

INTERCONNECTED

CANADIAN POSITIVE PEOPLE NETWORK'S HIV AND AGING EDITION 2024

CPPN AT IAS 2024!!!

Canadian Positive People Network represented Canada in a meaningful way on a national stage.

Covering topics such as HIV and Aging in the Silver Zone and Community Connections in the Canadian Pavilion, the mission of CPPN gained momentum at the International AIDS Conference in Germany this year. What an amazing and empowering experience for our community organization. Thanks goes to REALIZE and CAHR for their partnership and to the CPPN members that participated.



Join CPPN for a Webinar on HIV and Aging
When: September 18, 2024 7pm-8:30pm EST

Come and have an open community discussion on HIV and Aging. We will explore the needs and gaps to care and support for people living with HIV and Aging. A guest speaker will join us to talk about HIV and Aging and healthy relationships.

To register: Email [Breklyn Bertozzi ed@cppn-rcps.ca](mailto:Breklyn.Bertozzi@cppn-rcps.ca)

*You will receive a \$40 honorarium for your attendance to this webinar

HIV AND AGING
RESEARCH

Canadian study explores the impact of aging on people with HIV

<https://www.catie.ca/catie-news/canadian-study-explores-the-impact-of-aging-on-people-with-hiv>

Ageism and Ableism in Canada's HIV, HCV and STBBI Response

<https://www.realizecanada.org/wp-content/uploads/Situational-Analyses-Report-Realize-Final.pdf>



HIV, Aging and the CTN
Did you know that over
50% of Canadians living
with HIV are now over
the age of 50?

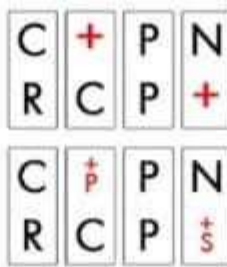
<https://www.hivnet.ubc.ca/knowledge-center/hiv-aging/>



CPPN

@IAS 2024!





COMMUNITY VOICES

HIV AND AGING

Like soldiers at war these two giants face each other,
Facing each other at war, on the battlefield,
The battlefield being the human body,
On the battlefield, they both fight to occupy,
Both accept no defeat and never find rest
Both whisper fear into our ears.
All we need is renewed **STRENGTH!**

HIV, a silent intruder, an unwanted and unwelcome guest comes to stay,
To stay with us and in us without any planned departure,
Staying to wreak havoc, staying to take out beauty,
Ever taking and never giving!
Though it may take, it will never define the beauty that's truly ours,
Though it may take, it will never define the love that's truly mine
All we need is renewed **HOPE!**

Aging's everyone's journey,
A path we have to walk in, day in, day out
Every step we make is a tale to be told
A wisdom earned by life's bitter, sweet dance
Each day, golden, crispy and fragile moments accumulate,
Accumulate like a warm ember's glow,
All we need is renewed **RESILIENCE**

Like a flower in night time, **RESILIENCE** blooms
Like a guiding light, **HOPE's** beacon shines before us
With all its might, **BEAUTY** shines around us,
Though **HIV** and **AGING** are here to tear us apart,
We will rise to face each day as it comes,
We will learn to live harmoniously with this unwelcome guest,
For we are more than the diagnosis! We are more than **CONQUERORS** in this battle!

By Honour

Your
VOICE
MATTERS



Let's face it, we are all going to age whether we want to or not. Wouldn't it be nice if we could just click a choose button...stay young...or grow old. Wake up, smell the coffee life just does not work this way.

At some point in life your hair will start turning gray, start thinning/falling out, be stubborn to be styled, go bald. Guys remember bald can be a sexy turn on 😊 You will get wobble knee aka arthritis, you will hurt, you will eventually have a cane, or walker or be in a wheelchair. Trust me when I say there will be days when you pray loudly that your knees will make it to the bathroom on time.

Unlike you, I am the same yet different. Why? You ask. I am a silver woman who lives my life every day, every hour, every minute, every second...I live with HIV. The scar of living: knowing this disease was not given to me by permission or choice.

Don't pity me. Why? I am resilient!

I am the silver of HIV. My journey is unique yet shared with others, my resilience whispers survival.

I am the phoenix: I will rise and rise again.

I live with non-disclosure: a balancing act between truth and fear.

I live with scars: they map my journey; they are badges of resilience.

I live the daily ritual: pill on time every day, regular lab work and checkups.

I echo endurance: roots entwined weathering a storm my resilience whispers: this dance I shall win.

I am an avalanche: buried deep beneath the snow my seed awaits the thaw's embrace. Resilience germinates.

I am healing -broken mends and wounds become art; resilience paints hope on the canvas of my heart.

I am resilient: my body is one of many canvases that have witnessed battles fought and victories won. The resilience mastered by warriors who pirouetted through stigma, faced adversity, danced to medical breakthroughs.

HIV will not knock me off my feet. I am one of many: proof that aging + HIV exists.

