

AAHP  
**AIDS Activist History Project**

**Interview Transcript 60**  
2017.004

<b>Interviewee:</b>	Thomas Waugh
<b>Interviewers:</b>	Ryan Conrad, Gary Kinsman & Danielle Normandeau
<b>Collection:</b>	Montreal, Quebec
<b>Date:</b>	August 13, 2017

13 August 2017

Persons present: Thomas Waugh – TW  
Ryan Conrad – RC  
Gary Kinsman – GK  
Danielle Normandeau – DN

[START OF TRANSCRIPT]

**GK: We are here in Montreal interviewing Tom Waugh and it is August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The first question we ask everyone is when do you first remember hearing about AIDS, and what do you remember hearing?**

TW: I am stuck on that question because the mythology of *The New York Times* piece and my own personal experience are all jumbled together. I honestly don't remember. I read *The Body Politic* every month, so their first reporting probably would have been the latest I had heard of it. But I was really close to John Greyson, who was in New York City, so he might have brought me up to date. Or—I don't know—what month was it in 1981, when the newspaper thing came out?

**RC: I think it was March?**

TW: Maybe it was March.

**GK: Yes.**

TW: Right. I could even have been there. I don't think so, but I am just assuming.

**GK: What do you remember people telling you about AIDS or HIV? What was the message that the mainstream media had at that time?**

TW: Mostly indifference. The Canadian media didn't wake up for a long time. I don't really have an exact chronology in my head of 1981 and 1982 and 1983, when things started to click in. By 1984, I had already published something. So, it happened very quickly, and my memories of the Quebec media were slower, obviously, than the English language media in waking up to what was going on.

**GK: And, so, you said you published something in '84?**

TW: I wrote something in '84 that came out, I think in *Jump Cut*, where I talked about porn stars and their AIDS activism... I should send you my CV [curriculum vitae], so you can go through it and see if that helps with the chronology.<sup>1</sup> But I believe that was the first mention of the epidemic in

---

<sup>1</sup> An online version of Thomas Waugh's CV is available [here](https://www.concordia.ca/finearts/cinema/faculty.html?fpid=thomas-waugh)  
[<https://www.concordia.ca/finearts/cinema/faculty.html?fpid=thomas-waugh>]

my publications.

**GK: Okay. Yes. We're not so much interested in exact dates because we can always—as you were saying—find that out. But what do you remember? So, you would have been reading *The Body Politic*? Do you remember other things you would have been reading at that point in time?**

TW: *Gay Community News*.

**GK: From Boston.**

TW: Every month. I believe *The Native*, every month. And, of course, the local French language media. I guess we had *La Berdache*, in the early '80s. I can't remember when it went under.

**GK: Did you find some of those sources of information more reliable than others?**

TW: I don't remember when *The Native* started getting hysterical and pushing alternative hypotheses. I found that—all the swine flu stuff—a little bit less reliable than *The Body Politic* who were, like, very measured and slightly cautious. Well, people like Michael Lynch and the reporters. What was the question, again?

**GK: Just did you find any of the media more reliable than others. And I think you answered that.**

TW: Yes. The gay community media I found very reliable.

**GK: As the AIDS crisis is emerging, for many people it hits them first as just, a health crisis, right? But it also then becomes a political or activist question. Do you have any memories of how that emerged for you?**

TW: Not really. I doubt if it was ever not political for me. I mean, I was reading the more political American community media, and *Gay Community News* was an excellent newspaper, as you know, and really sharp in terms of its political analysis. I mean, people like Andrea Dworkin and Cindy Patton were writing for it. I forget when Cindy really kicked in, in terms of her work.

**GK: Yes. *Sex and Germs: The Politics of AIDS* comes out of her work with *Gay Community News*.**

TW: Yes. It was really early on.

**RC: I actually have one other thing. I think it is also important to note that you came out of a PhD program in New York City in the late 1970s as part of, you know, that cohort with John D'Emilio, and you were in Marxist feminist organizing circles. I imagine that would also influence how you understood HIV and AIDS from the early days.**

TW: Definitely. Very good point. And, so, in that circle were also Tony Ward and Jonathan Ned Katz and a few people who died of AIDS—who were to die of AIDS—like Richard Schmiechen, and I forget the others. When I moved to Montreal in '76, I think the very first thing I did was go to the big demo against the Olympic raids. That's where I met Paul Keenan and Ross Higgins. And I was visiting New York at least once a year throughout that time. And, as Ryan said, my PhD defense was in '81. I don't know what that month was in '81. It was probably in the spring. My very close friend Bert Hansen...

**GK: Right. I know him, too.**

TW: Fanatically did clippings from *The New York Times*. So, I would have heard immediately. It was March that year, the clippings?

