

Youth: A Force For Change

By Shelley M. Motz

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

This month's focus: Youth and HIV/AIDS

Youth: A Force For Change

page 1

Board Approves 1999/2000 Budget

AVI Reports on M.A.R.S.

page 2

Check Your Booty

page 3

Talking to Youth about HIV/AIDS:

Some Tips & Traps

page 4

Youth Speak Out About HIV/AIDS:

Global Crisis

The Best Protection

Reality Check

We Need Education

pages 5 & 6

May & June Calendars of Events

pages 7 & 8

For the past three years, UNAIDS (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS) has focused World AIDS Day campaigns on issues pertaining to youth and HIV: Children Living in a World with AIDS (1997), A Force for Change (1998), and Listen, Learn, Live! (1999).

With this issue, *VOX* also tries to raise awareness about how vital it is for the world's youth to have access to HIV/AIDS education and testing in addition to supportive health care and counseling.

The statistics are staggering. Over 50% of new infections with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, are now occurring in the 10 to 24 age group. 7,000 young people aged 10 to 24 are infected with HIV every day. Five are infected every minute.

Low self-esteem and the lack of safer sex information and available resources make young people extremely susceptible to HIV/AIDS and other STDs. In addition, barriers to health care—including the discrimination of health care providers—put youth at risk, as do physical and sexual abuse.

Gay and lesbian youth, in particular, face discrimination and violence, which reduces their access to relevant HIV-prevention programs, health care and support. Young women, it should be noted,

are biologically and socially more vulnerable than young men.

And, although this issue of *VOX*, unfortunately, does not include articles on the subject, sex workers, drug users, street youth, domestic labourers, young men in the military, First Nations youth and imprisoned youth are especially at risk. They live under conditions that greatly limit their ability to protect themselves and others.

But these are not the only reasons to focus attention on youth and HIV. As UNAIDS has expressed through its campaigns, young people have the power to change the course of the epidemic. Their idealism, energy and commitment is critical to our efforts to stop the further spread of the virus. They can also help to reduce the social and economic impact of HIV/AIDS on the people who are infected with and affected by it.

Some of that youthful energy has been focused on these pages. Inside, you will find articles and opinion pieces written by high school students. You will also find an interview with a Grade 11 student who volunteers at AIDS Vancouver Island and Check Your Booty: Holistic Health Conference for GLBT2Q Youth.

Who says youth are apathetic?

Special thanks to Jim Wilton, Katrina Jensen and Janice Rose (Francis Kelsey Secondary) for putting me in touch with the youth who appear in this issue.

Board of Directors Approves 1999/2000 Budget

By Ruthann Tucker, Executive Director

At its April meeting, the Board of Directors of AIDS Vancouver Island approved a budget for the 1999/2000 fiscal year.

AVI is facing several fiscal challenges due to a cumulative drop in funding that totals \$75,000. At the heart of the cut is a \$50,000 decrease in funding from Health Canada, AIDS Community Action Program as well as a decrease in revenue from tenants.

The Board, in discussion with senior staff, set priorities for the budget process in order to maintain direct programs and services to the communities we serve. To that end, the 1999/2000 budget not only maintains current staffing levels, it also provides enhancements to three programs through which AVI provides direct financial assistance to people living with HIV/AIDS: the Complementary Health Start Up Fund, the Emergency Assistance Fund, and the Bus Pass Program.

The budget process focussed on reducing administrative costs related to print and photocopy resources, telephone and fax, the annual audit and travel.

Working together, the Board and staff have put together a budget that maintains AVI's core services and continues to allow us the flexibility to respond to community priorities.

If you would like a copy of the 1999/2000 budget please contact Shelley Motz, Communications Assistant at (250) 384-2366 ext. 307 or contact me at ext. 309.

AVI Reports on M.A.R.S.

By Stacy P. Leblanc & Shelley M. Motz

A unique study—the Men's Attitudes About Relationships and Sexuality (M.A.R.S.) Project—has found that self-worth is a key determinant of risk for HIV among gay and bisexual men as well as other men who have sex with men.

