

The Sacred Fire



2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations e-NEWSLETTER



**Message from the Executive Director
Art Zoccole
2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations**

Happy Holidays!
Merry Christmas!
Happy New Year!
See you all back here on January 5th, 2009.

**Corena Ryan
Client Care Coordinator**

Wishes all members a Happy and Safe Holidays!

Percy Lezard **HIV/AIDS Educator**

Greetings community members!

I wanted to extend a holiday greetings to you and yours and however you celebrate this change of season, solstice, kwanzaa, Christmas or Boxing day!

I look forward to the new year and the new partnerships I have taken up with sister agencies and projects and am one semester closer to completing my doctorate (I still have a minimum of 2 years to go). But it is with the generous support of LaVerne Monette and OAHAS and of our own agency leader Art Zoccole who have been supportive of me and my academic achievements that I am on this journey, K'chi miigwetch to you both and to the fearless work of the board, fellow staff and you the community.

Have a great year ahead!

In solidarity,

Percy lezard





Community Partner's Spotlight

Previous publications:

Autumn 2006 Assaulted Women's Helpline Newsletter



The Impact of Colonization on First Nations Women across Turtle Island

There are specific reasons that have a history in Canada and why social service professionals have challenges when working with First Nations people. There is a history of structural and initial oppressive legislation against the many First nations, Métis and Inuit nations/communities. We are women, as mothers, sisters, daughters and someone's lover/partner/girlfriend are more than our assigned stereotypes or labels constructed for us by greater society. Imagine with the creation of this G8 and 1st world nation, Canada in its early inception of how they the British and the French wanted the "new world," and all it had to offer, a linear nation of people who came over the "pond," for a better life. Upon arrival met many nations of people who were holistic, inclusive, shared their resources, oral cultures and celebrated by actively creating diversity in how they valued; their children, women, elders, challenged members (both physically and mentally), and their 2 spirited members (Queer community members).

Since many nations were on major waterways or where much of the natural resources were and having these colonizing cultures come into contact all of which by the way were not inclusive, did not celebrate their children or women (they were seen as property), their seniors, their differently-abled or their homosexual/lesbians, they placed economic value on many things and did not share easily their resources and they also brought the word of god with them. Now let's go to the year of 1850 and the birth of the Indian Act which in turn was concocted to dictate and label of what it meant to be "Indian," and also keep in mind that it was developed by 3rd parties who weren't "Indian," which begins the dynamic that Indians needed to be monitored by the federal government (parentification begins). This Act monitored the coupling of Indian women with non-Indian men; and if a woman did marry a non-Indian then she and her children were no longer deemed registered or entitled which was sexist and homophobic in that title and rights were only

passed on their fathers and heterosexual unions. It wasn't until 1985 that women who married outside their ethnic gene pool were now being recognized as Indian with the amendment of Bill C- 31. Now after the development of Acts, to govern how we are identified now brings us to where we are geographically located and what is known as the Relocation era – of placing First Nation communities off the main waterways and where geographical locations that were rich and wealthy with resources, the birth of Indian Reservations. Keep in mind that many nations of people were often nomadic, and to allocate plots of land most of the time land that was not harvestable, close to waterways or resources was detrimental to the people's harmony with self, family, community and nation and lessened their connection to the Earth (the mother of us all).

So you now have people now tied to one geographical location but also according the United Nations in contemporary times has deemed the living conditions on Indian Reserves as comparable to 3rd world Countries. So you have a people now who feel that their ways are superior and dominate as they have the written word, a series of icons, symbols marked upon pieces of wood. So now comes the time where negotiations need to happen with leaders of the colonizers but yet they are taken aback at the oppositions chief's sit at the tables but look over their shoulders to the women (the clan mothers or the grandmothers), who advise them of the course of action to be taken. This of course is an insult and many actions were taken to emasculate their counterparts as this was seen as inferior again. So comes the era of the colonizer's with their words now formulated laws where they legislated in 1884 (keep in mind that this land of red and white did not become a Country until 1867), what we now call the Boarding school era – of the Indian residential schools. Please keep in mind that the last Indian Residential School was closed in 1996, and they were all over Canada, most of the schools were on the prairies and in Ontario. One would assume that these schools would erected to provide sound education this is not true; stories of community members who are victims and survivors of these schools indicated they were subject to the 4 R's, (reading, writing, arithmetic and RELIGION), then they would often chuckle that it was the last "R," that was the primary mode of learning. Now imagine if you can; being 4-16 years of age and being taken from your home and forced (often), to travel more than 500 miles to your new school (as our children had the capacity to travel distances and had in our blood memory where our people/territory was).

