

ARC News

For the AIDS Resource Centre — Okanagan & Region

Special Points of Interest

- Help Africa fight the AIDS epidemic.
- Tips on financial matters.
- Changes in schedules, dates and changes in ARC staff.
- See how you can access our staff and resources.

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HOPE IN A SUFFERING CONTINENT

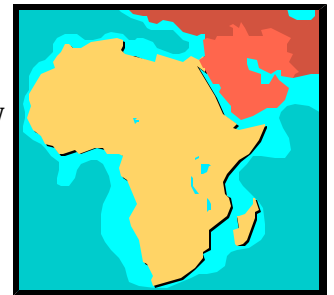
By Peter Mwenda

Walking into some African villages today requires ample strength to withstand certain horrific sights. It is not necessarily the extreme poverty or the decrepit living conditions that first strike you but rather the huge numbers of children running around in tattered clothes with no apparent sign of parental supervision. Sadly, it does not take long before the reason becomes clear; the AIDS epidemic is leaving a large number of African children without parents. In fact, the numbers are staggering. According to the latest estimates, 28 million Africans live with HIV/AIDS and 2.3 million Africans died from AIDS in 2001. With millions of parents dying what resources are present to take care of the numerous orphans? Sadly, not many.

The reason is that the AIDS epidemic is exacting a huge economic toll on African countries. AIDS deaths are directly reducing potential African economic growth. AIDS is rapidly curbing and



delaying productivity growth as many workers devote more time to take care of the sick and less



time to economic activities. With lower productivity come lower profits and less government revenue. In the end, that leaves little money to take care of AIDS patients, let alone the children they leave behind. But, what can the world do to help this struggling continent? Perhaps even more important, what should Africa do to help itself? A concerted effort by the rich countries and poor Africa is needed. A very effective way would be a partnership between industry, charity and both rich and poor government. The rich should be committed to providing medical or financial aid, and the African governments should pay more attention to the people dying of AIDS and less attention to unproductive politics of denial and blame. Denying that HIV causes AIDS and blaming others for its problems will only continue to compound Africa's problems — and Africa can do better than that.

TOPHER TALKS. . . A Client's Viewpoint



Living with HIV is mourning for the loss of one's health, having to deal with loss of friends and loved ones, and dealing with the anticipatory fear of loss in our lives. In the past four months, I have had the two deaths of my closest companions to deal with.

Six years ago when my relationship of 9 years ended, I got custody of our two dogs. For anyone who knew me since I moved here, appreciates that my dogs were a constant source of strength and stability in my life. Like children, they give you a reason to get up in the morning and they give you unconditional love and attention.

".....grieve not, Nor speak of me with tears, But laugh and talk of me, As if I were beside you...I loved you so-'twas heaven here with you" (Isla Paschal Richardson)

In January, my big dog, Cassidy, died of congestive heart failure and kidney failure. Fortunately, he was sick for only three weeks before I was forced to make the decision to have him euthanized. Being that he was 14 years old and given his poor state of health, it was the appropriate humane decision. My second dog passed last week. He was also 14 years old and had developed internal bleeding that required that he also be euthanized. After all this I am more a firm believer in Assisted Suicide and Living Wills that can include instructions not to resort to heroic measures if one is in distress. When living becomes mere existence, devoid of the quality of life we require to feel human, it seems unfair that we are able to extend to our pets the final grace of a dignified exit, which is denied to us as people.

Mourning is a personal time and this poem helps:

*"If it should be that I grow frail and weak
And pain should keep me from my sleep
Then will you do what must be done
For this, the last battle, can't be won.*

*You will be sad I understand
But don't let grief then stay your hand
For on this day, more than the rest
Your love and friendship must stand the test .*

*We have had so many happy years
You would not want me to suffer so
When the time comes please let me go.*

*Take me to where my needs they'll tend
Only, stay with me to the end
And hold me firm and speak to me
Until my eyes no longer see.*

*I know in time you will agree
It is a kindness you do for me
Although my tail its last has waved
From pain and suffering I have been saved.*

*Don't grieve that it must be you
Who has to decide this thing to do
We've been close through all these years
Don't let your heart hold any tears."*

- UNKNOWN



FORMULA FOR FINANCIAL WOES



By **Brian Mairs,**
Client Support Team

If you are receiving disability benefits from both CPP and the Ministry of Human Resources, (MHR), please do not have taxes voluntarily deducted from your CPP cheque. As you may know, you are required to declare the gross amount of your CPP earnings each month, and this full amount is deducted, penny for penny, from your MHR benefits. If you have income tax deducted from your CPP cheque, you run the risk of getting a tax refund in the spring. When you get this tax refund, it is considered income and must be declared on your report card and deducted from your MHR benefits, which could eliminate your provincial funds for that month. If this sounds as if the provincial government is deducting the same funds twice, you are quite correct. Furthermore, the government is aware of the situation but has no intention of changing the legislation that gives them the right to do so.

