

Scene 1

Introduction

This play is best read with the 7 characters all facing the audience in a slight semi-circle (so the two on the ends can see each other better) the facilitator can stand at one end, or in the middle. A projector screen is showing photos behind the stage. The first photo is an inner city landscape

Facilitator (facing the audience to address them directly)

I was the research coordinator for the project that we called the Caregiver's Project. We explored the care experiences of people living with HIV/AIDS and their informal caregivers. We wanted to know who the support people were, and how they came to take on the role. How the networks were formed and maintained and what was needed to best support the caregivers. We were looking primarily at low income or stigmatized individuals in Winnipeg and Regina.

We gave each of our participants a camera and asked them to go out and take photos of their caregivers and supports. These photos, and the interviews we held to discuss them, became our data set for the project.

We pretty much left people to their own devices to take photos of whatever they wanted. A few people called me or came by to ask questions, but mostly they just took photos.

Then we did the interviews. We had 31 participants; 20 in Winnipeg and 11 in Regina; some people did more than one interview and two sets of people did their interviews together. In all we had 37 interviews and 804 photos.

Of the 31 participants, 18 identified as male and 13 as female; 20 as Aboriginal, 2 as African refugees, 1 as Canadian Black and 8 as White; education levels ranged from Grade 4 to post secondary; ages ranged - at the time of the interviews - from 29 to 53; and HIV diagnoses ranged from 1 to 23 years previously.

At some point, it is necessary to say that the project was funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and was carried out in partnership between the University of Manitoba and Nine Circles Community Health Centre in Winnipeg and First Nations University, AIDS Programs of South Saskatchewan and All Nations Hope in Regina.

Scene 2 STIGMA

- Facilitator *(photo of wall with graffiti)*
The preliminary analysis of our data led us to a number of themes.
Stigma based on their HIV status was a big one.
- Person 1 Hey, you know what pisses me off!
- This disclosure crap! Crap. It's crap! You need to disclose your status. It's up to you to disclose your status. The AIDS epidemic is spreading because YOU don't disclose your status.
(heavy sarcasm) Like I am personally responsible for the spreading of HIV across the planet. Like I have had unsafe sex with 6 million people and shared needles with 4 million others and then gave birth to every positive baby on the planet.
- (Person 4 laughs)*
- Pretty good, eh? Little old me
- Of course people need to disclose. You have HIV and you have unsafe sex, or you share a needle, chances are you're going to give it to someone else. You think people WANT to do that? You think it feels good to know that you passed it along to someone else? That someone else has this ball and chain on now because you didn't tell them you were HIV.
- Well maybe we didn't KNOW we were HIV.
And maybe we did but we were too busy being shit on and spit at to feel okay about telling anybody.
- Person 2 Yeah, I was on the internet the other day. There's this guy who was arrested and charged in Ontario.
Now he didn't give these woman HIV, but he was HIV and he knew about it. And his lawyer was trying to use the defense that he was kind of confused blah blah and he didn't think it was so serious and I don't know exactly what the story here was or what his reasons were, but he still got charged even though they tested negative.
And people would comment on the story right.
About 50 or 60% of the remarks were very negative. "These people with AIDS should all be shipped off to some island." ...
- Person 5 I just didn't feel like being a gay male in my home town. It just didn't go over all that well. I mean there was an outlet. There were socials and all that kind of stuff, and there was support, but nothing for my people.
Nothing Native.

And maybe things have loosened up a bit since I've been here, but it's still not enough for me – for me to go back and say, well, you know, I feel okay at home. I was born here. I lived here. I used to be a part of this place.
No. I don't belong there anymore.

Person 6 I am not, you know . . . I don't hide my . . . that I'm positive, well actually, I guess I kind of do to some people because I don't want anybody to feel sorry for me you know what I mean, some people try to feel sorry for you, and I don't want that.

Person 3 like when I first met somebody that had HIV, I looked at them and I felt different about them. Like right away when I looked at them, I thought, "well, I'd better stay away, I don't want them to sneeze on me or go and cough around me." That was my ignorance and now that I have it, I can still see people . . . the way they change. When they find out or if they know I have it. So, well, I don't blame them because I was the same way,

Person 4 I moved over here because I contracted the virus, and I didn't have no support. My family . . . they kind of just threw me aside; . . . they kind of blamed me for my bother and my sister and my niece that got it. How they figured it was my fault, who knows, but they did.
Like my sister would say, "when are you going to die from this? She'd get pissed off, "when are you going to die from the disease," and my kids would hear it. When I'd leave they'd throw out my teaspoons, my cups.

