



KEYNOTE: INSIGHTS FROM INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES ON LIMB PRESERVATION

Addressing Health Disparities And Fostering Resilience

James Peters and Christine Kenel-Peters

Abstract: This report offers an overview analysis of the experiences of James Peters and Christine Kenel-Peters. It highlights the challenges that Indigenous populations face in the realm of limb preservation and summarizes the inspiring stories shared by the presenters.

Key words: *quality improvement, limb preservation, implementation, data collection, patient care, community support.*

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The *Wounds Canada Limb Preservation Symposium* marked its fifth anniversary with this year's event. It is worth celebrating its growth from a modest beginning in Toronto to a widely recognized platform garnering support from health-care professionals, lay audiences and industry stakeholders. Such a sustained engagement speaks volumes about the continuing relevance of discussions on amputation prevention across Canada. This year's focus on the intersection of amputation prevention and Indigenous communities underscores the need for inclusivity and equity in health-care initiatives

James Peters: Triumphant Through Adversity

James Peters, a Potawatomi/Ojibwa member of Caldwell First Nation (also known as the Chippewas of Point Pelee and Pelee Island), shared a compelling narrative highlighting his life through an array of challenges and eventual triumphs. His personal journey emphasizes the profound impact of forgiveness and unwavering community support in overcoming deeply ingrained struggles.

Raised in non-Indigenous foster homes and group homes, Peters' life was marked by adversity, including instances of abuse and trauma. However, he sometimes found solace in activities like horseback riding and ice hockey. As a young adult,

Peters continued to navigate a challenging path, including encounters with the law and struggles with addiction. He also battled with necrotizing fasciitis, diabetes, and kidney disease.

A turning point came when he had a transformative experience in a church, where he felt a powerful spiritual presence. This encounter marked the beginning of Peters' journey toward healing and recovery. In the sanctuary of the church, he began to find solace and a renewed sense of purpose. The unwavering support and guidance he received from mentors played an essential role in redirecting his life's trajectory, inspiring him to distance himself from the streets and work towards reconstructing his life.

Despite enduring immense difficulties, Peters also found love, purpose, and a sense of belonging through his relationship with his wife, Christine. Their shared faith, along with the support of family, community, and medical professionals, has been instrumental in his ongoing recovery from various health challenges.

Peter's story is ultimately one of redemption, faith, and the power of human connection. It serves as a testament to the importance of holistic well-being and the potential for transformation even in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. His journey illustrates that despite confronting apparently impossible odds, transformation and recovery are attainable through the confluence of determination, faith and connection.

Christine Kenel-Peters: Unveiling Health Disparities

Christine Kenel-Peters, a Swiss-Canadian advocate deeply engaged in Indigenous issues, shed light on the complex interplay of social and systemic factors that give rise to health disparities within Indigenous communities.

She emphasized the nutritional advantages of traditional foods and practices, highlighting their superiority over modern alternatives. However, accessing nutritious food becomes a challenge in remote Indigenous communities due to various barriers, thus underscoring the need for improved

health-care infrastructure and accessible resources in these regions.

The Power Of Community And Culture

The narratives of Peters and Kenel-Peters collectively exhibited the profound influence of spiritual resilience, support and strategic health-care interventions. Both speakers stressed the significance of reconnecting with indigenous culture, community bonds and familial relationships.

Kenel-Peters' involvement in northern communities showcased a tangible commitment to providing essential resources such as clothing, food and educational supplies. This outreach not only meets immediate needs but also cultivates a shared sense of responsibility and unity among members.

The Indigenous concept of the circle, symbolizing unity and interconnectedness, resonates throughout the experiences shared by the presenters. They articulated the importance of addressing individuals comprehensively—encompassing the mind, body and spirit—for achieving holistic health outcomes. Indigenous individuals often encounter barriers while accessing health-care services, frequently requiring them to leave their communities. Yet James Peters' heartening outreach to fellow patients during hospital visits emphasizes the vital role that community support plays in the healing process.

Amputation Prevention Through Cultural Empowerment

The narrative of the Peters illuminated the paramount importance of preventing limb amputations through timely intervention and well-rounded care. Nutrition, education and cultural reinvigoration emerged as pivotal pillars in combatting the root causes of health disparities prevalent in Indigenous communities.

By revitalizing time-honoured practices, addressing systemic challenges and bolstering community resilience, the rising rates of amputations and associated health disparities can be curtailed.

Conclusion

By sharing their personal stories encompassing challenges, setbacks and triumphs, the presenters hope to ignite conversations destined to drive positive transformations and heightened awareness regarding the unique obstacles encountered by Indigenous individuals in Canada. This symposium serves as a poignant reminder of the potential inherent in collaboration, empathy and cultural appreciation for addressing health disparities and fostering a healthier, more equitable future for all Canadians. ■

James Peters (1962-2023) was a Potawatomi/Ojibwa member of Caldwell First Nation. More information can be found at <https://www.caldwellfirstnation.ca>.

Christine Kenel-Peters is a Swiss-Canadian advocate deeply engaged in Indigenous issues.

This presentation is from the 2023 Wounds Canada Limb Preservation Symposium, a virtual one-day event held on April 23, 2023. A video recording of the full presentation can be accessed at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1H98hMrAQY8XGzSBUhSm-ltQAffIFpdyp4/view?usp=drive_link

Illustration on page 6: Mino-Mashkiki (good medicine) by Naomi Peters.

IN MEMORIAM It is with great sadness that we note the passing of James Peters (née-Gan-Nodin) subsequent to his presentation at the Wounds Canada Limb Preservation Symposium. Peters was a proud member of Caldwell First Nation, whose ancestral lands are located at the most southern tip of Canada. A full obituary can be found at <https://memorials.marshallfuneralhome.com/james-peters/5245069/index.php>

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