

Interconnected

“Spotlight”

Save the date: Saturday, November 28, 2020

(Virtual) ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The CPPN’s 2020 Annual Meeting of Members will take place on November 28th starting at 2:00 PM (Eastern time). This meeting will be hosted virtually and members will be required to register. The official notice, with registration instructions and all relevant documents will be sent to CPPN Members for whom we have an email address on file soon.

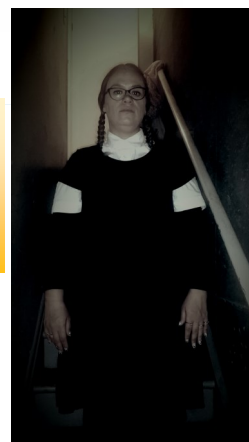
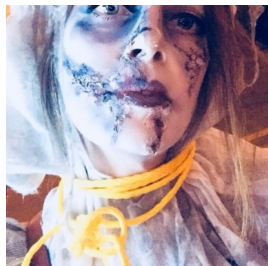
Nominations for election to the Board of Directors closed on October 18th and there are four candidates who are seeking election to the Board:

1. Jimi Lister (for the Ontario seat);
2. Mike Laframboise (for the Indigenous seat);
3. Dakarayi Chigugudhlo (for the Ethnocultural seat); and
4. George Tesseris (for an At-Large seat).

You will find details about the Board candidates on Page 6.



DO YOU HAVE SKELETONS IN YOUR CLOSET? DON'T KNOW WITCH WAY TO TURN? TRIED TO GIVE UP SMOKING WITH A PUMPKIN PATCH? DO YOU TRICK OR DO YOU TREAT? HOWEVER YOU CELEBRATE HALLOWEEN, CPPN WANTS YOU TO HAVE A HAPPY AND SAFE CELEBRATION OF ALL THINGS SWEET, SPOOKY AND SPIRITED. ENJOY!



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Board of Directors

Coming soon: a special AIDS Awareness Week and World AIDS Day edition of Interconnected. Stay tuned!

Special thanks to Bob Leahy, the CPPN’s Editor for Interconnected

In their own words... CPPN Members share their stories

My life behind bars, by Jimi *"No other life like it!"*

I've been HIV positive for 37 years. I've spent 35 of those years behind bars. No fears; the bars were in the form of taverns, pubs, clubs and restaurants. 30 of my 35 years were spent in gay bars. I was able to live my life as a poz gay man. But the bars were a type of prison, none the less.

Yup, you're trapped when you're working a bar, only the manager or busboy to give you respite. Your regulars and tourists, as well as the public in general all want to talk, all want to interact with the bartender. There is no escaping the repetitive banal talk of your regulars, the ogling of the tourists and hustle of the public at large.

When tending bar, looks go a long way in how you're perceived by your employers and the clientele. Thus I was given the off shifts, the ones that don't bring in the huge bucks. Far more time available that you have to deal with your regulars, far more time to go stir crazy, but not enough pressure to hone your skills well.

Regulars are just that. Regular, repeat customers that haunt you on a daily, weekly or sometimes even monthly basis. Be assured there is a HUGE difference between a regular customer and a good customer, and I've had my fair share of bad regulars. It was a regular who was responsible for my leaving my last job, with severe depression and a complete mental breakdown. He was the proverbial straw to my camel's back. No, there are regulars and good customers - and the two are not mutually exclusive.

"It was a regular who was responsible for my leaving my last job, with severe depression and a complete mental breakdown. He was the proverbial straw to my camel's back."

That being said, I've managed to have a fairly distinguished career. My last job I was at for 13 years, a timespan unheard of in the business. One of my staff (I was management) has been there for 23 years and is still going strong.

It makes me proud and humble simultaneously to think that I was partly responsible for building his career.

That's what I've been all my work life - a facilitator to other people. Helping others, facilitating their lives is a wonderful way to experience life. For one thing you're never bored. You are interacting with the people, you are part of their life and generally a bigger part than they appreciate or know. I found this out after I'd been gone from my last job about a year. The compliments for me were sincere, if I though undeserved; from some of the most unlikely people too. A busboy whom I'd ridden, a lazy sod if there ever was one, he was also a charmer and was kept on by management. He actually missed me.

