He explained that these Two-Spirit women occupied a distinct gender position, were uninterested in conjugal bonds, did not wish to raise children, and chose not to pass the whole winter in the village, but opted to hunt with men across somewhat distant hunting grounds. To his shock, Hennepin learned that parents did not discourage this choice:

quite the opposite, they [parents] say they are supportive, and say, as I am sure you have already determined, that the girls are master of their own bodies and that they are permitted to do all that they judge to be appropriate.⁴⁴

The concept of women as masters of their own bodies, with choices about their occupations (especially reproductive options), with the full support of their families and societies, were simply quite foreign concepts to the baron.

In 1724, the Jesuit priest and philosopher, Pierre Lafitau summarized his predecessors’ accounts of Two-Spirit men and women. The first part of his account reflects the large incongruity between Western and Aboriginal acceptances of alternative gender identities:

If there are women of a virile courage, who made a glory of the profession of warfare, a profession that seems suitable only to men, there are also men

⁴³ Louis Hennepin, *Nouvelles Decouverte d’un tres grand Pays Situé dans L’Amerique, entre Le Nouveau Mexique et La Mer Glaciale* (Utrecht: Guillaume Broedele: 1697): 219.

⁴⁴ Baron de Lahontan *New Voyages to North America...*, (London: Bonwick: 1703): 142-3.

cowardly enough to live like women. Among the Illinois, among the Sioux, in Louisiana, in Florida and in Yucatan, there are many young men who assume women's costumes, wearing them all their lives and take it as a mark of honour to lower themselves to women's occupations; they never marry; they are present at all the exercises in which religion seems to play a part; and their profession of an extraordinary kind of life makes them pass for people of a superior order above the common run of mankind.⁴⁵

Here, Lafitau enumerates multiple gender identities for men and women quite outside of the European social construct that "nature" limited and defined absolutely rigid, polar, and very narrow gender occupations. He then accounts for the term "hermaphrodite".

The sight of these men disguised as women surprised the Europeans who first landed in America. As they did not understand the reason for this kind of metamorphosis, they persuaded themselves that these were people in whom the two sexes were mixed. Indeed, our older narratives never call them anything except hermaphrodites.⁴⁶

In essence, the first colonials recounted, "people in whom the two sexes were mixed". Lafitau doubted that nature would allow such a co-existence and cast his skepticism.

In another passage, Lafitau describes in detail "particular friendships between young people that prevail almost in the same way from one end of America to the other". It is clear that Lafitau is speaking about male lovers.⁴⁷ He explains that these "unions" were an ancient component of Aboriginal culture, thus the lovers are "out", and consider their bonds to be sacred:

They [intimate male relationships] are very ancient in their origin, very clear in their constant usage, sacred if I dare say so, in the union they form, the knots of which they are so closely tied as those of blood and nature...⁴⁸

He adds that parents not only respected their son's relationships, but encouraged it:

The parents are the first to encourage these friendships and to respect their rights; they [the lovers] are chosen in such a way as to be worthy of respect, being founded on mutual merit as they reckon it, on congeniality of manners and qualities fitted to arouse emulation.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ P. Lafitau, *Moeurs des Sauvages...* (Paris: 1724).

⁴⁶ Lafitau 1724: 57-8.

⁴⁷ Lafitau 1724: 361-2.

⁴⁸ Lafitau 1724: 364.

⁴⁹ Lafitau 1724: 364.

Once again, parents clearly considered themselves to be fortunate to raise such extraordinary children and encouraged them to seek and develop relationships built on mutual respect and kindness.

In 1744, Charlevoix recorded that some Iroquois men dressed like women and undertook female occupations.⁵⁰ In an entertaining account from 1800, the military interpreter, John Tanner, described the time when Ozaw-wen-dib, a Two-Spirit man, traveled to Sault Ste. Marie to charm the military man. Tanner's journal entries reveal his cross-cultural and cross-gender shock, his derisive comments about Ozaw-wen-dib, and the Two-Spirit man's dignity and complete acceptance in his culture. The journal also confirms the fact that the Ojibwa had a specific word in their vocabulary for Two-Spirits. Tanner writes:

Some time in the course of this winter there came to our lodge one of the sons of the celebrated Ojibbeway chief, called Wash-ko-bu, (the sweet,) who lived at Leech Lake. This man was one of those who call themselves women, and are called women by the Indians. There are several of this sort among most, if not all the Indian tribes; they are commonly called A-go-kwa, a word which is expressive of their condition. This creature, called, (the yellow head,) was now near fifty years old, and had lived with many husbands. I do not know whether she had seen me, or only heard about me, but she soon let me know she had come a long distance to see me, and with the hope of living with me.⁵¹

Ozaw-wen-dib repeatedly offered herself to Tanner. Uninterested, Tanner described the A-go-kwa's offers in the homophobic phrase "disgusting". To Tanner's chagrin, nobody in the community shared his point of view. Indeed, one female elder, Net-no-kwa, found Tanner's homophobia to be amusing: "Old Net-no-kwa was perfectly well acquainted with her [Ozaw-wen-dib's] character, and only laughed at the embarrassment and shame which I evinced whenever she addressed me". In fact, Net-no-kwa supported the possible union: "She seemed rather to countenance the Yellow Head in remaining in our

⁵⁰ Pierre Charlevoix, *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle France: avec le journal historique d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique septentrionale*, (Paris : Chez Rollin Fils: 1744): 303.

⁵¹ John Tanner, *Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner During Thirty Years Residence Among the Indians in the Interior of North America*, ed. Edwin James (New York: G&C&H Carvill: 1800): 105.

lodge”.⁵² In essence, at this time, Aboriginal people not only found homophobia to be foreign, they mocked those who acted homophobic.

Tanner’s story ends when a male chief with two wives took Ozaw-wen-dib as his third bride.⁵³ For Two-Spirit men, however, the European idea that their identity was the cause of “embarrassment and shame” would eventually take root in Native communities and cause serious problems to this day.

The next year, Ozaw-wen-dib enlisted in a canoe brigade with the “explorers” David Thompson and Alexander Henry. It is interesting to note that in their crew manifest, they translated Ozaw-wen-dib’s name to the archaic French term, “La Berdash”.⁵⁴ While they applied the masculine “Le” for straight men in the crew (i.e. “Le Pendu” and “Le Borgne”), they chose the feminine article, “La” for Ozaw-wen-dib’s name.⁵⁵ Similarly, Tanner (above) alternated between the gendered terms “son” and “she”. It is interesting to note these Europeans’ sense to use the feminine article for Two-Spirit men at this time.

In 1805, the Northwest Company explorer, Charles Mackenzie, recorded Two Spirits among the Crow.⁵⁶ In 1814, the Canadian fur trader, Ross Cox traveled to the western side of the Rocky Mountains. Here, he met a Two-Spirit chief of a small nation whom he described as “an extraordinary being”. He then explained, that “The Indians allege that he belongs to the epicene gender”, meaning that the chief possessed the characteristics of both sexes.

He wears a woman’s dress, overloaded with a profusion of beads, thimbles, and small shells; add to which the upper part of the face and the manner of wearing the hair are quite feminine; but these appearances are more than counterbalanced by a rough beard, and a masculine tone of voice, which would seem to set his virility apart. He never gambles or associates with either sex, and he is regarded with a certain portion of fear and awe by both men and women, who look at him as something more than human”.⁵⁷

⁵² Tanner 1800: 105.

⁵³ Tanner 1800: 106.

⁵⁴ Elliot Coues, ed., *The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and David Thompson, 1799-1814*, 3 vols. (New York: Francis P. Harper: 1897): 53.

⁵⁵ Coues 1897: 53.

⁵⁶ L.R. Masson, *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest...* (Québec: Coté et Co.: 1889): 350.

⁵⁷ Ross Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River including the Narrative of a Residence of Six years on the Western Side of the Rocky Mountains among Various Tribes of Indians Hitherto Unknown: Together with a Journey Across the American Continent* (New York: J. & J. Harper: 1832): 169-70.

Once again, the account is that Two-Spirits are extraordinary people more than human in the eyes of their family and community members.

In 1823, an army major on an expedition to Lake Winnipeg recorded that, a certain goddess could visit men in their sleep, “The Indians consider it as enjoined upon them by duty, to become *cinædi*; they ever after assume the female garb”.⁵⁸ Evidently, some people were born with Two-Spirits while others readily adopted the gender role after a vision.

In sum, the archival sources document the high visibility of Aboriginal people not seen as men or women, but considered gifted because they embodied both male and female spirits. They held alternative roles and functions in their societies. The sources do not emphasize that the Two-Spirit identity revolved around sexual activity, but rather, that they were extraordinary people gifted with spiritual powers who were widely accepted within their societies as visionaries, healers, and medicine people. Parents once considered themselves highly fortunate to raise a Two-Spirit child. In addition to their spiritual power, Two-Spirit voices were considered essential at council meetings and a Two-Spirit could be a nation’s chief.

3.2 “Consequences” of the colonizer’s assault on Two-Spirits

It is now important to turn to an examination of how and why European missionaries sought to eliminate the prestige and extraordinary standing of Two-Spirit people. It is clear that missionaries had multiple motives. For one thing, the spiritual powers of Two-Spirit people were a threat to the credibility of the missionaries’ religious objectives and conceit. Secondly, Europeans had, by this time, outlawed homosexuality and internalized homophobia; it was their sexual norm. Finally, Europeans could use Two-Spirits as a counterpoint to construct their argument that Aboriginal societies were backwards, uncivilized, inferior, and primitive, and therefore justify intrusions into their social structures and belief systems. It is a melancholy history that began early.

⁵⁸ Stephen H. Long, *A Narrative of An Expedition to the Source of St. Peter’s River, Lake Winnipeg, Lake of the Woods, &c., &c., performed in the year 1823*, William H. Keating, ed. (Philadelphia: H.C. Carey: 1824): 210-11.

