

## HIV/AIDS Epidemiology Among Aboriginal Peoples in Canada

### Introduction

The HIV/AIDS epidemic among Aboriginal peoples is not well understood because limited information is available. Some communities of Aboriginal peoples are at increased risk for HIV infection because of their lower socioeconomic situation and higher rates of sexually transmitted diseases. This report updates current information on the status of the HIV/AIDS epidemic among Canada's Aboriginal peoples.

### Pattern of AIDS is different among Aboriginal peoples

#### Increasing trend over time:

- As of September 30, 1996, a total 14,185 AIDS cases had been reported to Bureau of HIV/AIDS and STD and of these, 210 were reported as Aboriginal. Adjusting for reporting delay, the number of Aboriginal AIDS cases was estimated at 240 by the end of 1995 or 24.0/100,000 Aboriginal peoples.
- Unlike the overall AIDS epidemic where the annual number of new AIDS cases has levelled, the AIDS epidemic among Aboriginal peoples has risen steadily over the past decade. Considering only the 8,404 AIDS cases with known ethnic status (59% of total cases), the proportion of cases attributed to Aboriginal people has increased from 1.4% during the period 1984-89 to 2.4% during 1990-92 and 3.6% during 1993-95.
- Aboriginal AIDS cases are under-reported due to variation in the completeness of reporting ethnic status between provinces (41% of reported cases lack ethnic information).

#### Injection drug use, a major risk factor:

- For the 182 reported male Aboriginal AIDS cases, exposure categories were as follows: men who have sex with men (64.8%), men who have sex with men and injection drug use (13.7%), injection drug use (11.5%), heterosexual contact (4.4%), receiving blood/clotting factors (1.1%), and perinatal transmission (1.1%).
- For the 28 female Aboriginal AIDS cases, exposure categories were injection drug use (42.9%), heterosexual contact (32.1%), receiving blood/clotting factors (14.3%), and perinatal transmission (7.1%).
- Aboriginal AIDS cases are more likely than non-Aboriginal AIDS cases to be attributed to injection drug use (11.5% vs 2.8% for men, 42.9% vs 14.9% for women).

#### Aboriginal AIDS cases younger and more likely to be women:

- Aboriginal AIDS cases are younger than non-Aboriginal AIDS cases (30.9% vs 18.7% diagnosed at less than 30 years of age).
- The proportion of women among adult Aboriginal AIDS cases is higher than among adult non-Aboriginal AIDS cases (12.6% vs 6.9%).