

**Messengers Project**

**INDEPENDENT EVALUATION REPORT  
Imagine That! Enterprises**

**October, 2011**

***This review was conducted by an independent team. The views expressed in this report are those of the reviewers and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Canadian Government.***

## Project Summary

Project Name	Messengers	
Delivery Organization	Shining Mountains Living Community Services	
	<b>Stage 1:</b>	
Commencement date:	Sept, 1, 2010	
Completion date:	Sept 2011	
Total Canadian \$	\$218 511	
Implementing Partner(s)	Metis Nation of Alberta, Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, Alberta Community Council on HIV, All Nations Hope, Cumberland House Metis Settlement, Peavine Metis Settlement	
Country/Region	Canada	
Primary Sector	HIV/AIDS Education – Aboriginal populations	

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## **Executive Summary**

### ***Introduction***

1. The Messengers project was designed as a vanguard initiative which aimed to develop Culturally relevant and appropriate HIV/AIDS prevention tools for agencies and organizations that have Métis Clientele and/or work with Métis individuals, families, and Communities. The main objective of this project was to increase the knowledge and understanding of service providers of Métis-specific Culture within the context of HIV/AIDS prevention information delivery, and involve Métis people and Communities in the design and information contained within an HIV Manual and training DVD from their own unique perspectives. While implementation has occurred on a provincial and limited national level, outputs have provided Métis specific HIV/AIDS information to service providers in all but three provinces, however, this information has not yet been disseminated throughout the Territories. It is Shining Mountains intention that the key messages developed in the Messengers project will be replicated in other regions of the country.

### ***Review Findings***

2. **Relevance:** The Messengers project was consistent with Metis Nation of Alberta (MNA), Aboriginal, and Provincial and Federal HIV/AIDS policies at design and has remained relevant throughout the project. This relevancy was ensured by regular meetings with MNA, and through several consultations with Métis communities throughout the project. In fact, Métis people directed the design and structure of the project. Similarly, relevance has increased as the emphasis on Métis issues has grown at a national level. Of greatest significance, however, is the validation of the 'theory of Métis engagement, ownership, Cultural relevance, and control of Information' embedded in Messengers which has involved Métis empowerment to have control over how health information, in this case, specific to HIV/AIDS prevention, is designed for Métis populations, ensuring Cultural appropriate, relevant information is disseminated. Further, the implementation of this project has assisted in organizational staff who is not Métis in understanding Cultural differences, and aided in providing a more complete and holistic prevention method of HIV in both rural and urban settings.

3. **Effectiveness:** The Messengers project has met, and exceeded, its Short term objectives overall. Originally the project was designed to consult only with Métis women; however, the research phase of the project indicated a need for a more inclusive project, one that addresses Métis women, men, and youth. Lack of Métis specific HIV/AIDS resources as identified in the literature review supported this need, and at the request of Métis populations who directed the design of this project, it was modified to serve the broader Métis population. The Messengers project has also effectively embedded both official languages into all produced documents and digital products related to this project, and ensured that the final product is available by hardcopy and DVD PowerPoint for maximum accessibility.

4. **Research:** Supported by Red Deer College Rural Research Department, the Messengers project underwent an initial literature review in order to obtain an accurate assessment of Métis specific information already in place, and avoid duplication of services and information. This review revealed a number of surprising elements. HIV prevention information that is Culturally appropriate and relevant to First Nations populations and non-Aboriginal populations is quite prevalent in all areas of the country. Additionally, HIV information developed for First Nations populations, by and large, was developed under the principles of OCAP (ownership, control, access, and possession), and largely, by First Nations organizations. Such

has not been the case with respect to the same type of information for Métis populations. There is little or no information for Métis women or youth, and sparse information for Métis men, particularly heterosexual men. As many Métis people are French speaking, there was no Métis specific information in French available in the literature review. The review did, however, detail a more general consensus that workers or volunteers indigenous to a target community are more likely to invoke trust, and that the “broad fabric” approach of HIV intervention from a range of CBOs do, overall, produce changes in attitudes, beliefs and knowledge in the desired direction.

A survey was developed to obtain more information on the needs of service providers with respect to Culturally appropriate dissemination of HIV prevention information to clients who are Métis. However, there were no responses to this online survey. Technical difficulties prevented the collection of data in some instances, while in others, service providers stated that the survey was simply “too long” and took too much time to complete.

Web dissemination of the survey was problematic at best, for a number of reasons not related to the length or technical issues with surveymonkey. Potential respondents to the survey indicated a reluctance to fill out a web survey as there is some sense that individuals and organizations are inundated with web surveys on an almost constant basis, and find it impossible to fill out each survey that is placed on the web without hiring an individual on salary to accomplish this task. Consequently, surveys, including ours are often ignored. Some concern was also raised around the privacy of the internet, and of possible virus transmission through surveys.

5. **Consultations:** a “bare bones” PowerPoint was developed with only basic HIV information in black and white (no graphics) was presented to five initial focus groups in November, 2010 to maximize involvement of Métis people and Communities in content, design, and relevancy to Métis Culture. Consultation was conducted in small groups, especially in rural areas (Cumberland House, SK – 6, Peavine - 8, Red Deer - 6, Edmonton - 6, Regina – 6.

Through an enhancement grant, Grande Prairie was added to the consultation process, along with Alberta Community Council on HIV/AIDS, a larger group in Red Deer that included individuals from surrounding rural areas, and the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network.

General Consensus to the “bare bones” consultation was that 4 or 5 short points should be given for each slide, graphics were needed that were symbolic of Métis culture and history, and that there needed to be a mention of how HIV is not transmitted (i.e.: which activities are “safe.”), but that the overall concept of the project was acceptable, and needed.

Rural Communities that were consulted seemed to prefer more colloquial language for sexual organs and terms, and language that was much less “technical” while Urban Communities requested the opposite, as they felt the use of colloquialisms may reduce the legitimacy of the project.

The second rounds of consultations were completed after data from the first round was completed, analysed and incorporated into the PowerPoint and manual. Feedback from the second round included a necessity to maintain small groups for better focus, especially in rural areas, an acceptance of a “middle ground” between colloquialisms and technical terms with the addition of facilitators’ notes indicating that technical terms may be substituted for colloquialisms as required, a general comment that graphics selected were Métis specific, but that colour choices should also follow Métis Cultural colours of blue and red as much as possible.

The addition of instructional video on Female Condoms was appreciated, while the same of that of male condoms was met with mixed reviews, as the male depicted was a youth over the age of 18, but who was not “professional” in appearance. Some groups stated that this was appropriate, and spoke to youth in Métis Communities in a way in which they can relate, while others, particularly in Urban Centres, questioned whether this was the image of youth that should be presented. The majority consulted, however, felt that the individual depicted was appropriate and representative of many youth at risk in Métis Communities.

Barriers to the consultation process were largely weather related. Winter consultations in rural and remote communities make travel virtually impossible. The second round of consultations in Cumberland House was delayed due to weather issues.

6. **Pilot “test runs”:** 5. Urban and rural Pilot Regions (Red Deer, Edmonton, Grand Prairie, Cumberland House, Saskatchewan) have been provided with the Messengers completed toolkit to assist in training staff in Culturally appropriate and relevant service delivery to Métis clients and persons at risk for HIV/AIDS infection, involving external stakeholders, and to implement and monitor performance. The ICR team observed tangible improvements in schools as a result. Further, there is a demonstrated, on-going commitment at school level to monitor and adjust approved plans and to involve external stakeholders in these processes. Initial reviews of the DVD, handbook and pamphlet have been favourable, although a long term analysis of the impact of the end product on Communities has not yet been completed by any of the identified pilot areas

8. **Toolkit Development:** The PowerPoint DVD, handbook and pamphlet were developed within the timeframe according to the workplan. An initial consultation with a “bare bones” PowerPoint was presented to all groups to maximize Métis Community engagement and involvement in design and content, with the information gleaned from consultations incorporated into the final product, and presented to these groups for their input to determine if Shining Mountains had captured their ideas and designs appropriately for Métis people. French Translation proved to be somewhat of an issue, given the small population of French speaking people in Alberta. A French Translator was hired on contract, and completed the translations; however distance and the inability to send large files over the internet for translation slowed this process down, as larger files had to be mailed or hand delivered from Edmonton to Red Deer for Translation. In addition, construction of the North LRT Line in Edmonton made internet access somewhat intermittent during the summer months, which resulted in limited ability to transfer files reliably through the internet, causing somewhat of a delay in reformatting translated documents and expediting smaller documents for translation.

