



Aboriginals Hit Hardest by AIDS Virus

OTTAWA: **Aboriginal people** are five times more likely to become infected with the **AIDS virus** than other Canadians, according to research funded by Health Canada.

“The deplorable extent of **HIV/AIDS** and other health and social problems among aboriginal people represents a human rights failure in Canada” said Jake Linklater, executive director of the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network.

The proportion of Canadian AIDS cases among aboriginal people increased from one per cent before 1990 to 15 per cent in 1999, according to joint research findings released by the aboriginal group and the Montreal-based Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network.

Aboriginal people make up only three per cent of Canada’s population.

In B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and much of Atlantic Canada, more detailed figures were obtained. In those regions, health officials indicated, 25 per cent of newly diagnosed **HIV infection** cases were among native people.

The research found that **aboriginal people** are infected at a younger age than non-aboriginal people, and that many are infected by injecting drugs.

Natives are a high-risk population because of such factors as high rates of incarceration, drug and alcohol abuse, and poverty. More needs to be done to educate aboriginal people about prevention and to improve their access to counseling and quality **testing for HIV**, the virus that causes **AIDS**, the research concluded.