Person 3 And some – everybody knows about my status. I don't hide it. I'm not ashamed of it. But it would seem to me that more of my friends these days are like me. Are positive. That kind of thing.

Person 6 You know what I - . . . like if you took somebody with HIV and a pedophile, a lot of people would probably say they'd rather have the pedophile. You know in the room, they'd rather have the pedophile.

Person 5 I'd rather be gone with the cancer than the HIV. I've seen people living with HIV. Half of them are gay; half of them are not gay. They're all human beings. It's all one disease. It can happen to anybody. But there are so many people out there that are so - . . . I've had to hide my identity - about it. Nobody knows except my close family. No one else needs to know. That's it. Nobody else, they think I'm healthy. They see, "Oh, you're looking good, but you're losing weight." I say, "I might have cancer." They say, Oh my god. So they think its cancer. See this way, when I'm losing weight, they say, oh the cancer is getting to him. This way I don't have to put up with this HIV business.

Person 2 I don't know how I ever caught it, you know, maybe it was through accidental, of a partner, like, but I didn't know he had it. I didn't know didly squat from what the heck HIV was or what it meant.

When I found out, well that's when I decided to drink every day. I didn't care. I didn't really want to sleep with anybody, didn't want to be with my kids you know. My boys, one was always asking me, "why don't you want to hold me mom?" you know, "why don't you want to kiss me?" you know, "why don't you love me?"

That's how bad I was. I was too scared to even hold my kids, I was scared to touch them, thought it was very highly contagious, I was, I was so scared. Just to touch them.

Person 1 So maybe before you start pointing your fingers at all us nasty folks with the HIV who are spreading it across the globe - maybe before you start doing that, you should think about how hard it might be to say something. Maybe you can take some responsibility for finding out yourself. Maybe you could ask. And if you find out I'm HIV, maybe you could treat me like a human.

Facilitator Stigma is a significant concern for folks with HIV. The stigma associated with HIV isolates people who are infected and affects their quality of life. It can make people who are at risk of HIV/AIDS less willing to be tested or to seek treatment. "For people who belong to marginalized groups -- such as gay men, people who use injection drugs, Aboriginal people, people from countries where HIV is endemic and sex workers -- the stigma associated with HIV is compounded by other forms of discrimination, including homophobia, racism, gender inequality and negative attitudes toward drug use and sex workers" (http://www.leadingtogether.ca/304_cur.html) In addition, individuals are generally less willing to aid those with stigmatizing conditions and those deemed personally responsible for their conditions (Knowlton 2003).

Scene 3

CHILDHOOD

- Facilitator *(photo of winter park (Eleanor))*
A lot of our participants talked quite openly about their childhoods, which were often difficult. This is not to say that all the participants had a difficult or violent childhood or that there is a connection between difficult childhoods and contracting HIV; this is simply to say that of the 16 participants who talked about their childhoods, 15 of them indicated some kind of abuse, displacement and/or violence.
- Person 4 I lived with my mother. My brother was put up for adoption. He's two years my junior and my mother didn't think she could handle the both of us.
My father never - he wasn't there.
I was not really totally acknowledged so I was never really a part of my full-blooded family. My grandmother denied my paternity or whatever, my father. I guess she didn't think her son could father a child.
- Person 3 I was adopted at birth and they took me from California to Thompson, Manitoba. And my adoptive father calls me racist things when he's drunk.
And he, my father said that my sister fucked her way out of the house. There was no way I could tell him anything. I left.
- Person 6 My sister and I were separated for thirty-seven years.
Ended up we were sixty scoops babies. You know, when the babies in the sixties they got taken away from the Indians and shipped off to wherever. I was shipped off and my sister was shipped of somewhere else.
- Person 1 I'm the second youngest.
Second youngest and the first adopted child. Yeah.
So there's three birth kids and then there's me and my little brother. And we're both Native. And my little brother is actually my cousin. (Laughing).
Sounds kind a Hillbilly eh? We were under the impression he was from Montreal but it turns out he's from my reserve and he's my cousin.
- Person 4 I was six when I was put into the system, I never learned why.
And I lost touch completely with my mom and my family.
- Person 5 I got kicked out of school cus I started drinking too much. I went there half cut and I locked this girl in her locker.
Then I got put in a group home. My mom put me in a group home.
- Person 2 Ah God man, I was homeless for five months. Yeah I had no clothes.
I slept under a bridge for five months. And they all watch over you, eh. Like we all look over each other. Like a family.

