

## AIDS & ABORIGINAL YOUTH



### *Here are the Facts!*

Aboriginal AIDS cases are younger than non-Aboriginal cases. 28.6% of Aboriginal people who are infected are under the age of 30, compared to 17.6% in the non-aboriginal population.

### *Why are Aboriginal Youth at Risk?*

Young people are likely to experiment with activities that put them at higher risk alcohol and drug use, and various forms of sex.

Young people often believe they are invincible, and that it won't happen to them. Coupled with mind altering substances, this combination can be very dangerous.

Young people are more likely to traffic between high and low risk areas. For example, it is not uncommon for young people to leave their reserve and

move to a larger city like Toronto, where the risk of HIV infection is higher, then return and pass the virus on to youth in lower risk areas.

Education provided in schools is sometimes not culturally appropriate to reach our young people. Also, HIV is often identified as a gay disease, and straight or bi-sexual youth believe they will not be affected by it.

### *What Can Be Done to Help?*

Targeted HIV/AIDS programs for Aboriginal youth need to be developed with active Aboriginal youth involvement in all stages of the process.

This fact sheet was prepared by The Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network located in Ottawa, Canada. CAAN is a National Coalition of Aboriginal people and organizations that provide leadership, support, and advocacy for Aboriginal people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS regardless of where they reside. For more info call CAAN at 1-888-285-2226. Statistics taken from LCDC Epi-Updates.

