



**CACVO**  
Le conseil des africains  
et caraïbeens sur le  
VIH/SIDA en Ontario



**ACCHO**  
African and Caribbean  
Council on HIV/AIDS  
in Ontario

## **Building a National HIV/AIDS Network for Black, African and Caribbean Canadians**

**Proceedings Report**

**Meeting in Montreal on March 4th, 2010**



## **1.0 Introduction**

ICAD's involvement in addressing HIV and AIDS within the African and Caribbean Diaspora has been a programmatic focus in recent years. To date we have worked with various stakeholders, including the African and Caribbean Council on HIV/AIDS in Ontario (ACHHO) and have produced the following resources:

- An environmental scan entitled "Springboarding a National HIV/AIDS Strategy for Black Canadian, African and Caribbean Communities Environmental Scan Report".
- "Taking Action on HIV and AIDS in Black Communities in Canada: A Resource for Moving Ahead".
- 'Prevention Programs in Developed Countries: Lessons Learned: *A Report on Prevention Initiatives used to address HIV and AIDS prevention for African, Caribbean and Black Populations in developed countries*'

Following the publication of *Taking Action*, ICAD organized and hosted an invitation-only, day-long meeting for key stakeholders including members of the Springboarding project national steering committee, activists, policy makers, and provincial and federal government officials involved in this issue. Following the event, ICAD and ACCHO published a final report which summarized the proceedings and suggested the establishment of a national network to build on the work that has already been completed. This network would complement activities related to the government's Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS among people from countries where HIV is endemic and further the work to address HIV/AIDS in Black communities in Canada. The meeting recommended that the network include representatives from existing regional/provincial bodies or hubs and new organizations established across the country. This would support the engagement of different stakeholders, including Black community members connected to their local community, to bring forth and share information. It will also lend an influential voice to HIV/AIDS issues in Black communities.

## **2.0 Meeting Summary**

**2.1** On March 4, 2010, in a follow up to the above recommendations ICAD and ACCHO took the next step in the creation of a national network. With funding provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada and ViiV, ICAD and ACCHO co-hosted a one day, invitation only meeting entitled *Building a National HIV/AIDS Network for Black, African and Caribbean Canadians* in Montreal to coincide with the Leading Together: the 6<sup>th</sup> HIV/AIDS Skills Building Symposium. The event was facilitated by Beth Jordan from Adobe Consulting Services and there were approximately twenty five participants in attendance. The participants included relevant stakeholders from non-governmental and community organizations, people living with HIV and AIDS and government representatives from the municipal, provincial and federal level involved with African, Caribbean and Black communities across Canada. The purpose of the event was to focus on governance and organizational issues relating to the network, to clarify its role and to create the necessary infrastructure to sustain its existence.

**2.2** Introductions were provided by Wangari Tharao from Women’s Health in Women’s Hands and Valerie Pierre-Pierre, Executive Director of ACHHO. Participants introduced themselves through a café style meet and greet exercise and then reformed into the large group to discuss the goals and objectives of the event. Participants were also invited to speak on how they felt about the meeting and many expressed excitement for the day’s proceedings and welcomed the opportunity to meet with others from across Canada. Many also spoke to the challenges of stigma and isolation in their own communities and were glad to be part of a larger group that could provide support and the opportunity to discuss topics of mutual interest in a supportive environment. The goal of the event was to create and formalize a national network to facilitate the sharing of information and expertise and provide access to relevant resource materials. The National Network will also lend an influential voice to HIV/AIDS issues in Black, African and Caribbean Communities particularly in the area of policy, research and service delivery. The objectives of the event included:

- To contextualize the work that supports and/or has been done to date on a National Network model and to share information on where the National Network has come from.
- To identify the role of a National Network by responding to key questions:
  1. Why do we need a National Network?
  2. What would be the role of a National Network?
  3. Who will participate in the Network and who would be targeted by the activities of the Network?
- To address issues of governance and infrastructure

**2.3** To provide context for the participants Dionne A. Falconer provided a presentation of the events leading up to the meeting. The attendees broke into small groups and discussed at length ideas surrounding the role of the national network. Participants raised the following issues for consideration:

- The incredible diversity within Black, African and Caribbean communities in Canada
- The different needs of individuals based on the region in Canada in which they reside
- The need to advocate for resources and disseminate relevant information on a national scale
- The possibility of building a surveillance network as part of the national network
- The possibility of linking the national network with other ethno-cultural networks across Canada
- Increasing visibility within ACB communities: a national campaign with links to regional and local focus and services
- Changing how the media portrays the ACB communities
- Informing policy decision making on a national level and providing a platform from which to challenge such decisions
- Validating the work of smaller organizations through their inclusion in the network, helping them with funding and facilitating the coordination of regional efforts
- Culturally adapted resources and approaches for service delivery



**2.4** The group agreed to define the role of the network in the following manner:

*The ACB community in Canada is disproportionately affected by the HIV and AIDS epidemic. The role of the National Network is to provide leadership and to coordinate a national response to policy, research and service delivery issues affecting the ACB community, identifying priorities and advocacy for their inclusion at the national, provincial and community levels, facilitating the sharing of information and expertise which accurately documents the ACB reality and, finally, to serve as a link between relevant national and international networks and allies.*

**2.5** The group also discussed the limitations and parameters of a national network:

1. Will be unable to direct service on the ground
2. Funding will have to be found
3. May be difficult to establish priorities
4. How to define the membership
5. Population Dispersal in Canada
6. Following through on decisions made by the network
7. The need to be strategic in the outcomes of the network

Despite these challenges it was felt that once the foundational pieces were in place the network would be able to be set up and grow. It was also expressed that consensus may not always be possible but that the network would seek to adopt a framework of conflict resolution for such instances and keep working towards the 'role' as outlined above.

