



Toronto Living With AIDS Cable Access Video Series (1990–1991)

A Guide for Postsecondary Education

**Vtape, Archive/Counter-Archive
Educational Guide**



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Recommended Study Levels Undergraduate Students, Graduate Students

Subject Areas Sexuality Studies, Cinema and Media Studies, LGBTQ+ History, Health Studies

Keywords HIV/AIDS, Activism, Race, Sexuality, Gender, Media, Censorship, Public Access Television, Archive/Counter-Archive: Activating Canada's Audio-Visual Heritage

What is the *Toronto Living With AIDS* Series?



Toronto Living With AIDS (TLWA) was a 1990-91 public access cable TV program hosted by Trinity Square Video that provided information about HIV/AIDS directly to affected communities. Using the 30-minute television format of the time, these videos were created by artists, activists, and community organizations responding to the AIDS crisis. They drew on ideas and strategies from video and performance art, but also employed innovative methods of communication to meet their community-oriented goals. *Toronto Living With AIDS* was coordinated by Michael Balser and John Greyson in collaboration with numerous artists and community organizations.

Unlike individual artist responses to the epidemic of which there are many, the series was uniquely funded with public money from health agencies and distributed on public access cable television, making it a fascinating political, cultural, and social phenomenon. The collection of tapes was recovered and digitized by Archive/Counter-Archive in partnership with Vtape. These restored titles offer a direct view into AIDS activist discourse in the early 1990s and can be used to explore issues of sexuality, activism, health politics, LGBTQ+ history, and media in a variety of educational contexts.

About the Guide

This guide includes important contextual information for the series as a whole, including information on key participants, a critical reflection on the social, political, and media contexts, a glossary, and suggested further reading. It also suggests a list of five films from the series for classroom viewing, offering film synopses and discussion questions focused on this list. All Archive/Counter-Archive educational guides are available digitally for free at www.counterarchive.ca.



Key Participants



Michael Balser (1952–2002) was a video maker, curator, producer, and AIDS activist. His HIV diagnosis in 1985 suddenly provided him with a life crisis and a personal / political theme that would

shape the rest of his artistic career. Balser met his life partner, visual artist Andy Fabo, during production of his two-channel piece *Fear of Everything in the Universe* (1987). Their fruitful artistic collaboration led to several of Balser's best known works, including *Pogo Stick Porno Romp* (1987) and *Survival of the Delirious* (1988). Balser's prolific career continued up until his death in 2002 (from mediaqueer.ca).



John Greyson is a filmmaker, video artist, writer, activist, and educator, whose productions have won accolades at festivals throughout the world. Greyson's 60+ award-winning features, installations,

trans-media works, and shorts critically investigate such social justice issues as racism, homophobic violence, AIDS activism, anti-apartheid and anti-war struggles, queer and trans rights, conflicts in the middle east, police entrapment, and prison reform. Greyson is active in various anti-censorship, AIDS, peace, and queer activist media projects, including The Olive Project, Deep Dish TV, Blah Blah Blah, and AIDS Action Now!, and is a professor of Cinema and Media Studies at York University in Toronto.

About the TLWA Series

Toronto Living With AIDS is both an archive of resistance and resilience. It is brilliant example of activist media which captures the evolution of an activist movement as well as individuals acts of defiance in the face of a devastating epidemic. *TLWA* is radical not only because of the political nature of the series, but also because of the collaborative and participatory aspects of the production. Indeed, the resistant spirit of *TLWA* resides, as Ryan Conrad notes, in its powerful images of Toronto's "vibrant queer, feminist, and anti-racist activist scene and cultural milieu," and in how it conveys "the dynamic sense of the collective character of HIV/AIDS activism in Toronto" (Conrad, 2021). Additionally, *TLWA* is a poignant record of people who have died of AIDS, as many participants who appear in the videos did not live to see this work become "an archive." The archive of *TLWA* is thus an ambivalent one—the sense of urgency which emerges from the tapes must remind us that HIV/AIDS is not only part of our recent past but remains an ever-looming threat in our present.