- Person 1 I was taken there when I was a kid. I still got my souvenir marks for kneeling for hours and days. I had to.
Well it started off with my sister and then, and then ah, in the bedroom and I heard something. I woke up, then I heard someone crying and she was standing there all naked and he was doing things to her.
- Person 4 I went into foster homes when my parents died.
I went and had visits to the reserve when I was younger, but then I just cut myself off, after I seen this, two doors down, a girl getting raped, from a guy inside and I don't want to be the next one, so I just quit going there.
- Person 5 Umm, I was a wanderer, I ran away from home when I was young, too much abuse, so I wandered away and ended up in jail, right, when I was 16, and reform schools and things like that
- Person 2 and then I was being sexually molested from my own step father.
I ran away at the age of sixteen, first got pregnant at sixteen, she got taken for a foster child. I just didn't give a shit anymore, and I ran and hide, trying to hide, trying to run, run, run from my problems.
- Person 3 With my cultural background I didn't grow up with contact with my reserve.
The first time I went to a reserve I was 16 years old. For my 16th birthday my mom, well my mom who adopted me, she goes "well if you really want to go, I'll send you, so that you can contact your biological mother".
And so she made arrangements, made arrangements to send me out to my reserve.
Next day I was crying and phoning my mom to take me back home, I hated it, I didn't even know what an outhouse was. I thought, this is crazy. No running water, no electricity and an outhouse; that was the strangest thing I'd ever seen.
And for a native person to say that, it's weird.
I was so naïve to the native culture.
I didn't know what bannock was.
I got to know more of native culture when I moved here.
- Facilitator (*to the audience*) Violence and abuse threaded much of the data we received from the participants. As they spoke about their childhoods and their lives, it was clear that most of them lived very violent lives. This fits with research that indicates that the "rates of violence, sexual assault, spousal homicide, and child witnessing of spousal violence are all higher among Indigenous than non-Indigenous populations. In addition to over-representation in criminal justice systems, the likelihood that Indigenous peoples will be *victims of crime*, especially violent crime, is also much higher than for non-indigenous populations. This includes family violence as well as other assaults and homicide. (citations at end)

Scene 4

COPING STRATEGIES

- Facilitator (photo of drugs at party) While the participants had as many coping strategies as there were participants, the struggle with the use of drugs and alcohol was present in most of their lives. Many had past or present struggles in their own lives, and many described negative experiences with drug or alcohol use in their families when they were children.
- Person 2 Most people are alcoholics in my family.
I always thought it would be so easy to just go to the reserve and live like they did. I acted one way around my biological family and another way around my adopted family. My biological family always thought that I shouldn't be 'like them' and I had no excuses for being addicted to alcohol or drugs because I had the opportunity to grow up in a white middle class household.
I always thought that if I moved somewhere else that it would be easier to fight my addictions. It wasn't; it would be there wherever I went.
- Person 5 A-Z. Everything from from Adavan to Zantac, you know, A-Z, you know, if I could smoke it, shoot it, swallow it, drop it, you know, I would do it.
I was eight years old when I started, when I, when I was on a date. I'd been doing prostitution also for quite some time and, yeah, anything and everything I could get my hands on.
- Person 4 My legal dad, my biological dad died of a, choked on his own vomit you know. Like he died sitting on the armchair like that, drinking by himself, he must have passed out and, must have drank too fast, or, must have been trying to throw up, died.
- Person 3 I got a photo [here] of a friend of mine and it was like, it must have been about five thirty in the morning, we're already hitting the bottle. A bottle of vodka.
- Person 6 I go to my mum's. To dry out sometimes.
Yeah, and you know there is no temptation. I don't know where to get and I don't care to know where to get, um, it's almost sacred to me there.
- Person 1 How do I keep my self-esteem up? That's why I smoke pot.
- Person 4 My typical day? It all revolves around drinking and drugs. Drugs mostly.
Drinking I can leave, like, unless someone else buys it.
- Person 3 Yeah. I remember I did one, I got paid and I got a lot of meth. And I'd get, I'd get a shot, about a thirty/forty unit shot.
I was flying so I'd grab my bike and book it around Winnipeg, going here, going there, doing whatever, stopping for coffee and I got home and I did the same amount again.