In 1697, the Missionary, R. Hennepin stated that the gender identity of Two-Spirit people was “against nature” and “sinful”.⁵⁹ Further, he opined that Two-Spirit women were primitive and backwards because they would cut off the nose of an unfaithful lover. He further described the cross-dressing of children as “abominable”.⁶⁰ The vilification process had begun. In 1704, after describing Ickoue ne Kiouffa (women hunters) who were masters of their own bodies, occupation, and reproductive choices, Baron de Lahontan’s turned to a narrative about how Jesuit missionaries were doing all that they could to correct this “disorder”. The Jesuits tactic was to confront the parents:

The Jesuits are doing all that they can to arrest this disorder among the debauched females, they never cease to preach to their parents that their indulgence is strongly disagreeable to the Great Spirit, that they will pray before God that they will take care to bring their children into a life of sexual restraint and chastity, that there are fires lit in the other world for eternal torment, if they are not careful to correct their vice.⁶¹

Clearly, the Jesuits considered alternative genders as “against nature”, “debauched”, and a “vice”, and tried to convert parents to the idea that their children would burn in hell if the ‘disorders’ were not ‘corrected’. As missionaries increased their numbers of Christian converts, the power of this message to parents must also have increased. As will be shown, it is a message that many parents possess today.

In 1724, Lafitau compared the lives of Two-Spirit men to the acceptance of gay sex in ancient Greek society. In his mind, this “most abominable of the vices” caused the collapse of Greek society. For him, the history lesson was clear, and he congratulated missionaries for “suppressing” Two-Spirit relationships.⁶² He went on to describe the missionaries’ success in prompting many Two-Spirit people and their relations to see their identity as “shameful”. He was pleased to report that after 75 years of missionary work, people once “regarded as extraordinary men”, had now “come to be looked on, even by the Indians, with scorn.” Here, is the origin of shame that continues to deeply affect Two-Spirits. The assault continued. In 1770, Cornelius de Pauw called for an

⁵⁹ Hennepin 1697: 219.

⁶⁰ Hennepin 1697: 219.

⁶¹ Baron de Lahontan 1703: 143

⁶² Lafitau 1724: 365.

“extreme remedy against the vices”.⁶³ In addition to shaming and preaching of an afterlife in hell to parents and communities, missionaries wrote to the outside world that Two-Spirit lifestyles were “contrary to nature”.⁶⁴

The final historical assault on Two-Spirits came in 1874 when the Canadian state made schooling, far from home (residential schools), mandatory for all children. For almost a century, ill-funded, church run schools with a Canadian government mandate to assimilate Aboriginal people, taught children to be ashamed of their culture and traditions. The church had not forgotten its old mandate to reinforce the European belief that homosexuality was deviant and a sin.⁶⁵ Now firmly in control of their pupils, missionary teachers constantly reinforced the European notion that there are only two natural genders. In addition to relentless segregation of the sexes, teachers taught girls domestic duties and instructed boys in manual labour. There was no room here for boys to express an interest in female occupations. Finally, teachers taught the children to be ashamed of bodily functions, and censored all forms of talk about sexuality. One woman recalled recently,

When my mother told her story of survival at Residential School I understood why she can't talk about sex. My mother was taught that they can't talk about sex because they would be punished by God.

One effect of missionization and residential schooling is that Aboriginal people have internalized a reluctance to speak about sexual health.

Prior to the 1950s, the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) prohibited Natives from leaving Indian Reserves without a pass. In the 1950s, the DIA loosened its pass restrictions and many Aboriginals moved off Reserves to urban centres. Among the first to leave their communities and head to Canada's cities were Two-Spirit people.⁶⁶ An Aboriginal woman recently asked her aunt, “What happened before?” Her aunt answered, “[Two-Spirit people] moved away from the community because of the

⁶³ Cornelius de Puaw, *Dissertations sur l'Amérique et les Américains, contre les Recherches philosophique de Me. de P.* (Berlin: G.J. Decker, 1770): 64.

⁶⁴ Puuw 1770: 64.

⁶⁵ Bill Ryan, *A New Look at Homophobia and Heterosexism in Canada*, (Ottawa: Canadian AIDS Society: 2003): 31-33.

⁶⁶ Ministerial Council on HIV/AIDS, *Situational Analysis: A Background Paper on HIV/AIDS and Aboriginal People*, Ottawa: 2001: 30.

shame”.⁶⁷ Long after missionaries convinced families that their Two-Spirit children would experience an afterlife in hell, the outcome to be shown is that Two-Spirit people would hereafter be condemned to a life of hell on earth.

3.3 Current conditions

Regardless of how many Native peoples the church converted to Christianity from 1608 to the present, many Native people have internalized many of the European’s messages about what is “normal” or “natural” and what is “sinful”. Of particular significance to this study, many peoples have: 1) internalized the belief that homosexuality is wrong, and 2) developed a deep reluctance to speak about sex.

Today, multiple studies confirm high levels of homophobia in Aboriginal communities and that Two-Spirit men grow up wrestling with the colonizers’ view that it is wrong to be gay or bisexual.⁶⁸ *Voices* found that 74% of their sample of Two-Spirit men would not return to their Reserve because, “my community would not accept me”, “my family would not accept me”, or “I have been banished from my community”.⁶⁹ University of Toronto researchers affirm this finding. In their random sample of 658 Aboriginal people in Ontario, over 80% of the respondents believed that their community felt it was wrong for men to have sex with men.⁷⁰ In addition, many first hand accounts confirm that straight Aboriginal people consider Two-Spirits to be “an aberration” and subject them to ostracization and discrimination. Beaver explains, “As two-spirited men,

⁶⁷ CAAN 2004: 12.

⁶⁸ Myers et al 1993; *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* 1996; Watershed Writing 1998; S. Matiation and R. Jurgensz, “Legal Issues relating to Aboriginal people and HIV/AIDS: Discrimination, jurisdictional divisions, testing and confidentiality”, *International Conference on AIDS* 1998, 12:970; The Northern Health Research Unit 1998: 12; Albert McLeod, “North American aboriginal two-spirited sexual identity and HIV/AIDS”, *International Conference on AIDS* 12 (1998): 725; S. Vanderhoef, “Aboriginal palliative care”, *International Conference on AIDS* 12 (1998): 489; CAAN, “AIDS and Aboriginal Peoples”, fact sheet, (Ottawa: May: 1999a), 1999b, 2000, 2004; Manitoba Aboriginal AIDS Task Force 1998; CAAN, “AIDS & Two-Spirited”, fact sheet, (Ottawa: May: 1999b); CAAN, *Understanding HIV/AIDS Epidemiology: HIV/AIDS Surveillance Among Canada’ Aboriginal Peoples*, 1st edition (Ottawa: March: 2000): 7, *Foundations for a Good Practices Approach for Aboriginal Organizations in Canada: Integration of STI Prevention Education with HIV/AIDS and Addictions Programs*, (Ottawa: 2004): 12, 20; Namaste K Marsden, “Honouring and Caring for Aboriginal People and Communities in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS”, *Native Social Work Journal* 3.1 (2000): 127-142; Ministerial Council on HIV/AIDS 2001: v; Monette and Albert 2001: 31, 33, 57; Ryan 2003: 14,18; L.L. Oropeza, “HIV prevention through education on indigenous people’s history of alternative gender roles and sexuality”, *XV International AIDS Conference*, Abstract no. WePeD6474.

⁶⁹ Monette and Albert 2001: 34.

⁷⁰ Myers et al 1993.

you know there is no room for your life on the reserve. Your sexuality is not tolerated and many men leave to find urban centres where they can express themselves”.⁷¹

In the mid-1980s, when the first cases of Two-Spirit HIV infections were identified, elected Aboriginal community leaders often distanced themselves and denied the existence of gay Aboriginals. In a *Winnipeg Sun* article, one First Nation chief was quoted as saying, “I don’t want those two [words] [gay and Native] put together. It is a disgrace to put them in the same category”. The chief claimed there are no gay members in his Reserve community of 1500.⁷² Dubois confirms that many Aboriginal communities “deny the existence of two-spirited people” and the effect is that, “two-spirited Aboriginal people are victims of homophobia, violence, exclusion and death”.⁷³ In sum, adding now to communal discrimination against Two-Spirit men is AIDSphobia. Multiple studies identify the depth of the problem. In 1993, Myers et. al. found that 32.3% of respondents felt Reserve communities would ignore a person living with HIV/AIDS (PHA) while 12.7% felt the PHA would be told to leave the community. In 1996, the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* found that many PHAs felt they could not return home due to stigma on themselves and their family, or that their community would not accept them. In 1998, Matiation documented the experiences of Aboriginal PHAs who were denied housing by Band officials or driven out by members of the community. In 1998, CAAN asked various Aboriginal organizations across Canada, “to rate how their community would react to someone living with HIV/AIDS; “55% claimed there would be an extreme negative reaction, ranging from gossip, ostracism, to outright hostility”.⁷⁴ In 2001, the Ministerial Council on HIV/AIDS stated, Aboriginal PHAs typically “lived away from their communities for years and felt they could not return home due to AIDSphobia and fears of rejection”.⁷⁵ First-hand accounts are melancholy reading. For example, one respondent in *Voices* states, “Having an

⁷¹ Beaver 1992.

⁷² Alex Wilson, “How We Find Ourselves: Identity Development and Two-Spirit People” *Harvard Educational Review* (1996), 66.2: 303-317.

⁷³ Dubois 1998: 18.

⁷⁴ CAAN 1998: 10.

⁷⁵ Ministerial Council on HIV/AIDS 2001: 30.

HIV/AIDS lover made my reserve react badly. I am forced to live away from those who care because I was told I couldn't be protected 24 hours/day."⁷⁶

In 2001, *Voices* found that Christian messages have also caused Two-Spirit men to internalize shame and confusion about their sexuality. For example, one respondent stated, "I don't believe in homosexual sex I am a Christian and God does not approve. I don't have sex." Another stated, "I was raised in the Catholic church which instilled a lot of shame about sexuality in general and self-hatred because of my homosexuality".⁷⁷

Out of this long colonial history has emerged multiple critical issues present today: 1) homophobia is entrenched in Aboriginal societies, 2) Two-Spirit men are estranged from their families, homes, and culture which takes a tremendous toll on their self-esteem, 3) Two-Spirit men have internalized shame and confusion about their sexuality, and 4) Aboriginal youth on Reserves are not always obtaining HIV/AIDS information, and should they leave for cities, they are not equipped with the necessary knowledge to protect themselves.⁷⁸

4. Data from the Focus Groups on poster content

The focus groups participants provided the consultant with robust data on themes, content, and messaging that they felt would motivate their peers to adopt safer sex behaviours. The consultant analyzed the data using qualitative and quantitative methods. In a structured questionnaire administered at the end of each session, he asked participants to identify the poster they recalled as the most effective. The consultant coded the qualitative data into themes about positive and negative content, style, and tone. Wherever possible, the external validity of the focus group data is checked against Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal HIV/AIDS studies and the social marketing literature.