A printer was utilized consulted and the Métis Nation of Alberta to mass produce all elements of the toolkit. These were then packaged together, and disseminated as per the workplan.

9. **Toolkit Dissemination:** The development of the toolkit in has provided Front line workers and service providers with an innovative package which is capable of addressing the training and development needs of service providers nation-wide. Not surprisingly, the capacity of organizational staff in the pilot areas to maintain and develop training for front line workers varies across regions. There is a need for further Métis Cultural training development at the Regional level and in resource

mobilization customized to the various regions for maximum effectiveness in service delivery to Métis populations. Clearly the work has demonstrated that a demand driven, Métis initiated, decentralized approach to professional development is possible. In the absence of a strong commitment to monitoring and follow up, however, it is less clear that the institutional culture has changed as a result of this work. Shining Mountains is developing a Master Plan (with the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network) for the national dissemination of the toolkit, and is in the process of identifying Métis training providers, to service providers, subject to funding for this endeavour. There are serious questions, however, as to whether Shining Mountains has the financial and human resource capacity, at present, to handle such a huge and complex undertaking.

Dissemination of the English version of the toolkit far exceeded intended targets in both demand and delivery. Indeed, the City of Edmonton Social Workers (through the office of Great Neighbourhoods) and the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues have received toolkits and indicated a desire for more of the English Version for dissemination amongst staff and Cultural liaisons. Service providers at the bi-monthly Interagency Meeting in Edmonton (Government of Alberta, Edmonton Young Offender Centre, Boyle Street Services, Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral of St. John, Mustard Seed, Edmonton Immigrant Services Association, Edmonton Public Library, We Care Ministries, Tagbaema Society, Victoria School of the Arts, Central McDougall Community League, Edmonton John Howard Society, Edmonton Community Services) were provided with copies of the toolkit for their use, as well as all communities and stakeholders engaged in the consultation process in Grand Prairie, Cumberland House, Peavine, Edmonton, Calgary, Regina, and Red Deer.

Provincially, the toolkit was disseminated through ACCH to member organizations, and through Métis Nation of Alberta (provincial and Region 3), additionally dissemination occurred through links with the Government of Alberta.

Nationally, the toolkit was disseminated through the Canadian Aboriginal Aids Network, The Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange (CATIE) and to service providers in the following areas:

<b>Province</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Future Dissemination</b>
British Columbia	Vancouver, Musqueam, Kelowna, Kamloops	Victoria
Alberta	Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer	Lethbridge, Medicine Hat
Saskatchewan	Regina, North Battleford, Prince Albert	Saskatoon, Yorkton
Manitoba	Winnipeg	The Pas, Churchill
Ontario	Toronto, Ottawa,	Thunder Bay, Kingston, Kenora, London, Six Nations
Quebec	N/A	Montreal, Quebec City, Gaspé
New Brunswick	N/A	Moncton, Big Cove

Nova Scotia	Halifax	Millbrook, Ashton
Prince Edward Island	N/A	Charlottetown
Newfoundland/Labrador	Goose Bay	St. John's
Nunavut	N/A	
Yukon	N/A	Whitehorse
North West Territories	N/A	Yellowknife

There has been much less demand for The French Version of the toolkit, though plans are in place for dissemination to service providers in the Quebec region. Demand for the French Version included 2 copies requested in Alberta, and none in any other prairie provinces. It is clear from the number of demands, regardless of offers of the toolkit in either official language, that demand, at least in Western Canada, is low for French versions. While 280 English copies of the English version were disseminated, only 2 French copies were requested.

Web dissemination has proven to be an issue, as the files for the PowerPoint, database, and handbook are too large to upload to the Shining Mountains server. The pamphlets are, however, available online. The Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network is currently assisting Shining Mountains with a resolution to the size issues, and investigating whether their server will handle the larger files.

Organizations who have received the toolkit have indicated they are equally as satisfied with receiving the package as they would be had the entire toolkit been available digitally.

13. **Project Management:** A number of areas were identified where a lack of paid staff at Shining Mountains appeared to have inhibited the expansion of consultations to include opportunities at additional gatherings and national conferences to maximize feedback and increase the number of Métis people involved in the design and development of the toolkit. While additional consultations did take place at the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network Annual General Meeting, and Métis Nation of Alberta events, opportunity did not exist to consult with Métis populations at CATIE, CAS, or other service provider sponsored conferences. Since Métis people walk in “both worlds,” it would have been beneficial to have had the opportunity to consult with Métis people involved in non-Aboriginal national organizations more readily. General lack of capacity with respect to human resources also stretched staff and contracted individuals to the limit, resulting in a less effective consultation process than originally desired. Designs for future stand alone activities must reflect the weaknesses identified above, develop risk mitigation strategies.

14. **Efficiency:** Messengers was implemented using several contracted individuals. In this respect the modality resulted in providing technical and research assistance, graphic and layout design services, translation services, and facilitators in tandem to work on this project. In addition to meeting their contractual obligations, the Shining Mountains team also provided a range of additional Métis Cultural Knowledge assistance to service providers. Communication between all parties was successful on the whole, however improved communication through regular face to face meetings could improve efficiency in future projects.

Nevertheless, Messengers project has consequently resulted in outstanding value for money, and an HIV/AIDS educational product developed and designed entirely by Métis populations.

15. **Sustainability:** Messengers has implemented a best practice approach to achieving sustainability. The structures, systems, tools, strategies, guidelines and information management systems have all been developed *with* key stakeholders and are owned and used by them. The principles of OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access and Possession) have been applied in every stage of development of this project. In addition, Messengers has facilitated substantial change in the amount of Métis specific HIV/AIDS prevention information available locally, provincially, and nationally.

16. **Gender Equality:** There is a general lack of Métis specific HIV/AIDS information produced for and by Métis people, regardless of gender. However, this project focused on, but was not limited to the design and development of the toolkit by Métis women. Within this context Messengers has included a total of 58 Métis women in the consultation process, with the remainder of consultation participants primarily consisting of heterosexual men.

17. **Monitoring & Evaluation:** Shining Mountains observed that the introduction of qualitative and quantitative systems of data collection across all components has encouraged Métis people to engage in both Traditional and non-Traditional ways of providing feedback on the effectiveness of this project for the purposes of improved management, accountability and learning. Métis knowledge quizzes were utilized to gauge the understanding of service providers of Metis Culture and Practices prior to the design of the toolkit, and post consultation. Results showed a marked improvement in understanding of Métis Culture and issues after Cultural Training and through the design and development process. A survey was developed to measure specific elements of the projects for effectiveness. Results were outstandingly positive, however it was noted that smaller groups increase the comfort level for Métis populations to discuss sexuality and HIV/AIDS prevention as opposed to large groups. There was some disagreement amongst respondents through verbal and written feedback regarding the use of formal language and colloquialisms.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

19. Messengers is a highly relevant initiative which has not only been effective, but has gone well beyond expectations in terms of both outputs and outcomes. Given this, and the application of best practice implementation processes, Messengers represents outstanding 'value for money' for PHAC and the Canadian taxpayer. Nevertheless, the momentum for more Métis specific HIV/AIDS resources which currently exists and the potential for Métis people and Communities to make a truly significant contribution to the HIV/AIDS prevention education stands on a knife's edge. PHAC needs to provide increased support to Métis organizations and Aboriginal organizations in general to ensure that HIV/AIDS prevention programming, promulgated by the Messengers project continue to be supported for all Métis populations. PHAC needs to offer on-going funding to maximize the potential of Métis people to participate in the development of programming that addresses HIV/AIDS issues and assists in further education of Métis Culture and practices. to ensure relevancy in programming in general. This may help to ensure that the national roll-out of a range of systems and approaches is carried out in a manner consistent with, and that supports increased capacity of Métis people and

organizations to manage and support these processes and initiatives. The body of the report contains detailed recommendations as to how this may be achieved.