It's been a great life helping others and being a part of their lives. As a poz person I've vicariously enjoyed the world, and lives, of thousands of individuals - and all because I was trapped behind bars. No other life like it!

CPPN Board Member, Marlo Cottrell, reflects on

“I’m always reminded that the beauty is in the rebound and regardless of how far one sinks within the seasons, there is always a reprieve that lies just around the bend.”

When the last of the crimson colors fade to fallow and our days narrow to drab, the seasons can present an unwitting shift of our spirits that reflect our surroundings. I know for me, in this season comes a heavy time of year that exacerbates my mental balance, tipping me into the echoes of the past. Over the years, I have learned to extend some grace and gentleness within myself, having that sense of calm that comes with the gift of knowing what to expect.

If you’ve survived thus far living with HIV, it goes without saying that you yourself are part and parcel to some degree or other a trauma survivor and very few of us have made it through to today completely unscathed. From my personal act of defying the all too often societal sentiment of the need for penance of feeling normal human emotions, I remind myself of what PTSD is; an ordinary reaction to extraordinary events, which become etched into the very fiber of our cells by the chemical processes within us.

I find it to be a necessary undertaking to strip the depression and anxiety of its power by finding humor within the experience. As I crack open my box of depression uniforms (more commonly referred to as housecoats), lock away my makeup and hair products and sink into this lapse of calm while apprehension takes the helm, I dig deep to acknowledge my momentary successes. Being frank with those I trust about the fact that I am struggling can certainly ease some of the burden, though it took a lifetime to be in a safe space to do so. In the year 2020, it has been particularly difficult for so many of us. With the new pandemic thrown into the mix, so many of us have had our lives rearranged in a way that has increased mental stressors, exacerbated finances,

posed a risk to even our housing, food security, drug stability and even transportation. The pervasive fear of doom has been nothing short of exhausting. Where there once lived a continuous passion for life, becomes an existence blanketed by anxious melancholy.

I’m always reminded that the beauty is in the rebound and regardless of how far one sinks within the seasons, there is always a reprieve that lies just around the bend. It can also take reaching out to our supports or mental health professionals to help us find our strength to pull through. If time is our greatest teacher, let us remember that life never remains stagnant. Sometimes when we find ourselves down, we just have to reach for something.

Personally, I’m in a safe place and find some respite in meditative practices that inspire healing; like building tiny tubs and fairy houses, listening for even one note to move me within the music, finding the positives in seasonal affective disorder, depression and anxiety by reaching to what once was an inspiration to carry me through. It seems like a lifetime ago that I wasn’t always afforded these opportunities and I’m thankful that although life had brought me to my knees, as it sometimes does for all of us, we have this incredible ability to dust ourselves off and get back up again.

Attention CPPN Members!

As you know the CPPN experienced several operational and leadership/governance challenges during the past 12—18 months. “Growing pains” should be expected with respect to a nascent national network like the CPPN. At the same time though, it should also be expected that growth often does and should include some degree of change and/or realignment.

The CPPN’s Board of Directors has agreed that one of the most-important management initiatives, at this time, is to ensure that the CPPN’s membership files are up-to-date, and that we are able to effectively illustrate our compelling ‘presence’ as people living with HIV and HIV co-infections across the country.

So... current CPPN members are asked (required) to confirm/renew their membership. All members who have an email address on file now will receive a message in the coming days which will include a link to a membership confirmation/renewal form.

IF a confirmation/renewal form is NOT submitted, it shall be assumed that the Member withdraws their membership, with immediate effect.

Submissions are due not later than 5:00 PM (Eastern time) on Thursday, November 26, 2020.

Thank you, in advance, for your prompt attention and response.

CPPN by the numbers

Since our last issue, we welcomed 4 new members! At time of publication, **205 people living with HIV and/or HIV co-infection from across the country are members of the CPPN.**

Our virtual presence...

