



PHOTO BY: RON ELLIOTT

SPREAD THE MESSAGE NOT THE DISEASE!

UPDATE

SEXUAL HEALTH, HIV AND HEPATITIS C

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

2004-2005 At a Glance

The Canadian Inuit HIV/AIDS Network (CIHAN) was formed by Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association in 1999 to educate Inuit about the risks and realities of HIV/AIDS. Every year is busy at CIHAN, and this year was no exception. Pauktuutit Sexual Health staff, Aideen Reynolds and Henry Kudluk traveled to all six regions of the North – Inuvialuit (Inuit region of the Northwest Territories), Nunavut (Kitikmeot, Kivalliq and Baffin), Nunavik (Northern Quebec), and Labrador – to meet with many of the people who work on health and social issues in Inuit communities. Aideen, Henry and members of the CIHAN steering committee have been busy organizing HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C Fairs, conducting needs assessments, meeting with public health officials, gaining knowledge of the issues among Inuit in Canada, and attending national HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C meetings.

In the Pauktuutit office back in Ottawa, they have been working on new projects such as the new and improved Pauktuutit website, planning a Northern Sexual Health Symposium, writing HIV/AIDS information fact sheets and juggling many other activities.



Henry Kudluk & Aideen Reynolds



Photo: Aideen Reynolds



Photo: Aideen Reynolds

Following is a brief update on some of the activities that Pauktuutit and CIHAN undertook this year to address HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and sexual health among Inuit.

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PAUKTUUIT
INUIT WOMEN OF CANADA

Trevor Stratton, Fair Speaker
Tobey C. Anderson, 1st Place Fair Winner, Makkovik, NL.

Photo: Sharon Edmunds



**Congratulations
Fair winners and
all of those who
participated.**

HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C Fairs

For the past 5 years, a number of communities have hosted HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C Fairs. During the Fairs, youth create projects that address any aspect of HIV or Hepatitis C. The projects are judged for accuracy, quality and creativity and prizes are provided to winning participants. An Aboriginal person with HIV and/or Hepatitis C travels to

the community to speak about his or her experience living with one or both of these diseases.

This year, Fairs took place in 7 communities – Cambridge Bay, Arviat, Resolute Bay, Arctic Bay, Iqaluit, Inukjuuak and Makkovik. Sincere thanks to the hard work of the community Fair Coordinators!

HIV/AIDS Fact Sheets

For the past three years, Pauktuutit and CIHAN have partnered with CATIE (Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange) in producing short fact sheets on HIV/AIDS for health staff and Inuit living with HIV. These fact sheets present information on various aspects of HIV/AIDS in easy-to-understand language.

This year, CIHAN produced eight fact sheets which were sent to health centers across the North. The fact sheets were on the topics of HIV testing, Hepatitis C testing, HIV drug resistance, HIV drug related fatigue, HIV medication side effects, HIV viral load, Non-Insured Health Benefits and HIV wasting syndrome.

To get any of these fact sheets, call Pauktuutit at 1-800-667-0749 or visit the website www.pauktuutit.ca.

CIHAN HIV/AIDS Environmental Scan

For the past seven months, CIHAN has been conducting an Environmental Scan – holding a series of meetings with governmental departments, Regional Inuit Associations, community health representatives/workers, teachers and community members across the North to find out how the regions are currently responding to HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C.

Information gathered during these meetings will help to design HIV and Hepatitis C projects that address some of the gaps and priorities identified by people working in the regions.

Short-term Objective:

- To conduct consultations with CIHAN project stakeholders in the regions, in order to understand strengths as well as barriers communities and regions face in the design and implementation of HIV and Hepatitis C projects and programs.

Long-term Objectives:

- To develop and/or enhance partnerships with the regions and communities, and;
- To design CIHAN projects that respond effectively to priorities as identified by the regions.

Findings from the Environmental Scan will be available in April, 2005.

