

# Native American AIDS rate continues to rise

AIDS cases among American Indians/Alaska Natives increased by 42 percent between April 1991 and 92, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This rate of increase is almost double that for the white population. Racial and ethnic minority communities throughout the US continue to be disproportionately affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, says a report in the national Indian newsletter, *Lmkages*.

AIDS is transmitted primarily through sexual contact with infected partners and through intra-

venous drug use.

According to the National AIDS Commission, the drug accounting for most HIV transmissions last year was not heroin, but alcohol; alcohol is felt to be a significant factor in seduction and unplanned sex.

Alcohol abuse is a recognized problem in the Indian community and among Indian youth. Surveys suggest that many high school students do not regard drinking as a dangerous activity. This attitude — combined with the attractive status attributed to alcohol use by

advertising on TV and at sports events — is a cause for great concern, according to many substance abuse and AIDS prevention workers.

Through June 30, 1993, 180 Alaskans have been confirmed to

have AIDS. Of these, 100 are known to have died. Of the 180 AIDS cases, 162 are in males and 18 in females. Fourteen percent, or 25, of the AIDS cases are Alaska Native.

Information on AIDS in the

Indian population is available from several sources. They include: the National Native American AIDS Prevention Center, 3515 Grand Avenue #100, Oakland, CA 94610. Telephone: (510) 444-2051.