### Evaluation Criteria Ratings

Evaluation Criteria	Rating (1-6)
Relevance	6+
Effectiveness	5
Efficiency	5
Sustainability	5
Gender Equality	4
Monitoring & Evaluation	5

*Rating scale: 6 = very high quality; 1 = very low quality. Below 4 is less than satisfactory.*

## Introduction

### Activity Background

#### *Objectives, Design and Implementation History*

The Messengers project initiative was designed to assist Front Line workers and service providers (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) to improve understanding of Métis Culture and assist in providing a toolkit for Culturally Relevant and appropriate service delivery to Métis populations living with, and at risk for HIV/AIDS. Messengers was implemented from September 2010 to September 2011 and focused on three main components: Research, Consultation and development of a toolkit and dissemination of the completed toolkit, locally, provincially and nationally in both official languages.

There was an enhancement activity between the completion of consultations and the start of dissemination. New funding was provided by PHAC for increased consultation in Red Deer for 21 front line workers and organizations from the province. Dissemination was implemented for upon completion of the toolkit on a rolling plan format. Métis Nation of Alberta, Métis Nation of Canada, Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, Métis Nation of Manitoba, the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, Métis Community members, and the City of Edmonton Office of Great Neighborhoods, Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, and other stakeholders agreed to disseminate the completed product to their constituencies at a regional and national level.

The Messengers project was completed in September of 2011.

The specific purpose of Messengers was to develop, support and strengthen HIV/AIDS education and learning support systems for improved access to quality Métis specific HIV/AIDS prevention material. Messengers was envisioned to be one of the strategic avenues to support successful awareness of HIV/AIDS as it affects Métis people and Communities and provide Culturally relevant and appropriate prevention information to help stop the spread of HIV in Métis populations. Outputs have directly informed First Nation and Non-Aboriginal organizations and front line workers of the unique Cultural need for Métis specific information delivery. It is Shining Mountains intention that the key support systems developed through Messengers will be replicated in other regions of the country.

The research stage focused on the gaps in information delivery and of the essential Culturally appropriate support systems for Métis populations with regards to HIV prevention information by providing new opportunities and tools for front line workers, social service providers, and local stakeholders to understand, appreciate, and adopt Culturally appropriate models of service delivery for Métis people. Specifically, the initiative focused on:

- Research element (literature review and survey)
- Knowledge assessments of Métis Culture (quiz) prior and post consultation
- Consultations (initial, second stage and final) with Métis Communities (rural and urban)
- Design, development, and dissemination of Métis specific HIV information toolkit (Handbook, DVD PowerPoint, and pamphlet) for Front Line workers and Service providers by Métis people, primarily but not exclusively women.
- Resource Database development
- Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Evaluation
- Improving Access and Equity to Métis resources and HIV/AIDS information

The consultation, development, and dissemination stages of Messengers developed the enabling environment upon which current and future efforts can be supported, sustained and continually improved. Without the enabling environment created by the required support systems at the local, regional, provincial and national levels, the investment of current and future project resources will be less likely to achieve the desired long-term results of reducing the spread of HIV in Métis Communities and may be more likely to focus simply on the provision of short-term activity inputs.

### **Evaluation Objectives and Questions**

Research and evaluation has been conducted in partnership with Red Deer College Rural Research Department. Further, the evaluation will capture lessons learned and best practices to guide the design and management of future initiatives.

The initial discussions of the Messengers project identified a need for a literature review and a survey to determine existing Métis specific supports and HIV education/prevention materials, and to determine need for increased supports. The literature review revealed that very few supports and prevention material have been developed specific to Métis people with regards to HIV/AIDS; however a plethora of supports and material was identified for First Nations and Aboriginal people at risk for HIV/AIDS.

It was further discussed that Métis women, in particular, are Traditionally active in Métis Culture in the development and dissemination of information to the broader Métis Community, and that there is virtually no Métis specific information for women in existence.

It was also confirmed that, insofar as the Messengers team did not include a Gender Specialist there was no expectation for the project to carry out a full gender analysis in this project.

The following Criteria questions were used in this evaluation:

- 1) Relevance: Was the project relevant to existing plans and policies (Aboriginal Strategies and Polices, and Government of Canada plans and policies) regarding HIV/AIDS?
- 2) Effectiveness: First, was the initiative effective in its own terms; did it meet its objectives? Second, to what degree did the achievement of these objectives enhance the overall support and engagement of Métis people, particularly women?
- 3) Efficiency: Was the project a good value for PHAC dollars? For the Taxpayers' Dollar? Did the project complete according to workplan? What was/wasn't efficient?
- 4) Sustainability: To what extent to which the benefits of the activities of this project are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn? What are the risks to destabilize momentum for the project? What are the risk mitigation factors?
- 5) Gender Equality: Was the project focussed on a specific gender? If yes, what extent did the activities meet this focus? What was the overall intention of balance between men and women in the project? If the project did not meet the focus target for gender, what are the mitigation factors in the future?

- 6) Monitoring and Evaluation: What was the balance of quantitative to qualitative data collected? To what extent did the evaluation component of the project report relevant information regarding input level indicators and sustainability plan that will aid Messengers management in ensuring sufficiency of and effective provision of input resources, their alignment to national standards; and development of appropriate sustainability strategies? Were there any risks associated with collection of data? If so, how were these risks mitigated?

## **Evaluation Scope and Methods**

The Evaluation Scope and Methods for this project involved an evaluative questionnaire sent to all involved in the consultations, consultations with key stakeholders, analysis, verbal feedback throughout the project, and reporting.

## **Limitations**

- Assessment of the performance of Messengers, therefore, needs to take all of these dimensions into account. In these circumstances, it is difficult, if not impossible, to adequately reflect the contribution of a range of actors by awarding a single rating for performance against specific criteria.
- The attempts to gather data through written evaluation questionnaire produced minimal results, as participants preferred to give verbal feedback instead. The distribution of an evaluative questionnaire in written form with the completed packages placed practical limitations on the extent to which respondents were able to complete and send written data to Shining Mountains in rural and remote areas. Shining Mountains may wish to reflect on this risk when planning future reviews.
- In the research phase of the project, a literature review was conducted through Red Deer College Rural Research Department; however, this review revealed that there has been very little research conducted regarding HIV/AIDS as it affects Métis populations. In fact, it was even difficult to find specific epidemiology research with regards to the numbers of Métis people living with an HIV diagnosis. This limited the literature review to a more broad review of First Nations or pan-Aboriginal literature produced.
- Also in the research phase, the survey produced by Red Deer College was placed through survey monkey, and widely distributed, however there were few responses to this survey, due to technical difficulties with surveymonkey, and reluctance by organizations to complete a survey via the web. Potential participants were encouraged to print off the survey, and mail it to Shining Mountains through wide distribution by email to HIV/AIDS organizations. However, this also proved to be unfruitful, as no surveys were returned to Shining Mountains using this method. This severely limited the research phase of this project.
- Placement of the DVD/PowerPoint, handbook, and database on the web proved to be a challenge, as the files were too large for the server.

## Evaluation Findings

### 1. Relevance

The definition of relevance within Aboriginal organizations, HIV/AIDS organizations, and partner government plans, policies and priorities has evolved over time, especially with the addition of the principles of OCAP (ownership, control access and possession) by Aboriginal policy makers and organizations. The term also refers to the relevance of the aid modality, as well as the specific objectives and strategies of an initiative, in responding to identified challenges. Shining Mountains is increasingly concerned with the relevance of projects to Métis populations embedded within the design and implementation of initiatives.

- **Relevance to existing plans and policies**

The design of Messengers was supportive of the **Aboriginal Strategy on HIV/AIDS in Canada for First Nations, Inuit and Métis People II, SUPPORTING MÉTIS NEEDS: Creating Healthy Individuals and Communities in the Context of HIV/AIDS, Making it Our Way: A Community Mobilization Tool Kit. And Leading Together, Canada Takes Action on HIV/AIDS 2005-2010**. Specifically, Messengers was aligned with the “Statement on the Meaningful Engagement of Aboriginal People” which endeavours to capacitate Aboriginal, including Métis people, in the direction and developments of projects related to HIV/AIDS for Aboriginal populations and define core objectives to be reached as follows:

- Change is possible and must occur.
- Respectfully accepting that HIV/AIDS exists in the Aboriginal community will reduce stigma and discrimination.
- Act with the pride and dignity that Aboriginal heritage demands, respecting and honouring all Aboriginal beliefs, practices and customs.
- First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples have diverse, rich histories and strong Cultural foundations to ground our actions and guide our hearts.
- Demonstrate unity amongst all Aboriginal peoples regardless of where they reside and without distinctions between Status and Non-Status First Nations, Métis or Inuit peoples.
- Integrate the wholistic Aboriginal worldview engaging the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of a person.
- Honour, respect and connect with family, the community and the whole population consistent with our family-based cultures.
- Mentorship is an effective approach for demonstrating opportunities, supporting someone to invest in their life and contributing towards sustainability for the Aboriginal HIV/AIDS movement.
- Recognize we have inherent rights which guarantee good health and well-being as Aboriginal Peoples.

