

World AIDS Day December 1

## SERC receives federal funding for Sacred Lives Project

SERC was delighted to receive funding from Canadian Heritage and Official Languages to deliver the project, *Sacred Lives: Preventing Sexual Exploitation of Winnipeg Aboriginal Youth through Peer-Based Education*.

Shelly Glover, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Member of Parliament for St. Boniface, announced the funding on October 13.

The project will provide educational workshops to youth that will serve as a way to prevent children and youth from becoming sexually exploited and lured into the sex trade. The uniqueness of this project is that it will be delivered by peer youth mentors who have a combination of child and youth care professional skills and education as well as experiential knowledge of having been formerly involved and/or exploited in the sex trade.

## Conference on Female Genital Cutting to be held in Winnipeg

SERC has received funding from the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) to organize a series of meetings of a national and international network of researchers, policy-makers, program managers and service providers to address female genital cutting in Canada. A two-day meeting will be held in the spring of 2011. More information on the program will be available early next year.

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## Refugee Single Parents: A Look at their Sex. Ed. Related Needs

- Paula Migliardi, Program Evaluation and Research Coordinator

In our increasing work with recent newcomers to Manitoba, many of these newcomers have indicated that we should pay attention to the specific issues faced by single parents in their communities. For this reason, this year we conducted an assessment on the experiences and needs of refugee single parents in Winnipeg.

Our objective was to learn about the specific sexuality related education needs among refugee single parents. However, we took the opportunity to try to understand their overall experience as single parents in a new culture.

We hired two community members to assist in the process of community engagement and as community-based researchers. A project advisory group

was established with representatives of some key agencies such as Welcome Place, Mount Carmel Clinic, Healthy Start for Mom and Me, the Faculty of Social Work (University of Manitoba), and two community members advocating for the situation of refugee single parents. An additional number of community members assisted with interpretation, recruitment and note-

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## Refugee Single Parents Cont'd.

taking.

Since February we have engaged with 60 community members, mostly single mothers, and mainly from rapidly growing refugee communities such as the Congolese, Sudanese, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Burundi, and other African and non-African communities. We also spoke with a group of children of single refugee parents.

Most participants were quick to share their hardships as single parents in a new social and cultural context. They

described their situation as "stressful", "difficult" and "lonely". Many found not to have enough connection and help from their own communities and many more did not rely on available community services other than government assistance.

Trying to support large families was a big challenge for participants. It was common to hear parents expressing concern about their inability to connect with their children due to lack of access resulting from custody related issues, but also due to rapid cultural changes.

Parents felt ill-equipped to address sexuality related issues, mostly with children of the opposite sex. Yet, they believed that, in general, barriers about talking to their children about sexuality were common to all parents, not only single ones.

We are in the process of completing the project by presenting the findings back to the participants. A final report will be available at the end of the year. This project has been supported by the Winnipeg Foundation and Manitoba Labour and Immigration.



## New on the Shelf in Winnipeg

- Gwen Crawley, Library Coordinator

*Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education.* (Canada: PHAC, 2008).

*Childhood Unbound: Saving our Kids' Best Selves - Confident Parenting in a World of Change* by Ron Taffel. (New York: Free Press, 2009).

*Eagle's Eye View 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition: An environmental Scan of the Aboriginal Community in Winnipeg.* (Winnipeg: United Way, 2010).

*Early Sexualization: A Guide for Parents of Preteen Girls* (Montreal: YWCA, 2006).

*Empower Youth, Arts and Activism: An HIV/AIDS Arts Activism Manual for Youth by Youth* (Canada: CATIE, 2009).

*Girl in the Know: Your Inside-and Out Guide to Growing Up* by Anne Katz. (Toronto: Kids Can Press, 2010).

*Harm Reduction Series: Facilitator's Manual.* (Winnipeg: John Howard Society of Manitoba, 2009).

*Innovative Approaches to Increase Parent-Child Communication about Sexuality.* (New York: SIECUS, 2002).

*It's a Teen's World: Wired for Sex, Lies and Power Trips.* (Toronto: CBC Learning, 2009).

*Just Because It isn't Wrong Doesn't Make it Right* by Barbara Coloroso. (Toronto: Penguin Group, 2005).

*Just TV-Year Two: Vision Voice Video.* (Winnipeg: Broadway Community Centre, 2009).

*Laid: Young People's Experiences with Sex in an Easy-Access Culture* (Berkeley: Seal Books, 2009).

*Mothers' Voices: What Women Say about Pregnancy, Childbirth and Early Motherhood.* (Canada: PHAC, 2009).

