


ARC News

August, 2001
Volume 5, Issue 3

Okanagan



AIDS WALK 2001
Sunday, Sept 23
Waterfront Park, Kelowna

News Flash!
Kelowna City Councillor,
Sharon Shepherd
named as Chair of the 5th
Annual AIDS Walk 2001

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for the AIDS Resource Centre – Okanagan & Region

“WHY ARE WE STILL WALKING?”

Because There Is STILL NO CURE!

The AIDS Resource Centre is gearing up for its 5th Annual Okanagan AIDS Walk which will be held on September 23, 2001 at beautiful Waterfront Park (at the Dolphins) in Kelowna. This year's theme is the title of this article: “Why Are We Still Walking? Because There is Still No Cure!” This theme really does capture the spirit of why after 20 years of AIDS (see last edition of ARC News), and after four years of walking for AIDS in Kelowna, we are still walking. Despite the great advances in treatment of the disease, there still is no cure for HIV/AIDS, and there is not likely to be one for quite sometime! So, HIV/AIDS is still here in the Okanagan, it can still infect/affect anyone, and it is still preventable!

Indeed, the battle against HIV/AIDS is far from won, and only a

decisive local response driven by the will of the community to prevent the kind of devastation AIDS is causing globally will suffice to prevent further infections in the Okanagan Valley.

To accomplish this, we may think of the Okanagan AIDS Walk as a local variation of the UN Declaration on HIV/AIDS that was made in New York on June 28th of this year, when the UN General Assembly ended its historic three-day special session on AIDS with promises to start speaking plainly about the disease, to reduce infection rates and treat the afflicted, and to provide the money to implement those goals.

These promises were made by nations who now realize that AIDS threatens to eliminate an entire generation in some countries, particularly African nations, and to devastate developing economies ... cont. on page 2



Local Heroes Lt to Rt - Debbie, Chris, Crystal, Stephanie and Martin

"Why Are We Still Walking?"

... continued from page 1

around the globe.

In a 16-page declaration, approved by consensus and enthusiastic applause, the 189-member body acknowledged the scale of the catastrophe that has resulted in 22 million deaths—and that will doubtless kill tens of millions more regardless of what the world does—and that discrimination against those with AIDS and those whose behavior makes them particularly vulnerable to the disease, lack of women's rights, and failure to provide adequate sex education for the young, all contribute to its spread.

Equally important, the first U.N. special session devoted exclusively to a health issue put the world's governments on record with pledges to deal with the pandemic. Indeed, with what many described as unprecedented clarity for the international organization, the declaration requires member states to report their progress on specific targets and methods for reducing the spread of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. The targets include development of national AIDS strategies by 2003 and full implementation by 2005, by when it is expected that states should have achieved a 25 percent reduction in HIV infection among those ages 15 to 24, and by when the number of infants infected should have fallen by 20 percent. The declaration pledges care for all AIDS orphans and infected children. Wealthy nations also pledged renewed efforts to increase overall spending on international

development to a previously promised 0.7 percent of gross domestic product (U.S. spending is currently less than 0.1 percent) and contributions that will increase global AIDS spending five-fold by 2005, to \$10 billion.

"It is a blueprint from which the whole of humanity can work, in building a global response to a truly global challenge," UN Secretary General Koffi Annan said during the special session, which also included an unprecedented level of nongovernmental participation, including many humanitarian and activist groups that have been deeply suspicious of government and U.N. commitment to fighting AIDS.

So, with the number of infected people in the Okanagan Valley estimated to be at around 1200—many of who are unaware of their infection status—can there be any doubt that the Okanagan requires a similar Blueprint from which the local community can work to battle this disease? Well, the Okanagan AIDS Walk 2001 is indeed the Okanagan Valley's very own Declaration/Blueprint for battling AIDS. With our target for donations and pledges set at \$40,000 this year, we are going all out to attempt to win this battle by ensuring adequate funding for local prevention, education, and support programs. You can be a part of this truly historic battle that is now being waged globally and locally, by supporting the Okanagan AIDS Walk 2001: Come walk, run, or ride for AIDS on September 23, and/or make your pledge today! (See enclosed Walk details inside this edition.)