The M.A.R.S. project was administered through AIDS Vancouver Island and funded by Health Canada through the National Health Research Development Program (NHRDP) and the Prevention Community Action Program (PCAP). The aim of the community-based study was to explore feelings and beliefs about sexuality, relationships and safer sex among gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands.

A fundamental difference between this study and many others is that its underlying principles emphasize the importance of the lived experiences of the participants in the study.

Information gleaned from the M.A.R.S. project will help shape education/prevention programs at AIDS Vancouver Island and other community-based AIDS agencies. Education focused solely on the message of safe sex is no longer enough. We need to address the many factors that can influence the meaning of sex in people's lives, thus affecting the choices that they make about safer sex.

The Island-wide study is an important step towards curbing the spread of HIV among men who have sex with men and is a crucial step towards understanding how social, cultural and political aspects of men's lives contribute to safer sex practices.

The final results from the M.A.R.S. Project will be released at a press conference on Sunday, May 2 at 12:30pm at St. Ann's Academy, 835 Humboldt Street. For more information, or to request a copy of the report, please contact Jim Wilton or Katrina Jensen at (250) 384-2366.

VOX - The Voice of the Victoria HIV/AIDS Centre

VOX is published bi-monthly by AIDS Vancouver Island (AVI). Typed submissions and letters to the editor are welcome c/o The Victoria HIV/AIDS Centre Attn: VOX #304 - 733 Johnson St., Victoria, BC, V8W 3C7, or via email at sleblanc@avi.org. Letters to the editor should not exceed 200 words and must include name, address and telephone number. Your name can be withheld by request. VOX will print no sexist, racist or homophobic copy and will cover issues and events pertaining to the lives of those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. The appearance of any advertisements, treatment information or letters to the editor does not imply endorsement by AVI. Submissions may be edited for conciseness and grammatical correctness. AVI will not be responsible for errors or omissions.

Editorial Committee

Sian Miller, Cheryl Price, Walter Quan, Shelley M. Motz - Editor

Check Your Booty

An Interview with Jordana Duffy
By Shelley M. Motz

Youth who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, 2-spirited or questioning (GLBT2Q) share many stresses with their heterosexual peers. But the discrimination and violence they often experience make it more difficult for them to develop healthy self-esteem and to access relevant HIV-prevention programs and supportive health care. This increases their risk of exposure to HIV and other STDs.

This spring, Check Your Booty: Holistic Health Conference for GLBT2Q Youth will provide queer-identified youth with the opportunity to get together with their allies to discuss how to keep life in balance and stay healthy.

I recently posed a few questions about the event to Jordana Duffy, a grade 11 student and volunteer with AIDS Vancouver Island and Check Your Booty.

S: How did you get involved with Check Your Booty?

J: Tathra (Volunteer Coordinator—AVI) referred me to Marc (Gay Community Outreach Worker—AVI) who told me more about it. It interested me so I got involved.

S: What is your role with the conference?

J: I am one of three people working on volunteer coordination. I am also the youngest person to attend the planning committee meetings on a regular basis.

S: Why is the conference important?

J: Well, actually, there are quite a few reasons. It is especially important for queer youth in small, rural communities and in northern communities. They lack a lot of resources. It is also a safe place for youth to get together and learn interesting and valuable information.

S: What do you think are some of the most critical issues facing GLBT2Q youth?

J: Drug and alcohol abuse. Suicide. Depression. Low self-esteem.

S: Can this conference address these issues? And how?

J: Yes. There are going to be lots of workshops available about issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, suicide prevention, depression, and also about spirituality, which can help with a lot of these issues.

Workshops are geared to touch base on most, if not all, of the issues that affect queer youth.

S: Adults working and living with

GLBT2Q youth are also being invited to the conference. What knowledge would you like them to take away from Check Your Booty?

J: That queer youth have all of the normal problems associated with teenagers, plus they have to deal with other stuff like discrimination and being made fun of. They have more problems on their plates. Adults should be aware of these problems and help queer youth develop strategies to combat them.

S: What knowledge would you like GLBT2Q youth to take away with them?

J: No matter what they're going through there are always people out there who they can talk to and who will help them in any way they can.