The Messengers Project also aligns with government planning and policy, as outlined in the **Leading Together, Canada Takes Action on HIV/AIDS 2005-2010 HIV/AIDS strategy document**. Most notable amongst these are:

<p><b>INCREASE AWARENESS OF THE IMPACT OF HIV/AIDS AND INCREASE THE COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINED FUNDING FOR HIV/AIDS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES</b></p>	<p><b>Awareness</b></p>	<p>1.2 Develop ongoing communication strategies and key messages for the public, political leaders and the media about the impact of HIV, the continuing epidemic in Canada And globally and the need for ongoing support and funding.</p> <p>1.6 Develop the capacity – nationally, provincially, territorially and locally – to respond immediately to any negative or inaccurate information about HIV/AIDS, people living with or vulnerable to HIV and/or factors That affect their health.</p>
<p><b>INCREASE AWARENESS OF THE IMPACT OF HIV/AIDS AND INCREASE THE COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINED FUNDING FOR HIV/AIDS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES</b></p>	<p><b>Research/monitoring</b></p>	<p>1.9 Continue to survey the general public and youth in Canada at regular intervals to assess their awareness, level of knowledge and support for HIV/AIDS-related services. Use the findings of this research to refine awareness programs.</p>
<p><b>ADDRESS THE SOCIAL FACTORS/INEQUITIES DRIVING THE EPIDEMIC</b></p>	<p><b>Human Rights</b></p>	<p>2.1 Pursue collaborative initiatives – locally, provincially, territorially and federally – to raise awareness of the underlying factors</p>

		<p>that contribute to the epidemic.</p> <p>2.19 Develop a better understanding of the relationships between knowledge, personal Contact and social distance to inform programs to reduce stigma and discrimination.</p>
<b>STEP UP PREVENTION PROGRAMS</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<p>3.1 Step up targeted, peer-led, age/gender/ culture-appropriate prevention initiatives For people living with HIV.</p> <p>3.7 Implement prevention initiatives that meet the needs of women and support other initiatives designed to enhance Women’s ability to reduce their risk (e.g., the development of microbicides, anti-violence programs, women’s shelters, drug treatment programs for women).</p>
<b>STEP UP PREVENTION PROGRAMS</b>	<b>Surveillance/research/monitoring</b>	<b>3.15</b> Conduct research on effective prevention strategies for communities vulnerable to HIV, and use the findings to inform prevention Programs...
<b>STRENGTHEN DIAGNOSIS, CARE, TREATMENT AND SUPPORT SERVICES</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>4.1</b> Identify the barriers to HIV testing in communities at risk and develop culture/ gender-sensitive

			and age-appropriate strategies to promote voluntary confidential/ anonymous HIV testing (including pre- and Post-test counseling) in each community.
<b>ENHANCE THE FRONT-LINE CAPACITY TO ACT EARLY AND STAY THE COURSE</b>	<b>THE ACT THE</b>	<b>Actions - General</b>	<p><b>6.2</b> Involve people with HIV/AIDS and communities at risk in identifying priorities, planning and delivering of all HIV programs And services (e.g., diagnosis, care, treatment, support, research) and in advising governments and other decision makers.</p> <p><b>6.3</b> Provide both volunteer and employment opportunities for people living with HIV and members of populations at risk.</p>
<b>ENHANCE THE FRONT-LINE CAPACITY TO ACT EARLY AND STAY THE COURSE</b>	<b>THE ACT THE</b>	<b>Actions - Peer-led initiatives</b>	<p>6.4 Provide support to self-governing organizations and advocacy groups for people living with HIV/AIDS across Canada.</p> <p>6.5 Provide support to self-governing organizations and advocacy groups for communities at risk.</p> <p>6.6 Provide capacity-building programs to help people living with HIV/AIDS and communities at risk develop the skills to Play a lead role in planning, delivering and evaluating HIV-</p>

			related research and services.
<b>ENHANCE THE FRONT-LINE CAPACITY TO ACT EARLY AND STAY THE COURSE</b>	<b>THE ACT THE</b>	<b>Actions- Community-based AIDS organizations</b>	<b>6.8</b> Develop effective working relationships among AIDS organizations and other agencies that share responsibility for serving people with HIV/AIDS and populations at risk. <b>6.9</b> Implement and evaluate innovative organizational models that have the potential to meet the complex health and social needs of communities at risk and people living with HIV/AIDS from diagnosis to end of life. <b>6.10</b> Implement strategies to attract, train and retain skilled staff and volunteers.
<b>ENHANCE THE FRONT-LINE CAPACITY TO ACT EARLY AND STAY THE COURSE</b>	<b>THE ACT THE</b>	<b>Actions - Other agencies</b>	6.16 Provide the education and support non-HIV-specific agencies/service providers need to fulfill their role.

- **Aid Modality**

The modality is, correctly termed a ‘facilitating contractor’ because of the focus on change management and institutional/organizational/Community strengthening.

Messengers entire modus operandi has involved strengthening the capacity of Métis people and Communities to lead and manage development in HIV Prevention/Education of Métis people and Communities. Messengers has worked from the *inside*, as all staff and consultants working on this project are Métis, with the exception of the research component of the project, implemented by Red Deer College Rural Research Department, whose work on this project was overseen by Shining Mountains, a Métis HIV/AIDS organization. At the same time, Messengers has gathered together and incorporated the best of the work produced by the Métis Communities and individuals who were consulted on design and development of materials.

The Messengers dissemination was based upon a rolling plan/exponential capacity building format. This approach facilitated flexible implementation and an ability to respond to changing circumstances in capacity and to reflect emerging organizations

which may make effective use of the project's outputs based on increased Métis clientele.

## 2. Effectiveness

An evaluation of the effectiveness of the Messengers Project must answer two, interrelated, questions. First, was the initiative effective in its own terms; did it meet its objectives? Second, to what degree did the achievement of these objectives enhance the overall support and engagement of Métis people, particularly women?

In respect of the first question, the evaluation found that Messengers has met, and exceeded, its component objectives against all indicators, with the exception of the survey component of the project. Messengers has also effectively embedded the "Métis engagement," "Capacity building" and "OCAP" themes across all components. In addition, verbal feedback from all consultations indicates the toolkit in its entirety, and the consultations have led to significant improvements in efficiency and effectiveness in Métis self-direction and control of HIV/AIDS prevention and support.

In respect of the second question, the evaluation found that Messengers has had a significant impact upon the service delivery process in prevention and education in Métis Communities. Further, the project has had a significant impact on the amount of Métis specific HIV prevention material available at a National level. The initiative has engaged a range of Métis people, service providers, and Communities, at a range of knowledge levels, as well as establishing the need for and willingness for more materials to assist in reducing the spread of HIV in Métis populations. The Messengers project has built ownership through active stakeholders' participation in design and development of HIV prevention information for Métis people and Communities. During the final phase, Furthermore, the achievements in the pilot Regions can be summed up in the following statement from Cumberland House, SK respondents to evaluative questions "the presentations were fun to be a part of. The people were joyful and full of suggestions as to how they are going to get across the issue of Aids/HIV Awareness within our community." Subsequently, the impact of the toolkit project, particularly in Cumberland House and Peavine, is such that additional copies of the toolkit including DVD have been distributed to families as an educational tool for youth.

The sub-sections which follow examine in detail the degree to which Messengers met its purpose and component objectives (effectiveness). In addition, the sub-sections highlight the resulting capacity building increases which have been supported by Messengers and discuss progress and prospects (development effectiveness).