**GK: Yes.**

TW: I would have been updated regularly on what was going on by Bert.

**GK: Yes. You had major New York City connections.**

TW: Yes.

**GK: That would have been feeding you information.**

TW: Good point. [laughter]

**GK: It was a very good point. And that relates to a question we often ask people. I don't think I put it into this pool of questions. When it came to dealing with AIDS and HIV, obviously, you had previous political experience—and maybe activist experience—do you want to talk a little bit about that? Like, what would have given you some tools—the theoretical, analytical, or activist tools—to be able to address questions around AIDS and HIV?**

TW: Well, I saw my work as being intellectual and critical. I mean, I really believe the '70s thing about the theoretical front, and that intellectuals had an important role in social change. Not as organizers of demonstrations, but as producers of discourse and language and conversation and critique. And I started that immediately upon getting my job in 1976 at Concordia—and publishing in *The Body Politic* and *Jump Cut*. And so, when my group in New York organized the zap on the psychiatrist's convention, for some reason I wasn't there. I guess I was here? But that wasn't the kind of stuff I did best. What I did best was writing and engaging in current issues, especially around cultural activism and film.

**GK: For sure. So, through those New York City connections you would have been aware of when ACT UP [AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power] emerges and maybe, through John Greyson and other people with AIDS ACTION NOW! in Toronto?**

TW: Definitely. I knew Tim and Richard since the '70s, and John, of course. So, yes, I was following what was going on in Toronto. And the ACT UP people, originally, were a little bit younger than me. So, I wasn't in close step with them, especially. And that's towards the end of the '80s, rather than early in mid '80s. So, we are sort of leaping ahead. I don't know if I know any of the ACT UP people. I knew Jim Hubbard, because he would come up to the queer film festival here and slept with all my friends, some of whom you know. [laughter]

**GK: I want names! [laughter] No. I'm kidding. [laughter]**

TW: I forget what year that was. It would be very interesting to find that out.

**GK: Right.**

TW: It might even have been for *Sans Popcorn*, the film festival I organized in '81 or '82. There might have even been an AIDS film in that. We need to look at the program. It was called *Without Popcorn—Sans Popcorn*—at the Cinémathèque Québécoise. It was—if I don't mind saying so—a really good, thorough, detailed festival. I think it might have been '82. So, there might have even have been an early AIDS film in that.

**GK: Right.**

TW: That would have been really, really, early, though. So maybe not.

**GK: So, we're thinking about the '80s prior to the AIDS conference here in '89. Would you have been connected with any of the AIDS groups in town? Like, of course, there's CSAM [Comité Sida Aide Montréal] and there's the emergence out of it, of CPAVIH [Comité des Personnes Atteintes du VIH du Québec]...**

TW: I was more involved with various activities at Concordia, but I hung out a bit with the people in—what year did CSAM become ACCM [AIDS Community Care Montreal]?

**GK: I think it's in the early 1990s, but I am not entirely sure.**

TW: Really?

**GK: It's after the AIDS conference. I am pretty sure.**

TW: Yes. So, I am a little bit...

**GK: Because I know you're involved in ACCM, later.**

TW: Yes. I must have been in touch with one of those organizations—at least one of those organizations—but I am a little bit foggy about that. I was mainly working at Concordia in the AIDS Committee at Concordia. And in the cultural committee leading up to the conference in '89. So that must have been at least one year in advance, if not two?

**GK: So, do you want to tell us, first of all, about what the AIDS Committee at Concordia did?**

TW: We started out being a human resources and antidiscrimination agency, or organization, put in place by the director at the time. I am sure we can figure out the dates for that, but it was definitely considerably before the conference, because getting involved in the conference was part of my activities in that committee. Another person in that committee was Donald Boisvert, who might have been the Dean of Students at that time. He's an activist in the church as well as teaching religion at Concordia for years, was the former Dean of Students, and a former student activist at Loyola. So, he was very active as well on the AIDS Committee at Concordia. And we put in place an anti-discrimination policy that was adopted by the university. Again, I don't remember the year. It might have been as early as '87?

**GK: Right.**

TW: And there were student representatives on that. So, my involvement with the conference cultural committee just sort of came out of that.

**GK: Do you want to tell us a little bit about that? So, you think you started about a year before the conference, which was in June '89?**

TW: Yes. It was Ken Morrison who organized it. And we screened hundreds of videos and made a selection and put in place this program that ran at the conference, an excellent program where I really caught up with... I mean, I already knew a lot of the work, but that was really where I caught up systematically, globally, with all of the video activist work and cultural work that was being done around HIV/AIDS. Do you have the documentation from that festival?

