

AAHP
AIDS Activist History Project

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Interviewee:	Kenn Quayle
Interviewers:	Alexis Shotwell & Gary Kinsman
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Persons present: Kenn Quayle – KQ
Alexis Shotwell – AS
Gary Kinsman – GK

[START OF TRANSCRIPT]

AS: It's September 17, 2016. We're in Gibson's [British Columbia], talking to Kenn Quayle about Toronto. Thanks for talking to us.

KQ: Wow. It's been mind-blowing thinking about all that. So long ago, such a huge decade in my life.

GK: So, where we start all of the interviews, just so that there's a baseline or a common reference point, is whether you have any memory of when you first heard about AIDS, and what you might have heard?

KQ: Yes. I first moved to Toronto from Laval University. I grew up on Vancouver Island, and I went to Laval for about a year or so. And then I went to Toronto because I was coming out, and somebody told me it was the gay capital of Canada. So that's where I went. I guess this is around '82. And fairly shortly after I ended up meeting this guy at one of the GCDC [Gay Community Dance Committee] dances, and we got on the bus together and went to California. [laughter]

AS: That night?

KQ: Well, no, it took months for him to call me back, actually. It was terrible. But anyway, it's an adventure. [laughter] We had a few months in San Francisco, but he got busted for working illegally, so we had to split in the middle of the night and went to LA. We ended up on the streets pulling tricks in West Hollywood. And I went to jail. Also, during that trip was the first time I ever injected drugs. I'd share the needles with everybody on Polk Street in San Francisco. I was in the right place at the right time, doing all the right things—or the wrong things, or whatever. So, as I came back from that California adventure, so, '82 or '83, coming back to Toronto through Vancouver, and hearing about the quarantine, you know? And GRID [Gay Related Immune Deficiency], all that stuff. So, when I finally went to the Hassle Free Clinic to get tested, I figured, for sure, you know, everybody else got it, and I did everything else with everyone else, like why not? They expected that I would be positive as well. So, I was totally surprised to find out I was not positive. Like, "Why?" Whatever. Here I am. Here we are. I mean, that obviously is significant in itself. I'm sure you've heard that from other people.

AS: Yes.

KQ: So, my first hearing about AIDS was the same as everybody, you know? That there's this gay cancer thing, and we don't know what it is. The right wing bigots are freaking out, "Look out!" And, you know, "What can we do about it?" The "punishment from God" business, the Louise Hayes "You can heal yourself," stuff. All of that sort of started emerging around the same time as any scientific information, so there's like, various versions of the AIDS mythology that I saw unfolding around me all at the same time. But yes, I just learned as everyone else was learning. Everyone around me was suddenly impacted by this thing, and there was nothing we could do about it.

GK: Right. So, the initial knowledge about AIDS is much more about it as sort of a medical health issue. Do you remember when you would have started to hear about it as something that could be political, or people could be activists around?

KQ: My arrival in Toronto was when the Right to Privacy Committee was doing the anti-bathhouse raids protests, "Enough is enough!" I mean, there's a photo of me carrying the banner that my parents saw on CBC TV, and said, "Don't you ever do that again!" [laughter] So, I was politicized right from the beginning. My approach to AIDS was political right from the start, especially with the backlash from the right wing, and all of that stuff. So it's hard for me to separate that. I got to play in the gay world pre-AIDS, which I am eternally grateful for, despite how short those years were. And boy oh boy, am I lucky, you know? I got Hep-C somewhere along the way, probably way back then, but... I just got to see the community change, and how we interact with each other, and what we prioritize together changed. You know, I got to see what was the gay liberation politics agenda put on the back burner to deal with the AIDS crisis, and that whole political thing. And the response to that later on, you know, like, post-ACT UP, the evolution to Queer Nation. Anyway, it monstrously changed everything in every possible way.

AS: Can you say something just about what gay liberation was like for you before AIDS? Or what that meant?