Despite the appearance of protease inhibitors in 1996 and the marketing of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) which drastically changed the conditions under which the epidemic developed in Canada, we must think of the ways in which HIV/AIDS continues to marginalize and punish, as HIV/AIDS coexists with many intersecting issues which require our immediate attention: the criminalization of HIV/AIDS in Canada combined with the criminalization of sex work, the overrepresentation of racialized and Indigenous communities among new cases of HIV/AIDS in the country, the opioid epidemic, the global inaccessibility of treatments, etc. (Conrad, 2021). Therefore, because activist work around HIV/AIDS and the production of video and media work about the epidemic are still necessary, the tapes call upon their viewers to continue thinking about the ways in which HIV/AIDS affects us all. In revisiting the *TLWA* series, we should therefore frame these works not simply as testaments of a devastating time period, but as vital documents which may contain blueprints to respond to HIV/AIDS today.



(From "Cable Access Queer" by Ryan Conrad
<https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc60.2021/Conrad-TorontoAIDS/index.html>)

Social and Political Context:

AIDS activists changed the world. They organized, strategized, and put their bodies on the line to change their medical, social, and political circumstances. Importantly, AIDS activists in North America did all this with early consumer-grade video technologies in hand. AIDS activists also took advantage of changes in media infrastructure and policies which led to, for instance, the creation of cable access television. Beginning in the 1970s, cable companies in Canada and the U.S. were mandated to provide equipment and channels to local communities for the creation of noncommercial television programs. AIDS activists, therefore, engaged in change-making at the level of culture through moving images in new ways and on a scale not possible during previous social movements (Juhasz 1995).



Toronto Living With AIDS (TLWA) was a cable access television series distributed on Rogers and MacLean-Hunter cable networks in Toronto from 1990 to 1991. It was produced under the leadership of white gay Toronto video artists, Michael Balser (1952-2002) and John Greyson. In 1989, they produced two pilot

episodes, *The Great AZT Debate* and *The World is Sick (sic)*, with seed money from the City of Toronto Board of Health. These two videos began the TLWA cable broadcast. Eventually, a total of twelve thirty-minute videos were created under the TLWA banner by a diverse array of video artists working in collaboration with community organizations in Toronto in the latter half of 1990.

Videos in the series ranged in form and content, from the committed documentary to the experimental short, and from the playfully erotic to the didactically pedagogical. While differing in form and content, all the tapes in the series took seriously the medium of television as having the potential to teach and impart critical information about HIV/AIDS as much as it had the potential to entertain the imagined audiences viewing the series on their cable-connected televisions at home.



TLWA represents the largest and most organized community-based effort to create audiovisual work about the AIDS crisis in Canada. Unlike individual artist responses to the epidemic of which there are many, the series was uniquely funded with public money from health agencies and distributed on community cable television stations, making it a fascinating political, cultural, and social phenomenon.

TLWA tapes were written and produced in the context of socially conservative austerity governments in power across Canada (Mulroney), the U.K. (Thatcher), and the U.S. (Reagan and Bush), from the outset of the epidemic in the early 1980s to the early 1990s. During this period, AIDS-related deaths continued to climb at devastating rates while political leaders and health agencies dragged their feet acknowledging the existence of the epidemic, let alone implementing provincial and federal AIDS treatment and prevention strategies. On June 28, 1990, in the midst of TLWA's production cycle, the Canadian government would finally release its first national AIDS strategy after years of intense pressure from AIDS activists across the country. The promised effective treatments from researchers and pharmaceutical companies on the horizon did not materialize until six years after TLWA was broadcast, and well over a decade after the first recorded case of AIDS in Canada in 1982.

Despite the bleak picture painted here, where there is oppression, there is also resistance—including cultural resistance projects like TLWA. Greyson participated in the activist group AIDS ACTION NOW! (AAN!) formed in 1988, Toronto's answer to New York city's AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), founded just a year prior. In 1989, AIDS activists from all over the world, led by members of ACT UP/NYC, AAN!, and the Montreal-based Réaction-SIDA, took over the opening ceremony of the Montreal V International AIDS Conference and led demonstrations all week long. This watershed moment in AIDS activism helped solidify the now taken for granted axiom that people living with a disease are experts of their own experience and must be given the opportunity to take an active role in shaping both their own treatment and the broader fight against the disease. In fact, it is this moment of storming the stage at the opening of the Montreal AIDS conference that begins Greyson's *The World is Sick (sic)*, the first episode in the TLWA series.



It is in this urgent and everchanging socio-political context that all of the tapes contributed to the TLWA series must be analyzed.