Michael Hook - Editor

ARC News

Michael Hook, Editor



This newsletter is the official publication of the AIDS Resource Centre – Okanagan & Region (ARC), formerly Kelowna and Area AIDS Resources, Education and Support Society. It is published four to six times yearly. The materials in this newsletter are meant

to be consistent with ARC purposes which are:

- * to promote awareness of AIDS and related diseases
- * to develop and provide resources to combat the spread of AIDS and the HIV virus
- * to develop and provide educational resources
- * to support those living with AIDS and those diagnosed HIV+, and/or their significant others.

Even so, the opinions and comments within this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect official ARC policy. The newsletter does not recommend, advocate or endorse the use of any particular treatment or therapy described as information. The board, staff and volunteers of ARC do not accept the risk of, nor responsibility for any damages, costs or consequences of any kind which may arise or result from the use of information disseminated through this newsletter.

Persons using the information provided through this newsletter do so by their own decision and hold the society's Board, staff and volunteers harmless.

Submissions for publication may be sent to our offices at any time; publication deadline is two weeks prior to publication date. Submissions will be returned if a request is made in writing and an address provided. Permission to reprint and distribute this newsletter is openly encouraged.

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Website: arc@silk.net
Internet: www.silk.net/arc/**

TOPHER TALKS..

“A Client’s Viewpoint”

Well summer is drawing to a close and it is time to think about the upcoming AIDS Walk. Remember that the funds raised in the Valley will stay in the Valley.

This year the AIDS Resource Centre has partnered with the “Peak to Pyramid” run that happens the same day. This adds a bit more interest for those of us helping to set up, as we get to watch the runners as they run past the starting point for our walk, knowing that a few are running to support us in our fight to help those infected and affected. Now if we could get the “Bike Ride for Toys” to join in we would have the city covered.

Yes I know that this city has a walk or run happening almost every weekend throughout the year. So pick your charity carefully—personally I chose two or three charities that I can support and give well of my time and hard earned money. Why should **you give to** the AIDS Resource Centre? Why should **you support** the AIDS Resource Centre?

With the discovery of new medications and treatment plans our clients are living longer, and with a bit of assistance, a few are managing to get back to some form of work. When a person feels like an active member of their community they have better self-esteem and can tackle life’s challenges.

Clients are also facing new problems as a result of side effects of the new wonder drugs “Kaletra” or ABT 378/r. We are now facing climbing cholesterol battles. We spent years fighting to maintain weight or even better gain back the

weight we lost, and now have to change our diets and cut out the nice gravies that helped fatten us up. Those who know me know that I am far from fat and need all the help I can get to gain weight. SO to lower my cholesterol I have been put on another drug. My current total pill count is approximately 40 pills over the course of the day—all of which have side effects that I have to live with! I am sure others are being forced off their meds due to their side effects.

We need more money to research new drugs; we need more money to help identify the new side effects and risks to the person

Funds raised
in the Valley
will stay
in the Valley!

infected with HIV. We need more money to help educate and stop new persons from becoming infected with HIV. The media has carried the announcement about “Condom Fatigue.” As funny as this sounds, it is a serious problem. After almost 20 years of wearing condoms, most people are burnt out and tired of having to carry them with them at all times. Nothing dampens the mood more than realizing that one does not have a condom and therefore cannot carry on their romantic interlude!

Add to all this the fact that both the Federal and Provincial

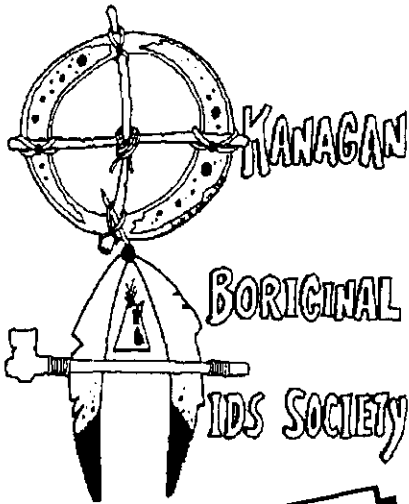
Governments are looking for ways to cut their budgets, and not spend more on the healthcare system - as demonstrated by the recent strikes and “work to rules” that have gone on.