For descriptive brevity, a number (i.e. #77) identifies each poster. Reference to the number in the Study Appendix at www.2spirits.com provides fuller information on the poster, its creator, and its objective(s). The Study Appendix also includes the uncoded, full comments of the focus groups that permit analysis by others, including the creators of each poster.

⁷⁶ Monette and Albert 2001: 34.

⁷⁷ Monnette and Albert 2001: 38.

⁷⁸ Wilson 1996; CAAN 1999a, 2000: 7; Monette and Albert 2001: 57.

4.1 Target consumers

During their review of the Powerpoint© presentation, focus participants constantly reinforced the fact that all new social marketing campaigns must be designed to reach two target consumer groups: 1) Two Spirit men, especially youth, and 2) Aboriginal communities, especially Reserves. It will become clear below that the latter target population must be a focus of significant social change in order to remove barriers to Two-Spirit men’s adoption of safer sex behaviours. Vernon agrees. After a review of Native HIV/AIDS prevention programs across the United States, she recommends, among other things, 1) changing the physical and social environment of the individual, and 2) reaching people “where they live, where they work, and the where they go.”⁷⁹

4.2 Positive self-images and self-esteem

The focus group participants displayed a clear desire for positive self-images of dignified, historically correct, or adapted images of Two-Spirit men. The image that

Touching Noses #77
“should be a poster”, “love, not sex”, “respect”, “clean”, “wholesome”, “Speaks to emotional well-being”, “they have their identity as Aboriginal 2-Spirited men, they have self-esteem, two healthy 2-Spirited men”,

obtained the highest score in the structured questionnaire was not an HIV prevention poster at all, but test image #77. Dignified and artistic images of Two-Spirit men are rare.

According to focus group participants, this rare image speaks psychologically to “emotional well-being” and “self-esteem”. Self-esteem is defined as “confidence in your own merit as an individual”. A history of missionization robbed Two-Spirits of their confidence, identity, and sense of belonging within their culture. They have also been robbed of the very unique fact that they were once considered extraordinary people in their societies. As the studies above show, Two-Spirit men are the subject of great misunderstanding, ostracism, discrimination, and violence at the hands of their own relations. Low self-esteem is chronic within the Two-Spirit men’s community.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Irene S. Vernon, *Killing Us Quietly: Native Americans and HIV/AIDS* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press: 2001).

⁸⁰ Monette and Albert 2001.

All HIV prevention studies concur that positive self-esteem is fundamental to the prevention of HIV infection.⁸¹ For example, University of Toronto researchers have shown that an individual’s self-esteem is directly linked to their ability to change risky sexual behaviour.⁸² The focus groups composed of street engaged and HIV infected/affected people concur that improving self-esteem is the most effective way to motivate their peers to adopt safer sex behaviours. Put another way, chronic low self-esteem is a barrier to many men’s ability to transform their knowledge of HIV into consistent safer sex behaviours.

It was surprising to learn that there are no current social marketing posters that promote a dignified image of a Two-Spirit relationship. So far, only the Pacific People

Pacific People Project’s of New Zealand AIDS Foundation (PPPNZAF)	
Poster #42	Poster #44
“Makes you proud: asset based”, ““Like our Ancestors’ is the best part of the message”, “flower is life, not negative”, “I really like it, multi-sexuality and sky element”, “cool”, “like the reference to ancestors”, “people are moving forward”	“Awesome, asset based-model, mutual pride”, “teamwork”, “all on same wavelength”, “Good use of art”, “You are worth it, you are a jewel, you are sacred, your are not expendable, we can’t replace you”, “will work with a variety of Aboriginal people”.

Project’s of New Zealand AIDS Foundation (PPPNZF) has attempted traditionally-based or historically modified, positive self-images of gay indigenous peoples. Poster #42 features a diverse group of indigenous Pacific Peoples in traditional clothing who clearly form an alternative sexuality. In the poster, they are stepping out from the sea under the caption, “Like Our Ancestors”. Its developers describe the poster as a condom normalization message designed to be “wild and exciting”. Although developed for an entirely different indigenous culture, the focus groups repeatedly commented that, “it makes you proud”. Participants also dearly liked the reference to “ancestors” as it links them with their traditional identity and culture.

⁸¹ Walter and Vaughan 1993; Pauktuutit, “Evaluation of an Inuit HIV/AIDS Survey: A Survey conducted as part of the first Inuit National HIV/AIDS and STDs Training Workshop”, Iqaluit, NWT (1995); Kelly 1995: vii; Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy 1996; Wellings and Field 1996; The Northern Health Research Unit 1998; Quebec First Nations and Inuit HIV/AIDS Working 1999; Health Canada 1999; British Columbia Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Task Force 1999; Marsden 2000; Vernon 2001; Monette and Albert 2001; Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada 2002; CAAN 1999, 2001, 2003, 2004; Métis National Council 2003.

⁸² Myers et. al 2004: 82.

Another PPPNZF poster (#44) describes Pacific Islanders as “The Greatest Treasures of the Pacific” and calls out “Protect our Treasure”. It also obtained very positive feedback. The poster itself is a collage of Pacific Islanders’ faces. The focus groups found the poster to be “awesome”. One person translated the message as, “you are worth it, you are a jewel, you are sacred, you are not expendable, we can’t replace you”. The message clearly countered low self-esteem with the clearly received message: you have merit, you have a place, you are a valuable, you are part of something special, and we need you. This is the message that must be communicated to Two-Spirit men.

Culture is important in Two-Spirit men’s social marketing campaigns. In 1993, La Fortune recommended the empowerment of Two-Spirit people through historically correct and/or adapted social roles that speak to “self-worth and self-preservation”.⁸³ In 1998, CAAN asked various Aboriginal organizations across Canada, “if culture was important in dealing with an illness such as HIV/AIDS”. An overwhelming 90% answered “yes”.⁸⁴ Also in 1998, Watershed Writing found that a majority of Aboriginal inmates and sex trade workers felt culture is important in dealing with HIV/AIDS. In 2001, *Voices* found that 90% of its sample of Two-Spirit men ranked “feeling pride in your cultural background” as “important or very important”.⁸⁵ One anecdote illustrates the power of culturally correct self-images of Two-Spirit men: “for myself my cultural background is very important to me as a person! Knowing who you are in life helps to deal with everyday, one day at a time.”⁸⁶ In sum, culturally correct or adapted modern images of dignified Two-Spirit men will address low self-esteem that is a major barrier to the adoption of safer sex behaviours.

Participants reviewed a third PPPNZF poster (#43), entitled “Queens of the Pacific” that features drag queens dressed as mermaids on a narrow beach between rocky cliffs. It evoked the response,

Pretty cool, we should include some queens in our campaign... Queens have been frontline workers in the fight, they are heroes, they should not be shunned, they should be celebrated as heroes, as warriors.

⁸³ Monette: 10.

⁸⁴ CAAN 1998: 9.

⁸⁵ Monette: 35

⁸⁶ Monette: 37.

This idea is critical as Two-Spirit queens have been among the hardest working, front line workers in the fight against HIV and have suffered greatly from the impacts of HIV and discrimination. Aboriginal people who identify as transgender or transsexual are also hard working, hard-hit front line workers. All front-line, street-engaged Two-Spirit people are modern-day, courageous warriors whose contributions have gone largely under-recognized. Recognition of their work is very important. Studies show that recognition for one's work is important to the development of positive self-esteem and self-worth. Many respondents in *Voices* stated that they want, "To be recognized for the work that I do".⁸⁷ The HIV/AIDS researcher, Driedger emphasizes that people living with HIV/AIDS "need to feel productive and creative, and that they matter to something or someone." New posters should be designed to recognize frontline Two-Spirit warriors for the work and differences that they are making.

In sum, culturally correct or adapted modern images of dignified Two-Spirit men are critical to addressing low self-esteem that is a major barrier to the adoption of safer sex behaviours. In addition, new posters should recognize Aboriginal frontline workers, inclusive of queens, transgender, and transsexual peoples, for the excellent work that they are doing. The latter posters will increase their self-worth and underscore the fundamental importance of their work to the benefit of our culture and society.

4.3 Inclusion and acceptance

The historical study above reveals how Two-Spirit people came to be marginalized from their societies. The literature confirms that today, Two-Spirit men are often estranged from their families, causing them to flee their communities. The literature also shows that communities are largely reluctant to accept the return of Two-Spirit men, especially if they are HIV positive. This climate of exclusion and marginalization profoundly affects the self-esteem of Two-Spirit men and hence their ability to turn their knowledge of HIV prevention into safer sex behaviours. Focus group participants expressed a very high desire for images that speak to inclusion in their families and communities.

⁸⁷ Monnette: 40.

Four posters that contain images of Aboriginal elders (#48, 53, #59, #72) that speak to condom normalization and/or HIV/AIDS discrimination scored very high marks in the structured questionnaire. In particular, the focus groups highly ranked Healing Our Spirit’s poster (#53) featuring a plain portrait of a female elder with the bold caption, “Be Smart Use Protection! Because Grandma Said So!” It was the only posters to evoke the emotional responses, “makes me want to put a condom on” and “it made me cry”. Other

Elders			
Poster #53	Poster #48	Poster #72	Poster #59
“My favourite of all”, “makes me want to put a condom on”, “it made me cry”, “grandmas are the first and final word on it”, “brilliant”, “you are never too young to talk about sex”, “speaks to traditional values”, “it is good to use elders”.	“it works”, “elders hit home”, “pretty powerful”, “He looks sincere, he is hurting”, “gorgeous”.	“like the elder”, “sends message that no matter who you are, HIV is there”	“like the use of grandma”, “good that she is an elder and educated – this will help”, “I can go to granny”, “elders are respected”.

posters featuring Aboriginal elders also scored well. CAAN developed two elder posters addressing HIV/AIDS discrimination, one with an elder against a beautiful landscape panorama of the prairies (#48), the other with an Inuit elder in the arctic (#72).

