

A History of HIV/AIDS – PEI & NS (2020)

(More Int'l detail : https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_HIV/AIDS)

1967

In December of 1967 federal Justice Minister Pierre Trudeau introduces amendments to the criminal code. The bill tackles a variety of issues including abortion, divorce and “decriminalizing” homosexuality. In 1967 “sodomy” is still a Criminal Code offence, carrying a 14-year prison term. "It's bringing the laws of the land up to contemporary society I think." says Trudeau. “Take this thing on homosexuality. I think ... there's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation."

1969

In the early hours of June 28 1969, police raid the *Stonewall Inn* in New York City: targeting it because it is a “gay” bar. Such raids are not new, but this time the local community responds with three nights of rioting, and within days “Gay Power” graffiti appears in the neighbourhood. While not the first protest of its kind, ‘Stonewall’ galvanizes and inspires an already frustrated community. Within months “gay liberation” organizations begin forming throughout North America."

On August 26, 1969 Trudeau's amendments finally become law. With this major legal shift, and the Stonewall Riots a few months before, the first Canadian gay liberation organizations start forming, and the anniversary of this Aug. date will be used for many of Canada’s first Pride festivals.

1972

Halifax's *Gay Alliance for Equality* (GAE) begins meeting in March 1972. GAE sets up the Gayline information phone-line and starts publishing a newsletter.

1973

In March 1973 GAE also presents its first human rights lobbying brief to the provincial legislature – making it the first “gay” group in Canada to present to a legislative body.

In December 1973 the American Psychiatric Association (also the authoritative body for Canada) removes homosexuality from its official list of mental disorders.

1976-77

At the 1976 license-renewal hearings for publicly funded CBC Radio, GAE asks the CRTC to withhold license renewal until the CBC adopts a non-discriminatory policy after refusing to run GAE’s public service announcements. CBC promises to study the matter, and in January of 1977 announces it will refuse all ads from gay organizations nationally. On February 17, twenty-one people picketed in front of the CBC radio building on Sackville Street in Halifax making it the first “gay” demonstration in Atlantic Canada.

With the announcement of a national policy the case became a national issue. GAE works closely with the National Gay Rights Coalition in coordinating a response. Two days after the Halifax protest, pickets against the CBC also happen in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver marking the first nationally coordinated gay demonstration in Canadian history.

1979

Pink Triangle Day (Canadian LGBTQ holiday) is established by a resolution from GAE's delegation to the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Rights Coalition national meetings in Ottawa, in July 1979.

"We recognize the importance of making known our history, so much of which has been lost or stolen, and particularly of commemorating the victories of lesbians and gay men. Given the historic importance of the acquittal of the officers of Pink Triangle Press as the first major legal victory for the Canadian gay movement, and given the fortuitous date of that victory, we propose a yearly celebration to mark the day. We realize that this date, February 14, has traditionally been celebrated as St. Valentine's Day and dedicated to the expression of heterosexual affection. We take this opportunity to challenge what Christopher Isherwood has called 'the heterosexual dictatorship' by affirming, for ourselves and the world, the existence, the strength and the beauty of gay love. A central symbol of St. Valentine's Day has been the figure of Cupid, derived from the ancient Greek Eros. We intend to make this day a celebration of the liberation of Eros, both as a reality in our personal lives since coming out, and as a common political goal to be achieved. We therefore proclaim February 14 as an annual Canadian gay holiday to be known as Pink Triangle Day."

1981

The US 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)* because it is thought it only affects gay men, but 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 realized that the infection can be sexually transmitted, although cases are reported in haemophiliacs and blood transfusion recipients.

Canada reports its first case of AIDS in March.

1983

It is discovered that women can become infected with AIDS through heterosexual sex.

American & French scientists separately discover the virus associated with AIDS and it is later dubbed Human Immunodeficiency Virus or HIV.

Canada forms a national task force on AIDS.

1984

March 30, [Gaëtan Dugas](#) dies. He was a French Canadian flight attendant who was (falsely?) linked by the CDC directly or indirectly to 40 of the first 248 reported cases of AIDS in the U.S.