What does this have to do with the AIDS Walk? Getting a large number of persons out for the walk and collecting money to help with direct client support, adds to the awareness factor of HIV. We need more people to realize that HIV is not a disease of gay men and drug users, but a virus that can strike *anyone that has once taken a risk*. If we can educate the public on how the virus is spread and ways to prevent it’s transmission, perhaps this can help make up for the generation that we lost in the first decade of this virus. As we head into our third decade of fighting this disease, let’s take it mainstream and get public acceptance that persons infected with HIV are not evil wrongdoers that are being punished. Let’s get away from the victim attitude; drop the “it is not my fault” attitude. Let’s take responsibility for our lives, our health and our own healthy choices.

The AIDS Walk is September 23rd starting at noon.

Come out, walk, pledge, or even better—volunteer to help make the walk move smoothly. If you need more information, would like to form a team of walkers, or any other HIV/AIDS information, contact the AIDS Resource Centre at (250) 862-2437 or those in Vernon or Penticton areas call 1-800-616-2437. Volunteers are always welcome to help out at the AIDS Walk or at the Resource Centre. ◆

Chris MacKenzie



O.A.A.S Okanagan Aboriginal AIDS Society

A Part of You, A Part of Me

Every moment that we are together, I am learning something
And that knowledge becomes a permanent part of me.

Everything we share and communicate becomes
a permanent part of my growth process.

Though my feelings will be different a year from now,
or ten years from now, part of the difference is you.
Because of you, I am a different person, and the person
I will grow to become, with or without you by my side,
will have gotten there partly because of you.

If you were not in my life right now,
I could not be who I am right now.

Nor would I be growing in exactly the same way.

Much of what I grow toward and change within myself,
has to do with what I respond to in you, what I
learn from you, what I understand about myself through you,
And what I learn about my feelings in the dynamics of our relationship.

I do not worry about our future together,
since we have already touched each other and affected
each others lives on so many levels that we can never be
totally removed from each others thoughts.

A part of me will always be you, and a part of you will always be me.

That much is certain,
no matter what else happens.

Written by Larry Chengges

Aboriginal AIDS Society

For
more
information
call Julie
@ 250-862-2481

A Reader Tells His Story.....

*Article printed on request by Michael J. Saya,
former ARC Educator/Speaker's Bureau
Coordinator, and editor of ARC News.*



Michael & Kevin

"We were very pleased and surprised to read the congratulations on our Service of Holy Union in the last issue of the newsletter. It has been a "long and winding road" that led me to this place and I thought it would be inspiring to share my story.

Eleven years ago I had just accepted a new job as a speech therapist in New Zealand. Living at that time in Calgary, I had gone for an annual checkup. The positive diagnosis of HIV was totally unexpected, as I was in a "closed, monogamous relationship" - or so I thought. The prediction that I had only 5 years to live spurred me on to complete those things on my "to-do-in-my-lifetime" list. One was to live and work in another country.....

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Volunteer Corner



It's been a very busy time for all of our volunteers especially Crystal Brouwer (story below) who has been an incredible amount of help over the past two months. Crystal took on the job of coordinating volunteers for the summer months and is doing an excellent job. In addition I have been very busy with the Executive Director being on leave and Crystal is always ready to lend a hand with anything that needs doing. She's made my life much easier!

Twice a year we like to recognize 5 of our volunteers with local hero awards for giving that little bit extra. This time our five volunteers are Chris MacKenzie, Debbie Brodsky, Stephenie Jardine, Crystal Brouwer and Martin Wortman. They were given their plaques at the office and Patrick Sessford baked some great chocolate chip cookies for them that they polished off in very short order. Thanks Patrick!

Over the years they have all given generously of their time working in the office, doing speaks in the community and helping out at special events. We simply couldn't do it without them.

As you will have read the 2001 AIDS Walk is coming up fast and we need your help to make this years walk a great success. If you have any extra time please give us a call. We have many things that need doing from making phone calls to handing out posters. It's a great opportunity to help out, have fun and make new friends.

Every issue we have tried to highlight one of our volunteers and I hope that this time you enjoy learning a little more about Crystal and why she enjoys volunteering here at the AIDS Resource Centre.