KQ: I came out—I went to university for about a year or so, and discovered that there was diversity beyond the little fishing village that I was brought up in. And when I came out to my family I was told, "Don't come home till you're straight," and that was in line with what I expected. But I sent them a copy of *Loving Someone Gay*, and this fifty-page long letter, pouring my heart out. Anyway. The first while, my connections in the gay community, as a young guy, my connections were mostly to like, thirty-five year old guys or so. And I didn't see myself as attractive or valuable or whatever, so I kind of got passed around the scene a little bit, until it sort of dawned on me that if there's one eighteen year-old faggot in Toronto there must be some more. So I asked somebody, and somebody told me about LGYT [Lesbian and Gay Youth Toronto], and the meetings at the 519 [Church Street Community Centre], and I expanded my connections to the gay community, maybe through that.

AS: So, that scene would have been more like, not, "Don't come home until you're straight," but more like, "It's good to be gay."

KQ: Yes. Absolutely. Celebrating being queer. Queer liberation, absolutely. Assimilation wasn't even in my vocabulary yet. I loved the, like—it still blows my mind that you had these clubs called

Parkside and Charlie's and the queens would all stand out front and get egged by the homophobes, like "Oh my god." What a weird, weird world! And yet, I still really identified with that strength of standing up against the stupid idiots coming down in their cars. Even though it was like, a ridiculously pointless and stupid charade, annually! It was a very weird thing. But just, like, I saw gay pride when I first visited Toronto, the year that it was in Grange Park. I was there with an artist—a gay artist, we were on a walk through Queen Street, and just happened upon the parade as we were heading down the road. This large-ish lesbian steps out of the crowd and points her fingers straight at us and goes, "Come on, you chicken shit faggots! Let's get your asses in here! I know what you're all about." I was horrified. Like, "Oh my god, she can tell!" [laughter] But so, I didn't participate in the Gay Pride then. The year that they went to the U of T [University of Toronto], I was there that year, and I think that's the first year I saw Michael [Smith].

GK: That would be '82...

KQ: I went to the LA one when it was down in Hollywood, and then I was back at the U of T one. So I think I must have missed one in Toronto there.

GK: Toronto, there was one in '81. That was the first one at the end of June, around the anniversary of Stonewall. And the next year, it was still Grange Park we were at. I think it was maybe '83, would have been when people were in that sort of big square in front of Convocation Hall at U of T. So, that would have been '83.

KQ: That maybe was just before I went to LA, but it could have been after.

GK: So, you are involved in lots of things.

KQ: Yes, and my activism stuff was involved, not just in Toronto, but all over the place, and in lots of issues. So, one of your questions that you sent was asking me about when did I leave AIDS ACTION NOW!, or when did I move on, or whatever. Anyway, it's just, like, I went to San Francisco, I spent two years travelling back and forth across the States, I went to New York, I hung out with Radical Faeries and ACT UP folks, did a lot of activism on the road in other communities, not just about AIDS and queer stuff, but anti-apartheid stuff...

GK: So, were you involved in other social movement organizing before you came out? Or was it sort of simultaneous?

KQ: I remember going, when I got to Laval University, I saw Black people. And like, the student union building had an info table for the UFO cult alien people. I don't know. Just, weird stuff for me, from my experience, things like that that just sort of woke me up to like, there's a range of people in the world, and there could even be space for someone like me. So I was sort of politicized right from the get-go that way. Like, I remember seeing "Flower Power" spray-painted on my public school when I was a little kid, and that was one of my favourite things, I didn't even know what it was.

AS: But it looked good!

KQ: Looked kind of cool. I saw the hippies getting beat up in Chicago on TV. The Democratic Convention, [1968]. Anyway, that was inspiring to me, just seeing people fighting back against authority that way, right from a very early age. Rebellion against my father's violence and abuse also fits in there, for sure. My brother's a cop, he's married to a cop, as different as you could possibly be [laughter].

GK: So when you are in Toronto, I realize you're going various different places over those years, but I think you have some involvement in the Peace Movement as well?