S: Check Your Booty is being billed as a holistic health conference for GLBT2Q youth. Do you believe that queer-identified youth have unique health concerns?

J: Yes. There is a need for queer youth to get health information pertaining to them. Information available to them, like school sex ed classes, is 99.9% geared towards heterosexual people.

Queer youth don't get a chance to get the information they need, and many think that because they are gay or lesbian [education about safer sex and sexual health] doesn't affect them. I find that lesbians, especially, think they can't get HIV or other STDs because many believe there is little transmission of fluid during sex, thus making it impossible to contract anything.

S: What are three things you would like to see evolve out of Check Your Booty?

J: First, I would like to see queer youth pull together and form a community or network where people can support one another.

I'd also like to see—although this is really a big pipe dream—I'd like to see statistics for drug and alcohol abuse and suicide, etc. among queer youth drop.

Finally, I'd like [all the queer youth] who come to Check Your Booty to walk away feeling better about themselves as individuals, proud to be queer, and not worrying so much about what anyone thinks.

"There is a need for queer youth to get health information pertaining to them."

Check Your Booty: Holistic Health Conference for GLBT2Q Youth will be held at the University of Victoria May 22-23, 1999. In addition to workshops it will feature key note speakers Mary Woo Sims, Chief Commissioner, BC Human Rights Commission, and Svend Robinson, MP (Burnaby-Kingsway). For further information, please contact Katrina Jensen or Marc Mertens at (250) 384-2366.

Talking to Youth About HIV/AIDS: Some Tips and Traps

By Katrina Jensen

Educating young people about HIV and AIDS is about empowering them to make healthier choices. Teaching about HIV/AIDS, sexuality and drug use is an ongoing process, not a one-off talk about the facts. Find ways to include information in everyday discussions. Supporting young people to make healthier choices in their lives involves not only giving information. It also involves building skills and self-esteem, healthy attitudes and values.

Talking to young people about HIV and AIDS necessarily involves talking about sex and drug use. If these topics make you feel uncomfortable there are things you can do. Read and watch everything you can find on the issue. Make sure you know the basic facts. You don't need to be an expert, but know where you can find expert help!

Start with a general conversation or discussion about the issues. Let young people tell you what the issues are for them. They are in the best position to tell you what they need to know and what support and resources they need to make healthier choices.

It is also important to talk with children and young people about the discrimination that people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS live with. Information about homophobia, sexism

and racism are important aspects of education about HIV/AIDS.

Respect any and all questions: young people have a right to know about these issues and parents and workers have a responsibility to inform them. Don't worry if you can't answer all the questions of the young people you are parenting or working with.

Don't tell young people what to do. Give them the information and resources they need, encourage them and let them make their own choices.

Encourage responsibility by making condoms and other resources available to young people.

Maintain confidentiality; model respect for feelings and the right to privacy. These things are very important to young people (as they are to everyone else).

Resist arguing, preaching or giving advice. Reserve judgement and try not to make assumptions. The point is to give information on a range of issues.

Remember, even if you don't have any

experience in HIV/AIDS education, you can still empower young people to make healthier choices. It may help to inventory the skills you do have. For example, being a good listener, encouraging self-esteem,

and letting young people make their own choices are all vital aspects of HIV/AIDS education.

“Teaching about HIV/AIDS, sexuality and drug use is an ongoing process, not a one-off talk about the facts.”

AIDS Vancouver Island has a free confidential information line to answer any questions or concerns. In Victoria, call 384-2366. Our toll-free infoline is 1-800-665-2437. We also have a number of brochures, books and other resources on this topic available in the Resource Centre.

We'd Love to Talk to You

Each year AIDS Vancouver Island's Speakers' Bureau offers close to 250 presentations to approximately 15,000 people across Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands.

The Speakers' Bureau is formed by a diverse group of volunteers with a wide range of personal experiences based on gender, sexual orientation, history of drug use, sero-status and ethnicity. All have undergone extensive training in both theory and practice.

Community agencies, civic groups, schools, religious organizations, businesses, governments and other groups of individuals have requested presentations on a variety of topics: AIDS 101, Living With HIV/AIDS, Women and HIV/AIDS, AIDS in the Workplace and Talking with Kids about HIV/AIDS. Other topics may be available upon request.