If you calculate that you may have a tax debt at the end of the year, instead of having funds deducted from your

CPP cheque, take some money each month and put it away in a separate bank account and pay the tax debt from these funds. For those of you who receive both CPP and MHR disabilities benefits, and find yourself with a tax bill, you may apply to MHR to cover some of the money you owe to the government. Take a copy of your "Notice of Assessment" and the CPP slip showing your annual income to your MHR worker. Tell your worker that you want to apply for the CPP Tax Adjustment and they will send your documents to Vancouver for processing. Six to ten weeks later, you will receive funds from MHR with which you can pay some or all of the amount owing on your taxes.

The AIDS Resource Centre is committed to your financial well being, so if you require any information about this or any other issue **please feel free to contact the Client Support Team at 250-862-2437 or 1-800-616-2437 to make an appointment with a client support worker.** Please also note the drop-in times are Thursdays, 9 a.m. till 3 p.m. Outside of these hours, please make an appointment.



VOLUNTEER CORNER

Are you interested in polishing up your computer skills or developing your interaction skills with the public? Then apply to join our office pool of volunteers where you will learn the skills necessary to de-

velop your administrative skills. You will be able to type up morning minutes, type up office documents, answer incoming calls, store and retrieve files, do photocopies and faxes, greet clients and gain some experience working in an office environment.

If you are interested in this challenging volunteer position please call us at **(250) 862-2437** to speak to our Volunteer Coordinator or visit our website at

www.arcok.com

Kate Alexander, Editor
Peter Mwenda, Contributing Editor

This newsletter is the official publication of the AIDS Resource Centre-Okanagan and Region (ARC). It is published four to six times yearly. The materials in this newsletter are meant to be consistent with ARC purposes which are: a) to promote awareness of AIDS and related diseases, b) to develop and provide educational resources, c) to support those living with AIDS and those diagnosed with HIV+, and/or their significant others.

Even so, the opinions and comments within this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect official ARC policy. The newsletter does not recommend, advocate or endorse the use of any particular treatment or therapy described as information. The Board, staff and volunteers of ARC do not accept the risk of, nor responsibility for any damages, costs or consequences of any kind which may arise or result from the use of information disseminated through this newsletter. Persons using the information provided through this newsletter do so by their own decision and hold the society's board, staff and volunteers harmless. Submissions for publication may be sent to our offices at any time; publication deadline is two weeks prior to publication date. Submissions will be returned if a request is made in writing and an address is provided. Reprinting and distributing this newsletter is openly encouraged.

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PERSON Project

By **Melissa Hill**,
Program Coordinator



“PERSON” is a pilot project with a goal of bringing information and resources for harm reduction to people at risk, during the hours when it may be most effective”

The AIDS Resource Centre is pleased to announce a new outreach initiative in Kelowna. Prevention Education Reaching Street-level Okanagan Now (PERSON) is a pilot project with the goal of bringing information and resources for harm reduction to people at risk, during the hours when it may be most effective. The name was chosen to reflect the reality that marginalized people are often seen as problems; it was chosen to affirm that regardless of their issues and challenges, these are persons whose lives must be respected and, to what whatever degree possible, protected. Two outreach workers, Nicole Sheppard and Mark Perry, have been trained by the ARC with the invaluable assistance of Lee from Outreach Health. They are already moving through the downtown area on **Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings between 9:30 p.m. and 1:30 a.m.**

equipped with information materials, condoms and alcohol swabs for distribution; along with new needles to be exchanged for used ones. They will also be providing referrals to appropriate community resources for needed services.

The program will also work closely with other agencies such as the Kelowna Drop-In Centre, the Down Town Patrol and Outreach Health Services in order to complement, but not to duplicate, existing services. The response from people on the street has been extremely positive and we will be collecting information about this and other needed services during the 17-week project. While you enjoy the summer you might see Mark and Nicole out there. Please stop, say hello and show them some support for their great service.

To contact **Mark and Nicole** during evening hours please call **878-5372**.

Or for more specific project information contact **Melissa** at **862-2437**.

CONDOM COPS return..



The AIDS Resource Centre is very pleased to announce our Condom Cops program has been approved by Human Resources Development Canada for the 9th year in a row with additional locations in Vernon and Penticton. The objective of this program is to **educate and inform the public about HIV/AIDS** by reaching the vast number of people who

would not otherwise access the services of an AIDS organization for condoms or educational material.

The program provides information on HIV transmission, prevention, testing and safe sex and attempts to dispel some of the myths and stereotypes that surround HIV/AIDS.