KQ: Yes, one of the first places I remember really clicking with people was at the Queen's Park Peace Camp. I had joined the International Socialists. I was lucky to have not been abducted by the Scientologists [laughter]. I actually was, almost, on one of my first wanders through Toronto at Yonge Street. I phoned some friend while saying, "Hey, I just met these cool people, they want to do this thing with me," And they're like, "Get the hell out of there! Run!" [laughter] So, I was rescued from that. The International Socialists and I were okay for a little while, until the boyfriend that I did the trip to California with, and I, put out a pamphlet ourselves, called "GRID," I think, that was during the bathhouse times, and it was about standing up to police violence. But we talked about calling for international socialism in response, so they didn't like that we used that term. It wasn't okay'd by the head guru. So, I got called an anarchist, and I didn't know what that meant, I'd never heard that word before—or, actually I had, from someone in high school before. But I met Brian Burch, and Dianne Savard, and some other people at the Peace Camp. And then some of those were folks from the Kensington Youth Theatre Ensemble, later on, we became close again over those years—Roberta Spence, who was working at the... whatever it was called, one of the Peace information things behind the Eaton Centre. And out of that, we did a civil disobedience at the Peace Camp one day, that was probably my first civil disobedience, after having been busted for prostitution in LA. Out of that somehow, I met Lynna Landstreet, I met Michael [Smith], and got involved with the Pagans for Peace and GLAD, the Gay and Lesbian against Disarmament folks, and protest out of Litton Systems. I went there multiple times, and got busted over and over again, in civil disobedience actions. Usually I would totally protest, and not give my name, not stand up to a judge, go on hunger strike while I was in jail, all that kind of thing. So, I have a fairly long arrest record, I would expect, but I'd kind of like to see it one day. So, there was a lot of stuff going on. I met John Kozachenko back then.

GK: Was that some of the organizing around Litton Systems?

KQ: Yes. After the Vancouver 5 bombing, but when there was lots of protest around the Cruise Missile Conversion Project. I did some other stuff with them, or connected to them, around Ontario Hydro, and Pickering [Nuclear Generating Station] and Darlington [Nuclear Generating Station]. There was one really fun day, we had a civil disobedience thing at the Ontario Hydro Headquarters building at College and University. And there was a shopping mall underneath, and an elevator that goes to the shopping mall, and past the mall into their offices. The cops were trying to blockade us at the lobby, but the company had said, "Don't arrest anyone." And so we spent all day going downstairs into the mall and up the elevator, and wait for someone up on the fire escapes, and wait for somebody to come out and grab the door. We'd go in as many floors as we could and

just leaflet all the workers, about nuclear power stuff, and getting dragged out over and over again. All day long. It was so much fun. [laughter] That was a good one.

GK: Alright, so, around anarchism, you begin to get more connected with people in the community and scene?

KQ: Yes, somewhere in there I got introduced to Cathedral A, which was definitely maybe more intentionally an anarchist household than what Cathedral B became.

GK: Do you want to just tell us a little bit about what the two Cathedrals were?

KQ: [laughter] I'm sure some people must have said something about them. They were amazing, amazing features in Toronto history. They were shared houses on Crawford Street. They lasted years and years and years. They had the same landlord, they were ten doors apart. Cathedral B became where I lived, most of the time when I was there – I was at Cathedral A a *little* – and it was more like a queer anarchist centre after a while. That was not so intentional as the way I saw Cathedral A, as being more anarchist-oriented. They had more of a music thing going on, Violence in the Sacred, the Polkaholics And they had friendships with Faith Paul and those folks. Cathedral A, and then Tracey came on, I don't know how, how did I meet up with her? I can't remember.

GK: That's Tracey Tief?

KQ: Tracey Tief. Anyway, she was one of the Cathedral B crew at one point, when we did the Anarchist Unconvention. And MDC [Millions of Dead Cops] came, and we did the Rubber Rap stuff and all that. Tracey's still doing great stuff in Toronto. If you haven't spoken with her yet, you should.

GK: We will.

KQ: She's great. I got busted for the Animal Liberation Front stuff, with Kentucky Fried Chicken, spray paint, and I eventually got sentenced to community service hours. I got to serve my community service hours at Inner City Youth, where Chris Bearchell was my manager, and Tracey and I got hired as peer coordinators for this video project called *STD Street Smarts*. And there was a bit of conflict, because we were sort of freaky, punky politicians, and they were trying to be street youth, east side, whatever, so not the same scene. But they for months were trying to get people from their crowd to take these positions, and there we were, ready to take it on, and completely able. So, we managed to bridge those communities and work together, and it was a couple of folks who were co-coordinators from that street scene, and a couple of us, me and Tracey, but others of our friends got involved in that project. That, as far as I know, was the first time in Canada that there was an AIDS prevention video with a condom-demo, actually using a hard penis, which was my boyfriend, Tim Potts at the time. And we actually showed him injecting, and flagging [a technique for making sure the needle is in the vein before injecting], so people actually see the blood in the needle. I think that's the first time that was actually shown, as far as we know, on video. But before that, it would've been bananas and broom handles.

