

Making It Our Way

This two year project ended March 31, 2006. It was intended to look at how Aboriginal communities and groups are doing HIV/AIDS work, and how to learn from these experiences so that we can mobilize more communities.

Surveys were conducted as we developed the community mobilization kit. Later, these findings revealed what the most common methods were being used. The surveys reached those Aboriginal groups working directly in HIV/AIDS. It later surveyed some elected Leaders to find out how much they knew about HIV/AIDS.

The project found that there were two types of leaders, elected and non-elected. Elected Leaders who advocated around HIV/AIDS most often had been touched by a family member or someone close who was HIV-positive.

Non-elected leaders were those community workers who made it their priority to raise awareness and support Aboriginal people now living with HIV/AIDS.

One important element in this document was a section on “Statement on Meaningful Engagement of Aboriginal People” which outlines how to partner between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups in order to do this important work.

Aboriginal Privacy and Confidentiality Initiative

As this two year projects winds down, a key milestone was the release of a resource called “Creating Environments that Respect the Privacy and Confidentiality of Aboriginal People Living with HIV/AIDS” (APHAs).

After speaking to Aboriginal People living with HIV/AIDS and various service groups like Aboriginal AIDS Service Organizations (AASOs), it was found that privacy and confidentiality is not always respected.

The downside is that once someone’s privacy has been broken, it is hard to repair this. If someone is HIV-positive and somebody else tells others, it is hard to take that back. While there are legal avenues people can take, it still does not correct the situation.

The answer then is to help people, including workers or volunteers at AASOs, among other service agencies, to make special efforts to protect a person’s privacy and confidentiality.

A resource is now available and a training session will occur in September 2006 on how to use this resource and to then work with other frontline workers to create environments that respect APHAs.

Canadian Journal of Aboriginal Community-Based HIV/AIDS Research

A highlight of CAAN's new research unit was establishing an annual peer-reviewed journal. This need came out of seeing gaps in research and also trying to find ways of getting this new knowledge out to the community.

CAAN's lead in the community-based research field has produced a number of quality research that is helping to understand how the HIV/AIDS epidemic is affecting the Aboriginal population, and various groups within.

The answer came in the form of creating a journal where research gets submitted and peer reviewed. Select articles then get published. Being published is one of the key ways to build prestige and gain recognition for your work.

This journal thus helps CAAN build and lead a research agenda, and supports researchers to present their work to the community. This in turn helps community workers to understand the issues and build this into their work. The premiere edition was released at the CAAN annual general meeting in August 2006.

CAAN Forms International Indigenous HIV/AIDS Secretariat

As the International AIDS Conference fades away, there were some proud highlights that CAAN was involved in. First, in partnership with the Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy and 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations, the International Indigenous Peoples Satellite was a huge success.

Over 300 people were registered for it. Next, CAAN worked hard to make sure Indigenous issues were in the media, and we offered a number of sessions, both oral and poster presentations.

As we look toward Mexico in 2008, CAAN through this newly formed Secretariat wishes to make sure Indigenous issues remain on the agenda. The current Satellite planning committee of Art Zoccole, Canada, LaVerne Monette, Canada, Clive Aspin, New Zealand, Kathy Malera-Bandjala of Australia, and Amaranta Gomez, Mexico will remain as the steering committee for this Secretariat as it grows into a broader mandate.