Nova Scotia has its first AIDS death in September.

Shortly thereafter the Gay Health Association (GHA) is formed by Darrell Martin, Arthur Carter, John Hurlbert, Scott MacNeil and Dr. Bob Frederickson

1985

October 2, [Rock Hudson](#) dies of AIDS. On July 25, 1985, he was the first American celebrity to publicly admit having AIDS; he had been diagnosed with it on June 5, 1984.

GHA are forced to change the name after a local TV supper-hour program refused to broadcast their name (because of the word "gay") during an information segment dealing with AIDS. They then become the Metro Area Committee on AIDS (MacAIDS).

1986

MacAIDS launches its Get It Undercover campaign.

Cape Sable Island grade 6 school teacher Eric Smith is diagnosed HIV+ (without his consent) and his status is illegally shared by staff of his healthcare provider with local residents.

1987

In April Diana, Princess of Wales, is photographed touching a person living with AIDS, creating a media frenzy.

In August 43 year old teacher-librarian Allen Hickox becomes PEI's first AIDS death.

1988

In May 400 people attend a candle light vigil at St. Georges Anglican Church in Halifax, and 47 lost loved ones are named.

Nova Scotia Persons With AIDS Coalition (NSPWAC) is formed with its focus on support and advocacy.

The Gay Alliance for Equality, along with other community groups, organizes Halifax's first Pride Week. The schedule includes workshops, films, women's dance, art show, variety show, safer sex 'fuck-aware party' (say it like "Tupperware"), and Halifax's first official "Pride March" on July 1. The march theme is "*Out of the Closet and Into the Human Rights Act*", and 75 people march.

A group of community activists in Prince Edward Island begin to lobby for adding sexual orientation to the provincial Human Rights Act.

In the fall Halifax's AIDS hospice "Morton House" (after Frank Morton) opens with four beds – and a waiting list.

The WHO announces that December 1st will be the first World AIDS day.

1989

Ottawa announces compensation for people who contracted HIV from tainted blood products.

In June the US AIDS Memorial Quilt comes to Canada, and Halifax is the first stop with a showing of the quilt at Saint Mary's University. The newly formed Names Project Foundation of Canada, which organizes the Canadian tour, invites people to create Canadian panels and begins what will become the Canadian AIDS quilt.

1990

In Winnipeg, the 3rd Annual Native American Gay and Lesbian Gathering met with the task of finding a term that could unite the LGBTQ Native community. Numerous terms in tribal languages identified third genders in their cultures that encompassed both masculine and feminine, however a consensus was reached to adopt the term '[two-spirit](#)' to refer to Indigenous gender variant people.

Nova Scotia Advisory Commission on AIDS is formed

A needle exchange begins at NSPWAC

Valley AIDS Concern Group is formed

Pictou County Women's Centre sponsors a Women and AIDS Project

Stepping Stone launches HIV/AIDS outreach program

Lobbying group Lesbian and Gay Rights Nova Scotia (LGRNS) are a hit with the media and public when they stage *Human Rights Jeopardy* in the Grand Parade on May 31. The three 'contestants' for this piece of street theatre are Cory Closet, Laura Lesbian, and Gary Gay.

On August 31, 1990 the NS Human Rights Commission announces that they will start to hear cases re sexual orientation by reinterpreting the definition of sex.

A local chapter of ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power) forms in Halifax in November and holds its first action on December 1st, 1990, World AIDS Day. The group protests government inaction on AIDS issues by marching with a donkey through the streets of Halifax.

1991

The Red Ribbon becomes the international symbol of AIDS awareness, after Jeremy Irons debuts it as host of the 1991 Tony Awards.

MacAIDS takes on a provincial focus and becomes AIDS Nova Scotia.

World Health Organization (WHO) reports that 10,000,000 people are HIV-positive

At a news conference in May, 1991, citing stress and medical advice, Eric Smith abandons his battle with the Provincial Department of Education to return to the classroom. Two days later provincial Attorney General introduces a hastily written patchwork quilt of human rights amendments that would add sexual orientation to the NS Human Rights Act.