Some of the key findings from the Environmental Scan will be included in the next UPDATE, so stay tuned!

Sexual Health/CIHAN Website

Pauktuutit recently launched a new website. As part of this launch, Pauktuutit gave all of its projects an up-to-date, user-friendly format. The CIHAN project webpage includes easy-to-find information about the Sexual Health, HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C Project at Pauktuutit. Go to www.pauktuutit.ca and click on the CIHAN logo. The website includes all of Pauktuutit's HIV/AIDS resources in a downloadable format.



World AIDS Conference Toronto - 2006

The next World AIDS Conference will take place in Toronto in July 2006. Between now and then, Pauktuutit will be working with communities to raise awareness and increase attention being paid to this very important issue for Inuit in Canada.

Sexual Health Symposium Fall 2005

Pauktuutit is planning to convene a Sexual Health Symposium this Fall 2005, to which health workers, community partners, Inuit organizations and government officials will be invited to share perspectives regarding how they feel Inuit communities are addressing HIV and Hepatitis C in Canada. It will be an opportunity for community members to come up with next steps and strategies for Inuit communities to address sexual health issues, including HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C.

Goals of the Sexual Health Symposium – Summer 2005:

- To arrive at a clearer understanding of what is meant by “sexual health”, why sexual health is important, the relationship between sexual health, HIV and Hepatitis C, and how these issues are clearly linked to other health and social issues;
- To increase community awareness of the need for increased prioritization and dedication of resources for sexual health;
- To provide an opportunity for sharing information across communities and regions with respect to the design and provision of sexual health programs and services;
- To increase understanding of the impact that HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C are having on Aboriginal communities in Canada, the rest of the world, and how Inuit fit within the global fight against HIV and Hepatitis C; and,
- To establish next steps and goals for Inuit communities to address sexual Health issues including HIV and Hepatitis C.

To get involved in this work, please contact Aideen Reynolds at 1-800-667-0749 or areynolds@pauktuutit.ca.



Photo: Henry Kudluk



Photo: Aideen Reynolds



Photo: Aideen Reynolds

Sexual Health Awareness Campaign

Initial findings from the Environmental Scan highlighted the need for increased public awareness about sexual health and HIV. There is an urgent need for greater public understanding of sexual health issues and the link between sexual health and HIV and Hepatitis C.

Pauktuutit is collaborating with Planned Parenthood Federation Canada on the development of a Sexual Health Awareness Campaign to increase awareness of sexual health issues including HIV and Hepatitis C among Inuit in Canada. Focus groups are being conducted with Inuit youth living in Ottawa as well as youth who are involved in Y.E.A.H North, a peer education project based in Iqaluit, to find out what messages they would like to send their peers about sexual health and protecting oneself and others from

serious diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis C. As well, youth will be consulted about the types of media to be used as well at the overall look and feel of the campaign.

To order any materials mentioned in this UPDATE or for more information on projects and events held by Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association and the Canadian Inuit HIV/AIDS Network, please call us toll-free at 1-800-667-0749 or visit our website at www.pauktuutit.ca.

HIV/AIDS & Hepatitis Fair in Arviat

David Nelson is an Aboriginal person living with HIV. David traveled to Arviat to speak to the community about what it is like to live with the HIV during a recent AIDS Fair in Arviat in February of 2005. The HIV/AIDS & Hepatitis C Fairs are sponsored by Pauktuutit, with funding from the Northern Secretariat and First Nations Inuit Health Branch. The Fairs are held in communities across the North. Students create and submit projects highlighting HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C awareness issues that are entered into a contest. The projects are judged by community and school representatives and by the HIV-positive speaker. For more information about the Fairs, contact Pauktuutit at 1-800-667-0749.