Want to book a speak? Call Katrina Jensen, (250) 384-2366. For presentations in and around Nanaimo please call Guy Tohana at (250) 753-2437.

Youth Speak Out about HIV/AIDS

Global Crisis By Sarah Giles

What would define a global crisis for you?

Maybe it's the effects of pollution on the ozone layer. Maybe it's the shortage of safe, fresh drinking water. Or, maybe it's not about the environment at all, but the thought that we as a species share a collective failure.

That is, the failure to be actively aware of a global crisis: AIDS.

The National Institute of Health estimates that there are million people infected with HIV worldwide. In the US, AIDS is the leading cause of death among Americans aged 25 to 44, and the third leading cause of death among women aged 25 to 44*.

The problem doesn't just stop there. The World Health Organization estimates that half of all infections occur between ages 15 and 19. What's more upsetting is that the number of HIV-infected teenagers in the US doubles every 14 months.

Did you know that there is one AIDS-related death every 15 minutes, and that someone is infected with HIV every 13 minutes? By the year 2000, an estimated five- to 10-million children will be orphaned worldwide because of the premature deaths of HIV-infected

its. The US Center for Disease Control also estimates that one in 92 men in the US is infected with HIV.

However, that figure isn't as staggering as the one in 30 adults infected with HIV in New York City alone.

What are facts like these telling us? That every single new infection represents a prevention failure, our collective failure.

The estimated numbers of infections and deaths due to HIV/AIDS prove that we need widespread, routine screening programs.

The lack of awareness about HIV often inhibits frank discussion between health care providers and patients about the risk and the need for testing. Talk to your children, friends and family. The more you talk about HIV/AIDS, the more aware your loved ones are. Make sure that they know these statistics exist.

More importantly, get tested—even if you believe you have never been in danger of being exposed to HIV. This sets a good example. Remember, you can trust only yourself when it comes to your health.

Although the statistics are devastating, there is hope. The numbers have dropped since 1996 when there was an estimated 8,500 people being infected each day. And the numbers will continue to drop further, if we continue to be more aware.

*Statistics are from US Center for Disease Control website

Sarah Giles is completing Grade 12 at Francis Kelsey Secondary in Mill Bay.

The Best Protection By Leah Lockhart

Girls are having sex at a younger and younger age.

It's not just 15- and 16- year olds, but 14-, 13-, and even 12- year olds. It is quite common for teens to have had a few partners before senior high school.

Though they may like to think otherwise, their mentality is no more mature than that of a 14-year old 20 years ago. They are still naïve young girls. The only difference between teenage sex then and now is that before the biggest risk was pregnancy. Now it is death.

You may not be able to alter the sexual behaviour of teens, but education can make sex safer, and can even save teens' lives.

We've all heard about the rise in HIV cases. We've been told repeatedly to use protection. However, I know of girls who still don't use any type of protection and others who rely on the guy to take care of it.

Why do many teens continue to play Russian Roulette? It is the age-old teenage state of mind: we're immortal.

With proper HIV/AIDS education, teens learn that it *can* happen to them. Girls discover that they can have control over their protection and do not have to leave it to their partner. When teens see the consequences of unprotected sex, the condom doesn't seem like such a big nuisance. Maybe, teens will think

twice before going any further.

Sex was, and still is in many homes, an unspoken topic between adults and youth. The awkward way parents fumble around the subject only intrigues kids all the more.

Adults need to erase the "sex is bad" attitude—sex is not bad, it is a healthy, normal thing to do. Parents must accept the fact that their *innocent* teens are probably already experimenting with sex.

Talking about sex will *not* make kids more likely to do it. By discussing the risks *and* benefits of sex, adults can be reassured they have provided teens with the best protection: knowledge.

Society should open up. HIV/AIDS information needs to be easily accessible to youth; if they know what choices they have and what exactly is lurking out there, they can form better decisions. If they have sex, they, hopefully, will do it safely.

Without the information, however, they are as naïve and unprotected as ever. The less that youth know the more likely they will contract HIV through unprotected sex.

