

2024 /
2025

Project Update

Growing Within the Same Skin



University
of Victoria

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Project Background

Approximately 17% of Canada's Indigenous population are youth aged 15 to 24. Despite their significant demographic, many lack access to **culturally-centred sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services**. These essential services should encompass a range of supports, such as guiding young Indigenous women through the intricacies of their menstrual cycles, preparing young men for their roles and responsibilities as sexual partners, improving access to SRH education and services for Two-Spirit youth, assisting young parents and families as they welcome new babies into their kin networks, and honouring life stages through cultural ceremonies. The **Growing Within the Same Skin** project is learning from urban Indigenous youth in Victoria, BC what their hopes and aspirations are for safe, non-stigmatising, and accessible SRH services.

Objectives:

- Guided by **Indigenous Youth Peer Research Advisors** (IY-PRAs), learn what services and supports youth access, want more of, and wish they had.
- Collaborate on a plan to implement youth recommendations and pilot these strategies locally
- Lay the groundwork for a strategy to scale across BC

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Meet our IY-PRAS



Angel Houle

ANGEL is Ojibwe/Cree from Brandon Manitoba. They work as an Indigenous youth peer research advisor at the University of Victoria and is preparing to become a nurse in the future.



Joan Hubert

My English name is Joan Hubert, and my kuus name is qaaqaanumwa – which means precious or like gold to the family. I am a woman of ehatis and Kahnawake Mohawk Metis. Day to day I am a student, Health Care Aid, and a mom. My goal is to get a Bachelor's of Science and find a career that I enjoy.



Jewel Lavan

Jewel is proud to be an Urban born Indigenous youth, born and raised on Lekwungen territory. She is Cree from the Flying Dust First Nation, Métis and Irish. She enjoys all types of art and has recently sparked a passion for making traditional jewelry.

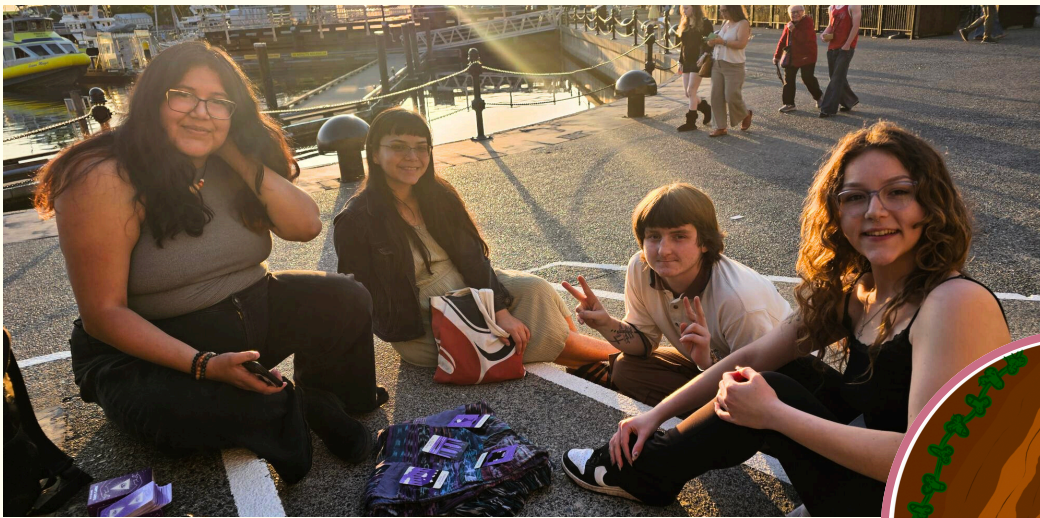


Reegan Lawlor

I am Indigenous/Irish from Turtle Mountain North Dakota. I am from Victoria, BC and part of the Foundry BC Youth Advisory Committee. I go to Camosun College and am working towards a career in the mental health and addictions field.

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Project Inspiration



Why is Sexual Health Important?



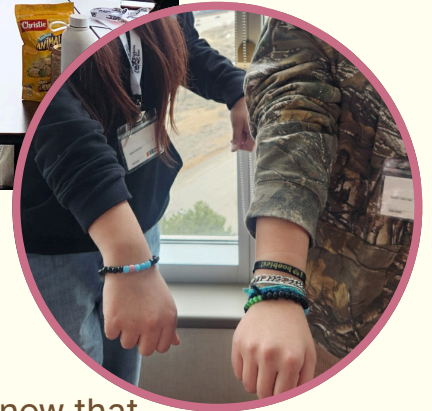
...so everyone can have safer sex and no one is catching random stuff they shouldn't be catching... so that you can have safer sex within friendships or relationships or whatever -ship you would like.

It's not only to better understand your body and how it works but so you can also understand when something might be off. Having access to sexual healthcare and knowing when to use it is extremely important.



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Project Inspiration



What do you want others to learn?

“

Don't be ashamed of being human! I wish I knew that having questions about sexual health is nothing to be ashamed of. Everyone experiences changes and has different thoughts and questions regarding their body and sexual health.

There are lots of ways to have safe sex, our sexual and reproductive systems do more for us than just allow us to have kids, and that our bodies aren't shameful!

”

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Activities to Date

- 
- July 2024**
Kick-off dinner with IY-PRAs, midwives, and research team
 - August 2024 - March 2025**
IY-PRA led weekly meetings: open discussions about SRH and guest speakers
 - September 2024**
Project Q&A meeting with Surrounded by Cedar youth advisory council
 - October 2024:**
Sexual health nurse Q&A
 - November 2024**
Cree knowledge holder: Carrying yourself as an Indigenous youth researcher
 - December 2024**
Fireweed Project: abortion and access for Indigenous persons and those in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community
 - March 2025**
“Indigi-Led Sex Ed” Workshop delivered at Gathering Our Voices (Kamloops, BC)
 - May 2025**
Wrap-up dinner with IY-PRAs

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Insights from the IY-PRAs



Reflections

- Youth need safe spaces and guidance to **'connect the dots'** around colonialism, sexual health, and other challenging topics.
- **Learning about the old ways**, natural medicines, and traditional care giver roles is a good way forward.
- Preparing the workshop, delivering it together, and **teaching the youngers** was a highlight; the IY-PRAs want to do more teaching.



Pathways forward

- **Passing knowledge** across generations is key - best to have the older youth to teach the younger youth
- Having more knowledge **builds confidence**
- Having more confidence helps you to **advocate for your needs**
- For needs to be met, services need to be **safe, non-judgemental**, and we need to know **where to find them**

Next Steps

- Work with the IY-PRAs, community youth, and partners to start creating this pathway:
 - Plan and conduct research activities
 - Host a report back to dinner
 - Collaborate on a strategy to pilot a culturally-centred SRH strategy grounded in the project findings