AS: Yes, and not actually showing people what's happening.

KQ: What's really the risk. And what to do about it.

GK: So, somewhere in there you also meet Michael Smith. And he—was he at Ryerson then?

KQ: He was. He was doing... there was a guy called Nathan, and I remember meeting him, I think that's his name, and Michael was doing something with the library. He may have already had some radio stuff going on before he and I got—we did a bit of stuff together, we did a show called the *Rather Queer Noise* at CKLN. But, there might only be one or two of those shows that we ever did. I don't even know... they're somewhere, maybe. We did some other stuff on the radio, too. Denise Benson was around then. I can't remember where Denise would have been...

GK: Denise would have been the music coordinator.

KQ: Yes. I can't remember a hell of a lot, but I remember going to Ryerson quite a lot, and hanging out with Michael when I was first getting to know him. I first saw him, I think, at that Pride parade that ended up at Convocation Hall. He was wearing his plaid pants, and he was like, one of half a dozen punk queers that I thought, "He's hot." I didn't meet up with him that day, but soon after.

AS: He was memorable.

KQ: He was absolutely memorable. He was totally memorable. And, more so, beautifully and deeply, the more I got to know him.

GK: He ended up living at Cathedral B, too?

KQ: Yes. I don't know, like, we all went back and forth, and in and out. There was one summer we traded head lice or crabs back and forth between houses three times. [laughter] Because everybody slept in everybody else's beds. It was terrible. I had dreadlocks, I had to shave my head that year, finally, eight and a half years. [laughter] But, yes, Michael had been at A, and he moved to B. I don't remember exactly how I ended up there. I don't know. It just seemed like the right place to go! I can't remember how it happened. I just sort of naturally landed there. It was kind of my first real sense of like, chosen family, or alternative family, after my biological family train wreck. I'd had a little bit of that previously with my ex, Frank, who I went to California with, and his friends Michael Sweeney and Frank Nemeth. Frank's not around anymore, but we lived together, the three of us, for a little while in a house in King and Portland, and our welfare worker was Bill Dwyer, one of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. So, he took it really easy on us! [laughter] We spent a lot of time shoplifting at the Salvation Army for drag, and going out and drinking and taking drugs and partying, and had a great time living together for a while. I ended up leaving that relationship because there was violence happening that was too much like what had happened with my dad, and I needed to not keep on doing that, like, participating in both ways. It was a deciding time for me. Politics was important around that, too. That's when I first started connecting with the socialists, and hadn't quite made the transition to the anarchists yet. Frank was always the anti-police kind of anti-authoritarian guy, but not learned. He was brought up in

Alexandra Park, housing project, and in the streets of Toronto, and much more wise about that than I had any clue about until I figured it out. But I remember accusing him of being an anarchist one day, not following the rules, or whatever it was. Just before I flipped that over in my own head.

GK: You are involved in a number of cultural projects during this period of time.

KQ: The Cathedral B community scene, I can't believe when I tried to figure it out in my calendar, what a short period of time that really was. Like, how much went down in such a short period of time. I'm still not sure if I've got it right. There was a lot of fighting anti-abortion stuff, some of us were involved in helping women get to their appointments, through the lines of the idiots at the abortion clinics.

AS: Clinic support, yes.

KQ: Yes. And Morgentaler stuff was going on at the time. Lots of peace movement stuff was going on at the time. Around that time was when I first became vegan, and I stayed hardcore vegan for ten years, until I got too sick and couldn't do it anymore. And so that whole thing, we were learning together about animal liberation politics and about eating healthy food, sharing food and cooking. We had an alternative economy kind of lifestyle which involved dumpster diving. You know, just as much freedom as we could possibly figure out. It was a big experiment. We canned our own tomatoes one year. I'll never forget, later that winter, sitting around having dinner together, and the sound of glasses, tomato jars blowing up in the cupboard in the kitchen! [laughter] Once one went off, they all started going! Turned out we hadn't cleaned them properly and bacteria got in there. We had a whole cupboard full of mason jars of tomato goo all over the place! That place became a cockroach hell at one point, and it took absolute dedication and determination to save it. But it became a human residence again. [laughter] It was a very different lifestyle than most people tend to live. I absolutely appreciate it. When we hosted the Anarchist Unconvention, a lot of the organizing for that happened through folks at Cathedral B and some other people who were doing anarchist newspapers at the time... Jim....