Media Context:

Critic and curator Tom Folland notes that unlike in the U.S., private Canadian broadcast corporations that oversaw community television stations had final decision-making power over the content they broadcast—with station managers acting as both gatekeepers of style and censors of content they personally disliked or deemed in bad taste (Folland 1995). This significant difference in how community television is regulated in Canada would lead to an



adversarial and acrimonious relationship between TLWA's coordinator Michael Balser and Rogers Cable's station manager Ed Nasello.

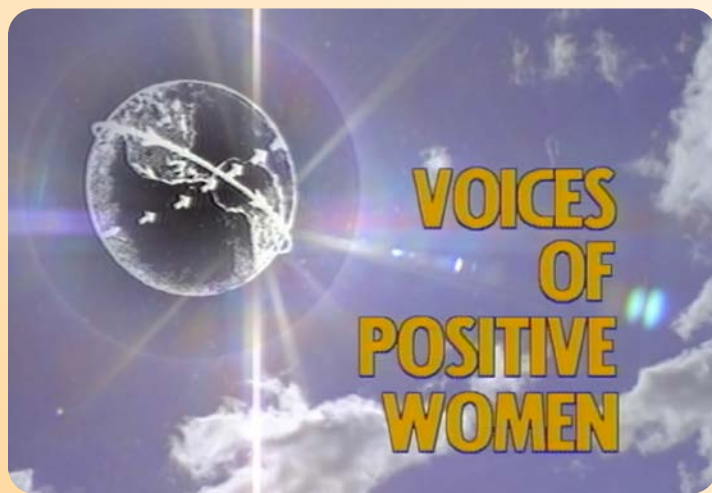


It was the communal shower scene in Richard Fung's *Fighting Chance* (1990) that first raised the possibility of censorship from Rogers Cable. Kaspar Saxena and Ian Rashid's erotic educational video on AIDS in the Toronto South Asian community entitled *Bolo! Bolo!* (1991) further angered Ed Nasello. In a letter sent to TLWA's coordinator, Nasello claimed that Balser had made an "error in judging the public's taste" by including a video with "men French kissing and the caressing of thighs" in the series, specifically referencing *Bolo! Bolo!* as the offending tape (Balser 1992, 6-8).



One cannot fully understand the impact of the decision by Rogers Cable station manager to censor the decidedly queer TLWA series without putting into relief the decades of censorship of queer content in Canada that precedes it. These conflicts over sexuality and its cultural representations, including the censorship of the TLWA series, would come to be called the culture wars in Canada with parallel developments in the U.S.

While the series formally ended as a result of this censorship, some of the original tapes continued to be shown at film festivals and organizations kept their tapes in circulation for educational and outreach purposes. The second season of TLWA was intended to focus exclusively on women and HIV, a likely result of the growing number of women testing positive in Canada. Unfortunately, after Rogers Cable refused to air the series any longer, federal funding was also denied. The proposed second season of TLWA was reduced to a single thirty-minute video instead, the Darien Taylor-directed and Michael Balser-produced 1992 portrait-style international documentary *Voices of Positive Women* (Balser 1990).





Key Films for Classroom Viewing

Five videos were chosen for classroom screening. These videos reflect a diversity of approaches taken in the series, both in terms of content and format. *The World is Sick (sic)*, the pilot tape by John Greyson and Michael Balser, is both an activist's love letter to the AIDS movement and a reminder of the battles that were fought to bring attention to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. *Bolo! Bolo!* (dir. Ian Rashid and Kaspar Saxena), *Fighting Chance* (dir. Richard Fung), and *Nibo' Apinewin* (dir. Ted Myerscough), too, are love letters to their communities. In particular, these three tapes testify to the need to approach HIV/AIDS through a variety of lenses in order to deliver culturally specific education about the epidemic—despite the looming threat of censorship. Finally, *Voices of Positive Women*, directed by Darien Taylor, marks the end of the series, offering a glimpse of what the second season could have been by delving into the struggles faced by women with HIV/AIDS.

