



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Community-Based/ Academic Partnership Posed to Examine *the Root Causes of HIV and AIDS among Aboriginal Women***

Wednesday September 17, 2014— Community members and Academic researchers gathered at the First Nations University of Canada’s Regina Campus to publically launch *Digging Deep: Examining the Root Causes of HIV and AIDS among Aboriginal Women*. The three-year project, funded by Canadian Institute of Health Research, will engage in community-based participatory research with, by and for Indigenous Women affected by HIV and Aids.

“ I am pleased to see this project come into fruition as there has been years of groundwork and past collaborations with the All Nations Hope Network and the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN), ” stated Dr. Carrie Bourassa, FNUiv Professor, Indigenous Health Studies and co-Principal Investigator for *Digging Deep*. “ We will be exploring a model of culturally safe care and ensuring that there is a legacy from this research for both community members and academics through what we commonly refer to as the two-eyed seeing model.”

“Working with the urban Indigenous community as long as I have, I continue to marvel at the resilience of our people. This multi-year project will strengthen Indigenous women through its engagement and capacity building,” declared Margaret Poitras, Chief Executive Officer, All Nations Hope Network, co-Principal Investigator for *Digging Deep*.

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## BACKGROUND

### **Digging Deep: Examining the Root Causes of HIV and AIDS Among Aboriginal Women**

While Aboriginal Women are over-represented in HIV/AIDS statistics, there is a startling lack of gender-specific (sex, lesbian, transgendered), Aboriginal-specific, HIV/AIDS resources, programs and services (Prentice, 2005). Furthermore, the literature indicates that Aboriginal women, in particular, are the most marginalized population in Canada (Kubik, Bourassa & Hampton, 2009). Within this context, it is essential that research contributes towards a deep understanding of the drivers that fuel this reality. Furthermore, we must identify the assets within the Aboriginal community that sustain women and contribute to culturally relevant solutions.

This research is important and timely given the multiple risk situations Aboriginal women experience on a regular basis. For Aboriginal people in Canada, colonization remains one of the most destructive elements affecting societal structures today. Family organization, child rearing practices, political and spiritual life, work and social activities have been turned upside-down by Canada's colonial system (Bourassa & Peach, 2009). Aboriginal women aged 15 and older are three and a half times more likely to experience violence (defined as physical and sexual assault and robbery) than non-Aboriginal women (Stats Can, 2006; Amnesty International Canada, 2004). According to the 2006 census data 36% of Aboriginal women were living in poverty compared to non-Aboriginal women in Canada (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2012). Aboriginal women also experience barriers to personal empowerment, including the impact of racism that is linked to higher rates of alcohol and substance abuse, and disruption of family systems due to residential school abuse (Campbell, 2007; Kubik, et al., 2009; Proulx & Perrault, 2000; Wood & Magen, 2009). We must illuminate the impacts of colonization on Aboriginal women and how that continues to affect this population living with HIV or AIDS and/or Hepatitis C Virus (HCV).

The research team will engage Aboriginal women living with HIV and AIDS or HCV using community-based participatory methods and Indigenous mutual learning that will acknowledge complexity of their individual and collective journeys.

**Research Goal:** to focus on Aboriginal women with the premise of helping them to develop evidence-based, community and asset-based solutions that are culturally safe.

**Team Composition:** inter-disciplinary scholars, community members, health practitioners, Elders and community partners with vast experience locally, provincially, nationally and internationally. Many of the applicants are Indigenous and have years of experience working with, by and for Indigenous communities and organizations. There is a balance of Co-investigators, Knowledge Users and Collaborators lending their expertise to this project.