Code of Ethics for the Pacific AIDS Network

At the centre of HIV/AIDS work it is important to remember the principles of PAN and the underlying understanding that this work requires respect, compassion and acceptance. Core Values outlined by the Red Cross in *Renewing our Voice: Code of Good Practice for NGOs Responding to HIV/AIDS* are listed as:

- Valuing human life
- Respecting the dignity of all people
- Respecting diversity and promoting the equality of all people without distinction of any kind, such as ethnicity (sic), sex, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, physical or mental disability, health (including HIV/AIDS), sexual orientation or civil, political, social or other status
- Preventing and eliminating human suffering
- Supporting community values that encourage respect for others and a willingness to work together to find solutions, in the spirit of compassion and mutual support, and
- Addressing social and economic inequities and fostering social justice.

These values are inherent in PAN's Code of Ethics as well as the Code of Conduct.

Definitions:

In this Code:

"Community" refers to the relationships of a group of people who share a commonality, whether that is HIV, geography, economics, or anything else.

"PAN" refers to the Pacific AIDS network

"**PAN member"** refers to both PLHA's designated as a representative and service providers who work for an agency that is also a member of PAN.

"PAN member agency" refers to agencies that are a part of the network of AIDS Service Organisations that form the body of PAN.

"PAN participant" refers to individuals who take part in PAN functions including, but not limited to, Forums, General Assemblies, Working Groups, and Skills Building Workshops

"PLHA" refers to people living with HIV/AIDS

"Service provider" refers to an individual working in a professional capacity in any of the variety of fields related to providing advocacy, care, and service to people living with HIV/AIDS.

Preamble:

The Pacific AIDS Network (PAN) was established in November 1995 with the purpose of achieving a unified provincial voice for HIV/AIDS advocacy. Within this Code, PAN will be referred to as both itself and the *Society*. As per the constitution under the *Society Act*, the purposes of the Society are:

1) To provide a network for communication, education, mutual support, collective advocacy and action for HIV related issues throughout British Columbia.
2) To include persons living with HIV (PLHA) in decision making and the governance of the Society.
3) To influence public and private policies and practices that affect the physical, mental, social and spiritual health and wellness of persons living with, affected by, and vulnerable to HIV.
4) To influence public perception and to advocate for and foster supportive political, commercial and social environments for persons living with, affected by, and vulnerable to HIV.
5) To encourage effective networking, communications and participation among the PAN participants of the Society.
6) To ensure that the Society maintains a positive and dynamic public image.
7) To promote and protect a community-based response to HIV in British Columbia.
8) To provide educational opportunities and capacity building for Society PAN participants.

PAN is comprised of a variety of service providers and PLHA's. Within this Code of Ethics and Conduct all participants of PAN are considered to be members of the helping profession, PLHA's, or both. Those who are not service providers are operating within the capacity of representation during PAN functions and therefore are subject to the same expectations as service providers. Therefore, for the purposes of the Code, PAN participants include: client service workers, supervisors/managers, administrative staff, practicum students, volunteers, PAN Board participants, PLHA, and all those in attendance at PAN assemblies.

All attendees of PAN assemblies, as listed above, will honour this Code of ethics irrespective of whether they are subject to a Code of Ethics of their professional organisation (e.g. the British Columbia Association of Social Workers) or any other Code or standards by which they are affiliated. It is the responsibility of attendees to identify potential conflicts between this Code and those of their respective professional organisations, and to discuss these with their supervisors. It is understood that by taking part in PAN assemblies, each individual assumes responsibility for the ethical

standards set out in this Code. Of further note, it is understood that all service providers who are members of PAN will also assume individual and agency responsibility for upholding the ethical standards set out in this Code while attending PAN functions.

PAN participants and PAN members must acknowledge that PAN is accountable not only to all participants and members, but also to host communities of PAN functions and communities those PAN members serve in a professional capacity.

The cornerstone of this Code, and of all human rights policies and guidelines, is the requirement that no one will be discriminated against or refused service by client service workers or the agency on any prohibited basis. These would include gender, race, ethnicity, spiritual practice or beliefs, language, national ancestry, sexual orientation, marital status, socio-economic status, age, abilities, or political affiliation.

The Purpose of a Code of Ethics:

Professional ethics govern the members of a profession, a society or a corporation. This implies that a certain way of thinking is common to a larger group, such as a professional society, association or corporation. A code of ethics should be a logical and a holistic system that guides choices, and should be based on the values, the purpose and a body of knowledge of the group or individual.