And I threw up; I passed out; right away within, within a two minute span. And I woke up, I woke up on my couch about a day and a half later. Dope still sitting on my stomach. Like I, I did not move; I just, where I passed out is where I passed out (Laughs). And my dope was sitting right on my stomach and vomit on the floor, needles on the floor, you know, holy fuck, okay whatever.

And I, that's a typical - that wasn't, that wasn't anything to get upset over you know.

Person 2 Yeah, and then one time I took a bunch of pills. I was lying in the middle of the road. My friends. My friends - I guess they wonder where I went and they can't find me. Then I woke up the next day; I was muddy all on the side. So I don't take pills no more.

Person 5 It wasn't until I saw myself in a photograph that I thought, you know – I had seen how my addiction had worn away at my – at my flesh. My weight. And my counts.

Person 6 Yeah. I have two girls, but I haven't seen them since they were born. One's 21; the other one is 16. Because this (indicating one of his scars) happened. It was a bad dope deal. I went out to some guy's house and the back-up fell through. And one guy got shot; I got sliced up. I was left for dead and my buddy was left for dead.

Person 2 I, right now, I'd be in my bedroom probably watching TV or in my living room watching TV, probably watching my cat, smoking dope.

Person 5 Get off sniff? Sometimes yeah, you struggle. I been sniffing for a while, off and on. When I have a beer or when it's dark and nobody can see me (laughs) Yeah. (Laughing). But in the daylight it's embarrassing.

Person 6 I started doing drugs when I was fourteen years old.

Person 3 Just take off, yep. Go visit and just to get away from here. Get away from here for a while. There was a lot of drugs and shit around here for a while and I didn't want to be around it

Facilitator Past studies have reported significantly higher usage of drugs and alcohol in Aboriginal than in non-Aboriginal communities, but a 2007 Saskatchewan study of youth between grades 5 and 8 went a step further and when the participants were divided into "rich" and "poor" categories, the cultural differences disappeared. This study has more appropriately linked poverty to drug and alcohol abuse. (citations at end) Further study might be valuable for making the same connections between violence and poverty.

Scene 5 SUPPORTS

- Facilitator (mom and lover no heads)
The descriptions of friendships and relationships were not what we had originally expected. We had assumed there would be a person in the caregiver role for most of our participants. What we found was significantly more complex than that.
- Facilitator Some people did have a life partner and there was a strong caregiver element within that.
- Person 1 When I'm not well? Mostly my partner. She's not positive, but she's very, very supportive and very, very, um, understanding and that. Very knowledgeable. Even though I was withering away and not doing very well at some times, like, she was still one hundred percent behind the whole thing.
- Facilitator Additionally, some of our participants had formed an interesting network of care. A large and shifting circle of care among peers. While the issues they presented were more around street life than HIV or AIDS, there was a very strong sense that they would look out for each other and help each other out.
- Person 4 Um. I talk to them, and if they're short of change or something I help them out with that. Or if they're hungry I help them with that.
- Person 5 I, I watch over these guys on the street. Make sure they're warm all the time. They're always on the street drinking and high. So, like I bring them a lunch. I take them sandwiches. 'Cus I get them from the project, they give me sandwiches. I take them with me.
- Person 2 Me and my roommate support each other. You know we're, we try to get each other to our meetings and our doctors' appointments; we remind each other.
- Person 3 Yeah I support them, yeah. Help them out. Talk to them. Say everything will be fine. Just see your doctor and get your medication, all that. Yeah (Sniffle) talk to them.
- Person 6 This is my friend M, we've lived together before. He's the same as me. HIV. He tells me to take my meds; I tell him to take his.
- Facilitator While many participants identified a number of friends who were supportive in their lives, when push came to shove, often the difficult times were spent alone.
- Person 1 Um no, um like basically I'll just stick to myself and just do what I have to do.
- Person 4 Caregiver? Just me. Just me.