All five TLWA videos featured in the guide are available via Archive/Counter-Archive at <https://vimeo.com/showcase/tlwa>

Total run time: 02:32:00



***The World is Sick (sic)* (1989)**

Genre: Activist / Documentary tape

Length: 00:43:08

Directed and produced by: Michael Balser and John Greyson

Topic: The pilot tape for the TLWA series entitled *The World is Sick (sic)* is a deliciously camp documentary focused on the historic activist interventions at the Montreal V International AIDS Conference hosted at the Palais des Congrès in 1989. The result is an irreverent humorous running commentary on the failures of the conservative Mulroney government to address the AIDS crisis directly with much needed funding, research, and education, while also poking fun at television news conventions and disappointing coverage of activist events.



"As a video activist, Greyson's task is to disrupt the mainstream media's misguided treatment of AIDS—as embodied by Andrea's superficial, fawning reporting—just as his compatriots in the convention center disrupt the oppressive, business-as-usual approach to the disease."

– Curator and writer Jon Davies¹

¹Quotes drawn from reflections commissioned by Vtape



Fighting Chance (1990)

Genre: Education and Outreach

Length: 00:29:13

Directed by: Richard Fung

Topic: In *Fighting Chance*, Richard Fung interviews a number of out HIV-positive gay Asian men in the U.S. and Canada about their challenges living with the virus. The interviews are punctuated by three interior-shot ritualized vignettes with poetic voiceover: a man ceremoniously folding and burning decorative papers, a communal shower scene where men wash each other, and a naked man slowly picking petals from a daisy.



"For politically minded queers of my generation, born during the height of the AIDS crisis, this era has taken on a mythical quality. A time before being gay would be normalized as a sexual preference then formalized as a market segment. But seen today, Fighting Chance doesn't feel like a revolutionary document. Thanks to the efforts of activists like the ones interviewed, the main insights of the tape—gay Asians exist, HIV doesn't equate certain death, falling ill isn't a sign of moral failing—now seem self-evident."

– Filmmaker and multimedia artist Kristin Li



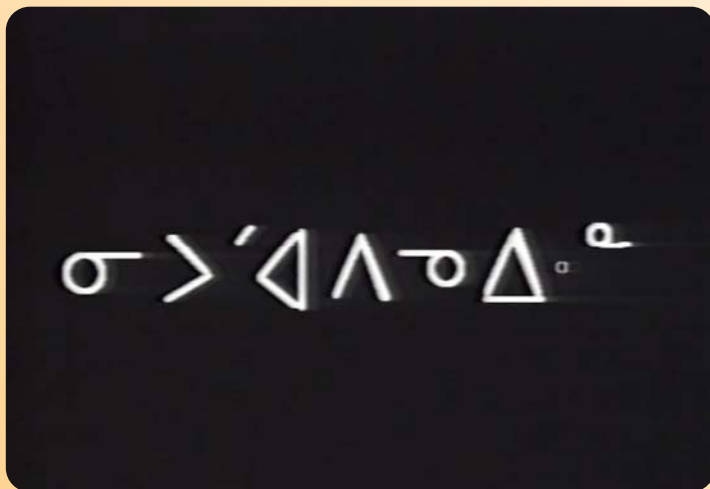
Nibo' Apinewin (1990)

Genre: Education and Outreach

Length: 00:22:16

Directed by: Ted Myerscough and produced by Anishnawbe Health Toronto

Topic: This tape situates HIV/AIDS within the cultural and historic context of settler-colonialism, genocide, and Indigenous people's glaring health deficits within the Canadian state. The tape features Ojibwe elder Verna Johnston who provides the basic facts of HIV/AIDS through direct address to the camera. The video is instructive in its demand for Indigenous people to be cared for within community, allowing space for traditional medicines and healing practices in addition to western medical treatments.



"The video's purpose was to raise awareness using Native healing approaches and teachings at the core of its message. For Native-found and led outreach organizations, 'doing something about it' means creating a circle of care. Healing is achievable when Native people are provided access to their culture as part of their care, when language barriers are removed, and when provided the opportunity to learn how a traumatic history has negatively shaped health outcomes for First Nations people."