See you at the AIDS Walk!
Noreen

Hi my name is Crystal Brouwer. I have volunteered here on and off for the last three years. My husband and I moved back here from a years

stay in Vancouver in June/01. I think we will back here for a long time, I plan to go to school in the fall and we just started our first mortgage.

In the last year, I have mainly volunteered in the reception area, and since the beginning of June, I have been the "Volunteer" Volunteer Coordinator. I really enjoy volunteering at the Centre, it gives me a sense of well being. I also enjoy the people I get to be with when I am here.



Crystal Brouwer and "Children"

As Volunteer Coordinator I had the experience of meeting new people and getting over my shy side. One of the main duties I had was organizing the Volunteer Appreciation Party. It seemed like a challenge at first, but with the help of Janet, it was a success. We went Putting and then had a great meal and handed out prizes. I also had to organize for the Mardi Gras, which I couldn't attend. Unfortunately we couldn't get the Dunk Tank this year. I heard that the day was still a great success. There was literally a sea of red AIDS Walk balloons, thanks to Gary. Children everywhere were seen walking about with the balloons. Thanks also to all of the volunteers that were there that day, for manning the booth and handing out juice.

I also volunteer to do speaks once in a while. What I actually talk about is my personal experience living with HIV. It makes me feel really good after helping out in this area, because when I divulge my HIV status I usually get a room full of shocked faces. People seem to put a typical face with AIDS and I guess I don't have it. I feel it helps people realize that you can't tell when someone has it, and it could be the girl or boy next door.

My days for volunteering here are nearly over, at least as reception and Coordinator, and I want everyone to know it has been a pleasure.

Canadian Condoms

President George W. Bush called Prime Minister Jean Chretien with a pressing emergency: "Our largest condom factory has exploded," the American President cried. "My people's favorite form of birth control! This is a disaster!" "George, da Canajan pippel would be 'apply to do anyting wit'in der power to 'elp you," replied the Prime Minister. "I do need your help," said Bush. "Could you possibly send us 1,000,000 condoms ASAP to tide us over?" "Certainment! I will get on hit right away," said Jean. "Oh, and one small favor, please?" said President George W.

"Oui?" "Could the condoms be red, white and blue, and at least 10 inches long, with a 4 inch diameter?" asked Bush.

"No prob'lem," replied the Prime Minister, and with that Chretien hung up and called the President of Trojan.

"I need a favour. You got to make 1,000,000 condoms right haway, and sen'dem to Hamerica."

"Consider it done," said the President of Trojan.

"Great! Now listen mon ami. Dey haf to be rouge, blanc et bleu in color, haf least 10 hinches long, and 4 hinches in dia'meter."

"That's easily done. Anything else?" "Yes," said the Prime Minister, "an print on dem;

**"MADE IN CANADA,
Size: SMALL - PROUD TO BE
CANADIAN."**



Support Plus... Client Support Information

Reiki Update!

The AIDS Resource Centre is pleased to announce that Toshie has added more Reiki sessions for clients of the AIDS Resource Centre. Reiki is now available Tuesday's from 11:00am till 3:00pm, but be sure to book far in advance because the spaces are filling up fast! Please call the AIDS Resource Centre to book an appointment!

Schedule C Update...

In the spring of 2001, the government sent out bulletins stating that they had reached an agreement with BCPWA regarding a new and improved Schedule C system. The new schedule C application process and benefits were supposed to take effect July 1, 2001. This has not taken place yet. However, we want to assure you that the AIDS Resource Centre continues to apply for and successfully secure Schedule C Health Care Benefits for PWA's: The current application process still requires that we go to Tribunal, despite the fact that the local Ministry has been very cooperative and that we have not encountered any major obstacles.

Therefore if you are not receiving Schedule C benefits and are on Disability Level II come in and talk to your support worker.

H.S.A Strike – how has it affected you?

Many of you may be aware that client services have been affected by the Health Sciences Association job action. The employees at the AIDS Resource Centre are members of H.S.A union and therefore have engaged in job action periodically over the past couple of months. We are aware that this has impacted your lives and want to assure you that we are doing everything we can to maintain consistent services at the AIDS Resource Centre. Your health and well being are our first priority!

Welcome Back!