Once there we weren't allowed to speak in our language (which wasn't English), we were then separated by gender and age (which disrupts one's ability to connect with siblings, genders or ages), forced to cut their

hair, and now pray in Latin 3 times a day. Little did people know until years later that many of the young were abused; emotionally, physically, sexually, spiritually and verbally. For many being able to survive this treatment was miraculous because the children weren't provided with any ability to read or write, more prepared to be the new reserve army of labours for the now dominant discourse; capitalism as grunt workers. First Nations people pre-contact represented 100% of Turtle Islands (aka the North American Continent) population of approximately 200 million people. Since the colonizers came upon contact 95% of the First Nations people were wiped out as a result of having a different immune system; so now there are only 150,000 – 2 million people after small pox, measles, TB, influenza waves hit the many shores of these communities.

Little do people know that we as First Nations people had been enslaved, the last documented indigenous slave was a 13 year old girl named Daisy, and she was sold for \$500 to an “elderly” gentleman in the Northern Territories in 1905. Not only were we defined, relocated, taken and put through an education system by 3rd parties they who felt that since our communities were so inferior felt we needed to be governed again by the amount of children our women had. Now is the era of the Sterilization Act of the 1920's, simultaneously during a time when the Women's Christian Temperance Union was advocating for women's' rights and access to voting, Aboriginal women's rights to bear children decisions were being made for us. Also with the protests and advocating for women to have the right to vote in 1929 in Canada, it wasn't 40 years later (1969) that Aboriginal women were afforded that same right as their sisters.

Now that many communities have been subject to 3rd parties making decisions, coming up with strategies of how nations of Indigenous people should be conducting themselves it is the 1960's that brings us the introduction of Child Welfare of Aboriginal children. In what we call one of the most intrusive actions of parentification, by taking thousands of our young and placing them outside in non-Indian families. Again, once placed in these homes they were treated as inferior, not having access to their language, cultural practice and traditions and abused. I also would like to comment on how as First Nation/ Métis/Inuit people's as a direct result of colonization, oppression and parentification it impacted our mental health and inter-generationally as we are labelled with many diagnosis i.e. PTSD, Depression, DID, Antisocial etc. As we have a wide variety of coping mechanisms and now we walk around with the DSM IV's definition of concurrent disorders as we have substance abuse issues and living with mental health issues.

Also how we represent 3% of the Canadian population of 27 million but how we are highly over represented in the criminal justice system as we are 60% of the provincial and federal jails! It doesn't speak to how provincial or municipal police forces treat our people, by picking us up randomly and taking us for the "long cold walk." Which is us being driven in the back of cruisers miles outside of cities, towns or villages in subzero weather and leaving us with no shoes or jackets after they have beaten and/or raped us and left to get back to homes on our own and often dying of exposure as a result.