– Artist and filmmaker Jamie Whitecrow



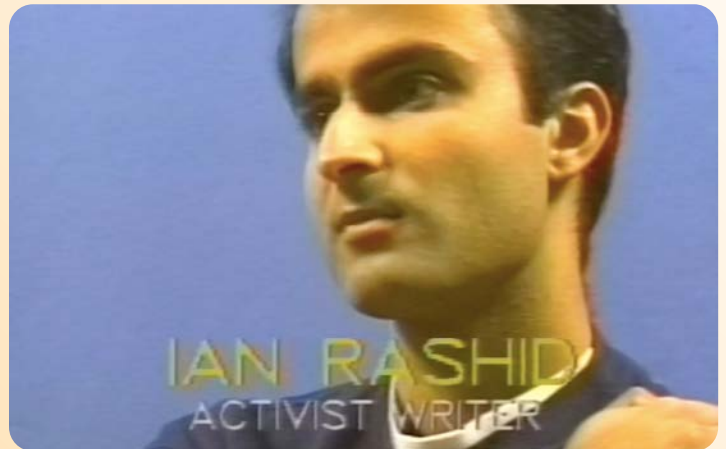
Bolo! Bolo! (1991)

Genre: Education and Outreach

Length: 00:30:11

Directed by: Kaspar Saxena and Ian Rashid

Topic: Focusing on the Toronto South Asian community, the video features discussion among members of the Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention (ASAAP), a project that came out of KHUSH: South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association. Discussions focus on the challenges of immigration, racism, xenophobia, and inherited cultural taboos about sex, sexuality, and the family.



"Bolo! Bolo!'s most important feat is its unique depiction of South Asian men as complex, human. Through Rashid's own appearances in the piece especially, we get a very strong sense of the vulnerability felt by these men at that time, especially when Rashid talks about his own experience of losing a lover to HIV. And throughout, we get to see what we still almost never see: South Asian men as sexual and, especially, sexually desiring of each other—a representation so rare in film and video that I could think of only one other example that is as validating of homoeroticism between South Asian men in the three decades that have since passed."

– Professor Andil Gosine



Voices of Positive Women (1992)

Genre: Education and Outreach

Length: 00:27:12

Directed and produced by: Darien Taylor

Topic: *Voices of Positive Women* examines the impact of HIV and AIDS on the lives of women. Working from material published in the book *Positive Women*, a collection of personal accounts of women from all over the world living with AIDS and HIV, video director Darien Taylor and producer Michael Balser have constructed a moving and powerful series of portraits of women speaking about their experiences for the first time.



*"The film *Voices of Positive Women* highlights a specific time in our collective history when women's voices were just starting to be integrated into the larger conversation about HIV. Despite this shift, the discourse about HIV and leadership was—and still remains—largely dominated by gay white men in the global north. In the film Wendy Alexis Modeste describes her experiences joining an all-gay men's group in New York because they had been ones organizing around HIV and had resources to share. This was not uncommon for women, many of whom were isolated within hetero communities that were largely untouched by the epidemic—AIDS was someone else's problem."*

– Artist and activist Jessica Whitbread

Discussion Questions

THEME:

ACTIVIST MEDIA/QUEER MEDIA PRODUCTION

1. In *The World is Sick (sic)*, director John Greyson makes use of the live news genre and a mock news anchor. How does this technique support the satirical tone of the video? How does it contribute to Greyson's overall critique of the government and media attention given to HIV and AIDS?
2. *Toronto Living With AIDS* aired on public access cable TV from 1990-91, providing information about HIV/AIDS directly to affected communities. How did their intended broadcast on public access TV shape the aesthetics of these videos? Why was the medium of television important as a site for disseminating video about HIV/AIDS?



THEME:

HIV/AIDS IN THE MEDIA: PORTRAYALS OF PWAS

3. Consider the depiction of People Living with AIDS (PLWAs) in both John Greyson's *The World is Sick (sic)* and Fung's *Fighting Chance*.
 - a) How do both of these videos challenge mainstream depictions of PLWAs at the time? Briefly watch these newscasts for reference:
<https://youtu.be/Pn2FcxDYLA>
<https://youtu.be/zP05wausim8>

- b) What effects might mainstream depictions of people with AIDS have had on the viewers? What about the TLWA videos?