- Person 3 I won't let um my partner see my emotions when I'm hurting, when he's sick. I won't do it, because it it'll bring me down, and that will lose me for what I'm doing, focusing on taking care of him.
Like, yeah, later on I'll go in my bedroom and I'll shut the door and I'll cry and just let it all out. Then I'll come back out and do what I have to.
- Person 6 Ah friends are hard to come by. Um a lot of people say they could be your friends but they are in actual fact not. And I think, honestly, I have, I can count my friends on one hand.
- Person 5 I won't trust – I don't trust most people to support me because I rely on myself. If I get so sick I can't get out of bed? I crawl. I won't let people help me. No, 'cause I feel – it shows a sign that I have weakness. And I don't like showing people I have weakness. I'm the strong one.
- Facilitator (*formal care buildings collage*) With many of our participants, connections to formal organizations and/or individual service providers repeatedly came up as part of their primary support systems.
- Person 1 Sometimes I get really sick, and when it's 2 am in the morning, I can't really call my son, and my friends from the health district won't be at work yet, so I just wait - - a few times, sometimes, I I think, "this is it". I'm going to die now, but what can I do? I do what I can to just wait until 8 am when people will be at work and then I can call them.
- Person 6 So who helps take care of me? Me. And you guys. At Nine Circles.
- Person 5 Yeah friends are, they are so hard to get here, ah. Here I sometimes feel like I'm alone, but then I feel like everyone here at Nine Circles is - well, it's not that bad.
- Person 2 So if I'm sick, if I'm, if I'm in trouble, if something's going on, I'd call my partner first. Then, well I would call the clinic; Nine Circles clinic. Yeah, and if it was serious I'd call my mom. She gets mad when I don't call her, and I haven't called her in like three weeks.
- Facilitator (*formal care providers collage*)
This connection to the formal organizations was quite strong. Many of the participants named the formal care organizations as a home or place of refuge and staff members of these organizations as their friends and family members. There was a theme of feeling safe, respected and able to trust them in ways that they might not have been able to with their families or street friends.
- Person 3 She was the very first one that I got to know, through All Nations Hope. Like I didn't know anybody, I didn't know who to, who do I, where do I go for, who do I talk to or,

when I did find out, when I was HIV, I said before, I was so withdrawn, I was so scared of everybody around me.

I didn't, I didn't want to associate with anybody, I didn't want to, I didn't want to deal with it, I didn't want to.

I was, she was the one that, she was the very first one that I talked to about, what, she knew how I felt; she knew what I was going through.

- Person 4 That's my nurse, but we're friends. I call her my mother . . . But that's just our relationship. So she's a major support. For me. She's going to meet my new boyfriend tomorrow. I'm bringing him here to meet her.
- Person 1 I go there to the infectious disease clinic.
I only have appointments every three or four months but I like to go there about once a week. I made friends with the people who work there.
- Person 2 Um, what supports do I have here in Winnipeg? Ah Nine Circles.
- Person 5 Oh, I was staying at Seneca House but um briefly, which is also another part of the the self-care thing like when, ah, um, well, the long and short of it, . . . um, it's basically a place of refuge.
- Person 6 And of course Nine Circles. Another major support.
- Person 1 Don't, um, don't care for the clients. No offence to ah the clients. Like I love the staff, staff's awesome.
- Person 2 And this one here is the office, the front entrance, that's where I sat, spending most of my days, days and afternoons here, the mornings and afternoons
- Person 3 Here's my home (Laughs). Nine Circles is my home.
- Facilitator This set of findings led us to interview the formal caregivers about their role with clients. The organizations themselves were not set up to provide this kind of care, yet the clients are clearly experiencing it and the workers are taking it on. This would have implications for the organizations in a number of ways including client service structure, staff responsibilities, employment prerequisites, support for the staff, among others.
The findings from those interviews have led us to examine boundaries between staff and clients.

