

## Renewing Our Response Update – January 2012

Happy New Year! I hope that everyone had a lovely end to their 2011 and have been able to enjoy the new year – the time has gone so fast! It has been a while since we provided an update to everyone about the goings on of Renewing Our Response, I apologize for the tardiness. Looking back, the last update was last January! Yikes! Here are the highlights of what has been going on:

Last Spring was quite busy with the planning of two major events: the Educators forum, done in partnership with the Pacific AIDS Network, and the APHA Forum. The Educators Forum brought HIV educators from all over the province together in Vancouver to brainstorm ideas for education models, share best practices, and provide support to each other. The two days were a great success, and the group has decided to stay connected to each other. The APHA Forum was a gathering of 90 APHAs from different regions in the province in Vancouver. The event was held over two days in March 2011. APHAs had a chance to share stories, talk about what they feel the priorities of service providers should be, and learn about various topics concerning their health, rights, and self-care. Overall the forum was a huge success, and we look forward to planning the next one! Please check out the report online!

The beginning of the new fiscal year brought some uncertainty with staffing, and so it was a lengthy period of transition. This was ultimately resolved in July with the hiring of James Beck as a Junior Coordinator to help out the Provincial Coordinator and learn the ropes, so to speak. We did not have a meeting of the group between March and September due to lack of funding.

RoR met in September for one day. Some of the highlights of the meeting were discussion about the upcoming *Bloodlines* issues, of which RoR is the advisory, development of educational resources for people living on reserve as well as community health representatives (a small working group was struck to take the lead on this work), a discussion on how to connect with and support the work of the Health Directors working in communities throughout the province. The group also spent time reviewing some of the priorities that were listed by participants at the APHA Forum. Some of these include: housing, advocacy, tolerance and acceptance of HIV+ people, addiction, and various discussion around medications and access to medications. Finally, we wrapped up the talking about developing resources for community based on the feedback we received through the *Voices of the People* community needs assessment (available online at [renewingourresponse.ca](http://renewingourresponse.ca))

RoR met again on December 8 & 9. The group once again provide updates for STOP: things in Northern Health have been moving slowly, but progress will be made soon. VCH continues to run great programs through either their clinics, or community organizations like Vancouver Native Health. There was also a lengthy discussion regarding HIV funding and concerns about future sustainability for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations through the province. The future of HIV funding is uncertain, and it is important for all organizations to plan for changes in funding and alternatives to traditional funding opportunities. The group also had a lengthy discussion about what RoR should focus on in the coming years, especially in light of the upcoming transfer to a new First Nations Health Authority, and how the expertise around the table can best be utilized. One of the ideas that made sense was the need for a new Provincial Aboriginal HIV Strategy, since the last one was done in 1998. This is something that we will be looking into further in the coming months.

Please visit our website for updates on events, trainings, and research in HIV. Please feel to contact us if you have any questions or require any information.