Community Consulted	First Consultation participants	Second Consultation participants	Third Consultation participants
Peavine, AB	8	10	8
Cumberland House, SK	6	7	6

<b>Edmonton, AB</b>	6	7	N/A
<b>Regina, SK</b>	6	N/A	N/A
<b>Red Deer</b>	6	7	7
<b>Red Deer Large Meeting</b>		21	21
<b>Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network Annual General Meeting</b>	N/A	23	N/A
<b>Totals by column</b>	32	75	42
<b>Total</b>	149		

<b>Description of target population</b>	<b>Total number of individuals reached in each target population</b>
<b>Métis Women – Living with HIV/AIDS or at high risk</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Métis Women – Service providers</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Métis Women – Front Line Staff</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>

<b>Component 1:</b>	Research (partner: Red Deer College Rural Research Department)
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This component aimed to develop a baseline to determine what, if any, active Métis specific HIV information and support systems are available to Métis people and Communities.

Work involved a literature review, the development of a survey to determine prevalence of, Métis specific HIV prevention material and support systems within existing AIDS related NGO's, and the development of an evaluation questionnaire.

The main thrust of this component was to:

- Identify the current gaps and needs of Metis Women for Cultural, relevant, appropriate education/prevention materials with regards to HIV/AIDS.
- Obtain final evaluation data for the project through a written evaluation disseminated with the final product.

- **Literature review findings**

At the commencement of the literacy review, it was quickly realised that there are very few epidemiological statistics related to HIV/AIDS specific to Métis populations, and very little literature written regarding prevention material specific to Métis populations. As a consequence, Messengers was forced to rely either on First Nations information, or on pan-Aboriginal information to complete the literature review for the most part. Substantial capacity building programs and funding exist in non-Aboriginal organizations and some Aboriginal organizations, however there is very little available specific to Métis Communities *to strengthen the capacity of Métis Communities. The Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network was contacted for literature on the subject, and was able to provide only two documents which were Métis specific.* This situation highlights the need for increased Métis directed, designed, Culturally appropriate and relevant research at all levels, including the epidemiological research markers. With respect to specific information for Métis Woman, this was found to be non-existent, further exposing a large gap in knowledge of Métis needs and understandings with regards to HIV/AIDS.

**Survey Findings:** An extensive survey was developed and disseminated via surveymonkey online with the intent of determining need for Métis specific HIV information and services, and access to the survey was disseminated widely via email and phone. Unfortunately there were several issues reported with regards to the survey, which resulted in no online responses.

Issue #1: Surveymonkey proved to be an unreliable server for implementation of this survey, as technical difficulties on the part of the server prevented some respondents from accessing the survey or submitting data. In addition, the server contains a “time out” function which does not auto save responses, which required respondents to start the survey over if they were unable to complete it without interruption.

Issue #2: The survey contained more than 20 questions, and was quite long for respondents to take time from their employment and service provision to complete. As a result, combined with the above issue, individuals were often unable to complete and submit the survey.

A mitigation strategy for these issues was developed in the posting of the survey on the Shining Mountains Website, along with instructions for completion, and faxing or mailing the completed survey in, and a wide range of organizations were notified of this change. Unfortunately this did not result in an increase of respondents.

**Final Evaluation Survey:** A final evaluation survey consisting of nine evaluation questions was distributed with the toolkit package. Shining Mountains is still awaiting responses from organizations who have received the package, however, verbal follow up by telephone has been established, and respondents in Cumberland House preferred to write their evaluation in a letter format, rather than fill out a questionnaire. Verbal feedback from Edmonton organizations, and the City of Edmonton was extremely positive, with respondents stating that the information in the toolkit was “innovative” and “well designed.” All respondents in Edmonton felt that the information was useful and would assist their organizations in better, however, there was a need expressed for more Métis specific statistics with regards to HIV/AIDS epidemiology from all levels of related Government departments. Cumberland House respondents found the engagement of their community in the process of design and development of the toolkit “a pleasant process to do.” Further, the Northern Villages Mayor Andy McKay stated “that he enjoyed the presentation and he would be taking a few of the information booklets for distribution among his council.”

Given the issues stated above with web surveys, Shining Mountains did not attempt to put the final evaluation survey on SurveyMonkey, and chose, instead to distribute the evaluation forms with the toolkit packages, to better encourage recipients of the package to fill out the survey as a risk mitigation factor; however, this has delayed further written results.

Verbal feedback regarding the project from Rural Areas (Peavine and Grand Prairie) was overall positive. Respondents were particularly pleased with the incorporation of Métis specific symbols and Cultural Icons, and, in the case of Peavine recipients of the toolkit, stated that all elements of the Toolkit were expected to be “an effective education and prevention tool for front-line workers and the community at large” Not all Urban areas could be reached for feedback at this time.

**The Web ‘culture’ has changed:** With the rapid and exponential expansion of the World Wide Web, so too, has proliferation of surveys placed on the web. The Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network has also reported difficulty with web survey responses based on this notion. In addition, finding websites by browsing has become passé, and respondents often only go to websites to which they are directed through email or mobile devices by trusted email addresses, to avoid the acquisition of virii through web and email to their devices. Several potential respondents to the web survey reported a lack of time to fill out “yet another survey” on the web or on mobile devices, due to high workloads in their own organizations. Many saw the completion of another “survey” as additional paperwork that was not directly related to their own immediate work in organizations.

**Direct Mail and Mailouts as risk mitigation for surveys:** Given the issues noted above with respect to the web survey, alternate measures were taken to provide potential respondents with a mail-in or fax option with regards to the survey. This was also unsuccessful in obtaining data. The Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network has also reported similar issues with the same risk mitigation plans. It should be noted that Aboriginal Tradition is largely oral, and this may partially account for the lack of written feedback, and the preference and responses gathered by oral face to face evaluations processes for gathering evaluative data may be more in line with these Traditions, and garner qualitative data. That said; this method of evaluation may require a rebalancing of weighting of qualitative vs. quantitative data with regards to evaluation of programming and services for Aboriginal people.

Component 2: Consultation, Development, and dissemination of Toolkit

This component aimed to develop a Métis specific HIV/AIDS preventative educational toolkit for quality professional development of front line workers, organizations, agencies, school heads, teachers and stakeholders. This included the development of a PowerPoint DVD. A handbook, and a brochure, designed by Métis people, particularly women.

The main thrust of this component was to:

- Facilitate and enable a Métis Community driven response to the professional development, understanding, and capacity building requirements of front line workers, social agencies and organizations; and to
- Provide, through the process of development of a Métis specific toolkit for HIV/AIDS prevention and education, a vehicle for further capacity building and engagement of Métis people and Communities in the direction of health and prevention of this population, respecting the principles of OCAP for Métis Communities.

It was intended that Messengers would work with Métis people, specifically women, in urban and rural Communities to strengthen capacity to deliver Culturally relevant and appropriate training programs for social service providers and front line workers working in HIV/AIDS prevention programming. In addition, component activities were planned to complement the on-going implementation of ***Leading Together, Canada Takes Action on HIV/AIDS 2005-2010 HIV/AIDS strategy document, and the Aboriginal Strategy on HIV/AIDS in Canada II (ASHAC II)***. It was also intended that Messengers would contribute to the development of additional Métis Capacity building HIV/AIDS prevention and Cultural awareness information that reflect the approaches and principles of OCAP, and, with Métis Community driven input, modify materials as conditions and knowledge information needs change,

Originally, the project was to be focused and directed by Métis Women, however, based on the literature review, and the results of initial consultations with Métis Leaders and Communities, a consultation project that involved a larger set of individuals was agreed upon. At the commencement of Messengers, the literature review revealed that a limited range of quality professional development resources were available for Métis people and Communities as a whole. Further, there were few Métis specific statistics, and no statistics in epidemiology related specifically the prevalence of HIV infection in Métis women.

Consultations with Métis Communities, supported by Messengers, provided the opportunity to develop capacity within these Communities, and enabled communities to be part of the educational process for our own Communities. Feedback from these consultations was then given back to Shining Mountains and incorporated into the final toolkit. All respondents who were consulted reported that this concept was “welcomed.” Messengers also supported Métis Communities to create an integrated toolkit and HIV/AIDS prevention System. This system involved the:

- Training and Development Cultural Knowledge Quizzes (pre, and post consultation process (which establishes a match between trainee's needs and training programs to be conducted);
- HIV/AIDS in Métis Communities HIV/AIDS prevention DVD/handbook/pamphlet developed by Métis Communities and Shining Mountains, and designed to assist in the training, understanding, and Cultural Awareness of front line workers and social service organizations and agencies.