We are thriving...no longer dying. We are our own community full of love and support. We walk amongst all of you who do not share our world of *being different*

Written by: DB



A message from Deborah Norris (CPPN Co-chair)

Aging and HIV: CPPN at IAS 2024

I had the privilege of attending the International AIDS Society (IAS) conference this summer in Munich Germany. This is the first IAS conference that I have attended in an international location. The prior times the conferences were held in Vancouver (1996) and Montreal (2022) and one in 2020 that was online. I am privileged: I have applied for and been successful in getting scholarships to all of the IAS conferences I have attended. I received a partial scholarship for this year and had my local HIV organization step up to sponsor the costs that were not covered. I admit that I felt jet lag the first couple of days. I really felt my age. But being able to attend the Living 2024 pre-conference meant that I could catch up on the work being done by the U=U guru, Bruce Richman.

During the conference itself I was part of 3 different presentations where I talked about HIV and aging. The first one was in REALIZE's Silver Zone for the International Labour Organization as part of a panel of people aging with HIV from around the world. We talked about how aging impacts us as people living with HIV. My takeaway from this was that people who are aging with HIV around the world are remarkably similar in our concerns: how are we going to stay healthy and who is going to look after us? However, the social safety net that exists elsewhere in the world is very different if someone is living in a country that has minimal resources. Often caregiving falls to family and people are worried about the burden this will place on their families who are often also living in poverty. It made me reflect on the privilege I have living in Canada and having some choice around where I am looked after when the time comes, in spite of living in poverty. I may live in poverty but we have a social safety net so that I have an income, albeit a very low one, to be able to look after myself.

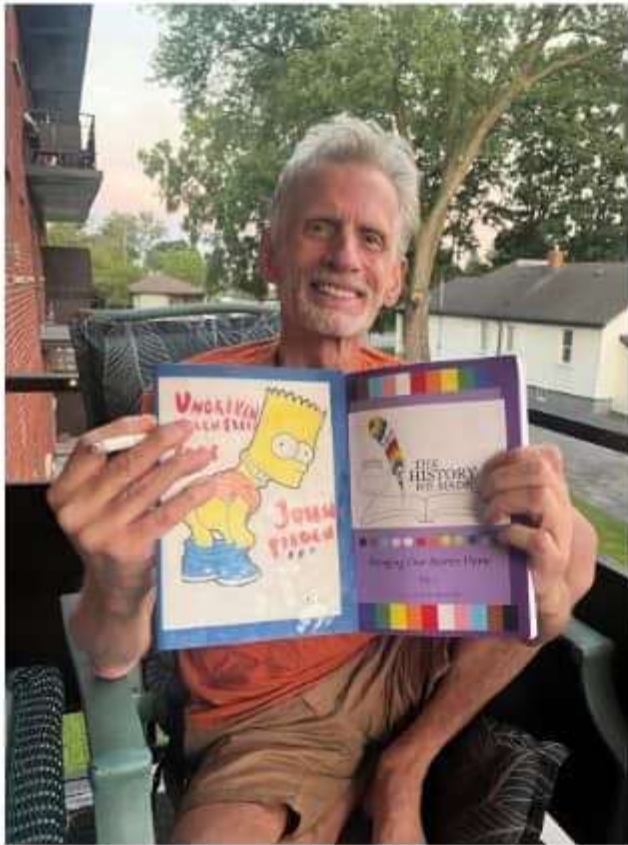
The next session I took part in was also in REALIZE's Silver Zone as part of a CPPN panel discussion.

Martin McIntosh was our moderator and Marlo Cottrell and Gord Asmus were also on the panel, both CPPN Board members. Bob Leahy sent in a video about what aging with HIV means to him. It was a wonderful experience. Martin was the consummate moderator, who made us really think about what we had to say. Marlo was there as someone who is starting to consider what aging will look like for herself in the future.

We talked a lot about what sex looks like for people aging with HIV. We were told in the 90s when we were younger that it wasn't ok for us to have sex. We were seen as, and felt like, vectors of transmission. Many of us avoided having sexual relationships because we were afraid of transmitting HIV to our partners. Then U=U came along and we realised that we are not vectors of transmission. In fact, if our viral load is undetectable then we cannot transmit HIV to our sexual partners! So now, as we age, we are once again being told that we shouldn't be having sex. We're old people. We don't have sex. Or at least that's what the attitude of the general population is toward us. Yet, we are living in the age of U=U. We are having sex. Some of us are having a lot of sex. And that is great! This was one of the messages of our session and I am so here for it!

The final session was a CPPN session at the Canada Pavilion that was a mixed group of people living with HIV. My part in this group was to talk to people about what it is like aging with HIV and encouraging people to "Ask me about Aging and HIV". Unfortunately there were not a lot of people at the pavilion at the time so I didn't get asked about aging by anyone. I wonder if there had been people there if they would have wanted to know about HIV and aging? I certainly hoped so.

The best part of the opportunities I had at the conference was to be able to talk openly and honestly about aging with HIV. It is about time that this issue was front and centre in the conversations we are having. I am looking forward to the CPPN webinar on this topic coming up to have the opportunity to talk more about what aging with HIV is like for this old lady. If you are aging with HIV, and even if you are curious about what this topic is about, please sign up for this. We need to have as many voices at the table as possible. See you at our webinar!