After a successful 3-year campaign by LGRNS (and other supporting groups), the NS Government amends provincial Human Rights act to add Sexual Orientation.

Black Outreach Project begins consultation process, is formed and funded.

Pictou county AIDS Coalition is formed.

After Tuma Yong and Elizabeth Paul attend an AIDS conference in BC, they return home to NS to form the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq AIDS Task Force to begin doing outreach and HIV 101 education. Over the next couple years First Nations communities in the other Atlantic Provinces and Quebec join and the name will change to the Atlantic First Nations AIDS Task Force in 1993.

AIDS Coalition of Cape Breton is formed

AIDS PEI forms and hires a nurse (who works out of a basement in downtown Charlottetown) to provide information and support. AIDS PEI's first major fundraiser creates kites in memorial to those who have died of AIDS, and the kite symbol becomes central to its logo.

High-profile basketball star Magic Johnson announces that he has contracted HIV through heterosexual sex. As a straight black sports star, his announcement has a huge impact on black communities, and perhaps heterosexual communities. Sales of condoms temporarily skyrocket.

On November 30 NS residents Randy Connors and his wife Janet go public with their story of how Randy, a hemophiliac, became infected through receiving tainted blood.

1992

NS announces approval for compensation funding making it the first province in Canada to compensate recipients of tainted blood.

1993

Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq AIDS Task Force becomes Atlantic First Nations AIDS Task Force.

1994

On July 16 the PEI Lesbian & Gay Pride March takes place: the theme: "Human Rights Now".

AIDS Nova Scotia (ANS) and NSPWAC move into the same office in September to begin the amalgamation process to become AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia in 1995

Randy Connors, Dartmouth hemophiliac activist for a safe blood supply and compensation, dies.

1995

The [CDC](#) announces AIDS has become the leading cause of death for Americans aged 25–44.

The [WHO](#) estimates that approximately 18 million adults and 1.5 million children have been infected with HIV since the beginning of the pandemic.

Wilson Hodder launches his court challenge for same-sex spousal benefits

Atlantic Transgender is formed by Jenn Nearing as a support group that last for the next 4-5 years. Jenn set up a web site as part of the group and the site quickly gains 250,000 hits.

1996

18,000 Canadians have AIDS

International Conference on AIDS in Vancouver announces Highly Active Anti-retroviral Therapy (HAART – AKA the “AIDS Drug Cocktail”) as the standard treatment for HIV infection, and begins changed an HIV infection from a “death sentence” to a manageable illness.

In response to the growing need amongst those with HIV/AIDS, a group from Safe Harbour-Metropolitan Community Church set up “Manna For Health” food bank at ACNS.

1997

The US reports that the number of AIDS-related deaths has dropped substantially for the first time – a direct result of the new Highly Active Anti-retroviral Therapy (HAART).

[UNAIDS](#) estimates that the number of people living with HIV is 30 million, much higher than previously thought. It is estimated that 1 in 100 people worldwide are living with HIV, with only 1 in 10 of those knowing they are infected.

1998

[Post-exposure prophylaxis](#) (PEP) is pioneered in San Francisco.

ACNS chairperson, Wilson Hodder wins his court challenge to secure same-sex spousal benefits (May 26th) after the loss of his partner, Terry Martin, to AIDS

WHO release its latest predictions that by the year 2000...10,000,000 people will have AIDS and 40,000,000 will be HIV positive

Dr. Bob Frederickson becomes the local resource in NS for trans health info.

The Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project (NSRAP) takes on Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) as an advocacy project, but has little first person Trans* input to inform how to best do so.

After public consultations Prince Edward Island adds sexual orientation as a prohibited grounds of discrimination in the provincial Human Rights Act.

1999

The [WHO](#) announces that AIDS has become the fourth largest killer worldwide.

Abegweit Rainbow Collective (ARC) forms in PEI to serve GLBT Islanders, their friends and families. They immediately begin a series of monthly community dances in Charlottetown. ARC also begins publication of “The ARC Quarterly” which continues publishing until 2003.

2000

Atlantic First Nations AIDS Task Force changes its name to Healing Our Nations.

