



## **Statement of Solidarity**

### **International AIDS Conference Local Host supports Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week in Canada**

TORONTO, December 1, 2005 – The Local Host of AIDS 2006 Toronto, the XVI International AIDS Conference, joined today with Canada's Aboriginal leaders, caregivers, service providers, activists and people living with HIV/AIDS in supporting the annual Aboriginal HIV/AIDS awareness campaign of the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN) calling for commitment to action.

The campaign raises awareness about the growing threat of HIV/AIDS in Aboriginal communities across Canada where the spread of the disease continues to rise at an alarming rate far in excess of the general or other specific populations. Indeed, the overall population of infected individuals includes a disproportionately high number of Aboriginal people including Aboriginal women and youth.

Leaders of the AIDS 2006 Toronto Local Host organization united in solidarity behind the Aboriginal AIDS awareness campaign as a vital step in the battle against HIV/AIDS in Canada. The Toronto Local Host is incorporated as a not-for-profit organization and includes leaders of the Canadian AIDS movement who are volunteering their time to ensure the success of AIDS 2006.

AIDS 2006, the world's largest international AIDS conference, to be held in Toronto August 13-18, 2006, will bring together 15,000 to 20,000 of the world's scientists, health care providers, educators, policy makers, AIDS Service Organizations, community leaders and people living with HIV/AIDS to share current knowledge on a full spectrum of issues about the global epidemic. With more than 2,500 international journalists also expected to attend, the Conference is the single most widely covered AIDS event in the world.

"This Conference marks the tenth anniversary of the breakthrough in HIV/AIDS treatment known as 'highly active antiretroviral therapy', which was announced at the 1996 International AIDS Conference in Vancouver – the last time the Conference was held in Canada, said Dr. Mark Wainberg, Co-Chair of the Toronto Conference and Chair of Local Host organization. "Holding this Conference in Toronto will shine an international spotlight on this country's response to HIV/AIDS, including our tremendous successes as well as the challenges despite our experience and resources, including the serious state of HIV/AIDS among our Aboriginal people."

AIDS 2006 Toronto will be an important forum for examining progress made over the past decade in Canada and around the world, and for mobilizing the action for the global response. The conference will include an International Indigenous People's Satellite symposium that is being organized and planned to assure that Indigenous issues receive attention, and that Indigenous groups from around the world are able to network and exchange important information in the battle against HIV/AIDS.



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The focus of the Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Awareness Campaign on knowledge, leadership and action on commitments, complements the Toronto Conference theme very well. "The Conference theme, *Time to Deliver*, underscores the continued urgency in bringing effective HIV prevention and treatment strategies to communities the world over, including our own Aboriginal people right here in Canada," said Darryl Perry, Executive Director the AIDS 2006 Toronto Local Host. "The International AIDS Conference is a significant opportunity to demand further commitment and mobilize action to make prevention, treatment and care more widely available, which is still a continuing challenge in many of Canada's aboriginal communities."

International AIDS Conferences are held every two years. The 2004 conference was held in Bangkok, Thailand. This is the third International AIDS Conference to be hosted in Canada. Montreal hosted the 1989 Conference, and Vancouver hosted in 1996.

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