GK: Campbell?

KQ: Jim Campbell, and *Bulldozer* and all that stuff was one wing. But there was another group—Kevin Thomas, and Shannon something—Jim's girlfriend, and Jim somebody, they were together sort of. Anyway. And we connected with them through the peace movement as well. There was another whole little part of the anarchist scene on Beverley Street, three houses in a row that we had going for a while. One of them had been going for quite a long time, it was the same landlord. We had the opportunity to rent all three together for a while, and that was a whole crazy, crazy scene. But that was also folks, some U of Ter's and folks that we'd met at the Litton protests up on Beverley Street. That was around the same time that the Kensington Youth Theatre thing was happening, too.

GK: Do you want to tell us a little bit more about the Kensington Youth Theatre?

KQ: Sure. It was International Youth Year. I think that's 1985. I had witnessed – more than witnessed – at the very last minute, it was people from the peace camp, including Roberta Spence, Ian Backs, Andy Mason and Chris Bearchell, and organized through Saint Stephen's Community... whatever the heck it is, Heavenly... it was a youth work kind of thing. Catherine and Pierre were the two directors. Fifteen or so of us all got hired for six months to create our own show and take it on tour across the country. That was the second year. The first year they'd had done this process, not exactly the same, I don't know what the funding situation was, but we were in this play, it was up the night before performance, our opening night, and one of the guys in this troupe quit. He was a street queen who had written a drag queen part, and they needed someone to come in and rescue it who was able to learn the lines and do the part in 24 hours. So I did that.

AS: Wow. You did that?

KQ: That was the first time I ever did drag in public. It was a Cindy Lauper song, "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun," which would never have been my favourite song to pick [laughter] but it was already in there! [laughter] So I came in and rescued the show, and sort of with a promise that next year, even though you're going to be a year too old, we'll hire you in to do the tour thing.

AS: Did you already have experience?—I just can't imagine being able to memorize...

KQ: I did theatre, and television production stuff in high school. I got the graphics communication award at my high school. I also got the French scholarship, I could choose whatever University I wanted to in Canada. They were going to give me the English one, but they couldn't give me all of them, so they gave that to my girlfriend at the time. Or, sort of girlfriend. She kept saying afterwards, "You deserve it! You should've got it!" Anyway, I chose Laval in Quebec because I knew I'd have to speak French there, and it was as far away from my family as I could get. Anyway. There are stories within stories there... You were asking me about some other event, but I was thinking still about the Anarchist Convention.

AS: Which I'd love to hear more about, if you want to say more about that.

KQ: You haven't heard much about that yet. It was an amazing thing. Like, Michael and I'd been living at Cathedral B in the garage together, and he'd painted it pink and black. And his grandmother had recently died, so he'd gotten inheritance money from her, and he used that to do a bunch of stuff, like make the garage into a home, and also buy a Volkswagen van that we ended up driving around and blowing the engine out of three times in the course of two years. But he basically financed that trip for us. Other people got to take advantage of that as well. It was a real gift to the community that he was willing to share with everybody. It was an amazing thing. It was an amazing thing to do, spending two years driving around the United States, visiting prisons for activists, you know, anti-racist activists, folks who were connected with through anarchist propaganda stuff—not even online, but newspaper exchange and stuff like that. But it was all leading up to the Chicago Haymarket memorial, its hundred years. I was going to that, but I went down early for a planning meeting in Chicago, and then spent a few months wandering around the Eastern seaboard. I ended up in Boston, and Michael [Smith] and David Barbarash came in the van and met me in Boston, and then we hit the road from there. We went all over the place. But there

had been that year, at the Haymarket anniversary, was also an anarchist—the First North American Anarchist Conference, in Chicago. So we followed that up with one in Toronto, I believe, in San Francisco, I think the San Francisco one might have been before the Toronto one, but I don't think so. Minneapolis was the fourth one, and I don't think there were any more after that. But there were like, four or five hundred anarchy-punk kind of people from around North America, and some even from Mexico, suddenly in Toronto, wanting to kick shit and knock things over, and with nowhere to stay. [laughter] We ended up hosting, you know, literally a couple hundred people in our house, sleeping on every floor surface. All the roofs, the backyard, the front yard, part of the park across the street, it was *packed* full of people! [laughter]

AS: Everyone using, like, two toilets.

