



Annual Report

2004-2005

Mission Statement

AIDS Vancouver Island provides comprehensive, accessible and effective education, prevention, care, treatment and support services to residents of Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands to:

- (1) Reduce the spread of, primarily, HIV/AIDS and also Hepatitis C and/or other co-infections; and*
- (2) Improve the health and well-being of people infected and affected primarily by HIV/AIDS and also by Hepatitis C and/or other co-infections.*

Chair's Message

As many of you know, the fall of 2005 is the 20th anniversary of the genesis of AIDS Vancouver Island. It was in the fall of 1985, when five men came together and created a vision and an organization that has grown over the decades to the Society we have today. There have been many changes and I am certain that the original "founding fathers" of AVI would be very pleased and satisfied to see the organization today. The seed they planted in 1985 has grown to a \$1.5 million dollar a year operation with programs and services delivered from Victoria to Port Hardy.

As with any organization with a volunteer board there have been several changes. Sally Calich, Ed Steele, Del Thompson and Bonnie Day resigned from the Board for various personal reasons. I would like to sincerely thank each one for their valuable contribution. Just recently, Foster James joined the board as the VI PWA Society representative. Foster's addition will result in a very valuable communication link between the two societies.

I would like to thank the ongoing Board Members, Debbie Brown, Ray Coombs, Patrick Corrigan, David Desmaris, Jim Farrow, Fred Hughes, Foster Jones, and Denise Skipp for their strong commitment to the work of the Society.

The Board, at this time, is a very cohesive, positive and proactive governing body and is rising to seize the opportunities and challenges before us. Some of the highlights of Board activities over the past year have included:

- The very successful ARTISTS FOR AIDS Fundraising event held in March 2005. The first of many new fundraising initiatives being planned by the Board Fundraising Committee.
- The planning for an annual Dining Out for Life fundraising event has been started.
- The creation of a Building Committee with Dr. Jim Farrow as Chair to commence the planning and development of finding a permanent home for AVI in premises we would own rather than pay rent. This initiative for our own building is particularly fitting as we celebrate the upcoming anniversary of AVI;

- The Board retreat has solidified the governing model of the Board and led to the development of a Board Strategic Plan that includes priorities and job descriptions.
- The ongoing pursuit to expand AVI's contacts within the political and business communities in order to seek out new linkages and new funding opportunities;
- The successful first year of operation of the Nanaimo Methadone Clinic;
- Continued leadership and commitment to the development of safe injection sites in Victoria;
- Continued strengthening of the organization particularly north of Nanaimo.

However, many challenges continue to require addressing, particularly on three fronts:

1. Funding – AIDS Service Organizations in British Columbia continue to be severely under funded by Government. We must undertake a "full court press" on the Vancouver Island Health Authority, local governments, the Province and the Federal Government for an increase in funding.
2. Strengthening Board participation up-island. Having Board meetings and Board representatives from up-island has been a logistical challenge that we hope to overcome by having Regional Advisory Committees.
3. Financial stability - With the funding responsibility goes the responsibility to ensure the organization is financially stable for long-term growth and provide stability and predictability. Having our building will help in this regard.

I would like to thank Miki, the staff and volunteers of AVI and members of our society for their dedication and hard work over the past year.

Executive Director's Message

Even with our best efforts, we have lost a number of people in the past year that have, each in their own way, significantly impacted everyone involved with AVI. These losses have been sad for all of us, yet in a strange way their passing has reaffirmed our need for diligence, activism and tenacity about the need for quality services.

Within the staffing team it has been a very action packed year while continuing to blend the staff from the former AIDS organization in the North Island. It has been a reasonably smooth transition with everyone going that extra mile to be inclusive of each other while recognizing that we will continue to have challenges with such a large geographic area.

To support the work of AVI's dedicated workers, Katrina Jensen was appointed Director of Programs. Katrina brings a wealth of experience to this position. She is the former Manager of Health Promotion and is one of the longest serving employees in the Victoria office.

We have seen an increase in the number of grant applications being submitted with a fairly high ratio of successes including an innovative program for Queer Youth. This program will be working with the Gay/Straight Alliances in the Jr/Secondary Schools and youth groups to educate other young people about HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C. We also received a grant from the United Way to pilot an innovative nutrition project with our HIV positive clients and to supplement our current Food Store with fresh food items. As well we will be launching a new health and wellness program for HIV positive men that will be similar to the current one run for women.

