



National Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week 2009: Leaders Gather to Discuss Aboriginal Access

Vancouver, BC (November 3, 2009) –The Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN) will be hosting a special presentation luncheon, on December 1, 2009, to heighten the awareness of the increasing rates of HIV infection amongst the Aboriginal Peoples within Canada. The occasion coincides with the 21st Anniversary of World's AIDS Day and will launch Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week.

The theme for World AIDS Day 2009 is *'Universal Access and Human Rights,'* to highlight and underscore the importance of understanding HIV and AIDS from a human rights perspective; this year's Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week echoes this important theme and how it pertains to Canadian Aboriginal issues.

"Universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support is a critical part of Aboriginal rights," states Ken Clement, CEO of Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network. "Our event will create a platform for us to explore legal, federal and moral obligations to provide those basic health services to the Aboriginal people - First Nations, Métis and Inuit – who make up a unique segment of the concentrated HIV/AIDS epidemic in Canada."

The event will gather National Aboriginal organizations, government delegates, and health care providers to speak to Aboriginal issues, and discuss the challenges that are experienced in accessing HIV/AIDS care treatment and support. Expected speakers at the luncheon will include: Dr. David Butler Jones, Canada's Chief Public Health Officer; Amaranta Gómez Regaldo, HIV/AIDS activist; and Shawn Atleo, Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations.

HIV/AIDS is disproportionately distributed across global populations, as it hits hardest in areas where structural economic and development challenges are greatest. This is mirrored in Canada's Aboriginal communities, which represented about 7.5% of all Canadians living with HIV in 2005. Aboriginal people are overrepresented among reported AIDS cases in Canada and made up a startling 23.4% of new HIV infections in 2006; 2.8 times higher than the infection rate for non-Aboriginal people.

Where: The Coast Hotel – 1763 Comox Street, Vancouver
When: December 1, 2009 9:30am – 4:00pm PST
RSVP: By November 20, 2009 to Peter Vickers assistant@caan.ca or call 604.266.7616
(Toll Free: 1.800.285.2226)

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CAAN Mandate and Mission www.caan.ca

The Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN) is a not-for-profit coalition of individuals and organizations which provides leadership, support and advocacy for Aboriginal people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS, regardless of where they reside.

For Media Enquiries, contact:

Mediatonic PR
Shelley Mantei
shelley@mediatonicpr.com
604.649.2893

CAAN
Ken Clement, CEO
kenc@caan.ca
604.266.7616 or 1.888.285.2226

CAAN
Art Zoccole, President Board of Dir.
art@2spirits.com
416.944.9300 ext 222