**GK: No. We should definitely get it.**

TW: You should get it. [laughter]

**GK: And collect it and put it online, too.**

**RC: Do you think you have the paper copies or anything in your personal archives?**

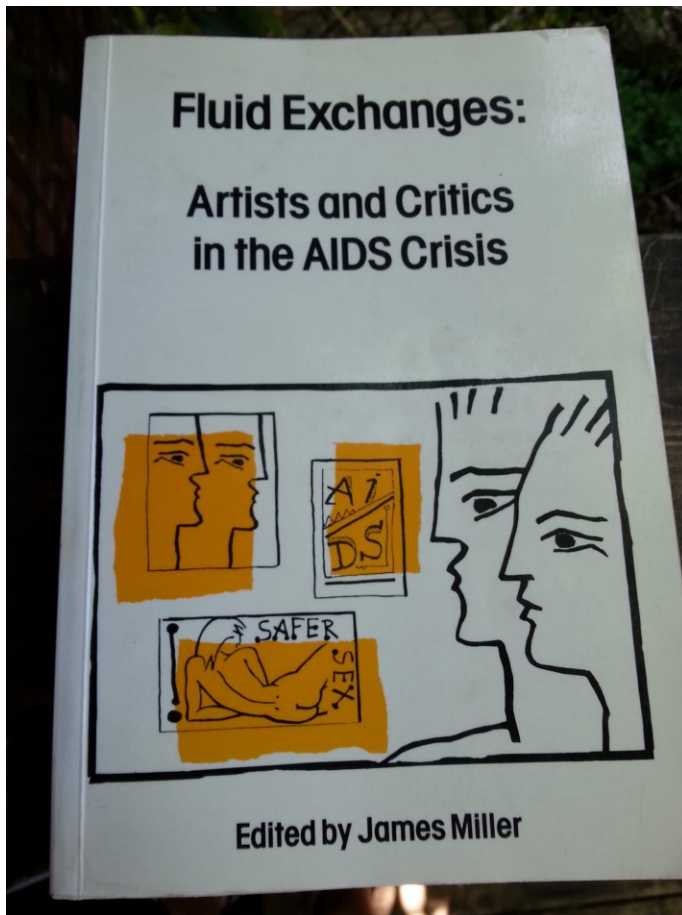
TW: I must have it somewhere. I'll keep my eyes open for it.

**GK: Yes. That would be really useful. So, do you want to tell us a little bit about the terrain of video AIDS activism that you were catching up on?**

TW: Well, being very close to John, I sort of had a foot in the door. So, that I knew everything that was going on in Toronto through him. And New York City also. At one point, there was an AIDS video festival, here, organized by René Lavoie. Have you met him?

**GK: No.**

TW: I think in that context we might have invited Arthur Bressan Jr. from New York City, who had done the film for the feature, called *Buddies*. That's how I ended up hosting the festival for him. I don't know when that was—'86? And I think, if that was when René's festival was, I was sort of involved in that on a consultant basis, but I wasn't one of the organizers. By that time, I was also showing AIDS-related materials in my courses at Concordia. And they did the whole range—covered the whole range—from activist work to mellow dramatic fiction and porn. And I saw myself as urging activists and community members to be interested in the whole spectrum, rather than just the activist work. I did research on the safer sex AIDS activist porn, for example, and published on that in this book, the James Miller book that you know, right?



**GK: Right.**

TW: I forget what the year was.

**GK: That's *Fluid Exchanges*, right?**

TW: Yes. I forget what the year was. When did he have his conference in London, Ontario?

**GK: I don't know. I would say it was in the early 1990s, but that's all I can say.**

TW: Really?

**GK: But it may have been before that.**

TW: It might have been as early as 1990. Or, I believe, it was probably after the—he was on our committee as well. Have you interviewed him?

**GK: No.**

TW: He was on our conference committee as well. The date of it is 1992. And his conference

in London, Ontario, in which all these people like Jan Zita Grover were there. That was a very interesting conference, and sort of under acknowledged, in terms of the history. The Canadian history. Hmm, what was I going to say?

**GK: We can find that later.**

TW: It was a reference to the AIDS conference. I think it might have been before the Montreal conference.

**GK: I remember them, but I don't specifically remember the conference because I wasn't there.**

TW: So, my work on porn came out in that piece in 1982. And I was fascinated with the Gay Men's Health Crisis's video work—safer sex video work.

**RC: The *Living with AIDS* work? Or the *Safer Sex* shorts?**

TW: The *Safer Sex* shorts. Some of my friends, like Richard Fung, did it. And they did a terrible job at archiving and keeping those works in circulation. I believe I have some of the only copies of some of those things.

**RC: Really?**

**GK: It's great that you have them, but not great that they aren't anywhere else. So, coming back a little bit to the cultural activist side of the World AIDS Conference here in '89, do you want to tell us more about the organizing for it? And there was a video conference—where a whole series of videos were shown—but what else happened in terms of the cultural dimensions of the conference?**

TW: I think there were some performances. It was happening, I mean, in the conference.