THEME:

SEXUALITY AND RACE

4. Consider the topics of coming out, silence, HIV/AIDS, and family conflict in Richard Fung's *Fighting Chance* and Ian Rashid's *Bolo! Bolo!*.
 - a) Why do you think the theme of silence is overarching in both videos?
 - b) How does each film challenge dominant assumptions about sexual identities and family relationships in Asian-Canadian contexts? Or, alternatively, how might they reinforce problematic assumptions about Asian cultures?
5. Consider the depictions and discussions of sexuality in *Fighting Chance*, *Bolo! Bolo!*, and *Voices of Positive Women*.
 - a) Think about why sex and pleasure are important in all three videos. How do depictions of sex and pleasure intersect with the racial and/or gender identity of each participant?
 - b) How do each of these video works explore the intersections of race, sexuality, and gender?



c) *Fighting Chance* and *Bolo! Bolo!* were both controversial when they aired, because of the ways they depicted the sexuality of queer people of colour. How are both homophobia and racism central to histories of censorship in Canada?



THEME: WOMEN AND HIV

6. In 2011, artists Allyson Mitchell and Jessica Whithead worked on a piece titled **Fuck Positive Women**, an art project “meant to relocate positive sexual energy around the bodies of HIV-positive women.” Consider this project in relation to *Voices of Positive Women*, which aired in 1992. How does this video depict HIV-positive women as subjects of their sexuality rather than sex objects?



7. Consider *Voices of Positive Women* and the role of women in many videos in this series, including Greyson's *The World is Sick (sic)* and Fung's *Fighting Chance*. Discuss the contrast between mainstream discourses of women and AIDS, and the ways these videos depict women at the forefront of HIV/AIDS activism in North America.

THEME: INDIGENITY AND HIV/AIDS

8. In *Nipo'apinewin*, what are the connections made by the narrator between colonialism and HIV in Canada? How can these same connections be drawn today? Refer to this [chart](#).

9. Artist Jamie Whitecrow said of the video: “The highlight of this video is witnessing Elder Verna Johnston in action. Her participation reflects Anishinaabe cultural values, the role of the Elder in community is to protect and educate the next generation. There’s no need to hire a pop icon to talk HIV/AIDS, just bring in an Elder who really cares.” How does the intergenerational cast in this video make it unique from some of the others in the collection? What can we learn from this video about culturally responsive HIV education?





Glossary

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV is a virus that attacks the body's immune system and interferes with your ability to fight diseases and infections. HIV can lead to AIDS.

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. AIDS is a disease of the immune system due to being infected with HIV. It is the most advanced stage of HIV infection.

ACT UP: AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power. The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) is a direct-action activist group which was founded in New York City in 1987 to address the HIV/AIDS crisis. They describe themselves as a "diverse, nonpartisan group of individuals, united in anger, and committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis."

AIDS ACTION NOW!: AIDS ACTION NOW! is an activist group founded in Toronto in 1988 to fight for an end to the epidemic in response to government and medical inaction in Canada.

AZT: Zidovudine, also known as azidothymidine, is an antiretroviral medication. In 1987, it became the first medication approved to treat HIV infection and prevent its progression to AIDS.

PWA and PLWA: People/person with AIDS & People/person Living with AIDS. The term was adopted in the early 1980s in response to the overwhelming use of "AIDS patients" or "AIDS victims" to refer to people with HIV/AIDS, which, as activists argued, implied passivity and denied agency to people with AIDS.

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HIV/AIDS in Canada: A Timeline

(Edited mostly from: <https://www.catie.ca/a-history-of-hiv-aids>)

1981:

- The U.S Centers for Disease Control (CDC) receive reports of unusually high rates of the rare diseases Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (PCP) and Kaposi's sarcoma in young gay men.
- The disease is initially called Gay-Related Immune Deficiency (GRID), although cases are reported in injection drug users by the end of the year.

1982:

- The disease is renamed Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). It is learned that the infection can be sexually transmitted.
- Cases are also reported in haemophiliacs and blood transfusion recipients. Canada reports its first case of AIDS in March.

1983:

- Cases of AIDS are reported across Canada. It is discovered that women can become infected with AIDS through heterosexual sex.
- Doctors in France isolate a virus – lymphadenopathy-associated virus (LAV) – that they believe causes AIDS.
- The AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT) is formed by a small group of community activists.

1985:

- Doctors at the US National Cancer Institute identify a virus – human T-lymphotropic virus type III (HTLV-III) – that they believe causes AIDS. A court case begins when it becomes evident that this is the same virus identified by French scientists in 1983. The virus is eventually called Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

1986:

- The first commercial blood test for HIV is licensed by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

1987:

- The first anti-retroviral drug, azidothymidine (AZT), is approved in the US and Canada.
- The activist organization AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) is formed in New York City.