A lot of time has been devoted, especially by the AVI Chair, to meeting with MLAs in an attempt to influence their knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS and the impact of the lack of new core funding for the last ten years. The Public Awareness Strategy developed by the Pacific AIDS Network (PAN), of which AVI is a founding member, took up considerable time and included:

- Comprehensive information packages to every MLA in BC, including individual letters to each one explain-

ing the impact of funding in their area

- Meetings with the Minister of Health and the then Minister of State for Mental Health and Addictions
- Discussions with the Provincial Health Officer
- Meetings with the CEO of the Vancouver Island Health Authority
- A presentation to the Board of Directors for VIHA
- Meetings with our new MLA, and
- Meeting the federal Minister of Health, Ujjal Dosanjh in Ottawa.

AVI has been diligent in its commitment to harm reduction and continues to work with the City of Victoria around issues related to a possible safe consumption site for people who use drugs by injection or smoke opiates. This has included ongoing committee work and public presentations on pragmatic harm reduction.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the staff, volunteers and the board for their *abundant and deeply felt dedication* to the people we serve. All of our lives are richer for it. I look forward to the coming year of challenges and successes while we honour our 20-year anniversary..

With respect,
Miki

Positive Wellness Program

In Victoria PWP provides support services to 216 registered HIV positive clients. These supports include a daily Drop-In and Hot Meal program, counselling, resource access, referral and advocacy services.



Meaghan, Counsellor at the Pancake Breakfast served by staff in Victoria

Our Drop-In and Hot Meal program are a huge draw for many of our clients who enjoy having space to connect with other HIV positive folks and share a hot, nutritious meal. On occasion, workshops are offered on topics relevant to clients, including self-care, nutrition and applying for benefits.

and co-infection issues with other folks with similar health and social concerns.

Our services include solution-focused counselling, peer support, access to resource material, referrals to other ASO and service organizations, and medical, legal, and financial advocacy as required.

We offer a client Drop In with coffee and snacks and provide support such as processing TAP forms and distributing food vouchers.

We print a newsletter with updates in HIV/AIDS research, new medications, drug interaction warnings, health and nutrition information, community services and updates on other AVI programs.

the Flower Box Project. Clients volunteered their time to plant beautiful flower boxes for sale and distribution to surrounding local businesses. Individuals from the community were invited to celebrate this project with a Neighbourhood Tea in our drop-in space. The turnout was good and we sold a few boxes. This project is ongoing and we expect it to be a success.

Dr. Fraser from the Swift Street Clinic continues to provide a weekly clinic to our clients. A blood test clinic run by the staff of Royal Jubilee Hospital is also offered on the days when Dr. Fraser is in.

PWP continues to grow as members of the community continue to seek services and register as clients. With the efforts of skilled and dedicated staff, the program rises to meet the challenges that this growth presents as we continue to offer relevant and supportive programming to HIV positive persons in our community.

PWP - Nanaimo

The Nanaimo PWP offers our 143 registered clients a private space to share knowledge and accurate information regarding HIV/AIDS, Hep C



Our transformed patio in Victoria, thanks to the Flower Box Project

Street Outreach Services (SOS)

In Victoria, SOS has experienced an increase in client numbers and syringe exchange this fiscal year. 365 new clients registered with SOS. Through the needle exchange we distributed 820,000 syringes with an exchange rate of 102%.

SOS continues to provide a community service with our Peer Outreach Syringe Collection program, also known as our Rig Dig program which does regular sweeps of the neighbourhood and the downtown core to collect discarded syringes and paraphernalia. This honourarium-based work is carried out by former or active injection drug users.

All of the volunteers who do syringe pickup are marginalized. The majority live with unstable housing; that is, they sleep on the street or in shelters when they can, and occasionally live in rooms for short periods of time. Often many live on the street full time. Most have mental health problems along with their addictions. They face multiple barriers in their lives on a daily basis and have little or no self-esteem.

Even with all these barriers, people come forward to be volunteers. Those selected have been on time for all shifts and cover their assigned areas with vigor. They receive numerous comments from the public, all of them positive, about the their work.

This program provides a dramatic change to their perception about themselves and the possibilities for change in their lives. This honourarium-based "employment" adds some stability to their lives.

SOS participated in a second national study, I-Track, that monitors the HIV/HCV associated risk behaviors among individuals who use drugs by injection. The data from this survey will help us to identify trends and evaluate prevention programs and policies.

In addition to a needle exchange, health promotion/harm reduction information and a drop-in SOS offers relevant programming: acupuncture, Christian drug and alcohol support group and art therapy and a monthly community dinner.

Anonymous HIV, Hep C, Hep A and B, pregnancy

and STD testing are provided on-site by the Capital Health Region Street Nurse Program; vaccinations, referrals, and other services are also available.

