

AIDS:

Wake up, it's on campus

by Karen Sugar

Cathy became infected six years ago, and has known that she is HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) positive for more than four years.

She contracted AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) after having sex only twice with a man she was dating. "You don't have to be a prostitute or a drug user to be at risk," she said. Although she doesn't think about her infection as much as she used to, she said, "It is (still) frightening to think that the next time I get the flu, it could turn into pneumonia and that could be it."

Cathy has tried to change her lifestyle, trying to keep herself as healthy as possible by eating properly, getting enough sleep and exercising. "The one good thing that came out of this nightmare," she said, "is that I appreciate life more than I ever did before."

Cathy was speaking at *What Women Need to Know*, a forum on AIDS presented October 12, the first lecture in a series to mark the beginning of a province-wide AIDS Awareness Week.

The turnout was very disappointing, with few people showing up to listen to Theresa Dobko, from the AIDS Committee of Toronto. "Women are the fastest growing group to get infected," she said, emphasizing that most women get infected from long term monogamous relationships, many of them married. She also told the audience that close to a million Canadians and Americans could be carriers of the disease within five years.

All this comes as no surprise to Ron Kelly, founder of the York University Council on the Prevention of Aids (YCPA), who said he wasn't disappointed with the meagre turnout. "If we get even three people to attend something," he said, "then it was worth bringing speakers up here."

Kelly's table in Central Square was much more of a success, where more than 1,000 condoms were given out to students. This is a turn of events from a few years ago at York, when AIDS prevention advocates were harassed and practically beaten up by students. The change in attitude most definitely reflects students' growing awareness and concern about the life threatening dangers of AIDS and the importance of safer sex.

Kelly is studying music at York. He has known that he has been HIV positive since the summer of 1987 and founded the YCPA early last year to educate the York population. Said Kelly, "I just don't want this to happen to someone else."

The YCPA has been very well received by students and staff alike, with the information hotline receiving over 2,300 calls in its first 18 months of operation. Kelly said



the callers range from students requesting general information to people who believe they have the disease and do not know what to do. There are 10 volunteers at the centre, who have all had some training in handling distress calls.

As for Kelly, his condition is deteriorating. He has lost more weight and needs more sleep than he used to, and will be starting the new experimental drug dideoynosine (DDI) in a few weeks. This drug performs the same function as azidothymidine (AZT), which was the first drug released. DDI slows down the formation of the AIDS virus, and is given to people with a T cell (a type of white blood cell) count of under 300.

Kelly is in the AIDS related complex stage (ARC) of the disease. While experiencing many symptoms associated with the disease, his immune system has not yet deteriorated to the point of kaposi sarcoma and pneumonia, when the immune system is exhausted and many infections are able to invade the body.

How does he cope, knowing that he has a life threatening disease? At first, he said, it was difficult. Upon learning he was HIV positive, he said he wanted to ignore what was going on. But since then, he has come to terms with the realities associated with having AIDS. "I try not to waste any of my life," he explained, "I have very important friends that keep me going."

Kelly's optimism is interesting, given his doubt that a cure for AIDS will be found by the end of the century. At a

Montreal conference which Kelly recently attended, Dr Jonas Salk, inventor of the polio vaccine, failed to suggest any real progress in conquering the disease.

Despite the media attention the disease has been given, however, there are still a lot of people who feel they don't need to be concerned. Bobby Hanoman, a second year political science major, said she was "kind of well educated on the subject of AIDS." She did not know that it was AIDS Awareness Week at York and, when asked if she would attend any of the lectures, replied, "probably not." She is not too concerned about AIDS, and said she doesn't "think about it happening to her," because she is in a monogamous relationship and trusts her partner. Hanoman said her friends feel the same way and that they are not concerned about it happening to them either.

A slightly different view came from Keith Vanderpool, a physical education major, who said that much of what he knows is only what the media has let him know. He is sceptical that the information given to him is completely accurate, and said he would be interested in attending some of the upcoming seminars on AIDS. However, he said, "Finding time is a problem and I wouldn't be interested enough to give up something that I was doing (in order) to attend one of the lectures." He said he practices safer sex and feels it is important to do so.

What the differences of opinion regarding the importance of AIDS education shows is that the process of changing people's sexual habits and thoughts is not an easy task. People are slowly becoming aware that they can catch the disease as easily as the next person. Until a cure is found, the only way people can protect themselves is through a better understanding how and how not to contract AIDS.

A lot of people still believe they can "catch" AIDS from sitting in the same room with someone who has the disease, from public washrooms and so forth. Most people are only beginning to realize they can be friendly with a person who has AIDS and not worry about acquiring it. Like people with any other medical problem, people with AIDS need support.