What happens when a 14-year old girl decides not to use a condom to please her 18-year old partner?

What happens when she discovers that she is now HIV-positive? What do you do then?

So much for innocence.

Leah Lockhart is a journalism student at Francis Kelsey Secondary in Mill Bay.

Youth Speak Out About HIV/AIDS

Reality Check By Melissa Pelto

For youth in the 90s, the concept of STDs and AIDS has completely changed the way that we deal with and think about sex.

We are one of the first generations to have such intense implications for engaging in unsafe sex. Whereas the worst case scenario for previous generations was an unplanned pregnancy, we now have to deal with the possibility of contracting AIDS.

Many youth still have the stereotypical idea that STDs cannot touch them. But youth now have to select their partners more carefully, and the thought of going home with someone after a party is steadily going out of vogue because it is so unwise and so unsafe.

I wonder when the reality check will hit for most youth. I see the attitudes that the kids I go to school with have, and they differ so greatly from the attitudes held by my crew of kids that I hang out with (who are 17 to 25 years old). This is what bothers me the most: they seem to have it figured out at 22 but not at 17 when they are in the red zone.

Melissa Pelto, a Grade 12 student at Oak Bay Secondary, has advocated for HIV/AIDS education in her school and organized her school's World AIDS Day campaign.

"This is what bothers me the most [about youth and HIV] they seem to have it figured out at 22 but not at 17 when they are in the red zone."

We Need Education By Venetia Chow

Nowadays, more and more people have AIDS. Do you know why?

It is because they don't know what HIV is. Where can they get HIV? How does it form? These questions are serious questions. Therefore, HIV/AIDS education is important for youth.

The percentage of people with HIV/AIDS is sharply increasing in developing countries. Therefore, HIV/AIDS education is important for youth in these countries.

There are many ways to get

HIV, like having sex without using condoms, or using the same needle as others when injecting drugs. These serious problems are happening all around us. It is because people lack education.

I think the government must do something about promoting awareness of HIV/AIDS. They can make some advertisements, slogans or posters for the media. It is one of the effective ways to waken people's minds.

Venetia Chow is an international student studying ESL at Francis Kelsey Secondary School.

Bring Us Your Junk

Spring has sprung and Street Outreach Services' (SOS) weekly art group is hoping that spring cleaning fever has hit one and all.

Bring us your junk: your scraps of wool, paper, cloth; your odd socks and spare buttons, your spools of thread and your extra shiny things; eccentric art supplies as well as traditional paints, glue sticks, crayons, paper—we pledge to recycle your junk into fantastic, fun, funky objet d'art!

For more info, call SOS at (250) 384-1345.

how to reach us and where to find us

The Victoria HIV/AIDS Centre
304 - 733 Johnson Street
Victoria, BC, V8W 3C7
Tel: (250) 384-2366
Fax: (250) 380-9411

AVI Nanaimo
201 - 55 Victoria Rd.
Nanaimo, BC, V9R 5N9
Tel: (250) 753-2437
Fax: (250) 753-4595

Street Outreach Services
1220 Commercial Alley
Victoria, BC
Tel: (250) 384-1345

AIDS INFOLINE (Victoria)
384 - 2366

TOLL-FREE INFOLINE
1-800-665-2437

Cowichan Valley Needle Exchange
Tuesday & Thursday Nights
from 6pm to 9pm.
Tel: (250) 246-6483