Since April 1, 2020:

- ◆ www.cppnrcps.ca welcomed 108 new visitors; nearly 69% of all visits were from Canada.
- ◆ On average, visitors to our Website clicked on 389 unique pages.
- ◆ Our Twitter account [@CPPN_RCPS](https://twitter.com/CPPN_RCPS) is followed by 657 people from around the world and, on average, visitors to our Twitter page made more than 1,200 impressions.
- ◆ On [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/CPPN), the CPPN has 517 active followers and our posts have reached, on average, 4,909 people so far this fiscal year!

We ARE Experts!

Committees and working groups

The CPPN's Board of Directors has established a number of Committee and/or working group and your participation is encouraged. Seats are available on the following:

- Finance Committee
- Peer Engagement Committee
- Communications Committee
- And, there are vacant seats on the Board of Directors.

Coming soon...

- The Evaluation Committee
- The Operations and Management Committee

If you are interested in working with one (or more) of the

Committees and/or the

Board of Directors,

Send an email to:

connect@cppnrcps.ca

“Together, we can do so much. And, at long last, we can do it with confidence that our greater involvement and meaningful engagement is more than a token gesture. We can do it AS EXPERTS who are compensated for what ONLY WE can bring to the proverbial table.”

This was our pitch to the Public Health Agency of Canada: a revised work plan and a budget reallocation that will benefit CPPN Members directly.

A decision that will pave our way is pending.

We all know it... doctors are experts in the field of medicine, lawyers are experts in the field of law, epidemiologists are experts in the 'field' of disease data, etc., etc., etc. It is not often that one of these experts, at least when from the 'outside', arrives at a consultation table without some sort of monetary compensation in recognition of their expertise and for the time they take away from their daily routines. How often, though, are people living with HIV and HIV co-infections sought after for this consultation or that under the auspices of “Greater Involvement” and “Meaningful Engagement”, sitting alongside the docs, the lawyers, and the epidemiologists when monetary compensation for them is a foregone and natural conclusion? Well... many of us would agree... that is rare indeed.

Way back, in 1983, the “Denver Principles” earned global recognition for their explicit demand that (among other things), people living with HIV/AIDS “Be involved at every level of decision-making...” and “Be included in all AIDS forums with equal credibility as other participants, to share their own experiences and knowledge.” Fast forward to 2020, to the Virtual International AIDS Conference, which was held amid the COVID-19 pandemic, when the “San Francisco Principles” were born. The authors call themselves members

of “The AIDS Generation”. They very passionately state that “Nearly everything the world knows about HIV/AIDS has been learned on the backs of long-term survivors. **And we will no longer be ignored.**” Among the demands included in these San Francisco Principles, the authors stipulate that “Long-term HIV/AIDS Survivors MUST be included in the planning and implementation of any programs and services offered to them.”

In July 2020, I wrote to the Public Health Agency representative responsible for the CPPN's Contribution Agreement requesting approval to submit a revised work plan and to reallocate funds that were originally intended to support the travel and travel-related expenses necessary for CPPN members to attend important face-to-face gatherings. In short, on behalf of the CPPN's Board, I asked for the authority to create a new budget line in the amount of **\$65,500** with which we would pay an honorarium to CPPN members who take an active part in the engagement initiatives that are planned for the balance of this fiscal year. **A decision is pending, but we are hopeful that we will have a green light to move forward very soon. Stay tuned!**

~ Jeff Potts, Executive Director ~

About the candidates for the 2020 election of the CPPN's Board of Directors

Jimi (James Richard) Lister (candidate for the Ontario seat)

Born January 21st, 1964, Jimi has been HIV-positive since the age of 19. He never expected to live past the age of 22. Here he is at 57 and still kicking. In 2005, Jimi was diagnosed with HCV, and went on Alpha Interferon and Ribavirin for the period of one year. He was considered cured at the end of the course of treatment. He has volunteered in the HIV/AIDS community since the age of 25. Most recently as a member of the Board of Directors for CTAC, the Canadian Treatment Action Council, Jimi helped with the closure of this wonderful agency. He has board level experience with HALCO as well, having stepped down due to his HCV infection. Jimi looks forward to the challenges and friendships this new board position can bring.