Scene 6

NON-HUMAN SUPPORTS

- Facilitator *(plants and pets collage)*
Aside from the strong support gleaned from the formal organizations and staff, pets and plants were also named. Other non-human supports included TV and film, the internet, statues, nature.
- Facilitator Plants were often seen as therapy of sorts.
- Person 4 I love growing things, nurturing, it relaxes me.
- Person 5 My plant. *(Laughing)* I've been growing that as therapy for myself. So I, so I got six of them rooting right now in water. You know, but it's good therapy.
- Person 6 And there's my little hobby that I've started and it's going quite well, and I was very surprised *(laughs)* 'cus I usually kill plants *(laughs)*. There's five plants. These are all geraniums.
And this is a Jamaican Fern that was almost dead that I brought back to life. It's another little thing that I have found that works for me.
- Facilitator Pets were also photographed a lot. Those with pets often had multiple photos of them. We had 47 photos that included pets.
- Person 3 These are my kittens, ahh I got lots of pictures of them, I just love them so much
- Person 2 And these here are three of the dogs.
- Person 5 And there is my kitty cat and my girlfriend
- Person 6 And this is my kitty, and oh what a sweet cat when I was in the hospital he went, went nuts. He didn't know where I was. They put me on speaker phone and he was right at the speaker phone; he wanted me; he knows.
- Person 1 These pictures of our hamster,
- Person 4 Kitty again, kitties, they're very important in my life, and then my brother.
- Person 1 The Cat represents – this is my little sister 'cause I don't really have siblings, but she's been around. She's really cool. Her name's Mukwah which is Bear which represents healing.
- Person 6 Um, there's a few pictures of my dog. You know he gives me hugs and kisses and unconditional love, and I get to cuddle up with my puppy, you know *(laughs)*. And he forces me to look after him therefore I have no choice but to take care of myself right. Cus I have to be healthy to look after him.

Person 5 That's my birdie. That's a little house I made her. It's a peach-face lovebird. She's amazing and that's she's a huge support for me because I'm typically a bit of a loner and she's, like, when I'm sitting at home and there's no one around or whatever I can like talk to her. You know, it's like I can, I can say whatever I want to her and I don't ever have to worry about her saying it to anyone else (*Laughing*).

Facilitator Where we were expecting more human supports, we saw more non-human supports. Our participants seemed to be really good at finding supports for themselves wherever they needed them.

Scene 7 CULTURE

- Facilitator *(photo of pow wow)*
Many of our participants were also connected to various aspects of culture and spirituality for support. The displaced childhoods reported by many of the participants would mean that many of them were raised without having access to their cultural roots and they've often had to go out of their way to find the channels to reconnect.
- Person 2 I grew up in a white middle class area of Winnipeg, and people laugh at me sometimes when I tell them that I was scared of 'Indians' when I was younger.
- Person 3 Um, I practice drumming, yes, I do practice drumming; it's, ah, very soothing to me, you know. I have a handmade drum that I made, ah, two years ago.
- Person 4 I cry. Ah, I cry. You know, I'm not afraid to cry, you know. It's a, it's a, you know, and in the Native tradition, ah, water, sister water is like the most cleansing thing.
- Person 5 No, I'm a Buddhist. Since I was, ah, fourteen. On and off for fourteen, since I was fourteen.
- Person 6 I was trying to take a picture of the native dancer. And I said to, umm, my family, "you know where the school is built, I danced that land. I danced that land."
- Person 1 The dream catchers. I was making them. That's what I do, for my spare time, and sometimes three four hours in the afternoon, depending on who wants to do crafts; that's where we were making those dream catchers.
- Person 4 Yeah, [my daughter is] a wise old soul, she's a awhitikocan, which is in a ceremony. She participates, it's a very important, honourable position for a little girl; it's usually for boys, but she's a very wise soul.
- Person 3 Yeah, I was sent a dream by my grandfather who is a very powerful medicine man and he knew I was struggling. This was about 1996, and that I was fearing; he sent me a dream. He showed me where I was going. I didn't want to come back . . . I'm totally going to take one day at a time, I mean take care of myself is a full time job, taking care of myself.
- Person 2 and I drum. I'm part of a drumming group. A women's group.
- Person 1 And yeah one of these Bears.

It's Métis and basically that's by, ah, the Centennial Concert Hall. City Hall kind of thing and I I found that quite interesting because A) I'm Métis and B) the bear means healing so that was sort of what that was for.

Facilitator The beliefs of a culture help to guide and shape the lives of the people within that culture. According to philosopher Jean Baudrillard, "we require a visible past, a visible continuum, a visible myth of origin, which reassures us about our end." While many of our participants identify as Aboriginal, few can connect their culture to their childhoods and the ones who are reconnecting with their culture are doing so as adults, often finding it difficult to retrace their roots or to erase the effects of the Dominant White culture that greatly affected how they were raised.

