



## JULEZ' SUCCESS STORY

(She/Her) from Dartmouth NS

Julez (centre) presents her work at AIDS 2024

**J**ulie (Julez) is a Program Manager at Healing Our Nations (HON) – the only Indigenous led HIV/AIDS organization in Atlantic Canada that serves all 33 First Nation communities and the off-reserve population through education, prevention and awareness interventions. She has been involved in the HIV/AIDS movement in Canada for nearly 20 years.

Thanks to funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada, Julez was selected to be a Pavilion Representative at the Canada Pavilion 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 to address HIV and other STBBI,

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— Julez, Canada Pavilion Representative at AIDS 2024

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

“I am immensely grateful for the opportunity to have represented both my organization, Healing Our Nations, and Canada at the 2024 International AIDS Conference.”

Julez says she used every moment to gather new information to bring back to her organization, which will benefit the communities that HON supports. She is eager to indigenize and share new programming ideas with communities across Nova Scotia.

“One of the most exciting aspects of the conference was the mixture of people and perspectives represented,” she says. “Exchanging ideas with everyone really energized me!”

The conference attracted a wide range of professionals, researchers, and advocates from around the world. Reflecting on her time at the conference, Julez shared that this opportunity opened her up to seeing what was going on across Canada in the HIV response.

“Talking with other Canadians who visited the Canada Pavilion showed that Canada is doing well in its HIV response,” says Julez. “But these discussions also highlighted how large Canada is, how many unique regions we have, and how we are all individuals collectively responding to complex needs.”

One complex need that seemed to be a recurring topic of conversation was around HIV and aging. This topic wasn’t something that Julez had fully explored before, but after this experience, she better understands the growing importance of ensuring that older individuals in First-Nation communities have access to the most up-to-date information and resources.



Julez (centre) and other members of the Canada Pavilion Team

Julez has already begun framing this information through an Indigenous lens. She shared that the discussions at the conference were an excellent reminder to review their programming.

When asked if it is important for Canada to be present at the AIDS conference, Julie enthusiastically replied “Absolutely!”

“Being in-person made a big impact due to Canada’s positive reputation on the global stage. This was a life-changing experience, and I am honoured to have been trusted to represent Canada at the conference.”