Wilson Hodder, long-time activist in the AIDS movement in Canada, past Board Chair of ACNS, founding member of NSPWAC, dies peacefully in his home.

Abegweit Rainbow Collective Organizes it’s first Pride week in August. There’s no parade or flag raising this year – but they do have a Pride Flag “unveiling”.

2001

The Truro-based Northern AIDS Connection Society forms to address issues in northern NS.

PEI’s Abegweit Rainbow Collective Organizes its first annual Pride Parade.

Abegweit Rainbow Collective and AIDS PEI partner and receive federal funding to organize the Prince Edward Island Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual And Transgendered Youth Project.

The Truro-based Northern AIDS Connection Society forms to address issues in northern NS.

2002

HIV becomes the leading cause of death worldwide in people aged 15–59 years.

“Healthy Sexualities, Healthy Lives” conference for PEI’s Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Two-Spirited, and Transgendered Community” take place in March.

2003

The first officially sanctioned supervised injection site in North America opens in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside.

2004

The [WHO](#) supports the provision of sterile injection equipment to reduce HIV transmission.

2005

[Health Canada](#) approves a rapid HIV antibody test for sale to health professionals in Canada. Rapid point-of-care (POC) testing that can provide an accurate HIV antibody test result in 2 min.

PEI legalizes same-sex marriage.

2006

AIDS PEI initiates PEI's first needle exchange.

2009

PEI makes significant, and same-sex relationship friendly, changes to laws governing domestic partnership (definition of spouse), adoption, etc.

2010

About 85 people participate in Halifax's first "Dyke March". Organizers originally call it "Dyke and Trans March", but that decision is criticized as token since it is done without much trans input. Even so, the event is inclusive of significant trans participation, and becomes the "Dyke & Trans March" the following year.

2011

Science magazine names HIV Treatment as Prevention as its Breakthrough of the Year after the HPTN 052 study in couples where one partner is HIV-positive and the other negative showed that HIV treatment can significantly decrease the risk of transmission.

For the first time, WHO lists transgender people as a group at increased risk for HIV infection.

2012

Despite growing scientific evidence that HIV treatment dramatically reduces the risk of transmission when the viral load is undetectable, the Supreme Court of Canada rules that an HIV-positive person has a legal duty to disclose their HIV status to a sexual partner before having any sex that poses a "realistic possibility" of HIV transmission.

After years of lobbying by NSRAP and other community groups, the government amends the Human Rights Act to include "gender identity" and "gender expression".

2013

ACNS adapts a gay men's safer anal sex workshop from London called the 'Ass Class' - billed as how to have more enjoyable anal sex. The decision is made to also make it Trans-inclusive, as there is a small but growing body of research that suggest transgender folx are also a high-risk population for HIV. This is the first trans-inclusive HIV prevention program in Atlantic Canada and one of the very few in the country.

The Public Health Agency of Canada releases a new HIV screening and testing guide that includes recommendations to promote HIV testing during routine medical care.

Billed as an alternative festival for queer and trans* communities, Rad Pride emerges as an inherent and explicit critique of how mainstream, commercial and apolitical Halifax Pride has become. The young organizers seek to create a more inclusive series of events and spaces: events are all-ages, dry/substance-free, barrier-free, free of charge, and some offer childcare.

On Dec. 6 PEI adds “gender identity” and “gender expression” to their Human Rights Act. The bill was first proposed in the legislature on Nov. 13 and passed just three weeks later.

2014

A [preliminary analysis of the PARTNER study](#) reports the first direct evidence that HIV treatment can significantly reduce the risk of HIV transmission for gay men and other MSM who have condomless sex.

The UN issues new [HIV treatment targets](#): 90% of all people living with HIV diagnosed, 90% of those diagnosed on treatment, and 90% of those on treatment virally suppressed by 2020. Canada endorses in 2015 - but the Canadian government does nothing new to move towards them, even though the intended deadline is 2020.

After years of lobbying by NSRAP, On April 1, the Gov. of NS announced it would now cover eight sex types reassignment surgeries for Nova Scotians who intend to begin that process.

2015

Results from the [PROUD](#) study in England confirm that Truvada as [pre-exposure prophylaxis](#) (PrEP) is highly effective for gay men in a “real world” setting.