Each of the above sub-systems feed data into a comprehensive, Training and Development package with respect to HIV/AIDS in Métis Communities, designed and developed by Messengers, which provides access to Métis Specific HIV informational documents and resources such as STI Clinics, HIV organizations and agencies,, guides and handbooks, templates and tools.<sup>1</sup> The Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network has indicated the intention to integrate these resources into their collection of Métis resources accessible nation-wide. This initiative is currently under development within CAAN.

Finally, rural and urban Métis consultants were provided with a venue by partner organizations that served as a hub for small and informal consultive meetings and for housing hard copies of current support materials related to HIV/AIDS prevention information.

The development of the toolkit by Métis Communities, with support from Messengers and partnering organizations has provided Métis Communities, organizations with Métis clientele, and some Town and City Councils and workers with a package of innovations, including, tools, strategies, guidelines and an information management system (database) which is capable of addressing the training and development needs of service providers nation-wide. Messengers is developing a Master Plan (with CAAN) for increased national roll-out of the toolkit. However, a number of issues will need to be addressed before a roll-out can be effectively implemented. In addition, a number of issues arose with the consultative process in itself. These issues are discussed below.

- ***Toolkit dissemination***

Follow up qualitative data retrieved indicate that, as intended, the toolkits are being used as a training tool for Front line workers in the pilot rural and urban regions. The groups are familiar with the intention behind the crafting of these toolkits and are conducting down-stream training and advocacy to ensure that they are used correctly. However, qualitative data also found evidence of confusion over the relationship between “Aboriginal” and Métis, and between First Nations and Métis. It would appear that the roll-out of the Messengers toolkit, particularly to non-Aboriginal organizations and service providers needs to be concurrent with Métis Cultural awareness training. The roll-out was not linked, other than in the consultative and design stage to a Métis Cultural Awareness training system. There has not been any follow-up with Cultural Awareness Training specific to Métis distinct Cultures and Practices. This confusion needs to be addressed when the roll-out takes place beyond the Messengers pilot areas as it has the potential to undermine the usefulness and intent of the toolkits.

Further, the Toolkits were not distributed on the web in their entirety, due to file size restrictions on the server. As a result, web distribution has been delayed as the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network investigates space on its server to house the entire toolkit for digital download. In some areas, toolkits were not reproduced in adequate quantities for all who requested them, creating a “backlog” of requests for the English version in Alberta, but no funding for reproduction. It is expected that the digital version of the toolkit online will overcome the non-availability of the printed toolkits. Nevertheless, additional advocacy for the purpose of the toolkit dissemination is clearly needed.

- ***Toolkit use***

This toolkit, developed under Messengers, has been disseminated to more than 97% of pilot areas. However, it is only in pilot regions that adequate training in its use has been provided. In non-pilot regions the use of the Tool has not been clearly explained. Where the toolkit from Messengers has been “borrowed” and rolled-out without training there may be little or no understanding of the context within which the toolkit might be applied.

Further, a perceived short-coming of the toolkit is that it is produced in a generalized form that does not allow easy identification of clear, specific needs for areas needing supplementary training. The toolkit can be used to reveal specific training needs at social agencies and organizations, including First Nations organizations. However, some potential users have not been adequately trained in its use as they were outside of the remit of Messengers.

- ***Monitoring and Follow-Up***

There has been a problem with the collection and collation of data and information, and there is a need for greater attention to be given to the improved use of data and how it might inform organizations and individuals who are not Métis. In particular, there is a need for strong systems to monitor (follow-up) the level of application of the training received by Front Line Workers and Agencies, and how widely they are able to influence colleagues in new approaches and practices.

Staff in organizations and agencies has been trained in instructional leadership, thus hitting one of the major demands made upon them, that is, to provide professional management to their staff. However, it is vital that they are held accountable to fulfil their leadership and management roles effectively, when they are training staff around HIV and Métis Cultural needs with regards to service. Similarly, staff must be held accountable to meaningfully engage in Cultural development with regards to Métis people and Communities in order to improve learning outcomes. On-going support needs to be provided by Métis organizations to help Staff and front line workers to implement this training.

At this stage, the apparent lack of staffing at Shining Mountains to follow-up and provide support at full capacity limits the potential of Métis Cultural Awareness with regards to HIV/AIDS prevention and education. However, as Métis Communities are gaining in confidence and skill to develop and design their own programs, they are gaining some of this capacity.

### ***Unexpected delays preventing or delaying consultative processes***

Shining Mountains has been designated as the unit responsible for implementing the consultations at all levels, but there have been circumstances beyond the control of Shining Mountains and Métis Communities in the North that delayed the consultative and design process. The first of these was winter travel to, and within Northern Communities. Ice Roads are often not open at certain times of the year, while in other Northern Communities; roads have become impassable due to weather related issues (blowing snow, extreme cold, etc.). The second issue causing an unexpected delay in consultations and even communication with Métis Communities as far south as Edmonton was the Slave Lake Fire and evacuation. These situations were unavoidable, and no mitigation plan could have been put in place, as the events were unforeseen.

However, it would have been detrimental to sustainability of the achievements so far if the trained personnel within the Messengers pilot regions were expected to provide support for this project without input from Métis people and Communities who were unable to be contacted due to the Slave Lake Fire or inclement weather.

Messengers experience suggests that training might well be coordinated by a unit within each region if given adequate support. However, the opportunity for organizations nation-wide to utilize this structure will be dependent upon the approval of Métis Communities nationwide. If, and when, this happens, support will clearly be needed by organizations for training and coaching/mentoring.

The pilot regions have been exploring the role of local providers such as schools and service providers in the provision of in-service programs. However, there are questions about the variable quality of many Aboriginal programs in Non-Aboriginal organizations and the likely quality of Culturally based Métis programs if they are not run by Métis organizations which are owned, staffed, and recognized as such by

Métis Communities. This is an issue to be discussed between Métis organizations and policy makers at Federal levels

Component 3: Project Management
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The objective of Component 3 is to ensure that Messengers was managed in an effective, efficient and responsive manner.

Pilot regions consultants advise that Messengers has been effective both in deployment of an appropriate team of long and short term personnel and in the management of operational resources including human resources, and monitoring of the project have also been satisfactory. Management has been responsive to changing needs, particularly in respect of work carried out with the consultation groups and in supporting the design and development of the toolkit.

Although not part of the original design, the work of Messengers was on an 'at call' basis, as well as through structured consultations. Although provision was made for Red Deer College Rural Research Department to take on the development of a database, and the evaluative portion of this project, including the design and implementation of an evaluative questionnaire, the secondment of the Chair of the Rural Research Department and staffing changes within the department significantly undermined the effectiveness of this initiative. In all three instances, Shining Mountains personnel were called upon to develop these components, and implement them. Further, the lack of extra staff through this partnership required Shining Mountains to commit far greater staff time to these three activities than was planned.

Very effective professional relationships have been established between Shining Mountains and Métis organizations and Communities as a result of the Messengers project. The work of Shining Mountains Messengers Project has clearly hastened and facilitated a commitment to further learning about how HIV affects Métis people within Métis Communities, not only in the pilot Regions, but also at the National level as a result. It is important to recognise that 'scope creep' is an inevitable outcome when genuine trust and respect is developed between Métis organizations and, indeed in between organizations on a wider, more national level, regardless of race.

The Evaluation Strategy and designs for any future stand alone activities must reflect the weaknesses identified above, and develop clear risk mitigation strategies.

### 3. Efficiency:

- ***Value for money***

As indicated above, Messengers was implemented using a Project Coordinator embedded in Shining Mountains. The modality is, therefore, more correctly termed a 'facilitating contractor' because of the focus on change management and creating capacity.

**Messengers implementation processes highly efficient:** Messengers aid modality was most efficient initiative both in terms of management and utilisation of Canadian government resources and delivery of resources to intended beneficiaries. Implementation processes are well defined and systematic in Messengers Toolkits.

Métis Communities are able to identify inefficiencies and trigger responses by Shining Mountains to correct any such inefficiency. Messengers could not, however, fully address inefficiencies, for example, lack of large groups of participants in consultations, and however, it was also noted by participants and Métis Communities that smaller groups are preferable to larger ones for consultations which may involve sensitive subjects such as HIV.