**GK: Right.**

TW: And I think there were some performances and screenings, there were definitely screenings. They were very well attended. That German guy, his name will come back to me in a second, was extremely well received. It was sold out. A session on safer sex porn, I forget the name. And, other than that, we need to look at the program. It must be published as a hard copy booklet.

**GK: I am sure it can be found. So, there's this cultural festival going on at the same time as the conference, but, there is also what AIDS ACTION NOW!, ACT UP New York City, and Réaction SIDA are doing during the time of the conference. So, did that intersect with your experience of the conference at all? Or, how did that work for you? Because some of your friends must have been involved in the protests, right?**

TW: Well, for sure, Tim and Simon Watney and Douglas Crimp, and people like that. We were all exhausted, those of us on the committee. And had this thing all set up, and suddenly all of these noisy young men in baseball caps and t-shirts from New York showed up and started sort of taking over space and making a lot of noise. And I didn't identify 100% with their style... I went to some of the events, but I wasn't really part of the protests. I mean, I was too exhausted and intent on making the videos run smoothly.



**GK: Right.**

TW: And, they were very American, and didn't really respect the local situation. I mean, they didn't have a clue about the local situation. So, that's my main memory.

**GK: Yes. They were the—I mean, ACT UP New York City brought, I think, 200 people out for that protest, and was the mainstay of it. AIDS ACTION NOW! brought 30 people from Toronto. And Réaction SIDA was a group of, max 20-30 people, at the time. So, that's why there was this overwhelming feeling from the New York presence. So, coming out of the cultural stuff at the conference, and what Ken Morrison and you organized, is the other book you have there, *A Leap in the Dark*. Do you want to tell us a little about how that emerges into this book?**

TW: I don't remember that much. For some reason, I didn't get along with Allan Klusaček very well. I don't remember why that was. He's still around, right?

**GK: I don't know.**

TW: You should track him down. I believe he is. And, so, people in this book I worked with, like these doctors, around Nobby Gilmore...

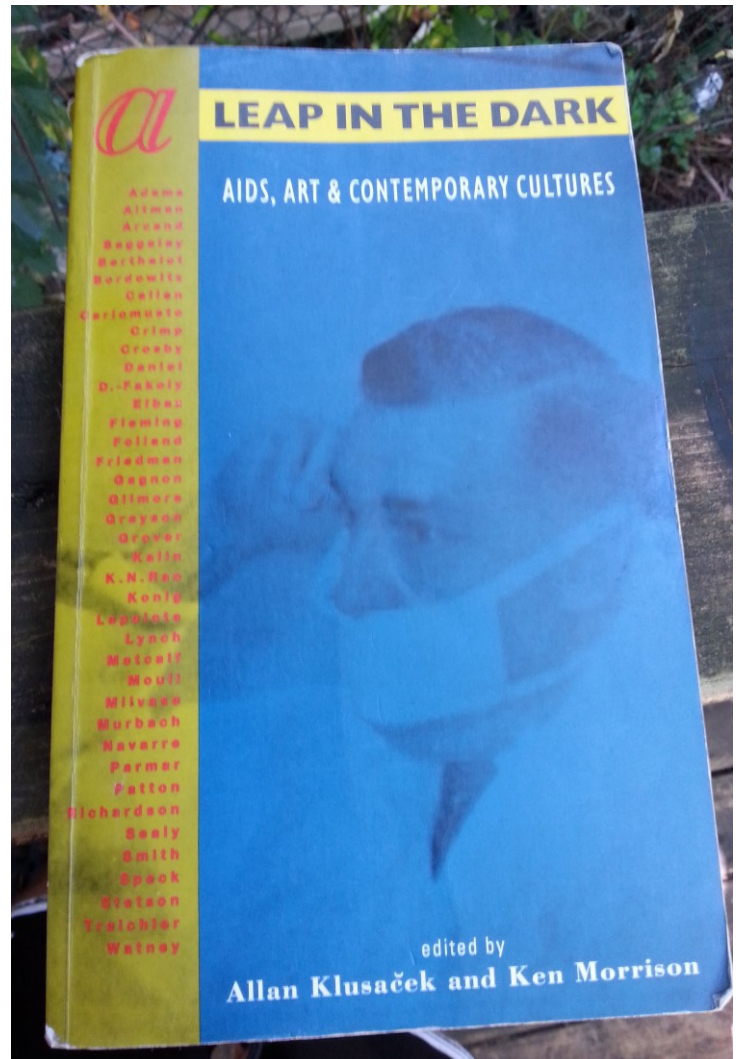
**GK: Right.**

TW: I remember once I did a presentation to a group of doctors a few years before the conference about AIDS and film. Wieland Speck was the German who sold out his work.