SOS is contracted with the Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre to provide trainings for peer educators in health and harm reduction issues.

ERIN in
kitchen

*There are
needle ex-
changes in
AVI offices in
both Courtenay and Campbell River. As well,
AVI runs Mobile Needle Exchanges in the
Cowichan Valley and the Port Hardy/Port
MacNeil areas.*

Health Promotion and Community Development

The **Men's Wellness Program** has a new Coordinator, Captain Snowdon. The successful Men's Health Forum saw gay, bi and trans men participate in health and wellness workshops over a two-day period. The Men's Briefs publication has a new format and content layout. New support services and community development opportunities in Victoria and Nanaimo have been created, including a spirituality support group, gay dog walk and health discussion groups.



Our precious volunteer, Don, distributing sex packs (condoms, lube & STD and community info. packs) at the Men's Wellness Program's prevention education display at Pride.

Central Island staff delivered dozens of **HIV/AIDS prevention** and awareness workshops to high schools, colleges and community groups. We worked with Cowichan High School to begin development on a Peer Education program. We strengthened our First Nations partnerships to offer support and training to various bands, including a recent Youth HIV/AIDS Information Day at Wachiai Friendship Centre. We also maintained our ongoing involvement with the Kw'am Kw'um S'uli Duncan HIV/AIDS Support Group. In Port Hardy,

we made inroads **for the first time in years**, establishing new educational outreach connections with local high schools, healthcare practitioners, and groups for youth-at-risk.

In Victoria, in partnership with the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, we received funding to deliver an empowerment program for HIV+ women. The 12-week program saw the women learn self-care and advocacy skills, knowledge about local resources and nutrition and care info specific to the needs of HIV+ women. The women had retreat activities, including a yoga/breathing retreat day, group graduation dinner, and massage therapy.

We continued to develop our connections with marginalized youth. Our Gay-Straight Youth School Alliance program grew by working with local GLBTQTT youth to create a peer-specific 'zine. Youth from all over Victoria donated artwork, poetry, and essays. The 'zine will touch on issues such as harm reduction and health promotion, the effects of homophobia, and finding peer connection and support. It will be published this summer.

We were also successful in securing funding to create a new and innovative two-year **Queer Youth and Community Development** program for youth that will involve training a team to teach HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness information to their peers across the island.

Finally, we delivered a series of workshops to youth in detention, providing much-needed information about HIV, Hep C, and community resources. We are currently working with youth detention workers to create a peer education program for youth in custody.

We expanded our education outreach to those affected, infected, and at-risk for Hep C. Our Nanaimo Hep C program connected with a variety of healthcare providers and community services. As well, we were successful in securing funding to create and deliver a new Hep C education outreach program to other parts of the island.

Volunteer Services

The volunteers of AIDS Vancouver Island remain the bedrock of our programs and initiatives. The roles they take on are as diverse as the personalities of the individuals involved. Volunteers have brought their skills and talents to bear on every aspect of our work – from the Board of Directors to filling sex packs, from supporting one-off events to the continued presence of volunteers at reception.

The Board of Directors devoted much time and energy to the long term planning of the agency. They have instigated fundraising initiatives, developed strategic plans and supported the work of the agency in their respective fields. This work is often performed away from the office and is mostly unseen – but the positive effects of an active and involved Board are felt throughout the agency.

The Victoria office has placements for volunteers in all of its programs – a total of nearly 170 volunteers have come through the doors of the agency and found a space to express their spirit of giving and support. Some of these efforts are centered on the special events that punctuate the year – Pride in July, MasquerAIDS/AIDS Walk in September, AIDS Awareness Week in November and World AIDS Day on December 1.

Every month volunteers in the Positive Wellness Program give 180 hours of their time to provide clients with a nutritious hot meal, served with a smile. The same volunteers help with the provision of a community dinner provided by other community organizations. Volunteers also organize a food store program that supports food security for our most vulnerable clients – 25 hours a month to stock and distribute bags with useful food items.

Street Outreach Services is supported by volunteers who give 160 hours a month acting as drop in hosts in the needle exchange and keeping the surrounding area free of discarded needles and drug paraphernalia.

Volunteers support the administration of AVI through reception coverage, data entry services and other office tasks like photocopying, mail outs and the maintenance of the building itself.

In Education and Community Development: at health shows, university and college events and in the community our volunteers help to keep the

public aware of risky behaviour choices and offer a contact point for the many people with questions and concerns relating to HIV/AIDS and Hep C. The Queer Youth Community Development program is recruiting young people to act as volunteer peer educators – a huge commitment from young people that will reach out directly to marginalized youth in our communities.