The AIDS Resource Cen-

tre has hired students for the 2002 program who will distribute an estimated 50,000 condoms and educational materials in high risk behaviors areas such as bars, pubs, nightclubs, beaches and parks throughout the summer. If you run into our Condom Cops, please show them support for their invaluable efforts.

Support Plus...Client Support Information



“Client directed service addressing HIV related issues is the foundation of the work done by the client support worker”

By River Glen, Client Support Worker

Client directed service addressing HIV related issues is the foundation of the work done by the Client Support Worker. That means your unique situation and circumstances determine the direction of our efforts. Client empowerment is our major goal. Many clients feel directionless and powerless when they first access our services but after building a good foundation of income security, housing, nutrition and health care, they find the renewed power to deal with other issues such as substance abuse, relationships and possibly further education and employment.

Sitting at the computer, in front of a desk covered with paperwork, this Client Support Worker glances out of the window at the bright, warm day and remembers to wish you all a safe and satisfying summer. It is definitely the time to smell the roses, eat fresh fruits and vegetables, drink lots of good bottled water and be in the moment.

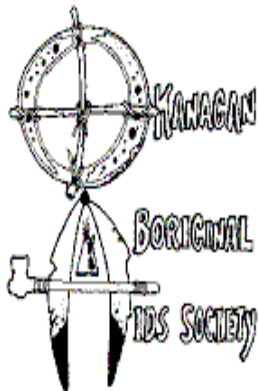
The BC Government's on-going changes (the new *BC Employment and Assistance for People with Disabilities Act*) could result in your file being reviewed. If you experience this or other challenges please let us know. We are available to help. Also, you are encouraged to contact your MLAs and let them know of your concerns.

Please note that River is taking a well-deserved rest from her duties until July 22. Until then Brian Mairs will take over the full-time duties in the client support area, Tuesday through Friday.

Reiki and Healing Touch.

Enjoy the relaxing and balancing benefits of a quiet hour with **Toshie**.

Call 862-2437 to book your free Tuesday session.



O.A.A.S. OKANAGAN ABORIGINAL AIDS SOCIETY

By Julie Desautels, OAAS Outreach Worker

Everyone is filled with emotions, whether we use them or not. In my case, I heard some news that I do not know what to do with.

There was time I remember watching how this person interacted with others: sitting there laughing, joking and making sure that

you also played to the beat. You knew when you were in the same room with this person and you always felt welcome.

Whenever I saw anyone who knew this person I would always ask them if they have heard from this person or how this person was doing or where this person was. They would say

that this person was doing well and looking great. That I was always happy to hear.

I have great memories. I think of all the work this person put into the HIV/AIDS field. I remember our talks and the nicknames. Sadly, I lost contact with this person. I will never forget you, Steve Hennessey. Goodbye till we meet again.

HIPPO update

By Merv McLeod,

HIPPO Coordinator

The First National Hepatitis C Conference was held in Edmonton from April 30th to May 3rd, 2002. A total of 500 delegates from every province and territory in Canada attended the event. The conference was thematically divided into 3 days: the first for honoring First Nations, the second for honoring the Metis and the third for honoring the Inuit. Interwoven between the sessions were elaborate First Nations dances, Metis music and jigs, ceremonies and stories. Delegates were also invited to participate in a Pipe Ceremony which took place on May 1st at 6:00 a.m., and 35 sleepy souls attended and enjoyed. The most impressive plenary session was the story told on the effects of Hepatitis C on the Morin family. Fox Morin had to have a liver transplant in September 1998 due to liver cirrhosis. Fox, his wife Ruth, his daughter and his doctor attended to tell their story of how the illness affected their lives and how the family has learned to live with it. This was a very powerful presentation and underscored the stigma of Hepatitis C in Native Reserves and Aboriginal Communities across Canada. Individual ses-

sions dealt with First Nations people in prison, in recovery from drugs and alcohol and the interweaving of the Native culture in Western healing. The reported emotional burdens of First Nations people include residential school abuse, forced break-up of families, loss of parenting skills by those who have had their children taken away and marginalization of First Nations people living in urban environments. The combination of all these factors often leads to drug and alcohol addiction. With drug addiction may come the use of needles which leads to a high risk of spreading the Hepatitis C virus.

However, some of the happy stories to report that came out of this conference were that some individuals who have been through all this pain and suffering have used the harm reduction model to come off the drugs, and they are now peer counselors within their own communities. Many Aboriginals are rediscovering their roots and finding that the strong spiritual aspect of First Nations, Metis and Inuit cultures are giving them the strength to face Hepatitis C in their lives and to use this to teach others how to protect themselves.



“The combination of all these factors often leads to drug and alcohol addiction.”

HEPATITIS SUPPORT Groups...contacts

VERNON:

HepLife. Call Sharon at 545-3092 for information.