Scene 8 RESILIENCE

- Facilitator (flowers)
The resilience and resourcefulness of the participants became more and more striking as we delved into their personal lives.
The violence, stigma and discrimination, the use of drugs or alcohol as a coping mechanism, the difficult life patterns; these all led to ways of coping and surviving that from a societal point of view may appear negative or destructive, but from an insider point of view, could be described as very creative or inventive.
- Person 6
So, I'm like, I'm an oily cat, you can try to hurt me, it just goes right off me. Like the nurses, they try to make me feel bad, and okay, we can do this in a nice way or in a hard way, and I'm very educated in making people pretty miserable. You know, you gunning me off, or you looking at my tracks isn't going to help you do your job any better and I feel sorry for you because you're scared of little old me.
- Person 5
As as many tragedies that there has been in my life since I quit, I have been strong enough not to ah go back on drugs. It's hard.
Um, my stepfather passed away about, ah, two months ago.
And then I had friend murdered; a friend of mine was murdered,
And ah just ah with the recent passing of Phil.
Not to mention ah the rough breakup.
I'm still clean, yeah. Angry, but still clean.
- Person 2
For example, doing some yoga here and there, and, you know, good nutrition, vitamin regimes, a lot of self-talk, even taking something such as this virus and saying, "It needs me to live, I don't need it to live." That kind of thing. Things like that are – even taking a look at my spirit name, or even just my English name and understanding what that means, you know. Taking certain symbols and meditating on them.
- Facilitator
Many of our participants also had an eye for beauty and would offer photos of beauty, both in nature and in urban life, as supports.
- Person 3
Okay these are pictures of just the scenery during the winter time and I just love it. Like it's, just how peaceful it looks, and stuff like that. And see how nature is so beautiful and what you can enjoy when you're not doing drugs and stuff like that. And when you're cleaning up, how you notice more things around you.
- Person 4
It really made me happy, these pictures, because it was just so beautiful,
- Person 1
I like my lake views. And I also like the scenery of the clouds, I like, that's one thing I love, I like my clouds because I try to make picture out of them.

Person 2 I love that statue

Person 1 And I took this picture because it is so beautiful.

Person 6 I took a picture of a gopher I don't know why. I just thought it was cute; something to enlighten it, all the negativeness.

Person 5 Ah, I just like architecture, yeah. I think it's important to have, like some, some outside interests as opposed to, like, the day to day, ah, survival.

Person 2 What I wanted here, what I wanted to show was winter with the snow.

Facilitator We also asked many of the participants if they had dreams.

Person 3 I want to buy a cottage out there by the water.

Person 4 I want to go back to school; people have told me about going to get my education to be an addictions counselor. I know that I will be a great addictions counselor because I've been through it all before; they can't pull any shit with me. You know. All people have good in them and deserve a chance to show it, you know.

Person 5 Like my future, it's kind of well, I survive him, and I want to turn all that grow area downstairs into flower area, and start my own business, so I'm just tinkering in it right now.
I'm just getting a feel; all I'd need is a cooler, and I'd have my own business, hopefully would make me enough to survive on the widowers pension.

Person 6 Something I think about a lot that I would like to do is research for HIV.

Person 3 I don't have dreams. No.
Um you know, but um, like, you know, it'd just be nice to, ah, just have some stability and, you know, have, have a home and then, you know, a partner.
Just, you know, just getting some stability in life.

Person 4 Red River College. Um maybe if it was drafting yeah I I mean I could see myself um doing more learning.

Person 1 One of my big dreams is to be able to own a house outside the city ah where I can grow my own, have a big garden, grow my own fruits and vegetables, live off the grid, ah maybe commute back and forth into the city.

Person 6 I would like one day to no longer have this illness in me. I would ask God to remove this illness, for me.

Facilitator All in all, it was a fascinating journey. Many of the participants are living very hard lives and are existing by creating supports and networks of care however

they can. With resourcefulness and creativity, they are meeting their most basic needs and living their lives the best way they know how. Some have overcome incredible challenges in order to simply be alive.

Person 5 Grow old and die. I just want to be old.

Facilitator Since we started the project three of our participants have passed on. It got easy at times to think of the participants as “beating the odds” and easy, again, to fall into the idea that the anti-retroviral medications were good enough to keep people alive for many years to come. And they do help many people, and people do live longer, but the reality is that HIV is a fatal disease and that poverty, stigmatization and discrimination are absolutely affecting the lives of all Canadians, not just the ones who have HIV. Every one of our participants is doing the best they can and we thank them for being a part of our study.