

Final Report  
Private Parts  
A Health & Wellness Forum for Men who have sex with Men  
March 18-19 2005  
Hotel Grand Pacific

**Communications & Event Planning:** Stacy Leblanc & Erik Ages of Casper Communications  
**Producer:** Captain Snowdon, Coordinator Gay Men's Community Development AIDS Vancouver Island  
**Event Planning Team:** Casper Communications, Katrina Jensen, Heidi Exner, Captain Snowdon.  
**Funder:** Public Health Agency of Canada, HIV/AIDS Programs

**Panelists**

- Ed Steele- Vancouver Island Persons With AIDS Society
- Moffat Clarke- HIV/AIDS- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Paul Harris- BC Centre For Disease Control
- Captain Snowdon – Coordinator Gay Men's Community Development

**Workshop Presenters**

- Brian Dunn, LGBT Health Matters Project Coordinator, The Centre-Vancouver
- Paul Adomako, Director of Prevention, British Columbia Persons With AIDS Society
- Jamie Myrah, Peer Education Programs Coordinator, YouthCo AIDS Society
- Matt Lovick, Support Services Coordinator, YouthCo AIDS Society
- Paul Harris, BC Centre for Disease Control
- Francis, Sommelier for Victoria's Zambris Restaurant
- Conrad Crockett, Yoga Teacher
- Captain Snowdon, Coordinator Gay Men's Community Development AIDS Vancouver Island

**The planning team set out the following objectives for the conference:**

1. Increase knowledge of HIV/Hepatitis C/STI's and other gay health issues.
2. Increase skills and capacity in communication and decision-making about health issues including safer sex and safer drug use.
3. Increase ability to access peer and social support networks
4. Increase skills and capacity in accessing health services and resources.
5. Increase skills and capacity for health professionals in providing services to gay/bi men.

**Overview**

Private Parts was part of the original Men's Wellness Project Work plan. We expanded the scope of it to include men from across the island and a wider variety of health professionals as well as being able to offer scholarships. Gay and bi men from across the province were also invited to attend with some travel assistance and accommodation provided. The conference program included broader gay health issues including STI's and Hepatitis C. The conference also served as a mechanism for creating links between the different health and social service organizations accessed by gay and bi men and between men themselves.

45 men ranging from 24-65 years of age attended Private Parts. Men came from Victoria, Vancouver, Kamloops, Courtney, Saskatoon, Nelson, and Comox. Private Parts was promoted in a number of places including: Monday Magazine, on email lists, Men's Briefs, Island Men's Survey, AVI offices across the Island and outreach at Bars, Queer Youth Groups, University of Victoria, Camosun College. It became clear from the one to one conversation I had at the conference that men want to know more about gay health issues. This was echoed in the feedback from our evaluations.

Private Part was the first of its kind in Victoria. It was the first multiday event in conference format to get gay and bi men together to talk about their own health and wellness. The event was kicked off with a film screening followed by a social. We screened Drawing Out The Demons: A Film about the Artist Attila Richard Lukacs. We were pleased to have the filmmaker, David Vaisbord in attendance who fielded many questions about making the film, working with the artist and including questions about crystal meth that the content of the film brought up. Many men stayed for the social after which was a good sign that folks were enjoying themselves.

The second day of the conference was kicked off with a panel discussion entitled "Is Sex Safe in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Condom Fatigue and Other Issues for Men Who Have Sex With Men."

Panelists were as follows:

- Ed Steele- Vancouver Island Persons With AIDS Society
- Moffat Clarke- HIV/AIDS- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Paul Harris- BC Centre For Disease Control
- Captain Snowdon – Coordinator Gay Men's Community Development

The panel created a lot of discussion. Important points were raised about broadening prevention work in consideration of the whole person not just specific health issues. Paul Harris opened up a valuable discussion about the fact that not one campaign or program will work for everyone. We need multipronged approaches to health and wellness for different age groups, guys from different cultural backgrounds and folks of differing abilities. It was also stressed that HIV positive folks need to be part of the planning and implementation of these approaches. Issues around unmet prevention needs for men who have sex with men who don't identify as gay or bisexual especially those who are living in rural communities and camps came up. It was stressed that this is a population that thus far prevention efforts have not been able to access. A number of folks exchanged email addresses and committed to working on these issues together.