**GK: Okay.**

TW: What was the question again?

**GK: It was just about how that book came to be and what its relationship was to what happened to the conference?**



TW: The Kent Stetson thing is very interesting. He was, I believe, a Maritimer playwright whose play was produced either at the conference or soon after or before it. Yes, so when did this book come out? 1992, also.

**GK: Yes. They both come out the same year.**

TW: Yes. What was the question about the book?

**GK: What was its relationship to the sort of cultural organizing around the conference? It sounds like a number of the things that were presented are part of that book.**

TW: Definitely. Most of it was at the conference. It was definitely a proceedings book, in terms of the cultural activities at the conference. And it had all the American stars, you know, like Grover.

**GK: Right.**

TW: As well as they did a good job of including some Quebec people. There should have been a French version of it, though. I don't know what they were thinking. Or what? They tried and failed to bring in French speakers?

**GK: No, I'm fairly sure there was never a French version. [...] So, one of the questions I wanted to ask you—and you've already told us a little bit about this—is what was the impact of AIDS and AIDS activism in a really broad sense, including video activism, on your work on film and porn and the other things that you were doing?**

TW: Well, it was completely integrated in it. I mean, working in proto-queer cinema, you increasingly were not able to set aside the AIDS-themed work, either in Europe or in North America. It was completely integrated into my work. My big research project of the day that came out as a book in 1996 had, as its end point, Stonewall. So, the periodization didn't permit work on AIDS, but the dedication to that book included the name of every single person I knew of in gay film who died of AIDS. I think there might be about 50 names, I can't remember. We should look at that list. I mentioned porn, and this article that's in *Fluid* was a detour from my main book project that I was having a terrible time getting published. People would not touch gay porn. That didn't happen until 1996. I forget what year I signed my contract with Columbia, but it was maybe 1992 or 1993. People just would not touch it. I was furious that pioneering scholars like Linda Williams were able to publish their books on porn in 1989 without any pictures whatsoever, and mine was held up another seven years.

So, that's what I was working on. And, of course, my teaching and side articles in *Jump Cut*, or, papers at conferences. Those were the years of the big American Gay Studies conferences, as well as a couple in Toronto. So, I remember Vito Russo and I both being present at—I can't remember if it was Harvard, or Yale, or Rutgers—and we hung out a little bit at that conference. I remember him sitting there with a big grin on his face during my presentation. It must have been on porn, but I'm not positive. It's all on my CV. And that was, I guess, near the end of his life. I can't remember exactly what year he died. Was it 1992?

**GK: It was definitely after the Montreal AIDS conference. I think it was about two years after that.**

**RC: Also, in 1994 is when the AIDS project at Concordia launches. And you mentioned teaching, but it might be interesting to hear about the HIV/AIDS course, and the community lecture series that develops out of that same period?**

TW: Okay. Shall we segue into that?

**GK: Sure.**

TW: On the Concordia AIDS Committee, we became increasingly impatient with the framework of anti-discrimination. And we suddenly started reminding ourselves, maybe I was the main voice in that, that this is also an intellectual issue, a scientific issue, and we should be ensuring that this curriculum, and public, intellectual, scientific conversations around HIV/AIDS, are happening on campus. So, 1993-1994 was the first year of the AIDS Lecture Series. In that year we had six speakers, including Simon and Douglas.

**GK: Douglas Crimp and Simon Watney, right?**

TW: Yes.

**GK: Okay.**

TW: I forget who else. I mean, there's a clear record of that. And, so, that continued thereafter every year. During that first year, we thought, "Okay, this is a really important public event, but students also need a coherent curriculum to do the background and flesh out the research." So, the following year, we did the first version of the interdisciplinary AIDS course. It was a full year course. I taught that with—I am trying to remember the exact chronology—one year I co-taught it with Frances Shaver, and the other year I co-taught with Chantal Nadeau. It was first, Frances Shaver, then the following year was, Chantal Nadeau, but I could be wrong. And then after, we rotated the teaching of it. Ross did it for a few years. Donald Boisvert did it for a few years. And that was a pretty exciting project. The students responded very well. The two projects—the course and the lecture series—were coordinated. So, the lecturers got to know the instructors and teachers. They were mutually reinforcing. And the course, actually, led to the development of the sexuality curriculum, by the end of the decade. We did two major conferences in the '90s: La Ville en Rose in 1992, and Sex on the Edge in 1999. And, of course, AIDS work was a huge component in both of those conferences. You must have the catalogues of both of those?

**GK: I have material on La Ville en Rose, not the other one, but we can get it.**

TW: You should. Yes, there was an important Quebec presence at both of those conferences, especially La Ville en Rose, but also Sex on the Edge.