JOHNNY'S STORY

Article by: Breklyn Bertozzi

I visited my friend John Pigden aka Johnny, a 62 year young gay man from Ontario to talk to him about HIV and Aging and his contribution to a newly published book. Johnny, is a very good friend of mine that I met many years ago at Camp Wendake, a camp for PLWHIV in Ontario. I wanted to explore and get to know more about his life in the context of HIV and Aging. I also wanted to showcase his contribution to an anthology called "The History we made," and learn more about it. While Johnny and I discussed these topics, his friend and roommate Tyler Newman, artist, captured our conversation in a piece of art. The art is titled, "Johnny's Story," you will find it on the next page of this newsletter. Sitting down with Johnny to have this conversation, I learned so much that I didn't

know about this unique, vibrant, crazy and kind hearted man. When I asked him what it's like to age living with HIV, Johnny answered in the context of the timeline of his 33 years of living with HIV. During our discussion he said, "It's crazy that I'm here to see the difference between then and now, I watched all my friends die from AIDS." This is a dark reality for many people living with HIV and Aging. Johnny was diagnosed in a time where the medication available to him was D4T, a complex pill regimen that he says, was a whole days work to manage and had horrible side effects. He is happy with his one pill regimen today, but has other co-morbidity medication's to manage as well. Speaking of medication, Johnny says he was taken off of pain meds that he has used for a very long time to manage the pain he endures every day. There was no support to help him manage this change and he has turned to buying pain meds from others and self prescribing cannabis. He continues to suffer with unmanaged pain without access to adequate medication. It's clear to me that there is a lack of resources and supports facing people living with HIV as they age.

Johnny was super excited to tell me about the book he has contributed to. The History We Made is a community led project to record, preserve, and protect LGBTQ2+ histories within the Niagara region. It was an opportunity for Johnny to document his life through a self published memoir, that has been placed in a collection alongside other memoirs and is available to the public at public libraries. In his memoir, Johnny shares a few of his stories from his early days of growing up as a self-described gay kid. Part of the story Johnny tells is during the devastation of the AIDS pandemic. If you'd like to know more about this amazing anthology visit www.thehistorywemadeproject.ca.

I am so immensely grateful to Johnny for sharing his self with me for this article and for his supportive friendship throughout the years.



Johnny's Story
By: Tyler Newman



Pamela Connell an 82 year old artist says that her art helps her wellbeing as she ages with HIV. Taught art at an early age by her father, she has displayed her art in many galleries throughout Ontario. There aren't any accessible art programs in her community and she would like to see more programming utilizing art as therapy, which would have a tremendous affect on her mental health and the isolation she faces.

Pamela's Home is filled with her art, she is constantly surrounded by the beautiful colours that she incorporates on canvas with acrylics.

We wanted to honour her art and show them to all of you.

The next few pages are photos that we took of her art hanging all over the walls in her apartment.



Sunshine on the Lily Pond
(Pamela's favorite)

Pamela's Art



Pamela's Art



Many of Pamela's art are of nature, her favourite scene to paint because her father taught her art right by the ocean.



Pamela's Art



ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLWHIV

Attention women living with HIV!!!

The Canadian AIDS Society is a national organization guided by the voice of people living with HIV/AIDS. We have partnered with the Canadian HIV Cure Enterprise (CanCURE), a research collaboratory focused on studying HIV persistence during antiretroviral therapy and developing strategies towards a sustainable HIV remission. CanCURE's survey will be used to gage the level of importance and understanding of a cure of HIV.

Meaningful involvement of people with HIV and affected communities in HIV cure research is essential to ensuring that cure research efforts are conducted transparently, socially justly, and ethically. In HIV research, the creation of Community Advisory Boards (CABs) has become the main strategy for researchers to introduce community representation and input in the HIV research process.

CanCURE is a collaboratory group of scientists across Canada working towards understanding HIV, and where and how it can persist in the body. In preparation for our next grant proposal (due September 2024), our group wants to understand the perspectives and opinions of people with HIV, expanding this question beyond the CAB advocates who participated in all CanCURE activities up to date. With the help of the CAB, we have put together a survey to understand better what people living with HIV in Canada consider priorities for HIV cure research for the next 5 years in Canada and to assist CanCURE researchers in developing a research agenda and a series of community engagement activities in line with the interests of the community.

If you are a woman living with HIV and interested in participating in this survey, please contact the study coordinator at: CancurePriority@rimuhc.ca

DIGITAL DYNAMOS

Media Tools for Knowledge Mobilizers

This three-part workshop is designed for **peer research assistants, front-line community HIV workers, and leaders.** We'll cover communication basics, media tools, and simple design elements to help you share information.

Workshop Details:

Format: Remote
Dates: November 7, 8, and 22
Committment: 4 hours
Application Deadline: October 4
Cost: Fully funded by CAHR
Prerequisites: None
Graduation Incentive: Receive a monetary token of congratulations.

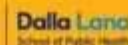
Course Facilitators:

Dr. Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco,
Dalla Lana School of Public Health,
University of Toronto

Diana Campbell,
Ontario HIV Treatment Network

Apply now
and secure
your spot!

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