Responses included “it works” and “pretty powerful”. The First Nations and Inuit of Quebec HIV and AIDS Strategy produced a poster featuring a female elder walking with her grandchildren (#59) that also scored positive input. Elders occupy a special position of respect in Native cultures. Respondents state, “grandmas are the first and final word on it”, “elders are respected”, “elders hit home”, and “elder [are] decision makers and respected”. The posters also struck a chord with the focus groups because elder involvement in HIV/AIDS awareness counters the participants’ feelings of marginalization from their communities and culture. In short, images of elders, very influential members of their communities, speak to the participants’ strong desire to one day, obtain family and community acceptance.

The issue of family acceptance came out strongly in poster #40 featuring an in-

Poster #40 “You are not my son anymore”
“family acceptance is very important” “Extremely powerful, intimate, intense, lots of emotion, very close, most powerful image of the whole presentation” “message is very important” “speaks to people’s experiences” “very striking”, “very realistic”

your-face portrait of a stern-faced Black father, stating, “Your not my son anymore”. The poster is designed to redress the pain of discrimination, stigmatization, shame, and ostracism. Focus group participants uniformly stated that it is, “very realistic” and “speaks to

people’s experiences”. Others stated clearly, “family acceptance is very important”. In sum, Two-Spirit men have experienced life histories of family ostracism and discrimination. They want these experiences reversed.

Posters designed to address homophobia and AIDSphobia obtained high praise from the focus groups. New Zealand AIDS Foundation’s simple black and white poster (#13) with the large words, “AIDS Attacks the Body: Prejudice Attacks the Spirit”, “Both can kill” is exemplary. This poster evoked a high emotional response on several levels because it “covers the two key issues” that “can kill”: 1) living with the HIV and, 2) dealing with multiple stigmas. Participants stressed, “The prejudice message is so

Prejudice Attacks the Spirit
“covers the two key issues”, “The prejudice message is so important”, “speaks to the mental state”, “the word ‘spirit’ is good”, “it explains that both can kill”, “the word spirit is good”, “Effective”.

important”. It speaks to peoples’ “mental” and “spiritual”, they said. Once again, the issue of prejudices that cause self-esteem difficulties is found to be a critical issue.

It is important to note that the use of the word “spirit” in poster #13 resonated widely among participants. In part, this is because the Two-Spirit men’s identity is grounded in the embodiment of spirits. In another respect, it is because spirituality is very important in the lives of Two-Spirit men. In 2001, *Voices* found that 93% of its sample felt “spirituality” was “important or very important” in their lives.⁸⁸ One participant’s anecdote illustrates the issue: “At times I’m very dissatisfied with my life in general. I need more spirituality in my life.”⁸⁹ This spirituality must be Native-based, not Christian. In this study, the focus groups roundly rejected two Christian-based posters in the presentation (#36, 37). Although they said it

⁸⁸ Monette and Albert 2001: 35
⁸⁹ Monnette and Albert 2001: 38.

was brave for a European bishop to speak out against homophobia (#36), they felt there was absolutely no ability for Christian messages to improve their personal lives. In effect, focus group participants know all too well the historical effect of Christianity on their current conditions. The HIV/AIDS researcher, Driedger, agrees. He notes that PHAs, “generally reject religious institutions”, but confirms that spirituality plays an “important role” in the lives of PHAs because it provides “a sense of meaning and purpose in life.”⁹⁰ Two-Spirit men wish to build and improve spirituality within their lives. The distinction is poster #13 between the effects of HIV on the body and the effects discrimination on a person’s spirit is very effective. The focus groups’ analysis of poster #13 confirms that they have lived lives filled with homophobia and AIDSphobia and know well that prejudice “can kill” and that they want more spirituality in their lives.

Some indigenous ASOs, like Australia’s National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health (ANACCH) have begun to address the issue of family acceptance. The ANACCH poster “We’re Family Too” (#45) aims to reduce the experiences of discrimination, vilification and stigmatization experienced by Australian indigenous

We’re Family Too #45
<p>“family acceptance is a key issue”, “It is a widespread issue and the poster makes nice connections”, “HIV affects everybody around them”.</p>

gay men, lesbians, and sistersgirls. Although the complex use of lines and circles in the poster was found to be confusing, focus group participants

emphasized that “I can really relate to this” and “family acceptance is a key issue”.

In sum, a real sense of inclusion, acceptance, and spirituality is critical to improving Two-Spirit men’s self-esteem, life purpose, and sense of control over their destinies. The focus groups stressed the need for direct action to reduce stigma and discrimination and build acceptance among their families and communities. Changing Aboriginal community values, especially the reversal of deeply embedded homophobia, is a formidable challenge, but fundamental to reducing barriers to the adoption of safer sex behaviours. Large-scale social change, although very challenging, is what social marketing is designed to achieve.

⁹⁰ Monette and Albert 2001: 10.

4.4 Care and Love, not Sex

In 2001, *Voices* found that 89% of their respondents rated their “sexual identity” as “important or very important” in their lives.⁹¹ Most two-Spirit men’s sexual identity, however, does not revolve around sex. The focus groups strongly rejected posters with sexually explicit material. Instead, participants consistently expressed a desire to promote and build a self-image of their alternative indigenous sexuality as not being sex-centred, but much more centred on love, care, kindness, and mutual respect.

In addition to the elements of self-esteem already discussed above, the image of two Two-Spirit men tenderly touching noses (#77) elicited very positive results because it projects an image of love and respect, as opposed to the all too common HIV prevention poster image of two or more men involved in graphic sex. Across the board, participants appreciated posters that emphasize love over sex. Examples include two posters involving cowboy images (#1, 2). Although the focus groups universally found cowboy celebration to be culturally offensive, they still appreciated the fact that the image “looks like love, doesn’t speak of sex.” Participants’ preference for images of love, care, and respect is consistent with Beaver’s explanation that being Two-Spirited is not about sex, but about culture: “Our ways of talking, interacting with each other, ways of seeing the world and how we experience life are different from other First Nations people”.⁹²

In another example, participants highly praised an indigenous Australian “Sistergirls” poster (#46) for its brilliant combination of humour, sexual playfulness, and tender content, along with its very serious message addressing the issue of sistergirl discrimination. Its creators explain that the poster is designed to address self-esteem with the major goal:

to empower indigenous Sistergirls and transgender communities by raising HIV/AIDS awareness; address underlying issues such as isolation; and promote positive self-esteem which in turn promotes individuals to engage in safer sexual practices, such as condom usage.”

Participants described the Sistergirl poster as “attention getting”, “funny”, and “very good”. They especially appreciated the theme of tenderness over sex.

⁹¹ Monnette: 35.

⁹² Beaver 1992.

The focus groups' view that effective posters should be about love, tenderness, and caring, and not about sex, is reinforced by their strongly negative reactions to the large number of erotic, sexual images produced by mainstream gay ASOs. A classic example is poster #15 of a young white male with cum dripping down his face under the caption "Have a Sucking Good Time". They considered it to be "Too much porn shit" and "offensive to elders".

It should be noted that some ASOs attempted to design posters depicting non-

Too sexually explicit
"equates sex with love; sex not necessary" (#20)
"too dirty" (#6, 15)
"Too graphic", "too explicit" [#6, 8]
"too raunchy" [#6]
"offensive" [#6]
"Too much porn shit", "porn" [#6, 7, 15, 34]
"Overkill, way too much" [#6, 7, 8, 34]
"hate it" [#7, 8]
"Very crude" [#7]
"Natives are more private, not so graphic" [#6, 8]
"disrespectful to elders" [#15]
"the message is useless" [#15]
"too careless" [#34]

sexual, caring gay relationships, but failed in the eyes of the focus groups. One example is the San Francisco AIDS Foundation's (SFAF) poster entitled "Family Values" (#31). The poster features two gay men embracing with a long text in the margin that dignifies gay relationships as consistent with the concept of "family".

While the focus groups appreciated the

objective of the poster, they reacted very negatively to the sexual positioning of the two models. "It looks like fucking, not a family", stated one participant. Another added, "it mocks our whole situation". "The whole situation" of Two-Spirit men involves the trauma of family and community ostracism, discrimination, and alienation. The primary life goal of Two-Spirit men is not to form alternative families, but to become a respected part of their existing families.

At this point in the analysis, it is clear that, sexually explicit material offends the values of many Two-Spirit men. Some participants stated, "Natives are more private, not so graphic", while many participants felt that explicit material would offend members of their communities and be "disrespectful to elders". It may also be added that, "Research shows that explicit imagery does not necessarily increase recall" and thus this approach may be ineffective in many other cultural settings.⁹³ It is clear that Two-Spirit men's culture is about more than sex and their dreams involve dignity, love, care, and family

⁹³ Wellings and Field 1996: 95.

acceptance. Sexually explicit HIV prevention images clearly turn them off of the message and may reinforce barriers to the adoption of the basic message of safer sex.

Sexually explicit posters are completely ineffective with Two-Spirit men. New posters should speak to love, care, respect, and inclusion. The absence of love and tenderness in the Two-Spirit men’s life experiences should not be further compounded with the production of more sexually explicit material that enforces a barrier to their adoption of the message. Non-Aboriginal ASOs who design and display materials in venues frequented by Two-Spirit men should be made aware of this finding.

4.5 Cultural survival

Focus group participants found two posters regarding the history Aboriginal cultural survival to be highly effective. A poster from the United States (#49) contains a

Residential Schools and Disease	
Poster #49	Poster #62
“Extremely, extremely powerful”, “very emotional”, “I get a rush from it”, “historical is important”, “It is all about the fight!”, “Survival defines First Nations”, “[I] identity with it”, “a history of what we’ve been through”, “we are survivors”, “no matter what they throw at us, we are still here”, “shows history of what we have come from”.	“elder brings it power and respect”, “Brilliant”, “very, very impactful”, “I think people will read every word”, “people want to know history”, “old pictures work – very effective”, “like it – about history”.

real archival photograph of Aboriginal youth lined up outside an American residential school. The caption reads, “They survived war, displacement, missionaries, smallpox, and boarding schools. We can’t let AIDS beat us now”. A similar poster (#62) by the

Alberta Aboriginal ASO, Feather of Hope, features an abstract drawing of an Aboriginal elder with the message, “In the old days it was TB and smallpox, Now its AIDS. Protect the People. Get Involved”. Both posters were viewed as very powerful and effective. Emotional responses included, “Extremely, extremely powerful”. Participants identified strongly with the concept of survival, stating, “[I] identity with it”, “shows history of what we have come from”, and “we are survivors”.