The event continued with 8 workshops to choose from during the am and pm sessions. The following were the workshop options:

- A Queerer Health and Social Service Sector for BC
- Thinking and Fucking While Chewing Gum: challenging issues in Positive Prevention
- Two Steps Forward, One Step Back: The Never-ending Pursuit of Sexual Self-esteem
- Yoga 101
- Working with Healthcare providers: a discussion on some of the challenges for men who have sex with men
- Fear versus Fact: Crystal Meth, Gay Men and Reality
- Good Living: How to choose the right wines for the right foods without coming across as a Type A obsessive compulsive
- Sexual Harm Reduction and the continuum of risk

The workshops were well received and all reported generating great discussion. The workshops were rated by participants as follows:

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I learned the most about my health at \_\_\_\_\_ (name the session)

- Sexual Self Esteem (3)
- Thinking and Fucking while Chewing Gum (3)
- Sexual Harm Reduction (2)
- Yoga 101 (2)
- Plenary (1)
- Good Living(1)
- Nothing

Participants commented on their favorite parts of the workshop:

- Good group discussions
- High degree of interaction
- Perspectives of other participants
- The workshop gave us tools

As organizers we wanted to get a sense of why men chose to attend the forum and if their expectations and needs were in fact met. We asked as follows the primary reason why they attended the forum,

What was the **primary reason** you attended this forum: Please circle one or write in your reason.

- a) to increase my knowledge about gay sexual health issues (10)
- b) to increase my knowledge of HIV/HCV/STD (2)
- c) to increase my knowledge of safer sex and/drug use (1)
- d) to increase my confidence in discussing gay sexual health issues(4)
- e) to have a good time (4)
- f) to meet new people (7)
- g) other **networking, volunteering, to support the Men's Wellness Program, to teach a workshop.**

The evaluations revealed:

- 83% of the men said that their knowledge about gay sexual health and resources had increased somewhat or increased a lot.
- 65% of men surveyed said their knowledge of safer sex and drug use increased somewhat or a lot.
- 56% of the respondents said that their knowledge about HIV/HCV/STD's increased somewhat or a lot.

We also wanted to know what specifically the men learned about their health at the conference in order to assess the effectiveness of workshops and different approaches to learning.

### **What I learned about my health was:**

- To be aware of what I am doing
- Don't drink too much wine
- That I am not alone
- Enjoyment
- Nothing
- Stretching is beneficial
- A sense that other people are dealing with the same issues that I am
- That I basically practice safe sex
- A constant need to evolve, learn more, share ideas, as an older man to keep relevant to "now" issues and questions
- Better communication strategies around safe sex
- I am healthy
- Do it
- I am not alone in my concerns

### **Looking Forward**

Half way through the second day many men began to make comments about how much they were enjoying themselves and what they would like to see at next years Private Parts. A number of comments were made to the organizers about how much folks enjoyed the classiness of the venue, the great food and the overall energy and ambiance of the event. Other suggestions and comments made on the evaluations:

- Well done
- Perhaps and extra day
- More people, more activities
- More advertising
- Congratulations
- Bridging the gay generations gap
- Conferences and workshops are totally useless for actual learning if anything they mostly spark an interest in a topic
- Bring in youth, more advertising, more art

We also explored what folks would like to learn about in the future. This information will be useful in planning; topics for the discussion groups, themes for future forums and topic for another Private Parts.

### **In the future, I would like to learn about:**

- Coming out
- Volunteering
- Party drugs
- Crystal meth
- Exploring more social/intergenerational gay wellness issues and education

Private Parts was very well received and appreciated. Captain Snowdon has received a number of phone calls, emails and posts to the website congratulating the organizing committee and saying how much they enjoyed the event from people. The expertise of the folks at Casper Communications made this event run incredibly smoothly, giving Captain, our new Coordinator of Gay Men's Community Development the opportunity to introduce himself to the attendees and chat one on one with folks about what they would like to see the Men's Wellness Program doing in Victoria.