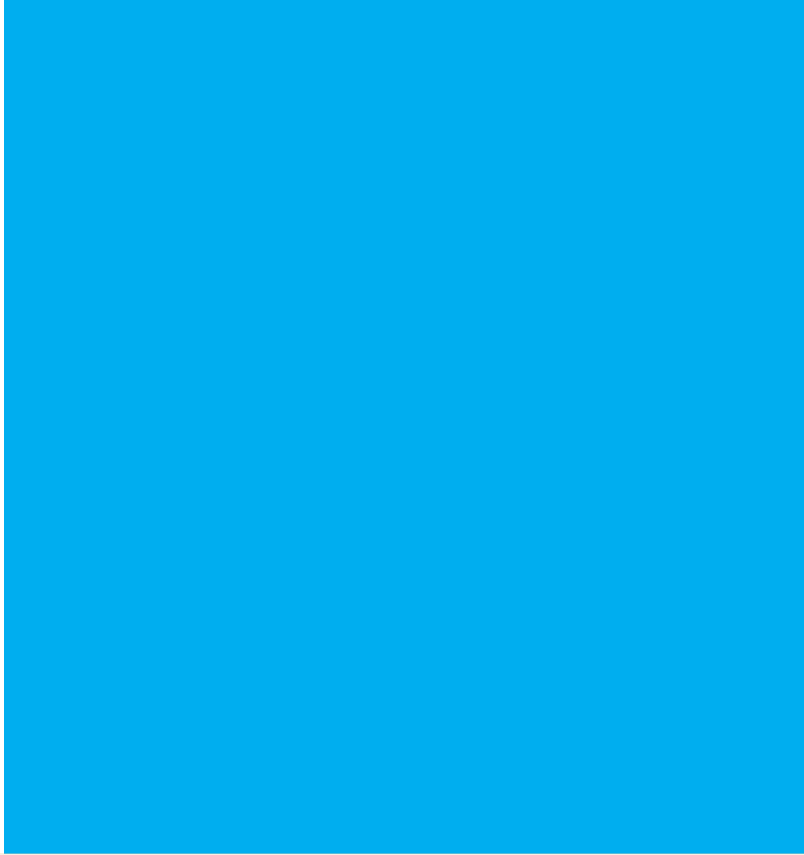


Community Empowerment & Trafficking and Sex Work eLearning

- This bulletin offers findings from a pilot Peer Health Advocates training program, designed with and for sex workers. It aimed to enhance community empowerment to enable sex workers to shape their practices around health promotion and prevention strategies, and to contribute to improving access to health and social services within their communities.
- Participants enhanced self-esteem and reduced internalized stigma, increased their critical consciousness, acquired new knowledge from participation and control over the training program, strengthened solidarity with other sex workers, and contributed to increased resource mobilisation in the community.
- This pilot study, the first of its kind in Canada, was a successful proof of concept and built the foundation for a long-term initiative. Other jurisdictions in Canada could adapt similar programs in their area.





clients. Criteria included interest in improving health and access to health care services for sex workers, being 19 years of age or older, currently engaged in sex work in the research setting, and having strong leadership skills and networking abilities. Trainees varied in age, gender, sexual orientation, Indigenous cultural background, socioeconomic status, and sex work history. Their sex work locations ranged from independent indoor, webcam, escort agency to independent outdoor. Some worked full-time, others part-time and some were transitioning out of sex work.

ALIGNED with community empowerment-based responses, this program prioritised the engagement of sex workers in the development and delivery of the program [20,21]. Participation was stimulated through frequent reminders that this training program was their program to develop. The teacher-student dynamic was replaced with a more horizontal power dynamic: "I felt like it would be more like teacher and student type thing... everybody in the group... we were all working our own little ways on different stu ... And then also [the Project C

THE training program fostered strengthened relationships and solidarity among participants, as well as with other sex workers in the community. The support provided by the local sex worker organization was important in empowering participants to identify as sex workers: "I would never, ever, before being associated with [local sex work organization] be able to identify as a... sex trade worker. It's very liberating to have all of that come forward and know that there's support services in place" [P5].