Despite being approved by Health Canada in 2005, as of 2015 rapid Point of Care testing (POCT) is still unavailable in NS. Dr. Jacquie Gahagan begins a community-based research project (Community Preparedness in the Context of HIV Point-of-Care-Testing) on POCT to assess what hurdles need to be overcome to bring it to NS / Atlantic Canada.

2016

In Feb. Health Canada [approves use of daily oral Truvada](#) (tenofovir plus FTC) for [use as pre-exposure prophylaxis](#) (PrEP) to reduce the risk of sexual transmission of HIV.

Reflecting a growing body of evidence that transgender populations (especially trans women) are also a high risk population for HIV infection, the public Health Agency of Canada adds transgender people as a priority population for their HIV and Hepatitis C Community Action Fund that supports community based HIV and Hep C prevention work in Canada.

AIDS PEI begins a LGBTQ2+ youth drop-in Charlottetown for those aged 12-18.

The grassroots Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U) movement is formally launched with the release of a *Consensus Statement* inviting community orgs, experts and government bodies to endorse the U=U message. U=U is informed by the growing body of research showing that HIV+ people who achieve and maintain an undetectable viral load through effective use of anti-retroviral medications; those people CANNOT pass on the virus to their partners.

A group of concerned advocates forms NS PrEP Working Group; an advocacy group to explore informational and governmental barriers to making PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) widely available to those communities most at risk.

2017

With the patent on Truvada (tenofovir + FTC) expiring in Canada, [four generic equivalents get approval from Health Canada](#). By year's end only Quebec, Ontario and BC have included Truvada and its generics on provincial formularies as PrEP, so access throughout much of the country is still very limited and expensive.

Passed in June 2017, Bill C-16 added the words "gender identity or expression" to the Canadian Human Rights Act, to a section of the Criminal Code that targets hate speech, and to a section of the Criminal Code dealing with sentencing for hate crimes.

In October AIDS PEI changes its name to the PEERS Alliance (PEERS = Prevent, Educate, Empower, Respect, Support).

ACNS adds its name to the growing list of those who have endorsed the U=U Consensus Statement. On Nov. 30th (before Dec. 1st - World AIDS Day) the [Gov. of Canada becomes the first federal government to publicly endorse U=U](#).

2018

In late January the AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia organizes a public info session on PrEP held at the Halifax Central Public Library, and [live-streamed on YouTube](#). Sixty people attend to hear the panel present and answer audience questions about PrEP.

In February PEERs Alliance, builds on the success of their LGBTQ2+ youth drop in by partnering with Holland College, and the Women's Network PEI to start an adult LGBTQ2+ drop in.

In June the NS gov. announces that new HIV diagnosis have spiked in the Halifax area. The increase is driven by IV drug use and by year end the regular provincial total of about 15 cases is almost double.

2019

The Government of PEI announces full access to PrEP for high risk groups.

Final published results from the PARTNER study of gay/MSM verifies that (ART) and an undetectable viral load eliminates the HIV transmission risk via sexual contact. This is the fourth major international study to verify TasP / U=U .

In June ACNS participates in the 2nd annual National HIV Testing Day and, working with local partners, organizes a series of public mini-testing clinics using rapid POCT tests – which are STILL not available any other way in NS.

In July Health Canada grants the HaliFIX Overdose Prevention Society a one-year exemption to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to allow the consumption of otherwise illegal drugs at the site. They open for business a few months later

In November ACNS organizes a panel to begin to explain U=U to the general public! The panel is intended to be the beginning of a longer public education program to be launched early in 2020, however the COVID shutdown postponed that launch.

2020

The emergence of COVID -19 early in the year has had a significant triggering effect on HIV “long-time survivors” - people who have been living with HIV for more than 25 years ... many of whom are permanently disabled by the HIV (irreversible damage done to their health before the HAART treatment cocktail changed the disease progression) and who watched their peers die during the worst of the AIDS crisis. The uncertainty, and threat of death, that COVID-19 imposed relating to health and human contact, for some that feels all too familiar....