Psychology has indicated around behaviour that it takes a minimum of 30 days to learn a new behaviour, now keep in mind since first contact in 1492 until the present day we have an approximate count of 516 years of compounded intergenerational new behaviours learnt. In closing what I have to offer as a person who has been victim and have survived many of these intentional strategies (all of which were and continue to be racist, sexist, homophobic and promote genocide). I am a person who has worked in social services for 18 years and want to share with you social service providers as feedback that when working with Aboriginal clients take a moment to consider the language in which you chose and the referrals you make for us or how you will network with other agencies that work with our community. Also that we are peoples who are more than our coping mechanisms of alcoholism, drug abuse, sex trade, but we through the adversity do have strong communities, that are about inclusion, celebration and holistic world views. In conclusion, that even though it wasn't you specifically that carried out the above previous stated strategies, but you represent a system that has historically parentified many generations of First Nations people. This was done by facilitating the removal of our children into Indian Residential Schools or into Child Welfare System. Now that you have a tidbit of the historical context in which we as Nations were subject to (Native History 101), hopefully it will impact your future practices. It is my hope and the shared hope of many people across Turtle Island that the social services system will take a moment to be critical of where you socially locate yourself as a practitioner, transform this new information and integrate it into your practices to have a more comprehensive picture of the many justifiable reasons why there is resistance to the medical, social services, and educational and criminal justice systems by First Nations people.

Written by:

Percy Lezard,
Okanogan First Nations

**Springwater Hester-
Meawassige
Coordinator of
Volunteer Services
And Development**



Dear Members:

On November 25th 2-Spirits had a drag show fundraiser at George's Play and it was a great success. All moneys raised with go towards the Aboriginal Peoples Living with HIV/AIDS Fund. Many thanks goes to all of the volunteers who assisted with the planning of the event as well as all of the wonderful drag queens and kings who graciously donated their time and talents for the night.

I wish everyone a safe and happy holiday!



Miss Hollywood – MC



Nancy Gonzalez **2 Spirit Trans Project Coordinator**

2008 was a year of positive change- 2009 will soon be here. I must say it has been a very interesting experience working together with the members on this important project. Every experience counts, as it has taught me valuable experience. All the positive changes I will take with me on the red road.

The launch of the document titled: 'Our Relatives Said: A Wise Practices Guide- Voices of Aboriginal Trans People' has been a success. Since the launch of 'A Wise Practices Guide', workshops in Hamilton and Sudbury have been planned and completed.

**Successful
launch of
"A Wise
Practices
Guide"**

The most recent launch took place in Sudbury on September, 29 & 30, 2008 at the Shkagamik- Kwe Health Centre.

Participants at the workshop ranged from different age groups; ranging from Aboriginal and non- Aboriginal ethnicity. At every workshop two members of 2 Spirits who collaborated in 'A Wise Practices Document' assisted me with the presentation of the Trans Manual.

Every participant at the workshops had the choice of filling out a pre and post workshop evaluation along with a Stats gathering form.

Findings were that the majority of participants were Aboriginal. The participants indicated they had very little to no knowledge on 2 Spirit Trans people. A very important observation was that the majority felt that the need for education on 2 Spirit Trans People was very important. The evidence that was gathered through the pre and post workshop evaluations clearly indicate that there is a much greater need of the distribution of 'A Wise Practices Guide' within the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community.

**To order a copy of
"A Wise Practices Guide"
Visit www.CATIE.ca**

We have been asked by our audiences to conduct workshops in two more cities in Ontario and on reserve. However, unfortunately due to funding, this is not possible.

The positive news is that two other workshops have been possible, one at an Aboriginal organization and another at a conference in Toronto. Since April 2008, 1 500 'A Wise Practices Guides' have been distributed in Canada. 150 were distributed at the International AIDS conference, with more than 20, 000 participants at the IAC, we hope it reached the world!

Most recently 'A Wise Practices Guide' was added to the www.CATIE.ca website for ordering. This means that any organization can order this resource on Aboriginal Trans people right from the CATIE.ca website.

The last workshops are set to take place in Toronto. Visit www.2spirits.com for Toronto workshop information and dates and please do not forget to RSVP. I would like to see you all attend the final workshop of the 2 Spirits Trans Project.

**Workshop information and dates are
available on the website.
Please RSVP in advance.**

Together we can work towards fostering a welcoming environment for all our brothers and sisters. It is our uniqueness that makes us beautiful.