HIV Positive Speaker's Report David Nelson

I traveled to Arviat on February 9th as the HIV positive Aboriginal speaker for the HIV/AIDS Fair at the school. I spoke to nine classes with the students ranging from grades seven to twelve. I brought T-shirts, key tags and condoms, and the students who asked questions were given gifts for their participation. I also participated in the judging of the Fair projects. The posters, created by the students, were judged for

accuracy of information, design and overall effectiveness. Other judges for the Fair projects included Obed Anoe, Community Health Representative for Arviat, the School Counselor, Heather MacDonald, the Art teacher, Denette and some school board members. Later that evening, awards for the best posters were given out at a community gathering and feast. I also delivered a speech during the gathering, with the assistance of Obed as a translator.

On the last evening of my stay, I participated in a local community radio show, again with the assistance of Obed as both the host of the radio show and translator.

Response of the Community

Everyone in the community was warm and welcoming. It was a powerful experience for me to have people from the community walk with me everywhere. People would stop and introduce themselves and go out of their way to ensure that I felt welcome. My experience in the community was great. All of the staff and the students at the school were welcoming and the teachers helped to settle the students at the beginning of the presentations. After the presentations were done, teachers offered words of thanks and support to me for sharing with the students.

The community meeting and feast was one of the highlights of the trip, as I had an opportunity to meet the Elders and to see how the community members interact with one another. I cannot imagine any visitor not having a great time in Arviat.



Photo: Aileen Reynolds

Challenges

In my opinion, one of the greatest challenges faced by youth in the North is not being prepared for the cultural differences in traveling to the south, making them vulnerable to high risk activities. Teen pregnancy is a major concern for the community of Arviat. Where there is a high rate of teen pregnancy, there is a high rate of unprotected sex. Where there is a high rate of unprotected sex, there is risk of HIV infection.

Finally, health workers in Northern communities need to consider what would be done if a member of the community tested positive for HIV. It is important to have some support for Healthcare Workers and Community Leaders in these communities to help them develop a plan to care for HIV positive community members if someone with HIV chooses to live in the community.

David Nelson, Fair Speaker & Obed Anooe, CIHAN Steering Committee Member



Photo: David Nelson

“Everyone in the community was warm and welcoming. It was a powerful experience for me to have people from the community walk with me everywhere.”

**Community Capacity Building:
*Building an Integrated HIV/AIDS
Service Model in Iqaluit***

The Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange (CATIE) is a national, non-profit organization committed to improving health and quality of life of all Canadians living with HIV/AIDS. CATIE has recently begun a 16-month Capacity Building Project working in seven sites across Canada. In partnership with Pauktuutit, one of the sites chosen for this project is Iqaluit. The sites were selected outside Canada's large urban centres in order to address the growing need for HIV/AIDS services in smaller urban and rural communities where such services are often lacking. Funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada, this project in Iqaluit will involve staff from local health organizations and community partners to develop a model to assess and build community capacity related to HIV prevention, diagnosis, care and treatment for Inuit in Iqaluit.


***Phase I: Community Needs
Assessment – April, 2005***

A one-day exploration of Iqaluit's needs in terms of sexual health issues will focus on HIV prevention, diagnosis, care and treatment. This phase will also include a half-day sexual health promotion skills-building workshop.

***Phase II: Capacity Building
Workshop – Fall, 2005***

From the assessment in Phase I, a workshop will be convened to address sexual health concerns, with an emphasis on HIV prevention, care and treatment issues identified during the needs assessment. This workshop will take place some time in the Fall of 2005.

For more information about this project in Iqaluit, or about the other sites in Canada, contact Pauktuutit at 1-800-667-0749.



*All of the sites were
purposely selected outside
Canada's large urban centres
to address the growing need
for HIV/AIDS services in
smaller communities*

Regional Focus: *Urban Inuit and HIV*

Darren Greer sat down with Harry Adams, urban Inuit representative on the CIHAN Steering Committee. Harry is Inuk from Rankin Inlet, and is currently a pre-employment and safety construction trainer for the Kativik school board in Montreal. Harry shares with us his own life experiences, as well the challenges and needs facing urban Inuit in relation to HIV:

Darren: How did you get involved with HIV/AIDS issues?

