



Cournoyea backs AIDS disclosure

by Ronna Bremer
Northern News Services

Tuktoyaktuk

The people of Tuktoyaktuk should have been told a man who was carrying the AIDS virus was returning to their community, says Nunakput MLA Nellie Cournoyea.

"They didn't need to know the name. But if they had been told, we have an individual returning to your community (who tested HIV positive) ... they could have been asked what is the best way to deal with it," said Cournoyea.

The man returned to the community earlier this spring from Vancouver and reportedly had unprotected sex with a number of women in the community.

Russell Newmark, chairman of Tuktoyaktuk's health committee and deputy mayor, said people in the community were angry they were not told about the man's condition.

Much of the concern stemmed from a lack of information on the disease. "People didn't know if you could get the disease from a handshake; by

kissing him, or toilet seats," he said.

George Gillies, chief executive officer for the Inuvik Regional Health Board, said standard protocol is a patient's medical history is confidential unless there is a health risk to a community or individual.

Cournoyea understands the issue of patient confidentiality and protocol but said if the community had been informed, it could have alleviated much of the distress.

"I would say there has to be a better check and balance



Nellie Cournoyea: each case should be reviewed individually.

Please see Man, 30

Man quarantined, leaves N.W.T.

Cournoyea, from 3

when people come back into communities. There is a hole there, somehow."

Gillies said as soon as the health board heard the man was reportedly having unprotected sex, it took action. The man was quarantined and removed from the community. He has since left the N.W.T.

He is distressed by the man's actions since officials spent several hours counselling the man. "He was not co-operative. He was irresponsible ... it was the last thing we expected to happen."

"I think there still is a feeling of fear," said Ne-

wark. "You don't think it can happen in your community but it can."

He said the community is coming to terms with the situation and is taking steps to educate people about the HIV virus. A funding proposal to start a door-to-door awareness campaign will be presented to the health board later this month.

Gillies said he will recommend the board accept the proposal.

Cournoyea said the situation in small communities in the North is different than in large centres such as Vancouver. "The problem we had would probably never have existed if there

was the community could have been informed (before the man's return)."

Cournoyea admitted it is a difficult situation to deal with because of the issue of a person's rights. But she recommends that each case be reviewed on an individual basis.

Medical authorities had their "hands tied" because of the rights of the individual, she added.

Cournoyea said Health Minister Dennis Patterson is aware of the situation and is reviewing the issue of protocol.

Gillies said the number of people being tested for the HIV virus hasn't increased because of the scare.

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