

## AIDS & MÉTIS PEOPLES



### *Here Are the Facts!*

The HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to grow and threaten Aboriginal Peoples throughout the world. The last decade has seen a steady rise in Aboriginal AIDS cases in Canada. Some studies have shown that as many as twenty percent of almost 17,000 AIDS cases in this country may be Aboriginal.

The Métis are one of three Aboriginal groups in Canada. In the early eighteenth century the Métis formed a strong nationalist movement, at which time there were two groups of Métis descendants of the Anglo/Indian unions known as Half-Breeds and the descendants of Franco/Indian unions known as Métis. The two were a closely knit group bound by their common Indian origin, the fur trade, and their western homeland.

On the plains of Western Canada these "mixed-bloods" increased in numbers and married among themselves, developing a new culture neither European nor Indian but a mixing of the two and a new identity, Métis. This new culture developed their own traditions and language: "Michif".

### *Why are Métis People Susceptible to HIV/AIDS?*

No one is immune from AIDS. The economic and social power imbalance between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people in this country plagues the Métis and other Aboriginal communi-

ties with a host of social problems.

Over 51% of the Métis population are women who are marginalised and live in poverty.

Studies in mainstream society show that instances of HIV infection occur more frequently where poverty, violence, drug abuse and alcoholism are present.

The high degree of movement of Métis people between inner cities and rural areas may bring the risk of HIV infection to even the most remote Métis communities. In Northern and some rural areas, culturally appropriate counselling and HIV testing is almost non-existent, and outreach services are desperately needed.

Métis culture and language differences make it difficult for outsiders to provide safer sex education in a way that will be accepted and understood by Métis people.

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

More education and better information among the Métis in Canada is needed to guide prevention and control strategies.

More funding and Métis specific programming and education must occur in Métis communities.



General Aboriginal AIDS agencies and networks providing advocacy and programs must take into account language and culture differences among Métis people in urban and rural areas and in the north.

Partnerships between First Nations, Métis and Inuit organizations must be built to address the needs of the Métis in general Aboriginal HIV/AIDS programming.

Governments and other agencies must respond to HIV/AIDS in Métis communities by ensuring that resources and services are culturally appropriate with access to counselling and HIV testing.

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.

# Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network