Harry: When I first moved to Montreal from Rankin Inlet, my friends and I were going out to bars a lot and partying. After a while, a friend came to me and said he wasn't doing well. He was feeling sick and had diarrhea and no energy. We went to the hospital together. The doctor gave him Tylenol and an HIV test. A few weeks later the results came back HIV positive. After that, we would often get into discussions about the disease – the things that my friend would have to do work-wise, to live, to manage the costs of medications – and that's how I came to be aware of the disease.

A couple of years later my partner came down with HIV. We weren't living together then, but I moved in to take care of him for five years. This was in the 1980's. I helped him through all the physical and emotional symptoms of the illness – the fear, the loneliness, the night sweats and infections. He finally died in 1993. Since then, many of my friends have died of HIV. For many, while they were alive, I volunteered to support them because they didn't have anyone else. There were hardly any services for people living with HIV then, let alone services for Inuit. Sometimes people just need a phone call and someone to talk to.

Darren: When did you join the Canadian Inuit HIV/AIDS Network?

Harry: In 2001, I was living and working in Ottawa. I met Todd Armstrong, who was then the project coordinator for the HIV/AIDS file at Pauktuutit. He asked if I wanted to be a part of the project, and sit on the steering committee. I've been on the committee since that time.



Darren Greer, Interviewer



Harry Adams, CIHAN Steering Committee Member

Darren: Describe the issue of HIV/AIDS as it affects Inuit in urban areas?

The key issue for Inuit infected and at risk for HIV in urban areas such as Montreal is isolation. Many of us live in fear and loneliness, isolated from our families and our communities. Another problem is that some of us, particularly those who have just moved from the North and spoke Inuktitut most of the time, might have a problem communicating in plain English, especially with doctors and nurses when we have health issues. Many times we do not know the southern terms for certain words in English and they may not even be translated into Inuktitut. We often have a hard time communicating. When we have gay pride celebrations or AIDS awareness events, there is not much Inuit participation in Montreal. Transportation for many Inuit is a problem, and high unemployment. Many of us live in shelters or far from downtown. These are just some of the issues we are dealing with.

Darren: Are there Inuit specific HIV/AIDS services in Montreal?

Harry: No. There is the Native Friendship Center, which is not specifically for Inuit but some Inuit do access it. There are hospital and health services that Inuit do access more often, such as the Montreal Chest Hospital that many urban Inuit go when they have problems with recurring TB and there are other hospitals that Inuit prefer to go. There is also a place called Nunavik House, which is a transit house for Inuit from Northern Quebec coming to the city. But it only accepts Inuit from Nunavik and Quebec, and there is no equivalent service for Inuit from Nunavut. None of these organizations offer HIV/AIDS services specifically to Inuit.

Darren: What are some of things that are being done in Montreal to address this gap?

Harry: Currently we are trying to start a new organization for Inuit in Montreal that would be based on the model of two-spirited people of the First Nations in Toronto. This is really important because Inuit need their own space. We are in early stages of researching locations and investigating funding and seeking letters of support from Inuit organizations. At the same time, we are trying to reach Inuit in Montreal and build a support network. This will help provide Inuit with information about where to go to access information and services, such as the Native Friendship Center, the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association and the Canadian Inuit HIV/AIDS Network. Right now, because we don't have this space and these services for Inuit, many of us are living in silence. The voices of urban Inuit have been silent because of our loneliness and isolation and our fear and hurt. Many AIDS organizations lack that urban Inuit perspective. Giving us that voice is important.

Darren Greer is an HIV/AIDS specialist who works with Pauktuutit on sexual health issues.



Photo: Aileen Reynolds

The key issue for Inuit infected and at risk for HIV in urban areas such as Montreal is isolation. Many of us live in fear, loneliness, isolated from our families and our communities.

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PAUKTUUTIT
INUIT WOMEN OF CANADA
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