**GK: Yes. For sure.**

TW: Did that answer the question?

**GK: Yes. The question I wanted to ask was a follow up question to the one that Ryan posed to you. This is relatively unique too, in terms of anywhere across the Canadian state that I am aware of. Certainly, there have been AIDS courses, AIDS conferences, held at numerous other universities, but that there is such a space that has been created for both the community lecture series, and a pretty significant force around AIDS questions. So, I am just wondering why you think that might have happened more at Concordia than other places? And how cooperative the administration was with the development of this?**

TW: Very good question. I think that Concordia is a relaxed and a fairly innovative place. And there is space for individuals to exert leadership. There's not a huge amount of bureaucratic resistance to fresh ideas, if the lead initiative and energy is there on the part of the individuals. So, Concordia would let me do anything I wanted to do. And the other people, like Donald Boisvert, who was the Dean of Students, and Elizabeth Moray, who was the assistant to the Director... I was plugged into the right networks. We could do anything we wanted. There was financial support and we got a \$40,000 grant from Burroughs Wellcome Fund, which was huge in those days. Now it's nothing, but Concordia was so impressed that we were able to raise that money. Although it wasn't that hard. You know, they took these people out to lunches, like they were millionaires... And there was a sort of little cluster, or network of researchers who were doing interesting work on HIV. I wasn't the only one, obviously. There was a guy named John Badgley, who has since moved on. Do you know of him?

**GK: Yes.**

TW: I believe he was also on the conference committee. I guess Concordia was less good at retaining people like that. So, some of the key players, like John Badgley, moved on because Concordia wasn't sweetening the pot enough for them, I guess? And, Concordia was really a street-level institution. It seemed to enable, somehow, a kind of activist, politicized, layer of activity. I mean, not only around HIV/AIDS and queers, but also around Palestinian stuff, towards the end of the decade. The other thing that happened immediately in the early '90s was a committee—a gay and lesbian committee was set up—that made recommendations. One of their recommendations was the implementation of curriculum around LGB stuff, for some reason we excluded T, which was really short sighted. I don't remember why that was, but this recommendation to develop curriculum, I guess, was also one of our rationales for setting up the AIDS course.

**RC: One thing you didn't mention about the AIDS course, that I know is true today, is that students who are in the course would actually work with community organizations as part of the course. Was that from the beginning?**

TW: That was from the beginning.

**RC: And maybe, could you talk about some of the organizations that people were paired**

**with then, and how that has shifted over the years?**

TW: Good question. Yes. That was there from the beginning. ACCM must have been there by 1994, when we had our first rendition of the course, because we always sent our interns there. We had a lot of interns. At the time, there were more palliative care houses. There were many more, obviously, then than there are now. And we developed some relatively innovative internship projects—here and there—with community organizations whose mandate was not queer or AIDS related, but they worked very well. Students got so much out of these things. Some of them didn't, but most of them did. And we saw immediate results, in terms of people making career choices or study choices based on the epiphanies they had here in these internships. So, that was an exciting aspect of the course.

The very first day of the course I stole an idea from somewhere—I don't remember where—and had everyone present in the room, if they wanted to, write on the blackboard the names of people they knew who had died of AIDS. The whole blackboard was covered. That was in the fall of 1994. It was a really stunning moment. It didn't really hit us the fact that students had died. Some students I had taught and some of my friends in the university community. So, there was that element of personal processing of bereavement and mourning and anger that this had been allowed to happen unnecessarily. And hanging out a little bit with these doctors—like Nobby and my own personal doctor Erwin Goldstein—sort of added another layer of, we were really tuned into what was going on in the research community. Mark Wainberg was one of the early speakers in the lecture series. Did that answer your question?

**RC: Yes.**

TW: And over the years the internships have evolved, of course. There are many more at ACCM now, and at the palliative care houses there are fewer, because there are fewer of them around.

**GK: I was going to move on to talk a bit about ACCM, but is there more Concordia specific things that you think are relevant? Other things that may have happened related to AIDS and HIV at Concordia over the years? Like, we are largely stopping around 1996, but we can go past that for sure.**

TW: Ross will have told you. He developed the online course, but I think that was after 1996.

**GK: Yes.**

TW: Which was a huge success. Ryan has taught that, as well. Yes. So, we ended up with two courses, different courses, also at Concordia.

**RC: And you also developed the Queer Cinema course that had a big double unit on HIV/AIDS film and video, as well.**

TW: Right. There was both a Queer Cinema course starting in the late '90s, and the Sexual Representation in Cinema course that had been given since the early '80s, all of which had AIDS-

related items in the syllabus.

