

THE HON. NELLIE J. COURNOYEA
MINISTER OF HEALTH

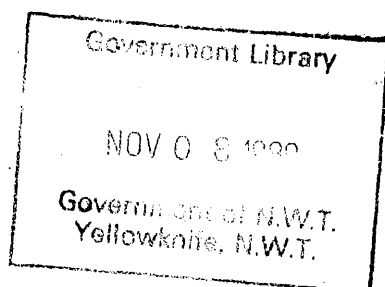


AIDS PROGRAM IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

UPDATE

MR. SPEAKER, SINCE THE LAST SESSION OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY THE N.W.T. AIDS PROGRAM HAS CONTINUED TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT AIDS TO THE PUBLIC, THROUGH NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS, POSTERS, PAMPHLETS, THE TOLL FREE TELEPHONE INFORMATION LINE, REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS, AND THROUGH THE N.W.T. SCHOOL HEALTH CURRICULUM.

DEPARTMENTAL STAFF HAVE PARTICIPATED IN WORKSHOPS IN SEVERAL COMMUNITIES IN THE BAFFIN AND KEEWATIN REGIONS, AND ALSO IN THE YOUTH CONFERENCE HELD IN ARVIAT THIS SUMMER. LAST MONTH, THE AIDS PROGRAM STAFF TOOK PART IN THE CONFERENCE AT FORT SMITH ORGANIZED BY UNCLE GABE'S FRIENDSHIP CENTRE. THIS KIND OF PARTICIPATION WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVES WILL HELP US TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE PREVENTION OF AIDS.



IN FEBRUARY, THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE THAT \$600,000 WOULD BE ALLOCATED TO LAUNCH A TERRITORIAL WIDE CAMPAIGN TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE PREVENTION OF AIDS AND THE HAZARDS OF TOBACCO USE. LOCAL PEOPLE HAVE BEEN SELECTED TO CARRY OUT THE CAMPAIGN. THESE INDIVIDUALS WILL RECEIVE SPECIFIC TRAINING TO PREPARE THEM TO PROVIDE HEALTH INFORMATION IN THEIR RESPECTIVE REGIONS AND COMMUNITIES. INFORMATION IS BEING DEVELOPED IN THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES OF THE N.W.T., AND, STARTING IN THE NEW YEAR, WILL BE DELIVERED TO EACH HOUSEHOLD. ORAL PRESENTATIONS ARE ALSO BEING PRODUCED.

NATIVE THEATRE GROUPS ARE ASSISTING THE AIDS PROGRAM STAFF TO ADDRESS THIS HEALTH ISSUE IN THE NORTH. NEGOTIATIONS ARE CONTINUING WITH TUNOONIQ (POND INLET PLAYERS) FOR THE PRODUCTION OF RADIO DRAMAS IN INUKTITUT FOR USE IN THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN ARCTIC. RADIO DRAMAS IN VARIOUS DENE LANGUAGES WILL BE AVAILABLE IN THE NEW YEAR. CURRENTLY, THE NATIVE THEATRE GROUP IN YELLOWKNIFE IS DEVELOPING A SERIES OF RADIO DRAMAS FOR USE IN THE WESTERN ARCTIC. THE ENGLISH VERSION WILL BE RELEASED ON WORLD AIDS DAY -

DECEMBER 1, 1989. ON THIS DAY, THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, INFORMATION WILL BE DISTRIBUTED TO THE PUBLIC ABOUT HIV INFECTION AND ITS RESULTING DISEASE, AIDS.

SINCE 1987 IT HAS BEEN KNOWN THAT SOME PERSONS IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ARE INFECTED WITH THE HIV VIRUS. AS OF OCTOBER 1, 1989 THERE WERE SEVEN SUCH PERSONS. THE NUMBER OF INFECTED PERSONS IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES MAY IN FACT BE MANY MORE THAN SEVEN BECAUSE OF THE EXCEEDINGLY LONG INCUBATION PERIOD.

ON AVERAGE, IT MAY BE TEN YEARS FROM THE TIME A PERSON BECOMES INFECTED BEFORE HE OR SHE BECOMES ILL ENOUGH TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION. THESE PERSONS MAY THEN, OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME, UNKNOWINGLY CONTINUE TO INFECT OTHERS.

IT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO TARGET PROGRAMS OF PREVENTION OR CONTROL, AND TO PROJECT THE NEED FOR CARE RESOURCES, WHEN IT IS NOT KNOWN WHAT THE NUMBERS MAY BE, OR IN WHAT AGE GROUPS OR AREAS INFECTION IS SPREADING.

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION IS PROMOTING A METHOD WHICH WILL FIND OUT THESE FACTORS; IT IS CALLED UNLINKED ANONYMOUS SCREENING OR UAS. THE UAS METHOD TESTS A LARGE NUMBER OF BLOOD SAMPLES WITHOUT KNOWING THE IDENTITY OF THE PERSONS INVOLVED. THE RESULT OF THE SCREENING GIVES A RELIABLE INDICATION OF THE DEGREE TO WHICH INFECTION HAS SPREAD IN AN AREA. AT NO TIME DURING OR AFTER THE SCREENING IS IT POSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY THE INDIVIDUALS CONCERNED.

THE NEED TO ESTABLISH LEVELS OF HIV INFECTION IN NORTHWEST TERRITORIES POPULATIONS IS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO THE FUTURE HEALTH OF NORTHWEST TERRITORIES RESIDENTS. AFTER OBTAINING THIS INFORMATION WE WILL BE BETTER ABLE TO ESTIMATE THE LEVELS OF HIV INFECTION; THE INFORMATION WILL BE GATHERED UNDER THE DIRECT SUPERVISION OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICER.

THIS INFORMATION WILL HELP OFFICIALS TO PLAN MORE EFFICIENTLY FOR THE FUTURE HEALTH CARE OF THOSE INFECTED

WITH HIV, AND HELP THEM TO DETERMINE WHETHER PROGRAMS
AIMED AT PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF AIDS ARE WORKING.

MR. SPEAKER, THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR RECENTLY ATTENDED A
MEETING ON AIDS IN GREENLAND; ALL CIRCUMPOLAR COUNTRIES
WERE REPRESENTED. A PERMANENT TECHNICAL GROUP WAS SET
UP TO LOOK AT THE VARIOUS PROBLEMS THAT AIDS PRESENTS TO
THE PEOPLES OF THE CIRCUMPOLAR NATIONS.

LATER THIS MONTH, THE AIDS PROGRAM COORDINATOR WILL BE
MEETING WITH A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE YUKON AIDS
PROGRAM TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION ABOUT AIDS PROGRAMS
AND EXPLORE JOINT INITIATIVES IN AIDS EDUCATION.

THANK YOU.