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— Martin, Canada Pavilion Representative at AIDS 2024

to address HIV and other STBBI, as well as showcased community innovation and the community-based response to HIV and other STBBI in Canada.

For Martin, the experience at the Canada Pavilion was profoundly inspiring, cultivating a deeper drive for the work ahead. The conference theme, "Putting People First," resonated deeply with him, and he noted how this theme was celebrated in every aspect of the Canada Pavilion. He was particularly motivated by the conference's emphasis on centering community voices and lived/ living experience—a principle RHAC has consistently prioritized in their work.

"Diversity was celebrated, and the Pavilion really put people first, not only in Canada but globally," Martin shared enthusiastically. "I had many discussions about the importance of focusing on priority population specific approaches and leveraging evidenced based services and programs. Canada can learn from global inspiration, and vice versa."

Martin was eager to bring actionable insights and knowledge back to his team to enhance the services and programs within his organization. Throughout the many sessions he attended, the significance of research was a key focus, underscoring his organization's dedication to community-based research engagement and fostering collaborative partnerships. This led to discussions about his organization signing on to new local community research projects, emphasizing population specific peer navigation and clinical experiences across diverse health service providers.

Stigma is also a critical issue affecting those living with HIV. Filled with anticipation for implementing new strategies to address stigma, Martin says that conversations he engaged in and the knowledge he gained have strengthened his resolve to combat stigma at its core.

"Connecting with international leaders and hearing firsthand about the challenges and solutions they face in their own regions was inspiring," said Martin. "These conversations have given me a fresh perspective on tackling inequity, and I'm excited to share everything I've learned with my staff and our clients."



Martin (right) with other Canadians at the Canada Pavilion

Martin believes Canada's presence at the AIDS Conference is crucial in demonstrating solidarity and commitment to reducing new HIV transmissions and ensuring that folks diagnosed with HIV has access to timely, quality and culturally responsive treatment. For him, it's about being part of a global family, sharing Canada's strengths and solutions with the world, and also taking learning back home.

"There is immense pride in knowing Canada provided over 50 presenters across 25 live sessions and also numerous resources at the Pavilion."

In closing, Martin shared, "The work is challenging—supporting and empowering people living with and at risk for HIV while actively combating stigma, discrimination, and systemic barriers. While policies continue to emerge that perpetuate 'othering,' coming together with like-minded individuals who share a commitment to health equity strengthens our resolve and fuels meaningful progress."



MARTIN'S SUCCESS STORY

(He/Him) from London, ON

Martin engaging with delegates at AIDS 2024

As the Executive Director of Regional HIV/AIDS Connection (RHAC) and a dedicated Community Advisor, Martin's multi-faceted role in the HIV/AIDS movement keeps him very involved overseeing essential programming, fostering partnerships, and working tirelessly to advance prevention, testing and connection to care efforts in his region. Martin's personal mission aligns with Canada's ambitious 95-95-95 targets, and he is driven by a deep commitment to addressing systemic health inequities faced by marginalized communities.

Thanks to funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada, Martin had the honor of representing Canada at the 25th International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2024) in Munich, Germany. With a theme of "Empowering Communities: Leaving No One Behind", the Canada Pavilion shared Canadian best practices, effective interventions and achievements