Calendar of Events

MAY 1999

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat./Sun.
Drop-In Hours: 9am-5pm Mon.-Fri. 6pm-8pm Wednesday Lunch is served daily from 11:30-1pm, unless otherwise noted. Noon Group gathers Monday-Friday from 11:30-1pm.					Infoline Training 1 10am-5pm @ Centre 2 Women's Health & Wellness MARS (Sat.-Sun.) press launch 12:30pm Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS
Lunch 11:30-1pm & Smell Good Feel Good 1pm --every Mon. @ the Centre Alcohol & Drug Support Group 7-9pm @ SOS Education Mtg. 5:30 @ Centre	Lunch @ the Centre 11:30-1pm (every Tues.) 4 Support group 12pm @ the Centre Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS Infoline Train. 6pm @ Centre	Lunch @ the Centre 11:30-1pm 5 Video & Pizza 6pm-8pm @ the Centre Drop-In Art 7-9pm @ SOS	Lunch @ the Centre 11:30-1pm (every Thurs.) 6 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS MOP Staying Negative presents "Coming Out Later @ 7pm	Lunch @ the Centre 11:30-1pm (every Fri.) 7	Infoline train. 10am-5pm @ Centre 8 Mother's Day Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS 9
HIV+ Support Group, Nanaimo (250) 753-2437 Alcohol & Drug Support Group 7-9pm @ SOS	Support Group 12pm @ the Centre 11 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS Infoline & SB Train. 6-9pm @ Centre	Lunch @ the Centre 11:30-1pm 12 Games Night 6pm-8pm @ the Centre Drop-In Art 7-9 @ SOS	Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS 13	14	15 16 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS
Alcohol & Drug Support Group 7-9pm @ SOS 17	Support group 12pm @ the Centre 18 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS	Lunch @ the Centre Support Group 6pm-8pm @ the Centre Support Group for sero-discordant couples, Nanaimo (250) 753-2437 Drop-In Art 7-9pm @ SOS AIDS 101 6pm @ Centre 19	Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS 20	Tai Chi 7-8pm @ SOS 21	Check Your Booty conference for queer youth Sat.-Sun. @ UVic 22 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS 23
Monday Dinner 5:30@Centre 24 Victoria Day Alcohol & Drug Support Group 7-9pm @ SOS (24 & 31) 31	Support Group 12pm @ the Centre 25 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS	No Lunch 26 Games Night 6pm-8pm @ the Centre Drop-In Art 7-9pm @ SOS	Infoline & SB Mtg. 6pm @Centre 27 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS	Birthday Celebration @ the Centre 11:30-1pm 28 Tai Chi 7-8pm @ SOS	29 30 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS

Calendar of Events

JUNE 1999

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat./Sun.
Drop-In Hours: 9am-5pm Mon.-Fri. 6pm-8pm Wednesday Lunch is served daily from 11:30-1pm, unless otherwise noted. Noon Group gathers Monday-Friday from 11:30-1pm.	Lunch @ the Centre 1 11:30-1pm (every Tues.) Support Group @ the Centre 12:00pm (every Tues.) Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS	Lunch @ the Centre 2 11:30-1pm Video & Pizza 6-8pm @ the Centre Drop-In Art 7-9pm @ SOS	Lunch @ the Centre 3 11:30-1pm (every Thurs.) Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS MOP presents Staying Negative @ 7pm	Lunch @ the Centre 4 11:30-1pm (every Fri.) Tai Chi &-9pm @ SOS	SB Training 5 10am-5pm @ Centre Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS
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HIV+ Support Group, Nanaimo (250) 753-2437 14 Alcohol & Drug Support Group 7-9pm @ SOS	Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS 15 SB Training 6-9pm @ Centre	Lunch @ the Centre 16 11:30-1pm Support Group 6pm-8pm @ the Centre Drop-In Art 7-9pm @ SOS AIDS 101 6pm @ Centre	Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS 17	Tai chi 7-9pm @ SOS 18	SB Training 19 10am-5pm @ Centre Father's Day Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS 20
Monday Dinner 5:30 @ the Centre 21 Alcohol & Drug Support Group 7-9pm @ SOS	Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS 22	No Lunch 23 Games Night 6pm-8pm @ the Centre Drop-In Art 7-9pm @ SOS	Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS 24 SB & Infoline Mtg. 6pm @ Centre	Tai chi 7-9pm @ SOS 25	Annual General Meeting James Bay Community Centre 1-3pm Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS 26 Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS 27
Alcohol & Drug Support Group 7-9pm @ SOS 28 HIV+ Support Group, Nanaimo (250) 753-2437	Acupuncture 7-9pm @ SOS 29	Lunch @ the Centre 30 11:30-1pm Birthday Celebrations Games Night 6pm-8pm @ the Centre Drop-In Art 7-9pm @ SOS			