Canada, at present, has about 3,000 people with fully developed AIDS. Many Canadians have already died from the disease. In Ontario, as of October 10, there were 1,213 people with AIDS and, in Toronto, more than 600.

The problem with AIDS awareness, as Dobko pointed out, is that people make promises to themselves to practice safer sex, and as time goes on they become lax. A condom must be worn every time, she stressed, as she advised her audience, "Don't look at the past but rather to the next five years, because as the number of AIDS cases rises, the greater you (will be) at risk."

goose bay cont'd

or else" and Ivanski assures everyone that he is concerned and he will pass on the petition and list of demands to someone with the proper mandate and then both sing together, "You've made your point, the media is here, what more do you want us to do?"

In the background you can see the bolt cutters being flexed.

At this point Ivanski also asks the media to leave but we refuse — I because I'm getting right into this disobedience thing, the *Star* guys because they get paid by the hour. When the nine reiterate that they are not leaving peacefully until the military does, link arms and start chanting again, head cop yells go and his minions begin dragging people out. I manage to find a ride to the station and am there to witness the cops pulling everybody out of the cars. They are not being very nice. Maggie later tells me that of all the times she has been arrested for CD she has rarely been treated worse.

One of the cops tells me, "You shouldn't be here" (I'm standing in the parking lot), but this is a free country, right? Anyway, after everybody is safely inside I go around front to the reception desk to find out what the nine are being charged for, but head cop tells me he still hasn't made up his mind, so I sit down and wait. I read all the pamphlets on good citizenship and really learn a lot.

Then who should come through the door but Ivanski! He talks to head cop and somehow calms him down, because now the story is that no charges will be laid. They are just going to store them until the Indian Affairs offices close.

The next day I read in the *Star* that the Newfoundland Appeal Court did indeed strike down Igloliorte's ruling, based on his having made a "procedural error . . . But it did not order a new trial before a different Provincial

Court judge as the crown had requested.

"The crown must now decide whether to apply for a new trial for Chief Daniel Ashini, Peter Penashue, Elizabeth Penashue and Penote Michel, all of the Goose Bay area . . . The Appeal Court decision could affect how the crown will deal with about 200 other Labrador Innu arrested during similar protests and how the military will handle further disruptions of its operations. In Metro, police dragged nine people from the St. Clair Ave. offices of Indian and Northern Affairs . . . (All nine) were charged with causing a breach of the peace and released." I had been told they wouldn't be charged at all, but I shouldn't believe everything I'm told.

I called Ivanski's office today to find out what he had done with the petition but he was out for the day. However, his secretary was kind enough to tell me it had been passed on to Native Affairs Ottawa, to the special projects executive, a guy named Duménil Chatain. I called him collect "from York University," and after a few token grunts he agreed to accept the call.

He acknowledged that the petition had breezed through his office, but since it wasn't a native affairs issue he had "sent it upstairs" to the good old boys at National Defence. He didn't know who specifically he had sent it to. I assume it either went into the paper shredder or was sold to the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS), which *The Globe and Mail* and Canadian Press Association have confirmed has been spying on the Innu and their supporters as part of a nation-wide probe into native groups.

Duménil reminded me that on June 21 Pierre Cadieux, the Canadian minister of Indian affairs himself, hauled his old bones down to Sheshashiu to negotiate the land claim personally, but decided the Innu weren't "serious" —



because they refused to talk about giving away any of their land until the flight test terror ended. This is unreasonable because "the federal government is a big outfit, you know" (Duménil's words) and can only be expected to deal with oppressed minorities in a racist and imperialist fashion.

Earlier this month I picked up a pamphlet on NATO put out by National Defence. It defined NATO as "a defensive partnership of 16 nations, including Canada, from both sides of the Atlantic. NATO countries have a common heritage, values and a dedication to democracy and human rights." It lists one of the three "primary functions of NATO" is to "cooperate within the alliance in nonmilitary matters such as assisting developing nations, scientific research and environmental protection." What we as students interested in real democracy and real human rights must realize is that a large part of this "common heritage" is our entrenched settler-mythology, and that institutionalized racism is one of Canada's most fundamental "values."

If we are seriously interested in protecting what's left of our environment we will not allow \$800-million to be spent on preparations for its destruction.

If we want to assist developing nations we can start by ending the Canadian government's occupation of nations such as Nitassinan. Remember, this is a national defence issue and a native affairs issue and a human rights issue, and it is the personal mandate of each and every one of us to take responsibility for it — even if you don't pay taxes.

For more information, or to get involved in YUD, call Mac Scott at 422-3649. And now I'm going to go out and get that donut, and if I see any more gun-toting imperialists on the way I think I'm going to puke.