**2.6** The participants broke into small groups again to discuss the infrastructure of the network. This discussion was guided by the ICAD document *What Makes a Network Work?* which provides examples of five 'model' types of networks. Each group reported back their opinions of the best type of model for this network. The group decided that at this stage the network would be best served by a governing council to be appointed by seeking volunteers from the meeting. The group also asked that ICAD temporarily house the network and support its evolution until such time as it can be self sustaining or form new partnerships with provincial hubs to coordinate its efforts. Membership was also discussed and some present felt that there could be two categories of membership within the network. The first category would consist of the aforementioned 'governing council', who would actively seek to drive the development of the network by drafting terms of reference, membership guidelines and other network documents. The second category would encompass a more general membership for those who would like to be a member of the network but may not have time or resources to dedicate to its further



development. This suggestion was approved in principal by the group and may be revisited at a later date.

**2.7** The group also discussed the guiding principles for the network and highlighted the following as imperative:

- GIPA and MIPA
- Anti-oppression, anti-racism, anti-homophobia
- Committed to working in each province
- Culturally competent and accessible to the whole community
- Inclusion and Diversity
- Equity and social justice
- Collaboration and partnership
- Accountability and Transparency
- Accessibility
- Community driven (By Us, For Us)
- Harm Reduction

It was also felt by some members that community and youth engagement would also need to play strong roles within the framework thought how this will be defined requires further discussion.

**2.8** Finally, the group considered broad strategies to guide the content of future meetings of the governing council and charged the council with drafting the terms of reference for the network in conjunction with the organizing committee for the March 4<sup>th</sup> event. Suggested considerations included:

1. To finalize the operational and governance structure.
2. To establish the guidelines for a communication strategy.
3. To create a strategic plan with a monitoring and evaluation framework.
4. Research, policy and advocacy strategies.
5. To create a coordination mechanism between formal and informal networks.
6. Planning to have meetings across Canada.
7. Facilitate the wider dissemination of the progress of the council relating to the creation of information and challenges.

**2.9** Volunteers were invited to join the governing council. The following are the approved members of the Governing Council:

- |                                       |   |                  |
|---------------------------------------|---|------------------|
| 1. Irene Mlambo                       | Somerset West Community Health Centre         | Ottawa, ON       |
| 2. John Gaye                          | African Diaspora Association of the Maritimes | Halifax, NS      |
| 3. Lynn Sutankayo                     | HIV Edmonton                                  | Edmonton, AB     |
| 4. Joseph Jean-Giles                  | GAP-VIES                                      | Montreal, PQ     |
| 5. Valerie Pierre-Pierre              | ACCHO   | Toronto, ON      |
| 6. Alain Houde<br>(ex-officio member) | Public Health Agency of Canada                | Ottawa, ON       |
| 7. Robert Bardston                    | HIV Society of South Eastern Alberta          | Medicine Hat, AB |

8. Elisa Hatton	Black CAP	Toronto, ON
9. Rosemary Forbes	ICAD	Ottawa, ON
10. Wangari Tharao	Women's Health in Women's Hands	Toronto, ON

### **3.0 Next Steps**

The meeting created a formal space for organizational and theoretical considerations to be assessed by members of the community. The network will now rely on the organizing committee and the governing council to complete the following tasks to ensure that the momentum created at the meeting continues.

The group outlined the following next steps:

1. The Organizing committee will draft terms of reference and suggest a formal name for the network. These will be sent to the appointed governing council for review and final approval.
2. The organizing committee will hand over responsibility for the network to the governing council at a final meeting.
3. The governing council will formulate a strategy to officially launch the network on a national scale. As part of this process the council will formulate a communications strategy to support the network.
4. The network will actively seek out to build the membership of the network from within ACB communities.

The meeting discussed the need for a national organization to help support the network in these next few months as the foundations are laid. The Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development was asked to fulfill this role until such time that an ACB organization from within the network gained the capacity to do so.

Closing remarks were offered by Wangari Tharao who thanked everyone for attending. The group was also informed that an evaluation questionnaire would be sent by e-mail to all participants.



***Participants List***

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Angeline Jones ICAD <i>Ottawa, ON</i>	Joseph Jean-Gilles GAP-VIES <i>Montréal, QC</i>
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Eric Bigirimana COCQ-SIDA <i>Montréal, QC</i>	MaryStella Anidi Sexuality Education Resource Centre <i>Winnipeg, MB</i>
Daniel Townsend Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS <i>Toronto, ON</i>	Nicci Stein ICAD <i>Ottawa, ON</i>
Dawn Shepherd PHAC <i>Quebec Region</i>	Robert Bardston HIV Society of South Eastern Alberta <i>Medicine Hat, AB</i>
Dionne A. Falconer DA Falconer and Associates Inc. <i>Toronto, ON</i>	Rosemary Forbes ICAD <i>Ottawa, ON</i>
Dr. Alix Adrien McGill University <i>Montreal, QC</i>	Susanna Ogunnaike-Cooke PHAC <i>Ottawa, ON</i>
Elisa Hatton Black CAP <i>Toronto, ON</i>	Valérie Pierre-Pierre ACCHO <i>Toronto, ON</i>
Felicite Murangira ACHNO <i>Ottawa, ON</i>	Wangari Tharao Women's Health in Women's Hands CHC <i>Toronto, ON</i>



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