KQ: Oh yes. And one kitchen, and whatever. Sharing everything. But you know, that's just how Cathedral B was, and that's what was needed at the time, and that's how it went. It was in the middle of all that when Tim Potts arrived back from a trip to California. I hadn't met him yet, but there was a woman called Ginger who was driving a psychedelic painted van that Tim and his boyfriend, Ray, at the time, and some other folks, I can't remember who, had made friends with the MDC band folks in California. Anyway, they all arrived back in Ginger's van and that was when I met Tim and had a wild bit of summer with the whole group thing going on, with five or six of us, and Tim and I ended up becoming boyfriends out of that, and stayed lovers for seven years, through all kinds of thick and thin. But I remember him arriving in town, I had heard of this creature named Tim but hadn't met him yet. Those folks all became really essential. Like, in terms of the "Rubber Rap" thing, like, that was all happening at that time. We did the performance on stage in Pride that year, we were all tripping on acid, and we showed up in Ginger's van—she was driving a psychedelic van full of freaks, and this this cop stops, or security, and she's like, "We're going to the stage!" [laughter] and they let us through. And we did our show. I really wish somebody had a recording of that. I heard there was an audio recording that Jennifer Gilmore's friend had, a VHS, somebody had the camera pointed at the ground, but happened to have the audio recording, during the time that we were doing that, and I got to hear it once, and it was stupid to not fucking record it at the time. I don't even know if Jennifer knows who those people were, you know, I've asked her and hinted, nudge-nudged a couple of times, and she's not really keen on knocking on doors I don't think, or whatever it would take to make that happen. But you know, maybe Pride was recording stuff that was going on their stages at the time. It was one of their side stages. Anyway, we rode in on mushrooms, Michael and Tracey and I went to Michael's cousin's recording studio the night before the deadline for this Public Health rubber rap contest, radio thing. We'd never done anything like that before. Well, we'd done weird stuff before, but not written a rap song! We did a long, long improv together while we were getting high, about Ellis the Camel, and I can't remember, but anyway, eventually we got the Rubber Rap out and recorded it. We'd spent some time writing it with a group of friends, and getting it all... like, believe it or not, we had rhymes for aerosolized pentamidine and stuff like that. Like, we knew what we were talking about! [laughter] But the contest was the next morning, we had to get the tape in, and we got it in, but we didn't make a copy of the bloody thing. And for some reason, they don't have it. It got played on the radio, so you know, somewhere, somebody's archives has a copy of us doing that thing. We got honourable mention at the end of the broadcast, they played the rap songs, and like, the ones they gave it to were more like, traditional rap songs, and they said, "But this one! We

couldn't give it—" we called ourselves the Fuck Heads, and we swore throughout the whole thing. And it was Public Health, so there was no way they were going to say "This is the winner!" But clearly, the politics in it, and the knowledge about AIDS and all that stuff, including treatment, was all top of the line, as best as you could get at that time. And so, we got honourable mention and they played it on the radio along with the others.

AS: What station was it?

KQ: I think it was CBC that I heard it on.

AS: So it might actually still exist!

KQ: It must somewhere. I can't believe that the Public Health Department didn't hang onto it. I asked, "where's the original?" You know, that could be in someone's box somewhere.

GK: So, around the "Rubber Rap." I mean, clearly you were doing it in some ways to try to win this contest, but you also must have had ideas about what you were trying to accomplish with it in terms of education...

KQ: Yes, like, we had a real youth-orientation to our politics at the time. It was fairly early on. So, empowering other young people to learn, teach each other, whatever. That was a big part of it. So it was an opportunity for us to share that political orientation with a younger community or crowd, a different cross-section of society than we might normally be hanging out with, being a bunch of white kids, mostly. And so, there was definitely some intention to that aspect of participating in it. But also, we were just having fun. It was fun to make up those lyrics and sing them together and perform them. [laughter] And we opened up with it during the Anarchist Convention, MDC played at El Mocambo.

GK: El Mocambo is a place in Toronto.