*Managing Your Health: A Guide for People Living with HIV and AIDS.* (Canada: CATIE, 2009).

*Questions & Answers: Gender Identity in Schools.* (Ottawa: PHAC, 2010).

*S.H.E.I.R.: Sexual Health Educator Internet Resource.* (Ontario: Aids Committee of London, 2008).

*Sexual Health Education in the Schools: Questions & Answers 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.* (Canada: SIECCAN, 2010).

*Supporting Sexual Health and Intimacy in Care Facilities: Guidelines for Supporting Adults Living in Long-term Care Facilities and Group Homes In British Columbia.* (Vancouver: Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, 2009).

*The Bare Naked Book 29<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition* by Kathy Stinson. (Toronto: Annick Press, 2006).

*The Care and Keeping of You: The Body Book for Girls* (Wisconsin: American Girl Publishers Inc., 1998).

*The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professional* by Stephanie Brill and Rachel Pepper. (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2008).

*What Your Doctor May Not Tell You About HPV.* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2002).

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The Board and staff of SERC wish to express their gratitude for the ongoing support of SERC's funders without whom the quality of and extent of our services and programs would not be possible.

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We reserve the right to edit. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect SERC policy.

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# Wzup in Brandon

- Kerri Law, Coordinator, SERC Brandon

The Brandon office underwent a transformation in preparation for the Open House that took place on October 13<sup>th</sup>. A new paint job, furniture, office décor and office equipment has got the centre looking fabulous!

SERC is thrilled to have two new people join our team. Pam McKay has been hired to fulfill the position of GLBTQ Program Coordinator/Counsellor. Pam has been focusing on setting priorities like connecting with the Brandon community and letting them know that a GLBT Education and Counselling Program is being established as part of the services that SERC offers. Pam also has had an opportunity to promote the program with more than fifteen organizations, providing one workshop and being visible in the community by participating with others who are doing workshops. The support from the GLBT community in distributing posters and other resources to a number of agencies, businesses and other public spaces in Brandon has been tremendous. The monthly GLBT Coffee House is up and running and will take place the third Thursday of each month.

We also welcome Kaitlyn White, who takes over Amanda VanWeert's position while she is on maternity leave. Kaitlyn will provide educational workshops in the community, liaise with local committees and plan the February Sexual Health Conference.

SERC Brandon has enjoyed working with Westman Immigration Services to deliver education through their ENTRY program and is currently exploring further opportunities to partner with and serve the newcomer community in Brandon.

SERC has been visible around town over the last few months by running display booths at local high schools, Brandon Shoppers Mall, Folk Fest, Ridge Fest, Assiniboine Regional Health Authority Mental Health Day, BRHA Mental Health Day, National Family Day, and Shilo Health Fair.

Along with the Brandon Pride Planning Committee, SERC enjoyed a successful year of Brandon GLBTQ Pride events. In June we hosted a lunch and learn event with a total of 45 participants attending and a pride in the park celebration. SERC, PFLAG, Knox United Church and the GLBTQ Brandon University Collective are planning a Trans Day of Remembrance Service to take place on November 25<sup>th</sup>.

During the last several months Bev has revamped the resource library enabling the users' easier access. A large selection of GLBTQ books were donated along with the purchase of an excellent selection of material for our Let's Talk campaign. We now have a good range of topics from the earliest changes in childhood through to young adulthood.

SERC wishes Amanda all the best on her year long maternity leave.

The **Let's Talk Project** in Brandon is well underway. Some of the project activities include the development of a parent and youth advisory committee, creation of a sexual health flyer, and the planning stages of a youth forum.

The goal of the parent and youth advisory committee is to provide direction on SERC programming, youth forum and resource library acquisitions, and to assist in the creation of the Let's Talk flyer.

The *Let's Talk: Getting Families Talking about Sexual Health* flyer is a tool that families can use to start conversations or to continue talking with their children about sexual health. The flyer was delivered to every household, farm and business in Brandon and district. As a follow up to the flyer, SERC will be facilitating workshops for parents focusing on how to talk with their children about sexuality.

An online survey was set up to gather feedback about the brochure and its impact on communication among families. Survey participants entered a draw to win one of four \$50 gift certificates from the Brandon Shoppers Mall.

In the up coming months we will continue to recruit new members for the youth advisory committee, plan the youth forum and facilitate sexual health workshops for youth in and out of school, and for parents.

## Sincere thanks to...

...**Great-West Life** (a Community Zone sponsor of the Winnipeg Goldeyes), donated 20 tickets for each of the 52 regular season Goldeyes home games to United Way Winnipeg. Through their generosity, we were able to give free tickets to the Goldeyes game on June 23 to 20 newcomer parents and youth who participate in SERC workshops.