George Tesseris (candidate for an At-Large seat)

George lives in Stayner, ON. He is a University of Waterloo engineering grad with fifteen years banking experience culminating in a group manager of credit card strategy position. He led a team of six MBAs. George was diagnosed HIV-positive in December 2009. At the time he was semiconscious with PML and almost died of AIDS. Within three months, though, he was undetectable... and fascinated by the power of ARVs.

In 2011 George joined the AIDS Committee of Simcoe County, now the Gilbert Centre as a client and volunteer. ACSC offered various opportunities to contribute and grow. He was a collaborator on a 3-year community-based research project on the real needs of MSMs in Simcoe Muskoka. He took a CBR course through OHTN to solidify knowledge. He is also a past board member of the ACSC, past steering committee member U=U, and a PLDI grad. Believing U=U is key to disarming stigma, George helped spread the message by authoring a blog piece, delivering two professional presentations and appearing on community television.

His proudest moments in life: ranking in the 99th percentile of the GMAT and descending the Grand Canyon by himself. He is an avid golfer, snowboarder and amateur photographer. George says, "I'm a big believer in self-sufficiency. What we can do for ourselves, we should."

Michael Laframboise (candidate for the Indigenous seat)

Michael is a 51-year old Algonquin Metis IPHA. He was diagnosed HIV-positive on October 17, 1998 and is a graduate of PLDI. Michael has been involved with The Aids Committee Of Ottawa (ACO) for many years: first, as a volunteer in the mid 80s, and as a client since early 2000's. He also volunteers at Camp Journey (formerly known as Camp Snowy Owl) as a camp counselor for young boys. He is also the ACO's Official feather and bundle carrier. And, he is also the leather ambassador (MR PLOW 2014) for the Snowblower festival, which is a health and wellness festival put on by ACO every year.



Michael is also currently involved with the Niikaniganaw project as a knowledge carrier and as a member of its planning committee. He attends Opening Doors in Gananoque regularly and helps facilitate the "Acknowledging our Losses" workshop, and he attends the CAAN AGM almost annually as a representative for Ottawa. In addition to all of this, Michael currently serves as President of the Ottawa Knights, a leather and denim organization, and he is the current title holder BOOTBLACK OTTAWA 2020 and 2021. Michael says, "As an Indigenous person living with HIV, I feel that Indigenous people need a voice and need to be heard... I am not afraid of a challenge, and I am a fast learner. I also have a voice and am not afraid to use it."

Dakarayi Chigugudhlo (candidate for the Ethnocultural seat)



Dakarayi Chigugudhlo is result-oriented development professional with a passion to make transformative change in people's lives. She is an inspirational Community Leader who is committed to help and support her community. This is seen in her community involvement and volunteer engagement in the HIV Sector. In her capacity as Founder of Women Empowering Positive Women, a peer led social enterprise; she has transformed the lives of immigrant women living with HIV. Her strident selfless outstanding leadership qualities reflective with her work has influenced many lives in a positive way in the community.

Dakarayi is currently working for Toronto HIV AIDS Network as a Peer Coordinator. She has been involved in HIV work since 2002, when she first volunteered at APAA, PWA, Fife House, and Women's Health in Women's Hands Research. She also served in several Advisory committees, Toronto HIV AIDS Network, PWA' 30th Anniversary, NOT art Therapy and Picturing Participation projects.

Dakarayi graduated with Honours Bachelor of Arts Degree at the University of Toronto and completed M.A. in Critical Disability Studies at York University and Non Profit Management in the Non Profit Sector Certificate at Seneca College. She had received Recognition Award from Inspector of Toronto Police, Nick Memme. She has shared a platform with UN women President Almas Juwani and honoured with the Leadership Award at the Immigrant Talk Show Awards; and received the Education Award from the Black Women Moving Forward.



Your perspective is important to us. Let us know if you would like to contribute to a future issue of Interconnected.

Send an email to connect@cppnrcps.ca.



Are you a CPPN Member? If not, would you like to be? Click [here](#) to complete our Membership Registration form.

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