**Processes transparent and accountable:** The transparency and accountability requirements for Messengers were very clear, and were followed. The Messengers initiative is notable for the quantity and quality of documentation produced which exceeded the reporting requirements of PHAC. This occurred because Messengers was not only supporting Métis Communities to develop our own approaches and toolkits, but also encouraging Métis Communities to record the process and progress of their efforts in a systematic way. The intense commitment across all Messengers components has ensured that Métis Communities are now in possession of a package of documentation which describes practical, Culturally appropriate and relevant, approaches to the implementation of the toolkit. (facilitator's notes). Indeed, the comprehensive documentation of all aspects of Messengers provides a model for similar initiatives to follow.

**Substantial additional services provided by Messengers:**

In addition to meeting their contractual obligations, Shining Mountains provided a range of additional assistance to Métis Communities. This trend has continued during the period under review. Major inputs and support has been provided to develop:

- Cultural Awareness training regarding Métis populations for First Nations and non-Aboriginal Organizations.
- Preparedness for the national roll-out of the Toolkit piloted by Messengers.

As a result of the above, investment in Messengers has resulted in outstanding value for money for PHAC.

- **Management of Risk**

The Contractor adequately maintained and updated the Risk Management Matrix throughout the implementation of Messengers. It is worth noting that the frequent changes of staff at Red Deer College Rural Research Department *could* have represented a high risk to the initiative. Messengers has experienced three changes of staff during the period of implementation. In addition, a major partner, Métis Region 3, lost their President, a major contact for this project through sudden death during the consultation phase of this project.

#### **4. Sustainability:**

- **Achievements**

Sustainability is described as “the extent to which the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn”.

As indicated earlier, the modus operandi of all aspects of the Messengers initiative has been to empower Métis Communities to manage change and sustain the systems and approaches they have developed. Messengers has implemented a best practice approach to achieving sustainability.

The materials, systems, tools, guidelines and information management systems left behind by Messengers have been adequately discussed under Section 2. Effectiveness, above, and will not be repeated here. However, the institutional culture changes, and the changes in people, deserve to be repeated insofar as these are the changes that will persist. These include:

- improved capacity and willingness amongst Métis Communities to manage their own health with respect to the prevention of HIV infection and to mobilise resources locally to improve their education of HIV prevention
- increased recognition in pilot regions and divisions of the importance of addressing Métis issues as a main element of prevention of HIV infection and knowledge of feasible approaches for doing so

The comments of consultants in the design living in Métis Communities are particularly telling. To quote participants in Peavine: “Messengers has made us to think. It has encouraged people to teach others about HIV. This is not only about us. It is about our Children and our future.” And from participants in Edmonton, the following comments: “The difference between Messengers and other projects is that this toolkit was made by Métis people. The manual, the DVD, the pamphlet; *they* are *ours*; we are using them; we cannot lose that.”

#### **Challenges**

Despite the achievements of Messengers in facilitating capacity building, this increase in capacity remains fragile. Since the pilot Regions have been involved; personnel have taken on new roles and responsibilities and efforts are being made to roll out these systems to other areas. Whilst capacity building and re-orientation has been continuous Messengers personnel nevertheless point out that “We have just planted the seed.”

Whilst there is significant momentum, a range of actions need to take place to sustain this momentum, as follows:

- the roll-out of the toolkit throughout the nation, including rural and northern communities. Until this occurs, all Métis people and communities will not have equal access to Métis specific HIV prevention information.
- There is a need for on-going Cultural awareness training at all levels by Métis people and organizations including training in HIV prevention from Métis perspectives in First Nations and non-Aboriginal organizations.

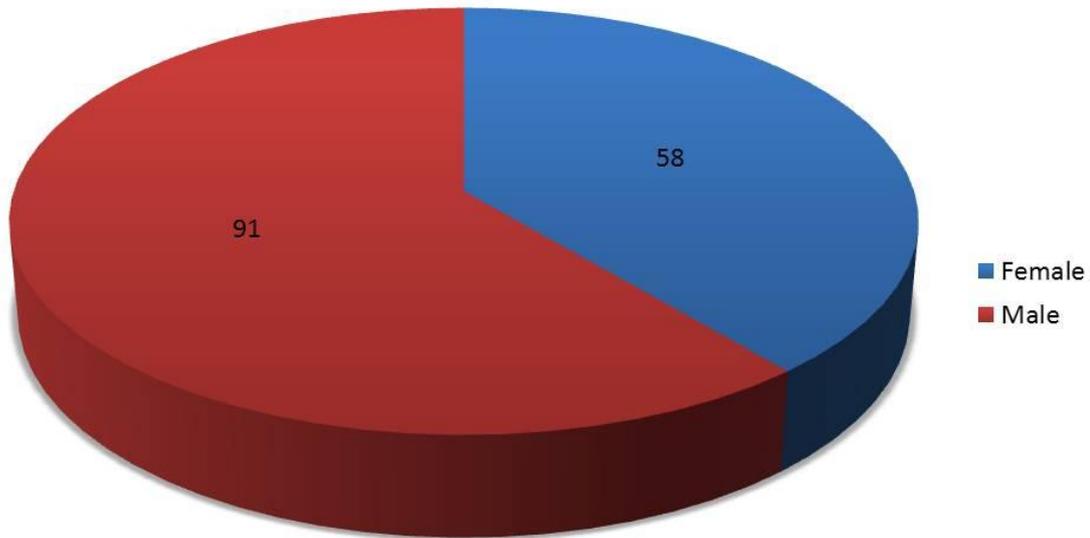
- Resource mobilisation remains an issue.
- There is still a lack of trained personnel in sufficient numbers to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the long term effectiveness of the toolkit, particularly in Northern areas.
- The toolkit has only recently been disseminated and piloted. The maintenance and further development of this system is, therefore, at risk.
- In pilot areas, processes which support the further development of the toolkit and enhancements that may stem from this development are time consuming and substantial commitment will be required from PHAC and partners for this work to continue.
- The digital upload of the toolkit requires further technical advice support the full national roll out.
- Finally, there is a danger that work which has occurred in the pilot regions will be pushed to one side as the economic crisis looms in Europe, which may place constraints on funding to future HIV/AIDS prevention initiatives for Métis specific projects and programs.

## **5. Gender Equality**

As mentioned above in this evaluation, the original aim of the Messengers project was to maintain a target group of Métis Women throughout the project. However, this turned out not to be the case, as during the research and first consultation phases of the project, the groups concluded that Métis specific toolkits were necessary on a broader level due to the lack of information available on HIV to Métis people that is Culturally appropriate and relevant. This deviation from the original project was not identified as a risk until the project was underway. A risk mitigation factor for this situation may have been to identify the target group, and hold several “women only” consultations to ensure adherence to the workplan. Nevertheless, no women reported feeling uncomfortable in mixed company, and all women involved participated equally with men on this project.

Within this context, and at the request of the first consultation groups of Métis populations, Messengers has attempted to support the wishes of the Communities, which aim to facilitate the move towards achieving gender equity outcomes like gender bias elimination; and empowerment of males and females to gain not only access but control over resources/service as learners and teachers in their Communities. A review of project data indicates the following: The total number of males participating in the design and development consultations of the Messengers project was 91 as compared to the total number of females at 58. This suggests that without women-only groups, the ratio of women to men in consultations is biased towards men.

## Total Participants by Gender



Despite the application of the gender lens in this evaluation, the evaluator was not able to identify any tangible negative or positive impact as a result of the application of this lens.

## 6. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Messengers Evaluation Framework has two objectives:

- (i) To report relevant information regarding input level indicators and sustainability plan that will aid Messengers management in ensuring sufficiency of and effective provision of input resources, their alignment to national standards; and development of appropriate sustainability strategies.
- (ii) To support decision-making of management in the adjustment of implementation approaches and strategies, including the application of sustainability measures.

The introduction of the Monitoring and Evaluation systems across all components of Messengers has encouraged personnel to develop a deep and systemic commitment and engagement in monitoring for the purposes of improved management, accountability and learning. The reviews carried out consistently at each phase with Métis communities, though mostly qualitative, have involved staff in the establishment of *standards of quality for the project*, as well as *targets*, against which progress is reviewed. Furthermore, staff now prepares correlations between

variables influencing results and to discuss these regularly, in and out of consultative groups. This has led to the development of the “habit of accountability and transparency”. These reviews have also encouraged Shining Mountains personnel to develop the habit of “catching an issue before it becomes a bigger problem”.