**“Love
has no
colour”**

“Love has no colour”- is what I have learned...love is essential when working with and for the people, without love the Spirit is unhappy and wandering.

I want to give a special Meegwetch/ Mantiox cha we to all members and staff who have supported me in this important project.

I wish you all a safe and joyous winter holiday season!

Peace of Mind!

Nancy Gonzalez
nancy@2spirits.com



Trevor Stratton
Advocate for Aboriginal
People living with
HIV/AIDS (APHAs)
Canadian Aboriginal
AIDS Network (CAAN)

Trevor Stratton is an HIV-positive, 43 year old Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation band member and consultant from the Niagara region, currently working in the position of Harm Reduction project coordinator and Advocate for Aboriginal people living with HIV/AIDS for the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN APHA Advocate). Trevor has 8 years hands-on experience working and volunteering in Aboriginal HIV/AIDS work at the local, regional and national levels. Harm Reduction, Awareness, prevention and addressing HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination top the list of his activities.

What is it like to live a life at the thorny end of stigma, ignorance and discrimination? I can tell you that it is not a bed of roses.

CAAN
APHA
Advocate
for the last
3 years

My name is Trevor Stratton and I'm an Aboriginal 2-Spirit man who has been living with the HIV virus for over 18 years. Over the last 3 of those years, I have had the great honor and responsibility of acting as Advocate for Aboriginal People living with HIV/AIDS for the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (AKA CAAN APHA Advocate).

2-Spirit, Aboriginal and HIV-positive

Toronto is my First Nation community's traditional territory, so I am proud and I feel very comfortable walking these paved streets. But many of 2-Spirits' members and clients come from small, often isolated communities where homophobia is rampant. Many 2-Spirit people arrive in Toronto expecting great opportunity not available to them where they are from. While some 2-Spirits do thrive in our fine city, many wind up tenuously struggling to hold on to a meager existence. The way of the city is much different than the ways on a First Nation, Inuit hamlet or Métis settlement.

Toronto's big-world notions of fashion, standards of beauty, the lingo people use, body language, subtle social interaction and ways of understanding differ from those in the Aboriginal community. I guess it is not surprising that 2-Spirit people have a hard time understanding and being understood in the city. And as harmonious and tolerant as Toronto may seem from the outside, intolerance exists against Aboriginal people here in large measure.

Many 2-Spirit people come to Toronto so they can live a life of truth and be who they truly are in the gay community. But the gay community is not always supportive to those who do not "fit the mould". Our trans-gender Aboriginal people have it the worst of all. How many layers of stigma, ignorance and discrimination do you think our Aboriginal 2-Spirit, HIV-positive, trans-gender relatives face?

Today, when you are out there, take a look for a moment at the people surviving on the streets of Toronto. A disproportionate number are Aboriginal people. Many have been forgotten, or worse, openly reviled or disliked by multiple sectors of society.

Stigma, Ignorance and Discrimination

Together, stigma, ignorance and discrimination are powerful forces trying to catch us and keep us in the dark where HIV can hurt us. The World Health Organization cites fear of stigma and discrimination as the main reason why people are reluctant to be tested, to disclose HIV status or to take antiretroviral drugs.

HIV/AIDS stigma, ignorance and discrimination hurt our whole community and yet sometimes we even turn on each other. Aboriginal People living with HIV/AIDS have a hard enough time just staying alive. But health is

more than just the absence of illness. Aboriginal knowledge tells us that health is a balance of the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of a person's life.

Stigma, ignorance and discrimination are a huge barrier to living a good life as an APHA. Please be a part of the solution. Please hug and support an APHA today.

As Canada's oldest and first Aboriginal-specific AIDS service organization, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations is a very active member organization of the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network.

WWW.HIVSTIGMA.COM



**Ontario's Gay Men's Sexual Health Alliance's
new social marketing campaign**

Gay Men chatting about HIV stigma?

That's certainly the goal of Ontario's Gay Men's Sexual Health Alliance's (GMSH) new social marketing campaign that is creating a safe-space for HIV negative and positive gay men to talk about HIV stigma and how that stigma is affecting their health.