1988:

- The Director-General of World Health Organization (WHO) announces that December 1st will be the first World AIDS Day.
- The activist organization AIDS ACTION NOW! is founded in Toronto.

1989:

- The 5th International AIDS Conference is held in Montreal. It is the first time that medical patients take part in a medical conference. Activists demonstrate at the opening of the conference and denounce the lack of funding for treatment and prevention by the Canadian government.

1990:

- The Canadian Federal Health Minister announces funding for a national treatment strategy as part of the National AIDS Strategy.
- AIDS ACTION NOW! establishes the Treatment Information Exchange (TIE), which becomes the independent organization Community AIDS Treatment Information Exchange (CATIE).

1992

- The US FDA approves the first successful combination of drugs to treat AIDS.

1996:

- At the 11th International AIDS Conference in Vancouver, combination antiretroviral therapy is introduced to the world, forever changing HIV/AIDS treatment. Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Therapy (HAART) becomes the standard treatment for HIV infection.



HIV/AIDS in Canada: A Timeline (cont'd)

1998:

- Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), which involves taking medications as soon as possible after a potential exposure to HIV, is pioneered in San Francisco.

2005:

- Health Canada approves a rapid HIV antibody test that can provide an accurate HIV antibody test result in two minutes.

2012:

- The US FDA approves pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), medicine taken to prevent getting HIV, in individuals at high-risk for infection.
- The Supreme Court of Canada rules that an HIV-positive person has a legal duty to disclose his or her HIV status to a sexual partner before having any sex that poses a "realistic possibility" of HIV transmission

2014:

- A preliminary study reports the first direct evidence that HIV treatment can significantly reduce the risk of transmission
- The Quebec Ministry of Health adopts a consensus statement on viral load and HIV transmission risk, developed to inform the delivery of risk-reduction counselling, that is the first of its kind in Canada.

2016:

- Health Canada approves use of daily oral pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to reduce the risk of sexual transmission of HIV.
- Updated study results continue to show that antiretroviral treatment (ART) and an undetectable viral load significantly reduces the risk for HIV transmission through both anal and vaginal sex.

2017:

- Following a statement released by the Canadian Coalition to Reform HIV Criminalization, the Canadian Federal Department of Justice releases a report on the Criminal Justice System's Response to Non-Disclosure of HIV, which addresses concerns about the over-criminalization of HIV non-disclosure.
- The Ontario government announces that Crown attorneys will no longer prosecute cases where people with HIV who have had a suppressed viral load for six months do not disclose their status to their sexual partner(s).

2018:

- Health Canada approves the first dual drug treatment for HIV maintenance therapy.

2020:

- Canada becomes the first country to approve the first monthly injectable HIV drug
- The novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is declared a pandemic by the WHO, impacting global health priorities and the provision of HIV services.
- The INSTI HIV Self-Test is approved as the first HIV self-test in Canada.

2022:

- The approval and roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines in Canada gradually allow for the return of some HIV services affected by lockdown measures. COVID-19 vaccines are also found to be safe and effective for people with HIV.
- Following the success of its mRNA vaccine for COVID-19, Moderna begins phase I trials for an mRNA-based HIV vaccine.



Additional Toronto Living With AIDS Episodes



The Great AZT Debate (1989)

Genre: Talk Show

Directed and produced by: Michael Balser and John Greyson

Topic: The tape begins like a game show, complete with a host, giant spinning wheel, and a Vanna White-like character. The tape quickly transitions from game show formalities into a roundtable talk show format about AZT, an antiretroviral medication approved for people with HIV/AIDS in 1987, and its effects on people living with HIV/AIDS.



The Medicine Show (1990)

Genre: Video Art/PLWA tape

Directed by: Gregory Wight and James MacSwain

Topic: The video utilizes narrative storytelling, mock interviews, and staged theatrical vignettes to create a satirical portrait of a day in the life of an HIV-positive gay man named Gregory. The video follows him as he tries to navigate a world where his friends, community organizers, and doctors encourage him to take various medical treatments, from swallowing large doses of AZT to carrying around a satchel of healing crystals.



