

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network: MEDIA RELEASE



International Indigenous and Aboriginal Leaders Gather to Discuss HIV/AIDS Issues –

Vancouver, BC (October 30th, 2009) – At the 5th International Policy Dialogue on HIV/AIDS and Indigenous Persons held in Ottawa, hosted by Public Health Agency of Canada, Oct. 21 -23rd, 2009, the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN) was selected to lead the International Indigenous HIV/AIDS Working Group. Attended by Indigenous Peoples from New Zealand, Chile, Australia, Guatemala, United States, Brazil and Canada, the delegates overwhelmingly supported the leadership of the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network through its work in addressing HIV/AIDS issues amongst the Aboriginal people in Canada.

“We want to continue this momentum that we have started in Ottawa to ensure that Indigenous and Aboriginal HIV/AIDS issues throughout the world are included in...Vienna and beyond”, said Art Zoccole, Chair of Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network.

The goals of the International Indigenous HIV/AIDS Working Group are based on the Toronto Charter: 1) increase the integration of HIV/AIDS and Indigenous peoples at the International level; 2) improve meaningful inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in research policy and program development; 3) ensure Indigenous Peoples are more accurately represented in HIV/AIDS epidemiological data; 4) increase support for capacity development to integrate HIV/AIDS and Indigenous Peoples; 5) Develop an Indigenous specific approach to the social determinants of health; and 6) ensure that Indigenous and Aboriginal HIV/AIDS issues are presented at the International Conference on HIV/AIDS in Vienna and beyond.

“The 5th International Policy Dialogue on HIV/AIDS and Indigenous Persons has provided an opportunity to support Indigenous Peoples in knowledge exchange, of cultural projects and programs in Aboriginal communities in Canada. CAAN will take the lead with Indigenous Peoples to ensure that Indigenous voices are heard on HIV/AIDS issues. We take pride in taking a leadership role in this initiative”, states Ken Clement CEO of the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network.

It is important to note that many Indigenous and Aboriginal People throughout the world continue to fall behind in receiving universal access to prevention, care, treatment and support; a goal set by world leaders for 2010.

HIV/AIDS is disproportionately distributed across global populations, as it hits hardest in areas where structural economic and development challenges are greatest and it is especially evident within the Indigenous populations. This is mirrored in Canada's Aboriginal communities, where Aboriginal people are overrepresented among reported AIDS cases and made up a startling 26.5% of new HIV infections.

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