One of our dependable and trustworthy volunteers in Victoria—David D., standing proud at Pride.

Volunteer Services provides support to students looking for a challenging and rewarding practicum experience. Students can work within each of our programs and gain an understanding of the realities of front line service provision.

Our offices in Nanaimo, Courtenay, Campbell River and Port Hardy all support volunteers and are supported by their volunteers' efforts. These are smaller offices and the volunteers take on a variety of roles from reception duties to drop in hosts – offering flexible support wherever needed.

All our volunteers receive extensive training – it is essential for volunteers to be fully trained when taking on a productive role within such a challenging environment. In 2004 Core Training was run once, with an intensive, condensed training course introduced later in the year.

Volunteers provide AIDS Vancouver Island with the essential human capital that enables us to effectively address the needs of the communities we serve. We highly value this contribution and thank all our volunteers for their efforts.

Public Relations

and Fund Development

AIDS Vancouver Island continued to diversify the funding base and successfully enlisted additional support to advance program initiatives.

We gratefully recognize the following funders, sponsors, donors and supporters:

Vancouver Island Health Authority
Health Canada
United Way
Greater Victoria
Courtenay
Campbell River
BC Gaming Commission
United Way

Bank of Montreal
Belfry Theatre
Canadian Springs Water Company
City of Victoria
Christmas Bureau
Discovery Community College
First Metropolitan Church
Island Savings Credit Union
MAC AIDS Fund
Out of the Box Productions
Starbucks Coffee Canada, Inc.
Thrifty Foods
Times Colonist
Top Shelf Bookkeeping Ltd.
VanCity Savings Credit Union
Victoria Foundation

And Pat MacLean, the fabulous soup maker.

And countless businesses and individuals who donated products, services and cash to the annual AIDS Walk—MasquerAIDS.

THANK YOU!

The **ARTISTS FOR AIDS** Fundraising Initiative acknowledges the personal gift from each of the following artists:

Jill Allen	Sandra Martens
Gary bolt	Richard Motchman
Jay Macdonell	Jill Rockwell
Andrew McKeegan	Joan Steacy
Mark Roth	Susan Underwood
Lisa Samphire	Michael Yoder
Morna Tudor	Judi Dyelle
Alain Costaz	Madeline Emery
Victoria Edgar	Robin Hopper
Jen Whitford	Toby Howell
Debbie Doros	Gary Merkel
Stan Funk	Frances Powell
Kate Seymour	Moore
Troy Yanulik	Gordon Reisig
Charles Campbell	Helen Rogers
Harry Corrigan	Kobita Sen
Rachael Hellner	Deb Taylor
Robert Ives	Elaine White
Grant Leier	

The ARTISTS FOR AIDS fundraising initiative was a success also because of the generous support from the following:

Cooks Day Off
Flowers on Top
Executive House Hotel
Royal & McPherson Theatre Society and the
Community Arts Council of Greater Victoria.

Financial Reports

[illegible]

AVI is 20 years old

*While it's not a celebration
we do want to pause and acknowledge
our history and recognize
the incredible vision
of the founders of AIDS Vancouver Island.*

*We also want to
reaffirm our commitment
to the work we do
and the lives
of the people we serve.*



John Spencer
Founding Member



Grant Sullivan
Founding Member

On September 17, 1985, five men: Wayne Cook, Don MacIvor, Roy Salonin, John Spencer and Grant Sullivan sat around a kitchen table and decided it was time to meet the challenge posed by the AIDS epidemic on Vancouver Island. These five men saw the growing need for accurate and up-to-date information and services relating to HIV/AIDS. That evening saw the birth of AIDS Vancouver Island with the founders forming the first Board of Directors.

The society was subsequently incorporated in BC and registered under certificate number S20925 on January 24, 1986 under the legal name of the Vancouver Island Aids Society. Initial funding for the society's expenses came from a benefit and charitable donations. There were no paid staff and a small office space was obtained at no charge.

Over the past 20 years, the need for HIV/AIDS related programs and services has continued to grow. AIDS Vancouver Island has continued to receive support from individuals and organizations in the communities we serve.

This year is a special year to recognize our achievements and the work of others before us. We will be remembering those before us throughout the year ahead.

Of the founding members, Wayne Cook, Don MacIvor and Roy Salonin have passed away. John Spencer and Grant Sullivan are the surviving two.

We hope they are proud with the legacy they have given to the communities we serve.



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AIDS Vancouver Island is a founding member of the Canadian AIDS Society and the Pacific AIDS Network. We are also a member agency of the United Way of Greater Victoria.

Charitable Registration # 130642440RR0001