The AIDS Resource Centre is pleased to announce that as of August 1, 2001 Ron van der Meer will be returning to work on a gradual basis. Many of you may remember Ron as the AIDS Resource Centre's first full time Client Support worker. He has been on leave for the last while, but we are pleased to welcome him back to our crazy office!

For those of you who have not met Ron, we invite you to come down to the office and get to know our returning support worker. ♦

TERRI ROSS
Client Support Worker
Phone: (250) 862-AIDS (2437)
Toll Free: 1-800-616-AIDS (2437)
e-mail:tross@silk.net

HIPPO update.....



HIPPO is growing larger and stronger each day and that really has nothing to do with its name!

The HIPPO Advisory committee has been hard at work. They have set their Terms of Reference and decided on what groups within our community need to be represented on the committee. They have agreed on their role and responsibilities and have agreed to meet at least every 2 months and more if necessary.

I have been busy updating the Physicians survey that will be going out soon, completing the community survey and looking at collecting data from the various Ministries. We have several volunteers who have been busy as well, one volunteer (Elaine R) has set up an information package to be sent to those requesting Hepatitis information by mail and another volunteer (Del S) has been contacting doctors and updating their addresses etc, to make our mail out a success.

We are in great need of more volunteers to make this year a success. Volunteers are needed to help people with HCV to fill in the Needs Assessments Survey and to take training in order to do speaking engagements within our community and throughout our region on education, awareness and treatment of HCV.

I will be setting up a training program for the end of September. If you or someone you know would be interested please call me at the office.

Thanks to a supportive work environment and dedicated people interested in helping themselves and others with Hepatitis I know that this project will be a success. ♦

Barbara J. Morrell,
HIPPO Coordinator

"A Reader Tells His Story..."

... continued from page 4

So off I went to New Zealand in good health, and for two years worked as the "Chief" of a Speech Pathology Department in a rehabilitation and general hospital, with a staff of 5. Before the end of the two years, my health began to decline; the CD4 numbers were dropping fast: AZT was started. At the same time, there was a division among the staff and the office tension was unmanageable. I had my first of several "nervous breakdowns". A few good friends with whom I had shared my "secret" were very supportive through a scary and uncertain time.

Back in Canada, I crashed big time and landed in the psychiatric ward of the Foothills Hospital for 10 weeks. When I got out, I was told that my friend would no longer share her house with me. I had no money, no job, and no insurance. Two long time friends from University days offered their home in Kelowna, and it became my sanctuary of safety for the next 6 months. I battled with thoughts of suicide, struggled to regain any shreds of self-esteem and tried to feed myself as best I could. I was afraid to leave the house, and finally did so only at night when the traffic was less and the urge to throw myself in front of a car was less.

In time, I dared to go to the gym and soon got a job as a janitor in exchange for use of the facilities. I latched on to a personal goal to be a race walker and compete in the next gay Olympics. In addition, I worked the night shifts at a Tim Horton's donut shop and got used to talking to a few people that came by in the middle of the night.

I discovered a group that did a lot of personal growth work, and for the next five years learned to recognize and deal with my anger, my fears; to grieve my losses and begin creating what I wanted my life to look like. I discovered that it takes time and a lot of trust; but more importantly – that I could not do it alone. I also began to volunteer at the AIDS Resource Center. (In those days it was called KARES-Kelowna and Area AIDS Resources and Education Society). Soon I was sitting on the board of directors, making hospital visits and began writing the newsletter

that you are now reading.

I found a church that welcomed me. I had left Catholicism in my University days, but explored a number of other traditional religions until I found a spiritual group that worked for me. It took nearly 20 years to find it but the search was interesting and rewarding. I took on the task of directing the church choir for 2 years. Even though I was often sick and weak, somehow the music kept reviving me and motivating me to keep on going.

By the middle of 1996 I was not responding well to therapies and was in and out of the hospital several times with opportunistic infections like PCP. I resigned myself to the fact that the five years were almost up. I was too tired to go on. I just let go and told the Universe that I was ready to go anytime.

