

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

NATIONAL NATIVE HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY OBSERVED MARCH 20, 2008

Native Communities Nationwide Hold Events to Raise Awareness

March 20, 2008 marks the second annual observance of National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NNHAAD), targeting American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiians. This national mobilization effort is designed to encourage Native people across the United States and Territorial Areas to get educated, get tested, get involved in prevention and get treated for HIV/AIDS, because unfortunately, in Native communities, it continues to rise. While American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians represent approximately 1.2 percent of the U.S. population, they historically suffer higher rates of health disparities, including HIV/AIDS. **Alaska Natives and American Indians (AI/AN) had the 3rd highest rate (above Whites) per 100,000 of AIDS diagnoses in 2005, despite having the smallest population.** Special events such as free HIV/AIDS testing, talking circles, Pow Wows, Walks, town hall meetings and memorial services will be held throughout the country.

Native communities selected the first day of spring to commemorate National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day because it marks a time of renewal. Spring represents a time of equality and balance. It is the only day when day and night are at equal lengths. It is a time of profound change and new beginnings.

Because NNHAAD is a nationwide effort, the National Native Capacity Building Assistance Network (National Native American AIDS Prevention Center [NNAAPC], Center for Applied Studies in American Ethnicity [CASAE], and Inter Tribal Council of Arizona [ITCA]) have made a "Call to Action" for Native people across the US to ensure that Native communities realize that the epidemic is not slowing; but increasing in certain parts of the country. This rise may be linked to the rise in methamphetamine use, an issue of great concern to Native people. NNHAAD is grateful to have Native celebrities and community leaders lend their name, voice and time to serve as spokespeople for this important day.

For more information on products such as posters, buttons, and save the date cards, please visit the websites of the Native CBA Network: CASAE at www.happ.colostate.edu ; ITCA at www.itcaonline.com ; NNAAPC at www.nnaapc.org . **With funding and support from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.**