The finding is that historical themes of cultural survival resonate with Two-Spirit men as it situates them in a historical continuum of struggle and survival. Survival is

linked to the motivation not to give up and to make the adjustments necessary for personal and cultural survival.

4.6 Barriers: Issues of sincerity, glamour, and self-identification

Two-Spirit men have grown up knowing they are different. Unlike the most recent generation of Western gay men, they continue to grow up in the absence of role models with whom they can develop a sense of their identity and project themselves into the future. As indicated above, there is a current absence of visible Two-Spirit role models, especially for youth on Reserves where sexual health is not discussed and sexuality materials are not readily available.

In social marketing, it is well known that role models must be chosen with care.⁹⁴ The selection of the wrong role model is more than just ineffective, it can cause Two-Spirit men to feel more isolated and alienated from society. As found above, sexually explicit images do not motivate Two-Spirit men to adopt safer sex behaviours and alienates them from the messaging. In this section, it is found that additional barriers can be created or reinforced by the selection of role models that are: 1) insincere, and 2) too glamorous.

Participants exhibited strong negative responses to posters with models who

Lack of sincerity in Aboriginal models
“nice smile but HIV is a serious thing” (#68) “actor is not convincing” (#50) “looks like a fashion plate” (#50) “the face and message don’t match” (#50) “too healthy” (#50) “looks fake” (#50) “she is too happy” (#59) “too happy, needs to be more serious” (#59) “not impressed, the guy is not real” (#65) “just a guy who likes to fish” (#65) “smile bugs me” (#70) “don’t like arms crossed, it is a shield” (#70) “not a sincere look” (#67) “can’t relate to him” (#67) “too much of a role model – don’t relate to the well-off Indian” (#67) “tired of the clean cut people” (#50, #67) “get someone from the hood” (#67)

appeared to be insincere and/or emotionally unaffected by HIV. Of particular concern are posters intended to target Aboriginal audiences. Specifically, a Canadian poster (#50) designed to address Aboriginal homophobia, stigma, and isolation failed poorly in this study. It is important to note why. The poster features an Aboriginal male with the caption “Because of HIV, Greg’s family doesn’t talk to him any more.” It concludes with the message, “Don’t add to

⁹⁴ Wellings and Field 1996: 64.

his isolation”. While members of the focus group felt it was “brave” for the model to include himself and appreciated the poster’s objective, they widely found the poster to be flawed due to the model’s posture and appearance. One participant stated, “Greg doesn’t appear to have gone through a life of hell and abuse”. Another said, “Greg looks like he is doing just fine without his mom and dad”. Across all focus groups, participants found a complete “lack of sincerity” in the arrangement of Greg’s portrait.

The same problem emerges in series of five posters produced by The First Nations and Inuit of Quebec HIV and AIDS Strategy. Each poster features a different Aboriginal role model (a female elder #59; a young Inuit male #65; a young male Northern Cree #68; an Aboriginal male medical doctor #67; and a young male doctor #70) with the identical text about the fact that they are doing their “part to prevent the spread of HIV in my community”. The focus groups responded negatively to every model except the female elder. Responses included, “the guy is not real” (#65), “just a guy who likes to fish” (#65), “too much of a role model – don’t relate to the well-off Indian” (#67), and “tired of the clean cut people” (#67). In addition, the repetition of the same message in each poster in the series causes it to lose sincerity. The conclusion is that these model choices and their posture do not work for Two-Spirit men. In addition, the prominence of such models contributes to the estrangement of Two-Spirit men from their communities as they cannot relate to the models or their message. Additionally, the choice of these models affects the self-worth of front-line Two-Spirit workers as the posters celebrate a different breed of Aboriginal HIV message bearers and do not include or recognize the less well-off, marginalized, impoverished front line people working hard at the centre of the epidemic.

Family abandonment, community ostracism, and isolation are serious issues. The selection of models’ and their postures in these posters do not address this issue. In fact, these posters confound the problem of Two-Spirit men’s estrangement from Aboriginal society and the loss of self-worth. Overall, it is very important to select models with care and use social marketing campaigns as an opportunity to recognize those who are doing the hard, day-to-day, frontline work. The wise choice of models are Two-Spirit males who are not clean cut and middle class, but people who appear to have suffered discrimination, poverty, and alienation and speak with sincerity from deep experiences.

A few non-Aboriginal posters in the sample presentation are exemplary of convincing sincerity. ACT’s poster #69 is a black and white image of an urban gay male with a serious, concerned look on his face. The caption reads: “I’m HIV Negative... but I’m living with AIDS”. The poster’s border contains a short, fine printed testimonial. Participants reacted very positively to the poster with such comments as, “the very

Poster #69
“the subtle eagerness and concern in his face, unlike the others above with big smiles” “this one seems concerned, sincere, worried about others around him”. “love this one, he looks serious, looks concerned”, “very, very good”, “serious, concerned”, “looks like he will break down”, “message of concern, good”, “looks concerned”, “very serious face draws you in”, “So many people are effected in the community – it is a good message”.

serious face draws you in”. Participants also commented positively about, “the subtle eagerness and concern in his face, unlike the others above with big smiles”. They added, “this one seems concerned, sincere, worried about others around him”. Others stated, “love this one, he looks serious, looks concerned”, and he “looks like he will break down.” On the same note, the Australian sistergirl poster #57 obtained high praise because it involves, “emotional people” who

are “not beauties, normal people”. Another example is poster #48 that participants appreciated because, “He looks sincere, he is hurting”. In sum, the model must appear to be sincere, affected by HIV, and be concerned for their community.

Participants expressed a strong disfavour for glamorous posters. Western gay glamour, it would seem, is hard for participants to relate to and increases their sense of

Too glamorous
“too glamorous” [#1] “just twinkies” [#4] “doesn’t do anything” [#4] “too clean” [#4] “I can’t relate to it” [#4] “not realistic” [#4] “cliché” [#4] “too fab, too romantic, too slick” [#20] “does nothing for me” [#20] “equates sex with love” [#20] “extremely judgmental, moralizing, I don’t like being associated” [#30] “pompous, don’t like it” [#30] “don’t use pretty boys who look so healthy” [#4, 30] “too high and mighty” [#30] “condescending” [#30] “more of the fab group” [#39]

alienation and estrangement. While the literature often cites these posters as highly memorable, provocative, and award winning, Two-Spirit men cannot relate and find them counterproductive. Examples include posters #1, 2, 4, 20, and 30. Participants stated, “I can’t relate to it”, “not realistic”, “pompous, don’t like it”, “condescending” “don’t use pretty boys who look so healthy”, “too high and mighty”, and “more of the fab group”.

In sum, Two-Spirit men do not relate to images of gay glamour. Indeed, their non-identification with this lifestyle increases their alienation, estrangement, and marginalization from society. Glamorous posters decrease Two-Spirit self-esteem and self-worth and form a barrier to their motivation to adopt safer sex behaviours.

In sum, participants clearly want dignified images of Two-Spirit men in caring, loving situations, with whom they can relate. The models must be sincere, real, concerned about their community, and not glamorous.

4.7 Complications with Condom Normalization

The goal of this study is to find effective ways to make condom use the norm within Two-Spirit men’s culture. A number of posters in the sample presentation were designed to normalize consistent condom use.⁹⁵ Focus group participants emphasized that it was not just good enough to inform people to wear a condom, but that “Natives

Condoms on penis
“Guy with condom is good” (#8) “the condom on his dick makes it obvious what it is going to look like. It can be effective” (#8) “The condom on the dildo “puts realism in your face.” (#7) “It is reality-based” (#7) “It has an impact, it makes you think” (#7) “Good because he is wearing a condom” (#8)

need the visual of wearing a condom”. These comments reflect the fact that many Native Reserve communities do not teach safer sex including the basics of condom application. Obviously, the best way to illustrate correct condom use is to show how it should look on a

penis. A number of non-Aboriginal ASOs have done just this in graphic, sexually explicit posters (#7, 8). Participants affirmed the wisdom of this graphic approach, “the condom on his dick makes it obvious what it is going to look like”, and it “puts realism in your face”. There is, however, is a problem, as explicit sexual imagery is not acceptable for the Aboriginal consumer audience. As discussed above, the same posters, while effective as illustrating condom application, were found to be, “Too much porn shit”, “Overkill, way too much”, and “offensive to elders”.

In sum, the challenge arises as to how to create a visual image of what a condom looks like on a penis without being sexually explicit.

⁹⁵ Wellings and Field 1996: 113-14.