Shining Mountains personnel interviewed were able to clearly articulate the important role of evaluation in increasing knowledge about the gap between what was planned and what was achieved. Staff further explained that: “An evaluation is done to address the gap between what was planned and what was achieved and this leads to best practices in the future, and lessons learned so mistakes do not continually repeat.”

Despite the positive outcomes identified above, the quality of the data collected and the analytical capacity of Shining Mountains staff still requires substantial improvement. In fact, the evaluative piece was originally the responsibility of the Red Deer College Rural Research Department as mentioned in other sections of this evaluation, and Shining Mountains was not expected to take on this piece of the project until much later as mitigation to a risk that arose. Shining Mountains personnel interviewed indicated they were aware of this.

## **7. Analysis and Learning**

As indicated above Messengers has been an outstanding success in strengthening capacity in Métis Communities and as a vehicle to the development and dissemination of much needed, and requested Métis specific HIV/AIDS prevention information, as well as hastening and facilitating the process of addressing HIV within a Métis specific Cultural context.

The success of Messengers has resulted from the employment of:

- (a) *A ‘theory of knowledge brings change’ which embedded change management at a capacity building level and sustainability into all phases of the development work.* Development work was conducted in three (3) phases alongside the application of progressive strategies to manage sustainability issues and risks.
- (b) The way in which Métis pilot Communities and Shining Mountains have worked has brought about a significant change in understanding and knowledge of HIV as it affects Métis people to organizational and agency staff in the pilot Regions, and to participants in the consultation process. Now they say “we need help with this” rather than “will you do it for us.”
- (c) *An integrated Program which recognised that all elements of learning systems are interrelated.* Messengers focused on developing a range of interrelated Métis specific information on HIV prevention, professional habits required to implement training on HIV prevention that is Culturally relevant and appropriate for Métis people effectively. Messengers personnel worked as a team, offering a common message that all elements must work cooperatively with one another, and with external stakeholders, if they are to succeed.

Finally, it should be reiterated that each of the tools in the toolkit developed with the support of Messengers have incorporated in-built mechanisms for analysis and learning. The effect of these mechanisms was validated by the fact that a range of individuals, communities, and agencies were able to demonstrate to the way in which they had been modifying/improving systems over time to meet their needs. As

discussed above, the reviews have led to an understanding of the importance of gathering accurate data and analysing that data in order to improve decision making and planning.

## Evaluation Criteria Ratings

Evaluation Criteria Ratings	Rating (1-6)	Explanation
<b>Relevance:</b>	6+	Messengers was rated 6, Very high quality. Since then, the relevance of the initiative has actually increased. This is best demonstrated by the degree to which the toolkit and approaches developed by Messengers have been taken up at all levels.
<b>Effectiveness:</b>	5	<p><b>Aid Effectiveness:</b> Messengers has met, and exceeded, its <i>component objectives</i> against all indicators, with the exception of the research indicators. Messengers has also effectively embedded the 'Quality Assurance' and 'Access/Equity' themes across all components.</p> <p><b>Development Effectiveness:</b> Messengers has had a significant impact upon the development process in Métis specific HIV information.</p>
<b>Efficiency</b>	5	Messengers implementation processes are highly efficient. Given the level of outputs which have been provided 'above and beyond the call of duty' Messengers represents outstanding value for money.
<b>Sustainability</b>	5	Messengers has adopted a best practice approach to sustainability and has stimulated significant changes in the amount of Métis specific HIV/AIDS prevention information, and the engagement of Métis populations in directing prevention efforts with regards to HIV and Métis Communities.. Efforts need to be made by PHAC to capitalise upon the momentum which currently exists.
<b>Gender Equality</b>	4	Despite efforts across a range of components and levels, achievement in achieving gender equality is disappointing.
<b>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</b>	5	In all aspects of the work the Messengers team has promoted a deep and systemic commitment and engagement in monitoring for the purposes of improved management, accountability and learning.
<b>Analysis &amp; Learning</b>	5	The Messengers experience should be used as a foundation for articulating the over-arching 'theory of capacity' underpinning Aboriginal service provision Delivery in Canada.

**Rating scale:**

<b>Satisfactory</b>		<b>Less than satisfactory</b>	
<b>6</b>	Very high quality	<b>3</b>	Less than adequate quality
<b>5</b>	Good quality	<b>2</b>	Poor quality
<b>4</b>	Adequate quality	<b>1</b>	Very poor quality

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Messengers is a highly relevant initiative which has not only been effective, but has gone well beyond expectations in terms of both outputs and outcomes. Given this, and the application of best practice implementation processes, Messengers represents outstanding 'value for money' for PHAC and the Canadian taxpayer. Messengers has stimulated a degree of Capacity Building change and change in the professional habits of front line, organizational and agency staff which is truly remarkable. This has included the development of a strong commitment, in pilot Regions, to quality assurance, monitoring / evaluation and learning.

It does not detract from these achievements in any way to point out that the deep embedding of systems and professional habits cannot be expected to be achieved in one capacity building project. Moreover, pilot regions, standing alone, are unlikely to be able to sustain the momentum that has occurred without on-going assistance.

There is every indication that Métis Communities and Leadership are extremely impressed with the achievements of Messengers and that CAAN is committed to the national roll-out of a range of tools which have been developed under this program.

Nevertheless, the momentum which currently exists and the potential for Métis Communities to make a truly significant contribution to the development of Culturally appropriate and relevant Métis specific HIV/AIDS prevention materials and programming, stand on a knife's edge. PHAC needs to provide assistance to ensure that the systems and professional habits promulgated by Messengers continue to be supported in the pilot regions. The Canadian Government needs to offer on-going to ensure that the national roll-out of a range of Métis specific systems and approaches is carried out in a manner consistent with Métis direction and support the process.

If PHAC is able to offer this assistance in a timely and appropriate manner, this will not only protect the investment which has already been made, but will also lay the foundation for a long and productive partnership.

The evaluator commends the following recommendations to PHAC for consideration.

It is recommended:

No.	Recommendation
1	<b>THAT</b> the MESSENGERS experience be used as a foundation for articulating the over-arching ‘theory of Capacity Building in Métis Communities’ underpinning Federal, Provincial, and Municipal Efforts to build Capacity in Aboriginal Communities and populations, especially with respect to HIV prevention projects and programming.
2	<b>THAT</b> PHAC support, in all ways possible, the development of risk mitigation and sustainability strategies built-in to projects that build capacity.
3	<b>THAT</b> ongoing monitoring and evaluation qualitative data models be given more weight than quantitative empirical data when analysing the effectiveness of programming in Métis Communities, based on specific Métis Traditional forms of communication, and indeed, also in First Nations Communities. Qualitative feedback should be taken from many sources, including decision makers, Elders, and Métis Organizations to ensure that existing and planned initiatives in HIV/AIDS prevention are consistent with, and strengthen, the Traditional and contemporary systems, approaches and professional habits which have been successfully developed under MESSENGERS, and maximize participation in evaluation from Métis Populations.
4	<b>THAT</b> Shining Mountains and PHAC, along with Métis Communities and Métis Leadership, investigate the best approach to provide on-going support to sustain the momentum capacity building which has been generated by MESSENGERS. Assistance should be directed to the provision of support in areas where there is already demand and demonstrated momentum and/or where weaknesses have been observed in application of systems/approaches.
5.	<b>THAT</b> Shining Mountains obtain support to increase web server space to handle larger files and documents, in order to make this and other future project resources accessible online.
6.	<b>THAT</b> support be given for training regarding how to utilize the toolkit in Métis Communities to maximize its effectiveness with front line workers, support staff, organizations and agencies. Further that this training be by Métis Community members who are knowledgeable about HIV and its effects on Métis Communities and populations.
7.	Further, if mentorship is to be provided to other organizations that are not Métis in utilizing the toolkit: <b>THAT</b> Métis Community members and organizations who are recognized as such by their community, with in-depth experience working on MESSENGERS, provide this training in order to avoid distraction or ‘factionalisation’ of elements of the unified toolkit and Cultural elements introduced by MESSENGERS.
8.	<b>THAT</b> due understanding that women are often in the minority where mixed gender groups are involved, and that the will of the Métis Communities determine the gender balance of any consultative group. However, that in future programs and projects, achieving gender parity where possible should be a goal of balance within consultative groups. In projects that specifically focus on women, the balance should weigh more towards women than men as participants.