KELOWNA:

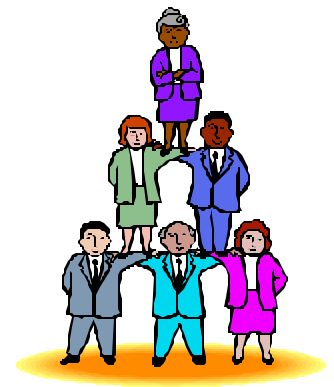
HEPKOP. Call Lisa or Elaine at 766-5132 or 768-3573 for more information .

PENTICTON:

Hepatitis Support Group. Call Alex or Sandra at 487-1598 for information.

OLIVER:

Hepatitis C Society of Oliver. Call 498-4598.



GATHERING IN REMEMBRANCE



**By Ron van der Meer,
Education Coordinator**

The 19th Annual AIDS Candlelight Memorial was observed in Mission Creek Park on Sunday May 26th. About 30 people showed up for the event, sharing their visions for a world without AIDS; or at the very least, an end to the stigmatization and intolerance that add to the burdens of individuals and families living with this reality. Many who spoke addressed the stigma and isolation that is heaped upon the already considerable weight of dealing with the illness itself. Tears were seen to glisten in the diminishing light of the setting sun.

“We thank everyone who came out, and are mindful of those who were not able to share in person”

I was surprised at how difficult it was to cite the names of the people who have died of AIDS. Out of respect for the friends and families of those who have died, their loved ones were named by their first name and last initial only, with the exception of those we were asked to give in full.

I knew many of the names, others I did not but that was irrelevant. The very length of the roll was enough to evoke sorrow. There were almost three times as many names as there were people in attendance. However, that is to be understood; for those of us who have lost a loved one, it can be difficult to remember without revisiting the loss. The gathering closed with the uplifting release of a flock of white doves. We thank everyone who came out, and are mindful of those who were not able to share in person.

Questions?

Should you require information on HIV/AIDS, please contact the Education Department of the AIDS Resource Centre at (250) 862-AIDS(2437).



AIDS Walk-2002

Ready, Set, GO! Mark your calendar and prepare to walk. AIDS Walk 2002 will take place on Sunday September 22. As usual, the walk starts and ends at the Dolphins in downtown Kelowna. It's an easy 3 kilometers to City Park and back along the waterfront.

Last year there was a clear winner in the pledge stakes: the “Chocolate Chips” of Bernard Callebaut Chocolates raised over \$5000. Can your team beat that? Look out for pledge forms available at ARC at the end of July. This is a great way to get out, meet people, and raise money to fight AIDS.

Start collecting pledges now!



NOTICE BOARD

ARC Newsletter On Line

www.arcok.com

Please contact Kate to receive an e-mail notification when each newsletter is published:

kalexander@arcok.com

Electronic transmission of newsletters would save ARC printing and mailing costs and prevent paper cuts!

Free Coffee

Starbucks provides coffee for distribution FREE to our clients. Please ask at the reception for your coffee the next time you come in to the office.



North and South Okanagan Clients.

Please note the following dates.

Vernon -

We will be at the **People Place** office on June 28, July 12 and 26, August 9 and 23, September 6 and 20.

Keremeos & Princeton -

July 16, August 13 and September 10, if we get calls from clients who want to meet with us. If no need is expressed, we will not make the trip.

Penticton & Oliver -

Every second Wednesday. June 26, July 10 and 24, August 7 and 21, September 4 and 18.

If you live outside the Kelowna free call area, call **1-800-616-2437** to book an appointment.

Aboriginal AIDS Society

For more information call Julie at **250-862-2481**

ARC Drop-in Hours

River Glen and Brian Mairs have drop-in hours on Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. If you wish to see them outside these times, an appointment is necessary.

Comings & goings

Fond farewell...We are sorry that **Rhona** will no longer be serving as Office Coordinator. Her diligence, thoughtfulness and dependability will be greatly missed. She will be remaining as the AIDS Walk Coordinator for this year.

Also, a fond farewell to...**Ron van der Meer.** His dedication, integrity, patience and intelligence will also be greatly missed. We will miss you, Ron.

Buffy joins the OAAS team as **Event Coordinator** for the Okanagan Aboriginal Leaders Conference on HIV/AIDS and HCV to be held in October.

Bill joins the ARC team as **Office Coordinator.**

Kate joins our team as **Education Coordinator.**

Navin is **Information Coordinator** for the HIPPO

In addition, **Mark** and **Nicole** join us as **PERSON Project Outreach Workers.**

Andrew, Robyn, Anna, Ryan, Anni and Shawn are our **Condom Cops.** We wish them a great summer as they work the beaches and bars of the Okanagan..