5. Refinement of the Analysis regarding Content

5.1 Low self-esteem, drugs, alcohol, and sex

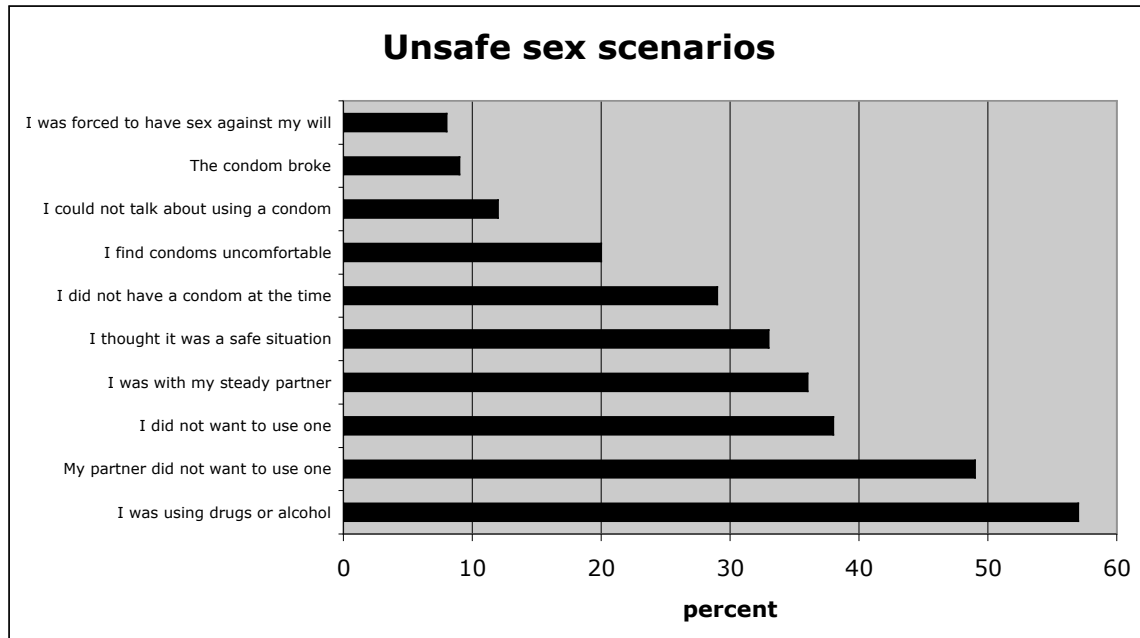
It has been found that the focus group participants desire inclusion in their families and communities, strong spiritual connections, and relationships based on love, care, respect, and recognition for the work they do. Instead, they live lives deeply affected by homophobia, discrimination, family and community alienation, abuse, and hell. As a result, their self-esteem has reached a chronic low level. As shown, low self-esteem impedes Two-Spirit man's ability to change risky behaviour. Some safer sex messages, such as gay glamour and insincere Aboriginal models, create or reinforce Two-Spirit men's alienation and estrangement. This study's findings agree in every respect with *Voices'* findings:

There are too many Two-Spirits who are excluded from the circle, estranged from their traditions, families, and communities. Our survey respondents have shown us a deep craving for self-esteem, familial love, community belonging, and spiritual connection. If their families and reserves reject them – if their traditional healers, elders and teachers denounce them – they will try to find what they are seeking elsewhere. More than any other factor, it is the sense of alienation that contributes to engaging in the high-risk activities that make them vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.⁹⁶

When *Voices* states that Two-Spirit men “will try to find what they are seeking elsewhere”, the authors are referring to alcohol, drugs, and sex. The authors asked their respondents about the situations in which they had engaged in unsafe sex. Fifty-seven percent (57%) explained, “I was using drugs and alcohol”.⁹⁷ The second and third highest categories are that they or their partner did not want to use a condom. The following anecdote perfectly explains how Two-Spirit men's search for self-esteem and

⁹⁶ Monette and Albert 2001.

⁹⁷ Monette and Albert 2001: 45.



affection interacts with drugs, alcohol, and sex to create situations for risky sex behaviour:

we are a people with very low self-esteem. Alcohol and drugs are the real problem. We use substances to get away and hide, we get drunk and high, we may have unsafe sex, or we may have safe sex. Sometimes we just do not care. Alcohol and drugs gives us courage sometimes. It is not even the sex. It is the affection that we really want.⁹⁸

In essence, this Two-Spirit man wants affection and improved self-esteem, but in its absence, he use drugs and alcohol that impedes safer sex actions. For this man, low self-esteem means, “Sometimes we just do not care”. Another participant explains how his low self-esteem impedes his ability or interest in transforming his knowledge of HIV into safer sex behaviours:

Although I am very aware of the issues around HIV/AIDS and Aboriginal Two Spirited men I struggle with my own risk behaviours. It is about self-esteem and a sense of belonging sometimes when I engage in high risk behaviours. I really do not care if I become sick.⁹⁹

In sum, people need to feel positive self-esteem, self-worth, and have a sense that the future holds hope for re-inclusion in their own societies and for the development of

⁹⁸ Monette and Albert 2001: 58.

⁹⁹ Monette and Albert 2001: 58.

relationships based on affection and love. In the absence of such important prospects for his life, this man does “not care if I become sick”.

Currently, alcohol and drugs are a major factor in the creation of high-risk sex situations for Two-Spirit men. In this study, the consultant could only locate one HIV social marketing campaign poster that addressed alcohol, sex, and the risk of HIV infection. Poster #22, entitled “Bottoms Up”, encourages gay men to carry condoms when they going out drinking. Focus group participants overwhelmingly said, “this is a really critical message” and that “alcohol needs to be addressed, it is so widespread”. Indeed, many agreed that, “alcohol makes us feel better due to oppression” and that, “this is something that we really need to work on”. These statements, the above figures and quotations from *Voices*, and multiple studies confirm that alcohol is a major contributing factor to high-risk situations.

It is clearly important to address Two-Spirit men’s abuse of alcohol and drugs. On this topic, the consultant and the Advisory committee held many discussions. It was agreed that alcohol and drugs are clearly abused as a substitute for self-esteem issues. The root problem, however, is not the drugs, but low self-esteem. The Advisory Committee and the consultant therefore decided to target the root problem of low self-esteem in this social marketing campaign.

5.2 Aboriginal homophobia

The literature stresses the need to understand the life histories and the causes for the marginalization of Two-Spirit men. Aboriginal homophobia is the fundamental cause of Two-Spirit men’s estrangement from family and community, loss of dignity and self-love, and the source of grief, despair, and low self-esteem. In addition, multiple losses, including premature violent deaths, contribute to despair and prompt a turn to substance abuse to numb these losses. These traumas contribute to marginalization and to some degree, homophobia, because some Aboriginal people, including Two-Spirits may use lateral violence as a means to avoid dealing with the core losses almost universally experienced by Aboriginal people. It is clear that homophobia is widespread and deeply entrenched in many Aboriginal communities.¹⁰⁰ In the conclusion to its major study, the

¹⁰⁰ Personal Communication, Kevin Barlow, Executive Director, CAAN, 7 December 2006.

authors of *Voices* concluded, “the core issue of homophobia must be addressed if we seriously hope to see a reduction in risk-taking behaviour among Two-Spirited men”.¹⁰¹ Numerous studies, including Aboriginal ASO reports, academic papers, The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and The Ministerial Council on HIV/AIDS, agree.¹⁰²

The historical study above reveals that homophobia is not a traditional Aboriginal value, but that missionaries thoroughly instilled this arbitrary hatred in Native communities. Aboriginal homophobia is a result of colonization. This aspect of Aboriginal colonization receives little attention in a large literature on the history of the impacts of contact between Natives and Europeans. While Aboriginal political leaders are working hard to de-colonize their social and political structures from European influences and control, there have been little or no efforts by these leaders to address the assumption of European gender and sexual norms in their communities.

Focus groups participants stressed the need for direct action to reduce stigma and discrimination and build acceptance among their families and communities. Changing Aboriginal community values, especially the reversal of deeply embedded homophobia, is a formidable challenge, but fundamental to reducing barriers to the adoption of safer sex behaviours. Large-scale social change, although very challenging, is what social marketing is designed to achieve. The necessary and appropriate path is to accelerate the de-colonization of Aboriginal sexual values.

5.3 De-colonization: the route to inclusion and improved self-esteem

In 1992, Susan Beaver eloquently brought the history and current conditions of Two-Spirit people before *The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People*. Most importantly, she called it time for Two-Spirits to reclaim their dignified traditional roles in Aboriginal society. The route is clear. *Voices* states that the concept of Two-Spiritness is “a way for the Aboriginal gay community to promote and support itself and become accepted again as part of mainstream Aboriginal society.” This is de-

¹⁰¹ Monette and Albert 2001.

¹⁰² McLeod and Peterson 1993; Walter and Vaughan 1993; Pauktuutit 1995; Kelly 1995; Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy 1996; The Northern Health Research Unit 1998; Quebec First Nations and Inuit HIV/AIDS Working 1999; British Columbia Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Task Force 1999; CAAN 1999a, 1999b, 2001, 2003, 2004; Monette and Albert 2001; Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada 2002; Ryan 2003; Wilson 2003; Métis National Council 2003; Nilimaa 2004.

colonization: teaching Aboriginal communities that they have, in addition to many other things, internalized the Western concept of homophobia and should throw off this colonizers' messages as part of their larger agenda to reclaim the capacity to define their social and cultural values, ethics, and norms. Many have repeated Beaver's recommendation.¹⁰³

Decolonization is by no means simple. *Turning Point* states: "Many practitioners believe that permanent, large-scale behavior change is best achieved through changing community norms -- a process that can require time and patience".¹⁰⁴ Decolonization is not merely about community "awareness" of Two-Spiritness, but about changing the social environment in which Two-Spirit people grow up and wish to remain a part of. Wholesale Aboriginal community acceptance of Two-Spirit people is the most concrete incentive for Two-Spirit men to adopt safer behaviours.¹⁰⁵ This major social change in Aboriginal communities involves: 1) the elimination of homophobia and insurance that communities embrace, honour, and respect all their people, and 2) the creation of a new environment in which sexuality and safer sex can be talked about openly.¹⁰⁶

For over a decade, Aboriginal ASOs have taken the first and hardest steps. Here, Two-Spirit people, often living with HIV, have entered Reserves and other Aboriginal communities to offer safer sex education. Their work needs to be augmented with a wide-scale social marketing campaign. This report recommends that this wide-scale campaign involve a series of sustainable posters that, 1) explain and dignify the extraordinary lives and cultural traditions of Two-Spirit people, 2) create awareness of the pain and suffering caused by the homophobic outcome of colonization, 3) acknowledge the work of frontline workers, including queens, transgender, and transsexual people. This report also recommends, 4) a traveling art show about Two-Spirit men, 5) the erection of a statue that concretely represents the oldest alternative gender and sexual traditions in North America, and 6) Two-Spirit grief counseling.

Before the specifics of these recommendations can be outlined, it is necessary to understand Two-Spirit men's preferred tones and styles for posters, art, and other media.

¹⁰³ Beaver 1992; Deschamps 1998; CAAN 1999b; Albert and Monette 2001: 10; Vernon 2001; Ryan 2003.

¹⁰⁴ *Turning Point*: 3.

¹⁰⁵ Vernon 2001.

¹⁰⁶ Monette and Albert 2001: 57.

6. Data on tone and style

The consultant selected posters that, in addition to being representative of a spectrum of content, are representative of the variety of tones and styles used in HIV prevention messages. Focus group participants also commented on the tone and styles that would most effectively capture the attention of their peers.