AIDS: A Family Affair (1990)

Genre: Talk show

Directed by: Marc Bérubé and Steve Walker

Topic: Group interviews with families, caregivers, and partners of people with AIDS, both alive and deceased, as well as a few PLWAs themselves. The tape makes emphatically clear that HIV/AIDS is an issue that not only affects people with the virus, but also their family of origin, partners, and friends.



Person Livid With AIDS: A Day in the Life of a Gay Man Living with AIDS (PLWA) (1990)

Genre: Taped one-man show/PLWA tape

Directed by: Michael Smith

Topic: Michael Smith's 1990 one-man show performed as part of the QueerCulture Festival organized by Buddies in Bad Times theatre. In the show, Smith instructs his audience in safer sex practices and offers a testimonial snapshot into what a day in the life of a person living with AIDS might look like; from demonstrating the quotidian yet irksome tasks of scheduling multiple doctor's appointments a day and swallowing pills every few hours, to the emotional devastation wrought by stigma, government neglect, and the spectre of an early death.



***anOther Love Story* (1990)**

Genre: Scripted Melodrama

Directed by: Gabriella Micallef; prod. by Debbie Douglas

Topic: The scripted dramatic narrative builds around a lesbian couple's relationship to illustrate the issues facing women, lesbians and racialized women in particular, in regards to HIV/AIDS. The storyline primarily revolves around a conflict between the two lovers in the video's opening sequence when one of them withdraws from the relationship after being encouraged to take an HIV test by her doctor. *anOther Love Story* was the first tape co-authored by a Black woman video maker to address HIV/AIDS among African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) women.



***The Cause of AIDS: Facts and Speculation* (1990)**

Genre: Investigative Journalism/Documentary Tape

Directed by: Colman Jones

Topic: An overview of the debates about what causes AIDS, interrogating whether the syndrome is really caused by a new infectious agent like HIV or a series of co-factors like untreated latent syphilis and/or other bacterial and viral infections.



***The Colour of Immunity* (1991)**

Genre: Education and Outreach

Directed by: Glace W. Lawrence and Black CAP (concept by David Findlay, Douglas Stewart, Courtney MacFarlane)

Topic: *The Colour of Immunity* is the first HIV/AIDS-themed video produced exclusively for and by ACB communities in Canada. *The Colour of Immunity* mixes scenes of Black CAP outreach workers strolling through the Caribana street festival and Regent Park's Blockorama in safer sext-shirts handing out condoms, street-based interviews with ACB Torontonians, and scripted vignettes where a young ACB heterosexual couple discuss safer sex and negotiate condom use indirect unpretentious language. Occasional voiceovers provide basic facts and figures regarding HIV/AIDS in Canada, routes of transmission, myths about who the epidemic affects, prevention strategies, and the importance of condom usage in particular.



Guide Credits

Guide Authors: Chloë Brushwood Rose and Axelle Demus

Design: Leslie Supnet, Brett Ramsay

Case Study Lead: Ryan Conrad

Production: Archive/Counter-Archive

Contributors

Archive/Counter-Archive (A/CA): Activating Canada's Moving Image Heritage is a seven-year research creation project led by Janine Marchessault and funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Partnership Grant. Comprising four universities, numerous community partners, memory institutions, and policy advocates, the project is dedicated to activating and remediating audiovisual heritage created by Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis, Inuit), Black communities and People of Colour, women, LGBTQ+ and immigrant communities, and to fostering a community and network dedicated to creating best practices and cultural policies(counterarchive.ca).

Vtape is a vibrant distribution organization that represents an international collection of contemporary and historical video art and media works by artists. They make this collection accessible to curators and programmers, educators, scholars, and public audiences world-wide(vtape.org).

Dr. Ryan Conrad is adjunct research faculty in Women's and Gender Studies at Carleton University and a former SSHRC postdoctoral fellow in the Cinema & Media Studies at York University. He is currently working on a manuscript entitled *Radical VIHsion: Canadian AIDS Film & Video*, the first book-length study of HIV/AIDS film and video within Canada. He previously held a postdoctoral fellowship with the AIDS Activist History Project(aidsactivisthistory.ca)and he earned a PhD from the Centre for the Interdisciplinary Studies in Society and Culture at Concordia University. He also holds an MFA from Maine College of Art and is an active film and video maker.

Chloë Brushwood Rose is a Professor of Education at York University in Toronto. Her research explores the intersection of media, art, and pedagogy.

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