**GK: So, ACCM forms out of the demise of CSAM, but, my understanding from Ross, is that you were at one point on the board of ACCM.**

TW: I was on the board.

**GK: Do you want to tell us a little bit about what that organization is and what it did?**

TW: I didn't have that much experience working with community organizations and NGOs. And it's a little bit frustrating, because things work so slowly, even more slowly than in academia. And I was so busy with my academic work I didn't really have time to be a member of an activist organization. But I was there for—I don't remember how many years—five or six. At one point, I got elected vice president and immediately the president resigned, fully. I was so furious with him. I was, like, somehow, I don't know how long I was president for, I got out of there as fast as I could because I just couldn't do it. I was so busy with everything else.

**GK: Right.**

TW: I always said that was a trick. [laughter]

**GK: That was an evil trick.**

TW: Have you interviewed Fo Niemi?

**GK: No. And we can't do everyone, but we have a gigantic list of people in a whole bunch of cities to talk to and we only have one more year of funding, so who knows! But if we get to talk to him we can ask him this question: "Why did you do this to Tom?"**

TW: And you don't need to, but if you want an angle on sort of the multi-racial or minoritized dynamics in AIDS organizing, he's the right guy. He was the former president of, what was then called, Gay Friends of Concordia way back in the late 70s and early 80s.

**GK: Did he go on to become involved with the Human Rights Commission?**

TW: Yes. As the president of the Centre for Research Action on Race Relations [CRARR].

**GK: So, at ACCM had they been trying to do the same types of things that CSAM had been trying to do before, like providing AIDS support and prevention education? Those are the things that it did?**

TW: Yes.

**GK: Okay.**

TW: I am a little bit foggy about the pre-ACCM AIDS community organizations.

**GK: Right. No, that's fine. So, what is your general overall sense of what happened with AIDS organizing in a broad sense, including cultural dimensions during the 1990s? Beyond what you have already told us, as you have already told us a fair bit. Is there anything else that sticks out to you?**

TW: There was a big push to develop local cultural initiatives as opposed to importing things. So, that's more where work by people like Anne Golden comes in, and Esther Valiquette films. She was one of the early AIDS Lecture Series lecturers, just before she died. She died in 1994. So, she was there in the first or second year, I can't remember. Her work, in my mind, is absolutely essential and is under recognized. So, that push to develop local materials in French was important. There was an exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in which local work was experienced alongside imported work. So, yes, that's one of the things that I remember being important going on in the 1990s.

**GK: So, one other question related to the 1990s is that you obviously had done work with Ken Morrison around the cultural stuff around the AIDS conference, but are there other key individuals that you would point to as major movers and shakers in AIDS groups in the 1990s?**

TW: I've mentioned René. And I've mentioned Allan. One of the big people at ACCM, who I really discovered and really admired, was—what was his name, he's still with us—a lawyer. In the AIDS movement, you work with people that are really humbling, because they are so brilliant and committed and inspiring, and he was one of them. And I don't remember his name. [laughter]

**GK: We will figure it out.**

TW: David Thompson. Have you run across his name?

**GK: No.**

TW: His name should be on your radar, also. And I mentioned Anne Golden and Esther Valiquette.

**GK: And we have talked to Anne. The interview's on our site.**

TW: You learned some interesting stuff. I can't think of anyone else for now. But, I will if you send me the transcript, actually.

**GK: So, I am moving into our general concluding-type questions. So, are there any other questions either Danielle or Ryan would like to ask?**

**DN: I had a general question. based more so on an observation. Just moving through your home, I couldn't help but notice entire walls filled with incredible videos and films that you have collected. Can you speak to your personal collection? And why you started it?**





TW: I must have started it in the '70s when VHS came in. And I just found that I couldn't rely on conventional sources—whether archives or distributors—to provide me with the materials I needed for teaching and research. So, I just gathered them on my own and created my own archive. And there's a mixture of pirated stuff from TV and from commercially rented videos, things from independent distributors, also some originally shot materials. When DVD came in, there was a very slow process of digitizing the most important and pertinent things, but that has not been a systematic activity. It would have to be too large scale. I couldn't really afford it. Or didn't have the energy to supervise that, because it's all in my brain, really. Even though we have a database. It's all in my brain, which things are important, and which are not, and which things are irreplaceable, and which are not. There's lots of Indian stuff, as well. So, yes, now that DVD has sort of gone out... I still acquire DVDs, though. But now that it's gone out,

the collection, I guess is segueing into an online external drive. Or that's, like, a third collection, I guess. Maybe a fourth collection, but I also have analogue celluloid materials. A lot of them are in the basement: VHS, DVD, and now there's some external drives. So, I guess, teaching and research collections and archives were so bad, and that demanded personal archives, personal collections.