6.1 Aboriginal Cultural Motifs

Any new poster for HIV prevention among Two-Spirit men must contain Aboriginal culture motifs such as the medicine wheel and circular forms.

The focus groups identified the medicine wheel as a critical cultural motif. Poster #57 featuring a medicine wheel scored highly in the structured questionnaire. One participant stated, “the four directions is excellent -- it is critical”, while others felt “all the elements” are present.

Another Aboriginal poster (#66) contains two hands forming a circle that frames a traditionally dressed male. The use of a circle and the colours of the four directions

Medicine wheel
“it has all the elements” (#57)
“The circles overlap to show relationships” (#57)
“The 4 directions is excellent – it is critical” (#57)
“like the circle, feather, and colours”, (#66)
“very cultural” (#66)
“art is cool” (#51)
“not a Hollywood image” (#51)
“canoe as a journey, travel, speaks to us” (#51)
“eye catching” (#51)
“imagery is nice” (#51)
“very native” (#51)

prompted very positive responses from participants. An Aboriginal ASO poster (#51) featuring a Haida canoe with a wreath around its bow also scored well for style. The canoe served as a metaphor for the message, “AIDS knows no boundaries”. It stimulated the imagination of participants as some stated, “the boat travels like the virus” and that life, like a canoe, was “a journey”. It was found to be eye-catching, thought provoking, and memorable. Finally, the

background prairie imagery in CAAN’s posters #48 also prompted much imagination and contemplation. Participants saw the background as symbolic of a “storm” or “winds of change”.

Not all posters containing Aboriginal motifs work. Posters containing an

Ineffective use of cultural elements
“conflicting imagery” (#54)
“teepee with Northwest coast design is all wrong, not good” (#54)
“message is nice, the art work is flat” (#58)
“good for awareness, but it will not lead to behaviour change” (#58)
“does nothing” (#63)
“cute, not effective” (#61)
“doesn’t work” (#61)

inaccurate mélange of cultures, such as a teepee with a Northwest coast design (#54), were considered wrong and confusing. In addition, posters with “flat” or “uninspiring” artwork were deemed to be ineffective at motivating

behaviour change (#58, 61, 63).

The straightforward finding is that Aboriginal HIV social marketing efforts should include the medicine wheel and circles as prominent motifs. In addition, Aboriginal cultural items that can act as metaphors for life, change, or continuity are effective. Care should be taken not to use “flat” artwork that “does nothing” to motivate behaviour change.

6.2 Minimal use of text

The focus group data reveals a clear preference for posters that contain a short, succinct message in large, clear print. Posters with too much text or messages that twist and meander around the poster were not popular. For example, SFAF’s poster #9

Too busy
“Too busy”, (#9) (#66)
“people can’t read it” (#9) (#55)
“the picture grabs you, but the words are too small” (#9)
“The message is lost” (#9)
“message is too confusing” (#16, 18, 27, 56)
“too wordy” (#9, 18, 27, 65, 66)
“Can’t see the message” (#16)
“colours and fonts descend to childish letters”, (#27)
“lettering jammed” (#55)
“bad font”, “bad text” (#55)
“too much guessing to figure it all out” (#56)
“no one wants to stand and read it” (#59)
“too cluttered” (70)

obtained comments like, “Too busy, too much to read”, “people can’t read it”. The concern is that, “The message is lost”.

Posters with minimal text received high grades. Perhaps the most minimal message in the whole sample is the People of Colour Against AIDS’ poster #25. It is a

simple image of white chalk letters on a blackboard that read, “AIDS Is A White Man’s Disease”; smaller red lettered words below read, “famous last words”. A small portion of the focus groups found the message to be insulting, while overall, the message was found to be highly effective due to its dramatic text, minimalist imagery, and relevant message.

“AIDS Is A White Man’s Disease”
“excellent, just the way it is. It belongs all over every Rez.” “very high marks” “very dramatic” “Still relevant” “it will work well in Aboriginal community”

In sum, posters with minimal text are overwhelming found to be more effective. These findings are consistent with the current emphasis in social marketing that the message be a direct and succinct “call to action”.

6.3 Humour

European HIV social marketing agencies are divided on the use of humour to motivate behaviour change. Wellings and Field explain, “Some think that humour diminishes the ability to understand and hence act upon the message, others that humour increases the acceptance of the message”.¹⁰⁷ A Canadian researcher, Baggaley, found through experimentation that humour effectively reaches individuals with risk behaviours.¹⁰⁸ In the end, Wellings and Field conclude from a review of the literature that humour increases recipients’ attention and allows social marketers to more easily approach taboos like sex, which is especially sensitive in Aboriginal communities.¹⁰⁹

In this study, focus groups participants responded very favourably to humorous posters. In their opinion, “humour is a great approach” and that various forms of humour

Positive use of Humour
“humour is a great approach” (#33) (#23) (#24)
“brilliant” (#47)
“humour and sexuality” (#47)
“A 2-Spirited superhero would be awesome” (#47)
“a brown superhero, that is different” (#47)
“it will reach youth” (#47)
“comical, which is good” (#33)
“cracks me up” (#33)
“humorous, not trite”, (#33)
“makes you think” (#23)
“good, fun, not busy” (#23)
“attention getting” (#46)
“I love it” (#46)
“funny, throws humour” (#46)
“emotional people” (#46)
“comedy but tender” (#46)
“not beauties, normal people” (#46)

“make you think”. One positive example is poster (#33) that took an erotic Central (East) Indian painting and pasted on the words, “If you think this looks dangerous, trying doing it without a condom”. The poster received the greatest outbursts of laughter. All found that the poster, although not targeted well for an Aboriginal audience, possessed the right combination of humour, playfulness, acceptable eroticism, and artfulness.

¹⁰⁷ Wellings and Field 1996: 59.

¹⁰⁸ Wellings and Field 1996: 59.

¹⁰⁹ Wellings and Field 1996: 60, 95.

In a very innovative medium, the Australian Health Board came out with a poster depicting an indigenous Australian as a comic book superhero named “Condomman” (#47) who goes about making sex safer on the continent. The concept of a “brown superhero” was extremely well received. Some participants argued that a Two-Spirit superhero would be a very effective device. This campaign approach is also very sustainable as the hero’s actions can be easily updated over time.

In sum, participants indicated uniformly that humour is effective in the Aboriginal community.

6.4 Minimalist, light-hearted

In the mid-1990s, a “new breed” of condom advertisements appeared that are “light hearted and minimalist” with the simple goal to keep condom use on everybody’s mind as part of routine prevention.¹¹⁰ Early poster examples come from Switzerland in which condoms were arranged in playful ways to symbolize every day circular objects such as the moon. Examples followed in which condoms were made to appear as a Life Saver brand candy (#19) or were contrasted to a construction site hard hat (#14).

Wellings and Field remark that the condoms are arranged to “function as ideogrammatic

Minimalist, light-hearted
“gives you a chuckle” (#19)
“visually simplistic” (#19)
“round” (#19)
“like the simplicity” (#14, 19)
“like it a lot, very good for youth and pre-teen” (#14)
“excellent” (#38)
“funny” (#38)
“works in North” (#38)
innovative” (#3)
“very clever” (#3)
and “effective” (#3)
“Love it” (#10)
“Recognizable, catches the eye” (#10)
“Very clever” (#10)
“awesome” (#11)

puzzles, riddles, or puns, inviting the audience to decipher their meaning.”¹¹¹ Posters that contrasted condoms to other objects or formed parts of puzzles scored very well with the focus groups.

In one example, the AIDS Committee of Sudbury’s constructed an ideogrammatic puzzle juxtaposing a parka and a condom (#38). Above the parka, the poster explained, “In Northern

Ontario, this coat may protect you from the cold virus”. Above, the condom, it states, “This coat, however, will protect you from a deadly virus”. Participants disapproved of

¹¹⁰ Wellings and Field 1996: 114.

¹¹¹ Wellings and Field 1996: 115.

the use of the word “deadly” in the poster, but responded favourably to its use of an object familiar to northern Aboriginal people and found it “funny”. In another puzzle format, participants highly scored a stylized image of a purple condom stretched over a speeding bullet (#3). The broad consensus is that poster #3 is “innovative”, “very clever”, and “effective”

In 2003, ACT applied the ideogrammatic puzzle format to a series of creative posters. Poster #10 features an iconographic image of a Toronto street map. A closer examination, or second glance, reveals that certain streets in Toronto’s familiar street pattern are arranged to form a large penis. In a second poster (#11), ACT designed a nighttime starscape with the stars forming two men having sex. Both posters encourage people to “explore” their sexuality. Both apply minimalism and ACT states that they are designed to encourage sexual expression and sexual self-esteem. Participants found both posters to be “clever”, “eye-catching”, “cool”, and “awesome”. Act explains that it deliberately left out the words “HIV/AIDS” or a message about safer sex as it felt it could address self-esteem best without appearing to be another prevention poster. Participants, however, found the absence of this message to be unfortunate.

In conclusion, puzzles using condoms or familiar scenes are highly effective because they draw people into the poster and people appreciate messages that are clever, creative, and “make you think”.

6.5 Multicultural collages

A number of posters reviewed are collages of many faces representative of many cultures (#20, 24, 27, 28). Participants responded very positively to these collages. The primary reason appears to be that the collages show that HIV/AIDS affects “everyone”, “everywhere”. In the case of posters #24 and #27, participants expressed great pleasure at seeing an Aboriginal face within the collage of peoples from the world. In addition to the presence of faces from multiple cultures, participants identified posters “inclusive of old, young, men, [and] women” as particularly important because they are the most inclusive. For example, poster #27 obtained high marks because it included a spectrum of ages and sex in addition to cultures. The poster also scored well because it included an array of culturally significant geographies ranging from an urban environment, to

suburbia, to plains, and mountains. In sum, poster #27, inclusive of an Aboriginal man and other peoples from around the world in various geographies is effective because it communicates that HIV/AIDS affects all types of people everywhere.

In sum, participants found that posters inclusive of multiple cultures, ages, sexes, genders, and geographies were very effective. As opposed to being the primary “target” of all posters, participants appear to be indicating that posters that show Aboriginal people within a spectrum of those affected reduce any possible stigmatization of their culture as a specific “risk group”.

