



# POSITIVE WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP TRAINING

## fostering individual and community growth

Leadership opportunities for women living with HIV in British Columbia are lacking. Many women face multiple barriers to achieving full participation in BC's social and democratic life.

From June 2011 to May 2014, **40 HIV+ women** from across BC's regions completed leadership training offered by Pacific AIDS Network, in partnership with Positive Women's Network.

Pacific AIDS Network is a coalition that supports member organizations to respond to HIV, hepatitis C, and related diseases in BC.

Positive Women's Network provides education, support, and resources for women living with HIV in BC.

Training is based on Ontario AIDS Network's Positive Leadership Development Institute. All training-related expenses including transportation are covered. Sessions have been funded by Status of Women Canada.

The goal is to support women to realize their leadership potential and increase their capacity to participate meaningfully in community life.

Training includes sessions such as "Core Leadership Training: Who am I as a leader?" "Bored? Get on Board!" and "Communication Skills," as well as leadership graduate retreats and mentoring events.

Individual support, from recruitment through training to follow-up, is critical.

Through the phone, email, and face-to-face contact, Pacific AIDS Network and Positive Women's Network support women to access the training by offering the following:

- ◇ Assistance with the application
- ◇ Encouragement and emotional support to apply a second time
- ◇ Assistance with language issues
- ◇ Maintenance of communication when women do not have access to phone or email
- ◇ Assistance with finance management
- ◇ Reminders about logistics, money, child care
- ◇ Personal crisis management
- ◇ Support for addiction relapse and entry to detox programs
- ◇ Support around health issues

Barriers prevent some women from participating.

- ◇ housing instability ◇ poverty ◇ addiction and mental health issues ◇ child care issues ◇ fear of HIV disclosure ◇ HIV stigma ◇ gendered violence



**"After taking the trainings, I started making goals, dreaming big. I did not think that I could have a full-time job and raise my kids. I went back to school, and I dream bigger and am making goals."**

**"Since the trainings started, I have noticed more women involved in the HIV community. We are more visible. I feel more comfortable, less isolated, and more welcomed."**

Participants report significant changes as a result of the training.

Qualitative interviews are conducted with participants three, six, and eighteen months after training:

- ◇ 81% report new knowledge acquired
- ◇ 85% report deeper motivation to build their lives
- ◇ 90% report higher confidence levels
- ◇ 100% report strengthened leadership capacity and exploration of volunteer and job opportunities to enhance their skills

The project aim is to graduate **54 HIV+ women** from the leadership institute.

Results thus far indicate that combining personalized individual support with leadership training significantly improves women-specific capacity and representation in decision making regarding programs and services for women affected by HIV, hepatitis C, or both.



**Positive Women's Network**  
Challenging HIV. Changing women's lives.



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