“...an interactive website where gay men are talking freely about the impact of HIV stigma and discrimination....”

That safe-space has been created in the form of www.hivstigma.com an interactive website where gay men are talking freely about the impact of HIV stigma and discrimination in their day to day lives. The website unfolds with an intro video that serves as a public service announcement surrounding the current state of HIV infection in the province of Ontario and how stigma remains a contributing factor to new rates of infection.

The website includes **blogs and videos** of 8 online facilitators, a mix of HIV negative and HIV positive guys who interact with visitors to the website, stimulate dialogue and offer heart-felt personalized anecdotes related to HIV stigma. Guys have been talking about where HIV stigma comes from for gay men, how it may prevent guys from getting tested for HIV or from talking to their sexual partners about HIV, and how it can make it very difficult for guys who have HIV to disclose their HIV status.

The campaign highlights that about 30% of guys with HIV don't know they have HIV, which is important to know when guys think that HIV positive guys will disclose their status before sex. Take this quote from one of the campaign facilitator's blogs, referring to the question of whether or not HIV negative guys should ask their sexual partners if they have HIV:

“...about 30% of guys with HIV don't know they have HIV....”

“If you are negative and trying to keep that way, what's more important to figure out is whether it's a useful question. Maybe you're neg and you know that even safer sex carries some small risk and you'd rather not take it. Like I said I think it's fine for people to decide what risk they're comfortable with. But now we're back to, does he know and will he tell the truth. So the only guys you are going to be able to eliminate with the question are those who have recently tested and who are compulsively truthful.” - (From Tim's blog at www.hivstigma.com)

The HIV stigma campaign is rolling out across the province with the help of 35 participating AIDS Service and Community Health organizations. The campaign will be visible to gay men through paid advertising in various mediums, story pitching to gay media and programmatic outreach through gay men's education and prevention workers at participating ASO's.

For more information please visit www.hivstigma.com

WWW.HIVSTIGMA.COM



December 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18 Winter Solstice Feast	19	20
21	22 Office Closed	23 ➔	24 ➔	25 ➔	26 ➔	27
28	29 ➔	30 ➔	31 ➔			

January 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 ➡	2 ➡	3 ➡
4 ➡	5 Office Re-opens	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NOT A MEMBER YET?

Please fill out the following application to receive our quarterly newsletter and many other benefits! Bring or mail in your completed application with corresponding payment. Chi-meegwetch for supporting 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

All information is strictly confidential—our membership list is not shared with anyone.

Name: _____

Address:

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Date of Birth: _____ (month/date/year)

First Nation/Reservation Affiliation:

Please check one only:

FULL MEMBERSHIPS

(are available to people who are Native and two - spirited gay/lesbian, bisexual, transgendered)):

Regular \$10.00 ___ & you are a student and/or unemployed and/or on disability or

receiving social assistance \$5.00 ___ and you are a U.S. resident \$20.00 ___ and you are

a resident over seas \$35.00 ___

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIPS:

are available to people who are not native and/or not two -spirited:
regular \$10.00 ___ & you are a student and/or unemployed and/or on
disability or receiving
social assistance and/or a person living with HIV/AIDS \$ 5.00 ___ and you
are a U.S.
resident \$20.00 ___ and you are overseas \$35.00 ___

ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIPS:

organizations in Canada \$25.00 ___
organizations in the USA \$35.00 ___
organizations overseas \$45.00 ___
YES! I WILL SUPPORT 2-SPIRITS AND WOULD PREFER TO DONATE \$ _____.

MEMBERSHIP POLICY:

Full membership is open to all members of any Aboriginal person
who defines themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered.
Associate
membership is open to any individual who wishes to support TPFN and its
objectives. All
members receive regular updates and The Sacred Fire newsletter.

**ONLY FULL MEMBERS
MAY VOTE AT THE TPFN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.**

Map



Staff Includes

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Our Board of Directors

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