6.6 Conclusions on themes and styles

The focus groups showed a strong preference for posters that contained minimal text and imagery, ones that involved humour, deep sincerity, artistry, puzzles, and were inclusive of multiple cultures and geographies.

Artistry is very important. Participants found some posters to be so artful, that they would like to “frame it”. It is highly recommended that Two-Spirit prevention poster be artistic with minimal text. The test standard should be: will people want to frame this because it is so identity or self-worth affirming, artistic, or exceptional? Achieving these standards will ensure that the posters have an enduring prominence.

7. Conclusions: Phase I

This study finds that many Two-Spirit men desire inclusion in their families and communities, dignified self-images, recognition for the work they do, stronger spiritual connections, and loving relationships based on care, respect, and tenderness. Instead, they live lives deeply affected by discrimination, family and community alienation, abuse, ostracism, loss of dignity and self-esteem, grief, and despair. Aboriginal community homophobia is the fundamental cause. In order to increase Two-Spirit men’s self-esteem, and hence their ability to overcome barriers to their adoption of consistent safer sex practices, it is essential that they feel a real sense of acceptance and inclusion in their home communities, a restoration of their dignity, grief counseling, and recognition for the extraordinary work and lives that they follow.

Aboriginal homophobia is a fundamental issue. Aboriginal community acceptance of Two-Spirit people is the most concrete incentive for Two-Spirit men to adopt safer sex behaviours. This means that one major consumer audience of new social marketing materials is not Two-Spirit men but rather, their home communities where fundamental social change must occur. Large-scale community social change, although very challenging, is what social marketing is designed to achieve. The route to changing Aboriginal community values and norms is set: decolonization. Aboriginal communities must be taught that homophobia is not a traditional value but an outcome of European colonization. Communities must learn to embrace, honour, and respect Two-Spirit people as traditional and modern contributors to their societies.

This report concludes with recommendation for a sustainable, wide-scale, multi-media, campaign designed to remove barriers to Two-Spirit men's adoption of safer sex behaviours.

8. Recommendations: Phase II

The HIV rate in the Two-Spirit men' community and its social impact are very serious. The necessary measures to prevent new HIV infections are very unique to this cultural community. Below are multiple recommendations for a wide-scale, multi-faceted, innovative, and flexible social marketing campaign designed to eliminate the barriers to Two-Spirit men's adoption of safer sex behaviours. It is critical that that the findings of this study (above) and recommendations (below) be reviewed and discussed by members of the Two-Spirit community. This is the necessary second phase of this study.

8.1 Posters

In 1998, CAAN surveyed Aboriginal people regarding where they obtained information on HIV/AIDS and found that pamphlets and posters were cited more than any other source.¹¹² This report therefore recommends posters as one key pillar to changing social norms. Two social norms are the target of change: 1) Aboriginal

¹¹² CAAN 1998: 7.

community homophobia, and 2) Two-Spirit men who do not consistently practice safer sex.

8.1.1 Aboriginal homophobia

A series of artistic, well constructed posters that reflect the desired tones and styles identified above must be developed that display the following:

- a) A series of posters must explain the extraordinary cultural traditions of Two-Spirit people. It is recommended that some of these posters apply quotations from the historical sections in this report. For example, one poster featuring a wise role model should include the caption: “through [Two-Spirit’s] profession of leading an Extraordinary Life, they pass for Manitous, that is to say, for spirits, -- or persons of Consequence”, 1674
- b) Historical quotations that explain that homophobia is not an Aboriginal value should be utilized. The focus groups expressed a very high interest in historical themes.
- c) A series of posters should include Two-Spirit men with their moms, grandmas, and or families, with a message that the family is gifted, proud, and accepting.
- d) A series of posters should create awareness of the pain and suffering caused by homophobia.

8.1.2 Two-Spirit men

A series of posters must be created that convey the message to Two-Spirit men that, “you are worth it, you are a jewel, you are sacred, you are not expendable, we can’t replace you”. These posters must also contain information about how Two-Spirit men can access the services of *2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations* with the human resources and products that will further assist them with their adoption of safer sex behaviours.

Recommendations include:

- a) Dignified self-images of Two-Spirit men are rare. It is necessary to produce positive self-images of dignified, historically correct, or adapted images of Two-Spirit men. Test image #77 is an exemplary model.
- b) A series of posters are needed that feature front-line Two-Spirit HIV/AIDS workers (including queens, transgender, and transsexual people) and acknowledge and honour the hard and excellent work that they are doing.
- c) The above posters, or separate posters, must include images of Two-Spirit men in relationships clearly based on love, care, kindness, and mutual respect, not casual sexual gratification.
- d) Links with indigenous groups in other countries should be pursued. For example, a poster featuring Two-Spirit men from North America and the

South Pacific will be effective as well as a wise cooperative use of funds and resources.

- e) Posters containing collages inclusive of multiple cultures, ages, sexes, genders, and geographies are recommended.
- f) The above poster concepts must work with humour, deep sincerity, and artistry.
- g) Ideogrammatic puzzles are recommended.
- h) Some posters should include Aboriginal humour.

8.1.4 Notification of barriers

It is found that some current safer sex messages, such as sexually explicit or glamorous gay posters, or insincere role models, Christian-based, or cowboy-based posters, reinforce Two-Spirit men's alienation and estrangement from society and hence create barriers to their adoption of safer sex practices. Although inadvertent on the part of non-Native ASOs, the effects are serious and must be communicated. The fact that not all safer sex messages will work in all situations is a truism. Worse, some posters, no matter how well intentioned can have a reverse effect and prompt Two-Spirit men to avoid or even boycott the message. It is recommended that Aboriginal ASOs bring the findings of this report to the attention of non-Aboriginal ASOs so that the inadvertent creation or reinforcement of Two-Spirit men's barriers can be avoided.

Aboriginal ASOs must have full involvement, discrete funds, and full decision-making powers in any initiatives to create national or global HIV prevention posters.

8.2 A Traveling Art exhibit

It is recommended that an Aboriginal ASOs organize a series of professional portraits of Two-Spirit men and set up a traveling art exhibit. The exhibit should include photographs of Two-Spirit men in a variety of roles, from romance to street-engaged work, to being wild and exciting. Many of these portraits should be created in conjunction with photographs taken for the posters described in section 8.1 above to avoid duplication of work and costs.

The art show should be designed to travel around Canada to be held in community art galleries and hosted by a local Aboriginal community or service organization. The purpose of the show is to visually and artistically exhibit the extraordinary lives and challenges of Two-Spirit men. The show will have a high impact and raise awareness of

the historical traditions and lives of Two-Spirit men and help create a new and positive environment for re-inclusion in their societies.

The social marketing literature recommends innovation in the variety of methods used to educate and encourage social change. This method is designed so that it will also be the subject of local newspapers wherever the show travels. The show will thus have a multiplier effect as its contents will be the subject of local media and informal discussions. Art, and especially portraiture art, is a fundamental part of the global strategy to increase awareness of the pain and suffering caused by HIV/AIDS stigma as well as to honour those engaged on the front line. No exhibit of this kind has been attempted with Aboriginal and rural communities in Canada. It is time to take this action.

Anecdotally, some Aboriginal communities are receptive to the concept of a traveling Two-Spirit men's portraiture art exhibit. The consultant spoke with various Aboriginal community representatives during the *International AIDS Conference* (2006) in Toronto and found them very interested in the concept and willing to host the exhibit in their region.

8.3 A Two-Spirit Statue

Around the world, various countries now boast about the creation of a gay monument. Recently, Toronto erected the largest, life size monument of a gay non-Native pioneer. A cursory review of the world-wide-web reveals that the erection obtained extensive international press.

The purposes of monuments are multiple. One purpose is to commemorate and educate citizens about an important aspect of one's society. In effect, monuments serve to physically reinforce the significance of a person or persons' contributions to our society and affirm their significance.

It is recommended that an Aboriginal ASO seek funds to erect a statue of a Two-Spirit person that concretely represents the oldest alternative gender and sexual traditions in North America. The historical section of this report identifies multiple Two-Spirit individuals that could be the subject of the statue.

The erection of a Two-Spirit statue will not only educate citizens about the relatively unknown historical presence and traditions of Two-Spirits, it will serve

immeasurable to enforce the facts of their traditions and dignify Two-Spirits today. The impact will be high. Recognition on this scale is necessary to reverse powerful forces that depress the ability of Two-Spirit men to feel confident, important, and special.

8.4 Grief Counseling

Aboriginal ASOs require greater funds to provide grief counseling. In order for Two-Spirit men to improve their self-esteem, they must also obtain as much assistance as possible in coping with accumulated grief from the loss of relations due to suicide, premature and violent deaths, AIDS-related illnesses and its impacts, as well as cultural trauma resulting from colonization. For many 2-Spirit men, there is a need to cope with their accumulated grief in tandem with the embrace of the positive self-images and acceptance interventions proposed above.

9. Taking Action: Phase III

As stated, the HIV rate in the Two-Spirit men' community and its social impact are very serious. The necessary measures to prevent new HIV infections are very unique to this cultural community. This study makes multiple recommendations for a wide-scale, multi-faceted, innovative, and flexible social marketing campaign to eliminate the barriers to Two-Spirit men's adoption of safer sex behaviours.

Phase II of this study involves the Two-Spirit community's analysis and discussion of this study, its findings, and its recommendations. After the community has had time to review, consider, and improve on the recommendations above, it is critical that the Two-Spirit community be well funded to carry out a sustainable intervention campaign based in wise practices.

The social marketing literature is clear that sustained behaviour involves a sustainable initiative. Social marketing is made sustainable through partnerships, especially with government.¹¹³ The UNAIDS states, "Social marketing programmes do not operate in a vacuum; government support is a key component of a successful

¹¹³ Lagarde 1998; CAAN 2003: 15.

programme.”¹¹⁴ The Public Health Agency of Canada includes sustainability as a key term in its definition of “best practices”.¹¹⁵

In order to implement wise practices that can specifically address the unique barriers to Two-Spirit men’s adoption of safer sex practices and limit the spread and impact of HIV in our community, it is essential that governments provide funding to keep this project sustainable.

¹¹⁴ UNAIDS 1996: 13.

¹¹⁵ Health Canada 2003.

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