That leads, in fact, to the emergence of the Queer Media database, which is an online catalogue of all Canadian moving image LGBTQ-related materials, moving image materials. So, that was a good question, because I get to mention that. A lot of the AIDS-related materials are on that database from works by people who have died, like Michael McGarry from Vancouver, and a few others. I don't know whether this is on anyone's radar, these kinds of questions and criteria, again a lot of them are in my brain, But I think that database is very important. Now that I have retired, I hope that we are able to maintain it. It's sort of a challenge because, as usual, everyone thinks, no one cares. If you don't take personal initiatives and go beyond the call of duty and conduct unremunerated labour of passion and affect, then no one cares. I believe in remunerated labour,



with thanks to Ryan, but fortunately salaried academics are there to fill in the gaps.

**RC:** I think your question is really important. I don't think I would have been able to do the work I did at Concordia. I developed and taught an HIV/AIDS film and video course that could not have happened without your personal archives. That material is not available. The *Video Against AIDS* compilation tapes that John Greyson and Bill Horrigan put together, I was only able to see them because you have the three VHS tapes upstairs in your AIDS video file cabinet. And Vtape acknowledges that they've lost one of the three original tapes. So, it doesn't exist, you actually can't find it. And it's not online.



**TW:** The American distributor doesn't even have that?

**RC:** Video Databank and Vtape both do not carry it.

**TW:** Those fuckers. [laughter]

**RC:** So, your collection is very important.

**TW:** That is disgraceful.

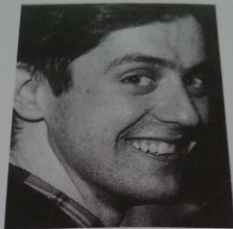
**RC:** Vtape said they were going to try and get on top of it after I met with them. But I guess I am just trying to reiterate that your collection is important.

**TW:** I know that makers make, and they're really bad archivists. Like, Greyson.

**GK:** I know. I had to chastise John about throwing out all his—he had lots of AIDS activist interview footage that he just threw out. [laughter] [...] So, there are three concluding questions. The first one that we ask everyone is are there things that have arisen for you as we have been talking? Like, memories, other topics that you want to talk about that you haven't had the opportunity to talk about yet?

TW: Something might come up when you send me the transcript, actually. It's Sunday morning and I was crazy to agree to this schedule. I mean, I didn't realize I would be up until three the night before at the screening. So, I'm a little bit foggy and I am sure when I look at the transcript I will get inspired. Hopefully, I find the time to fill in the gaps in the transcript.

**GK: So, the other two concluding questions are—one you already started to tell us a little bit about—but are there people, in terms of the AIDS Activist History Project, we want to remember people who we can't talk to now. So, we want to remember people who passed away, who died during this period of time of AIDS and HIV, who might have been involved in activism in a broad sense. Are there other people aside from the people you have mentioned already who you would like to have remembered? Or that you would remember?**



*In Memoriam  
François Laliberté*

TW: Chris Cockrill. Have people mentioned him? Ross must have.

**GK: Yes.**

TW: Kalpesh Oza.

**GK: A number of people have told us about him. He also ended up going to Toronto and going into AIDS ACTION NOW!, too. Do you want to tell us anything about those two people?**

TW: I am sure Ross has done a good job at doing that. When I see the transcript, I'll fill it out. Opening this book, *A Leap in the Dark*, I see the dedication to François Laliberté. You know, it's rough going. So, I am sure other names will come up.

**GK: The final question is just if there are other people that you would flag for us to interview? You've already told us a number of people, but other people you might want to suggest?**

TW: Maybe Chantal?

**GK: Where's Chantal now?**

TW: I think in Champaign, Illinois. But it would be interesting to look at the programs for La Ville en Rose and Sex on the Edge and see if there are any other people. It would be interesting to look at the repertory of all the speakers in the AIDS Lecture Series, because every year we had one local

person, some of whom were medical researchers. I mean, have you interviewed Joanne Otis at UQAM?

**GK: No.**

TW: She's been around a while doing research on gay men and prevention. A Projet Oméga. The pun is on "hommes et gars" [men and boys] project." Have you heard of that?

**GK: No. Tell us about that?**

TW: It's a French pun of men and boys, hommes et garçons. I think that's more late '90s than earlier 90s. Yes, so all of this AIDS medical research was going on here at the same time. I think more than what was going on in Toronto. It was led by people like Mark and the Francophone universities. We had a doctor on our video committee for the AIDS conference—I forget his name. Another doctor from McGill, who was on the ACCM board—now I can't remember his name. I guess, yes, there was a kind of co-activism in the research community that was interesting to discover for me as a humanities academic.

**GK: That's I think all of our questions. Thank you so much, Tom, for sharing this early morning interview time with us.**

TW: My pleasure.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]