Ironically, at that point my health started to improve! Not quickly but slowly and surely. I have over the years gone through 12 different combinations of the "cocktail". But I also learned

**You can dream and you can create
what you want in your life!**

everything I could about HIV and my health. I was in control. My doctors were often the targets of my anger because they wanted to do it their way. But I was not willing to just go along with what they said. It was always *my* choice in the end. I had the power to live and keep on living if I wanted.

I had made a "treasure map" of the things I wanted to create in my life: like taking lessons on a very good pipe organ, learning to sail, traveling to Italy, and finding a life partner with qualities of health, spirituality and integrity. For three years I was receiving most of what I wanted to create, with the exception of a Life Partner. Of course, you can't just wish and then sit back and wait for him/her to show up. So I dated; I went to the local dances; I joined a local phone line that connected you to others of "like mind". Some offered sex, conversation or a friendly dinner, but as soon as the "HIV thing" was mentioned they were gone.

After 2 years of many disappointments I gave up! Why frustrate myself month after month? It seemed that what I had to offer was not good enough. So I just stopped

and made another choice: I would do what I wanted to do and not rely on anyone else for my happiness.

Well, that was the key, I guess. I went off to holiday in Mexico for 6 weeks. A week after coming home I was offered a second trip down south and jumped at the chance.

It was on that second trip that I met Kevin in San Francisco; he was also on holiday from his studies at the Vancouver School of Theology at the UBC campus. Well, it was love at first sight!

It has been 17 months since then and I could not be happier. We have been living together for 13 months in a home that we have both created, in a great neighborhood. He is completing his academic and internship work towards his Ministry. I have taken several months of lessons on the best pipe organ in Vancouver, I sang with the Vancouver Men's Chorus; I enjoy the spiritual support of several different groups. And I now use my free time to develop my creativity in watercolors and acrylics. We both struggle sometimes with all the pills, their many side effects, the constant fatigue. But we are not alone. We have each other, yes. But more importantly, we have a huge support group of people in several communities that love us.

At our Service of Holy Union, co-officiated by our two ministers, there were over 150 men, women and children who stood and applauded, acknowledging our public vows to each other, honoring us with their best wishes, and showering us with many wonderful gifts!

The point of writing about all of this and sharing it with you, is that, despite your diagnosis and state of health, **you can dream and you can create what you want in your life.** The key is to be clear about what you want. Be very specific: write it down or picture it on paper; take control of your life; and make every choice a conscious one. You do not have to be religious or spiritual; you do have to be trusting that you are good enough to get what you want. No dream is too large or too difficult. Be committed to what you want, and then get out of the way! If you push or force what you want to happen it will only backfire on you. Trust and be patient that it will happen in its own time. Act as if it is already part of your reality. I know - the picture tells it all. ♦

NOTICE BOARD

● ARC DROP-IN HOURS

Terri Ross, our Client Support Worker, has drop-in hours on Thursdays from 09h00 - 12h00. If you wish to see her at other times an appointment is necessary.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

To be held on Monday, September 10, 2001 at 7:00 pm at the Ramada. Refreshments provided.

For further info call (250) 862-2437

AIDS WALK 2001
Registration & Pledge Submissions 11h00
Starting Time 12h00
(In front of dolphins)
Sunday, September 23, 2001
Location: Waterfront Park, Kelowna
This year will feature live music at the Island Stage!
For further info call (250) 862-2437

For Early Bird Draws register by September 3, 2001

See u there!

Please let us know your thoughts on our Newsletter!

In the last issue we enclosed a survey form, however the scores for #1 and #4 both read "Completely Disagree", please change #1 to read "Agree" and submit your feedback which is greatly needed and appreciated.

ARC Hours of Service

The AIDS Resource Centre will be open effective September 4, 2001 between the hours of 8:30 AM and 5:00 PM.

OUR THANKS GO OUT TO..

Thank you to Toshi for her continued support and thoughtfulness.

We appreciate her dedicating even more time to improving the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS.

Julie would like to thank OAAS volunteer Lynne for all her help in the office, which is greatly appreciated.

She helps keep my desk in line and still maintains a bubbling personality.

Acts of Choice would like to thank Dave and Tracy for the generous gift of their time and enthusiasm. Your hard work is greatly appreciated.

Volunteers Elaine R., Del S., and all the HIPPO Advisory Committee members who have provided their support and assistance to the project.