...**YIP (Youth in Philanthropy)** - SERC was honoured to receive a \$100 grant from the Youth In Philanthropy Committee of Balmoral High School, which we used to purchase the DVD, **Sexy Inc.** Youth In Philanthropy is a program of the Winnipeg Foundation to give high school students first-hand experience with philanthropy and community development.

...**The Winnipeg Foundation** for their support of the Refugee Single Parents Research Project (see article beginning on page 1).

**Yes, I would like to HELP SERC** continue to work for informed choice and sexuality education

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Organization (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town \_\_\_\_\_ Province \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

HERE IS MY DONATION OF

\$200

\$100

\$50

Other \_\_\_\_\_

METHOD of PAYMENT

Cash

I have enclosed a cheque/money order

Detach and mail to: Sexuality Education Resource Centre; 200 - 226 Osborne Street North; Winnipeg, MB R3C 1V4

# Manitoba HIV Conference

- Linda Plenert, Sexuality & Reproductive Health Facilitator

The 16th Annual Manitoba HIV Conference was held in Winnipeg on October 25th and 26th at the Radisson Hotel. This year's theme was *A Positive Outlook: HIV and Aging*.

The picture of living with HIV is definitely changing: people on therapy (HAART) will now live almost as long as an uninfected person. In fact, the higher the person's CD4 count when they begin therapy, the less risk there is of AIDS related complications developing. Early start to treatment also seems to reduce the chances of a person developing HIV associated neurocognitive disorders (HAND).

One of the key messages of the conference was the importance of testing so that diagnosis happens in the early stages of a person's infection. In 2009 most Manitobans who were diagnosed with HIV had a CD4 count of less than 400 at the time of diagnosis. It also appears that if a person's CD4 count can be increased up to 500 and it can be kept there for five years, his/her life expectancy can be close to that of an uninfected person's.

There are, of course, emerging issues as this population "ages" (we're talking over 50!) and we heard that it is the other age-related health issues that can become problematic. The message was that we all need to do what we can to stay healthy as we age - eat nutritiously, exercise, get adequate sleep, quit/reduce smoking, learn how to deal with stress, etc., etc. Negative lifestyle activities take a toll on an older person, but people living with HIV may notice a greater

impact on their health.

Social isolation in the older person living with HIV is also a significant issue. Although the research took place in a younger population, there is some evidence of a negative impact on a person's mental well-being when his/her social networking takes place electronically rather than in person. Another emerging issue related to HIV and aging is the refusal of some assisted living care homes to accept a resident who is HIV+. Apparently, the staff were threatening to quit. The taboos around sexuality, not just HIV, are alive and well.

The Manitoba Update given by Dr. Ken Kasper highlighted the need to address society's stereotypes about who is becoming infected with HIV. We heard the story of a 72 year old Calgary woman who had sex with another Canadian while on vacation in Mexico. She was recently diagnosed HIV+. Contrary to the old stereotypes, heterosexual males are the new "drivers" of HIV infection. In Manitoba there are an increasing number of cases of HIV infection in young women. Although there have been no HIV infected newborns in Manitoba for a few years, there is the concern that it could become a reality again.

Those working in the field of HIV research and treatment are keeping a close eye on what is happening in Saskatchewan. There are many similarities to Manitoba and the number of new cases in Saskatchewan is increasing. In Manitoba, more than 80% of HIV diagnoses occur in Winnipeg - but it doesn't mean that is where people reside

permanently or where they were infected. Although Dr. Kasper indicated that 100% of the new HIV cases in Winnipeg are linked to services and care, he was not sure what was happening in other regions.

The social determinants of health need to be addressed if we are going to be successful at curbing a rise in HIV infection. Socio-economic status, addictions, and mental health are interconnected with HIV infection and treatment success. Dr. Kasper noted that in Manitoba there is no HIV specific education in medical school. Health practitioners' lack of confidence in their knowledge regarding an HIV diagnosis impacts the number of HIV tests that are offered to patients.

There is a need to put HIV back on the radar screen, so to speak. Media and social networking could be instrumental in delivering messages about preventing HIV transmission and the importance of early testing and treatment. Those of us in the field of sexuality education need to be creative in how we get the message out. Dealing with the stereotypes of who is/is not at risk is a critical piece for educators, health care providers, and the community at large.

Don't assume anything. Ask the same questions and provide the same information about HIV to everyone. Much of the prevention education related to HIV focuses on 'what the person did wrong'. Positive prevention is a holistic approach and focuses on the positives of what people can do to stay sexually active as they age.