

Women who are HIV positive and use substances struggle with the stigma of deviance. Disclosure of one's status and/or acknowledgement of alcohol use or drug problems can have a negative effect on the woman, her family, and her children. This project allowed us, as service providers concerned about women's health issues, an opportunity to meet with women in rural communities to discuss the issues and explore strategies for change.

In summary, the key principles in providing services related to HIV and substance use that proved beneficial in this project were recognizing community culture and working with the women in the communities to plan, arrange, and offer the sessions in a timely and convenient manner.

In the focus group discussions there were a number of reoccurring themes. We were told, again and again, that women were neither aware of the services available in the community nor how to access them. The participants felt that more information about services and more community educational/information sessions about health-related issues would be beneficial.

It would seem, based on the feedback of the women who participated in the sessions and focus groups, that while some services were available either in a nearby urban setting or within their rural area, a significant number of women were not aware of what those services were nor how to access them. Clearly then, there is a need for more information about the services that are available to women in rural areas and smaller communities, as well as how they can access those services in a way provides for and ensures a level of anonymity.

Karen O'Gorman works as an HIV and Substance Use Program Consultant with The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Education and Training Services HIV Program. She works out of Thunder Bay providing education, training, consultation, and outreach to Northwestern Ontario. She

has a Masters in Social Work and has lived and worked in many rural communities throughout the provinces and territories.

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DANIELLE MAVEAL

Dreamcatcher

she spits and kills a pigeon.

she dreams
the pigeon enters her
expands
its wing they fill
up her back and arms

she can feel
two sets of ribs
hers and those more fragile

death inside her

she spits feathers
and sells them
souvenirs to other
women.

Danielle Maveal, 22, is in the Creative Writing Program at York University.