

Diabetes in Indigenous Communities

a transformative, community-driven solution in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Recommendations



By Jeffrey Cyr, Managing Partner, Raven Indigenous Capital Partners and Marcel Lauzière, President and CEO, Lawson Foundation

The COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately threatens those with diabetes and immunocompromising conditions, highlighting the vital need for large-scale action for transformative change. The federal government has shown incredible leadership and cross-party collaboration to put the needs of Canadians first and prioritize public health in the wake of crisis. We applaud federal, provincial and municipal governments for coming together quickly and effectively to manage the COVID-19 pandemic. Appreciating the ongoing attention and resources coronavirus disease management requires, we hope COVID-19 public health best practices can also be applied to the ongoing diabetes crisis threatening Indigenous communities across Canada.

Diabetes is a chronic disease that impacts all Canadians, but its physical, emotional and spiritual toll on Indigenous communities is devastating. Lasting solutions to diabetes are multifaceted, reflecting the nature of its causes. The effectiveness of diabetes prevention and management interventions within Indigenous communities have had limited success due to focusing primarily on obesity and lifestyle changes as underlying causes, coupled with insufficient and insecure funding and resources. Permanently reducing the burden of type 2 diabetes (T2D) in Indigenous communities requires uprooting the structures that accelerate its onset using a community-developed, culturally sound, and trauma-informed approach. Indigenous communities, federal and provincial governments, an Indigenous financial intermediary, medical experts, and advocacy bodies are now partners in a project to address these issues.

A 20-year-old Indigenous person has an 80% risk of developing diabetes in Canada

The national prevalence of diabetes in Canada is 7.3%. Diabetes rates among Indigenous individuals are estimated to be almost five times higher at 34.8%. Indigenous peoples are among the highest-risk populations for diabetes-related complications, including heart attack, stroke, amputation and blindness. Research shows the lifetime risk of diabetes at 20 years of age is 75.6% among Indigenous men and 87.3% among Indigenous women, resulting in an increased spending on healthcare.

EVERY 24 HOURS...



More than **20 Canadians die** of diabetes complications

620 receive a diagnosis of diabetes

14 have lower limb amputations

Our health care system spends

\$79 million treating diabetes

A \$150 MILLION INVESTMENT = \$20 BILLION SAVINGS
IN 7 YEARS

770,000 fewer cases of type 2 diabetes

245,000 fewer hospitalizations for diabetes

34,000 fewer lower limb amputations

*Source: see "Diabetes 400" - The Science Lab - for the complete information.



Raven Indigenous Capital Partners is an Indigenous social finance intermediary, founded as a solution to the challenges faced by Indigenous communities, organizations, and entrepreneurs. Our namesake, the Raven, is central to rebirth and transformation in Indigenous cultures. We endeavour to use the element of transformation in our work, creating an equitable and prosperous future for Indigenous peoples in Canada, which includes addressing the social determinants of health. We use existing structures - impact investing, strategic partnerships like our collaboration with the Lawson Foundation, and strong relationships in the Indigenous community - to breathe life into a re-emerging Indigenous economy.

The Indigenous Solutions Lab on Diabetes Reduction

Diabetes prevention and management in Indigenous communities are not just about diet and exercise; they require a hard look at the social determinants of health that contribute to diabetes. The Indigenous Solutions Lab on Diabetes Reduction is a process whereby stakeholders co-design a social finance instrument that funds the implementation of diabetes reduction interventions. The entire process and its outputs are designed to transform funding relationships and build "sticky" solutions to seemingly intractable problems. The Lab re-centers communities and their needs, empowering them to address complex problems using social finance. Our goal is to co-create a model that can be replicated in Indigenous communities across Turtle Island. Without community-driven innovation, transformative change will remain elusive and the T2D epidemic will continue its exponential growth in Indigenous communities.

Viable Indigenous Diabetes Solution that Supports TRC Priorities

The health insecurity caused by diabetes undermines the resilience of Indigenous communities to face

additional health, economic, and social challenges. Policymakers and public health planners need viable - community-developed - options to immediately prevent growing diabetes disease complications in Indigenous communities.

Raven has developed community-centred tools and a sustainable financing model in partnership with the Lawson Foundation and Indigenous Services Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch to effectively support Indigenous diabetes needs, addressing Call to Action 19 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). With additional partners and additional resources, we can affect real community change now and support a government and Canadian priority. Visit RavenCapitalPartners.ca/Social-Finance to learn more.

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Dr. Brandy Wicklow, Pediatric Endocrinologist, Clinical Investigator at the Children's Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba and both Raven and Lawson Foundation researcher

"As a pediatric endocrinologist and clinical researcher, I have witnessed generational impact of type 2 diabetes within Indigenous families and communities causing a significant barrier to health, happiness and healing. Indigenous leadership and direction are required to make substantial gains in the fight against type 2 diabetes in Indigenous communities. The Raven Indigenous Capital Partners Diabetes Solutions Lab and research grants from the Lawson Foundation are examples of substantial and sustainable improvements that can be made in partnership with Indigenous communities to support children's health."