A Code of Ethics is an expression of basic values adopted by the Society. It is a statement of the profession's beliefs and values, of its responsibilities and obligations to those for whom services are provided. These beliefs, values, responsibilities and obligations assure the clients/users, other professional groups and the public at large, of the accountability and collaborative independence of the practices adhered to by its performers.

When using a Code of Ethics as a standard, members are able to engage in agreed upon ethical behaviour and utilize the Code and the following principles as decision making tools when encountering potential ethical dilemmas.

Principle One: Responsibility to PAN

In order to provide a healthy and co-operative network for communication, education, mutual support, collective advocacy and action for HIV related issues throughout British Columbia, PAN participants will assume the responsibility to adhere to an ethical standard developed and approved by the PAN membership while attending PAN functions.

1.1 Be responsible for conduct within professional and community activities that is congruent with the promotion of both HIV prevention and considerate lifestyles.

1.2 Recognise when their own personal problems and conflicts, including health concerns, have the potential to interfere with professional effectiveness. If such

personal problems occur, service providers will take reasonable care in determining whether professional activities should be limited, suspended or terminated.

1.3 Act as role models for the responsible use of alcohol and other legal drugs and for personal health care in general.

1.4 Be responsible for conduct in order to ensure that the Society maintains a positive and dynamic public image.

1.5 Promote professional, community and personal conduct that aims to reduce the stigma and discrimination that is associated with HIV/AIDS.

1.6 Not be involved in or ignore conflicts of interest. *PAN participants will distinguish between action undertaken as private citizens and actions undertaken in the course of their employment and/or participation in PAN functions.* "Conflict of Interest" includes, but not limited to:

   a) taking action in an official capacity which generated a benefit to the member as a private citizen;
   b) influence peddling;
   c) soliciting clients for one's employer for private practice purpose;
   d) Using information received from clients to acquire, directly or indirectly, an advantage or material benefit.

   For example, service providers will not accept substantial gifts from a client or former client nor will they give substantial gifts to clients.

1.7 Where serious ethical conflict has been brought to a PAN participant's attention, conflict resolution will be referred to PAN's Ethics Committee.

Principle Two: Responsibility to Community

Service Providers are a special class of individuals whose duties and responsibilities provide a valuable function within the community and, as such, they enjoy certain rights and privileges and therefore, have special responsibilities to the community. It is also the responsibility of service providers to ensure the involvement of both people living with HIV/AIDS and the affected communities. It is important to recognise that everyone's involvement is required in order to effect a community response to the impact of HIV/AIDS in all communities.

In this Code:

   - *Integrity* refers to the adherence to principles, either professionally or personally
   - *Honesty* refers to being genuine and truthful to all participants
   - *Respect* refers to showing consideration for the worth of yourself and others through words and actions.

2.1 Act as a role model in accordance with the ethical standards set out in this Code.

2.2 Act with integrity, honesty and respect in the community hosting the PAN Assemblies.

2.3 Act with integrity, honesty and respect in the community that the PAN member serves.

2.4 Accurately represent personal and professional qualifications, education, skills and professional affiliations to all PAN participants.

2.5 Be accountable to each other, to other agencies, to fellow PAN participants, to funders and most importantly, to people living with HIV/AIDS. Actions are sanctioned under the Code of Conduct and questions can be brought forward to the Ethics Committee.

2.6 Promote a learning and inspiring environment that facilitates self and agency improvement and reflection.

2.7 Promote the diversity of community needs and the value of community involvement.

2.8 Encourage community involvement in challenging the discrimination and stigma related to HIV/AIDS.

Principle Three: Integrity

Integrity is essential for responsible professional practice. It means acting honestly and in good faith in all dealings with fellow PAN participants, colleagues, and in the public. It means PAN participants will not exploit any relationships for personal gain or sexual gratification.

3.1 PAN members are not to use their position of authority to coerce or harass fellow PAN participants, colleagues, or the public.

3.2 PAN participants will promote an environment that does not condone or ignore physical, verbal, or psychological abuse, whether oral, written or behavioural, including sexual harassment.

3.3 PAN participants will follow confidentiality procedures set out in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act as well as the Personal Information Protection Act. These procedures include, but are not limited to, not naming or giving information about another PAN participant as well as clients, former clients, or clients' family members except when specifically advised to do so.

3.4 PAN members will uphold the ethics outlined by PAN in both their professional and personal lives, always striving for honesty and respect of all members of their community.

3.5 PAN members are not to take advantage of any individual's circumstance, whether that be age, health, economics, or understanding.