KQ: On Spadina?

GK: Yes.

KQ: I think that's where it was.

GK: It might have closed since then, but it was around then.

KQ: So, we were their opening act. When we got up on stage, it was all this testosterone-laden, black leather jacket, macho punk scene bar for the MDC show. Not at all from the unconventional scene. So most of them didn't have a fucking clue who we were. So, this group of freaks walks out, and we were all wearing skirts and makeup, etc. And people in the audience started hooting at us, "Get off the stage, fucking faggots! Blah blah blah!" And Dave, of MDC, the lead singer of their band, came out on stage and said, "Shut up, you assholes! We're not going to bother playing this show if you don't welcome our friends," and got them all to chill out. We did our thing, got a round of

applause, and then the show went on, and it was great. So that was neat. So, anyway, there could be a recording of that somewhere, through the... or maybe even M.D.C.

GK: Great. Anyway, we will put the lyrics up, and hopefully find any recording.

KQ: Yes, well I'll keep on hunting for the rest of my life.

AS: Well, there's a version of it in the play, right?

KQ: Maybe.

AS: Yes.

GK: If there's a version in the play, it's sort of partial.

AS: It's partial, yes. Well, you'll see it. It's toward the end.

GK: Isn't some of it in John Greyson's *The World is Sick [Sic]*?

AS: I don't remember that.

GK: Some of it was done in Montreal. There is a partial version, I mean, maybe Karen Pearlston, Tracey Tiefert and someone else.

AS: Yes. And we have some versions of the lyrics...

KQ: Cool. I remember when I did the *Coming On* zine, and put the lyrics in there, it was like, one or two line fragments that I... like, off on the side with an arrow pointing in. As far as I know all of the lyrics are there, with some really grainy, photocopied pictures of the stage performance at Pride.

AS: Yes.

KQ: In the Cathedral B scene, when I first got there, there was this old, biker-hippie guy called Charlie who lived in the garage in the back. We had this freaky, queer, anarchy-punk thing going on in the main house, and Charlie was cool. He'd come in and use the toilet or kitchen or whatever, you know, we got along fine, but he did his thing. Michael and I ended up in that space together. That was when he was first starting to get sick, and we didn't really know what was going on. Like, he didn't even know what was going on. I remember sitting there with him for a long, long time. Like, day after day after day, basically holding court, smoking hash, like, lots of hash, over and over and over again, all day long, and it sort of dawned on him at some point, "I've been like this for a few months now, and I'm really not feeling very well, actually." That was sort of when it was first, like, "This is really happening. This is really happening to my friend." The significance of that took on a huge importance in all of our lives. That was a beautiful thing to see, the whole community coming together and supporting Michael through that process as best we could. I know I could have done better at things. I'm still, to me, what we went through, including the memorial thing

and the protest and all that stuff, like, the treatment care team, when he needed that, and the housing co-op... And previous to that, around Cathedral B, including our road trip together, like... the way he lived with his illness and... he was never a whiner about it. He struggled with it. He hated those bloody pills. But he had us all around him. I've never seen another memorial thing for anybody, ever else, like what we pulled together for Michael that day.

AS: Could you say what you did?

KQ: [Sigh] I can't even really remember how it happened. It was an open coffin thing, and so people brought gifts for Michael to take with him over to the other side. I think it was Scott, or maybe Robinski brought a flashlight and batteries, because Michael had said it was going to be dark over there, he wanted to see where he was going. I brought him a Mars Bar. He was always guiltily eating Mars Bars. Anyway, that was all part of it. We must have had something planned ahead of time, because there were some signs, and maybe even a banner. But we were pissed off our friend was dead. He didn't need to die that way. Part of it was government inaction, and pharmaceutical profiteering, and you know, homophobia, and whatever. But we were *mad*. The way we'd acted before, *with* Michael among us, when we were mad with the way he should act [crying] like, "Fuck you!" and do whatever it takes! So you know, all the stuff with ACT UP and AIDS ACTION NOW! and all of that that I've lived through with Michael, like, I was there at his memorial. And it just made absolutely sense at a certain point in the service just to say, "Okay, well now we're going to get up and we're going to leave the church and we're all going to go for a protest march," and we went around the block, we blocked the traffic, nobody ordered a permit or whatever. We stopped the traffic. I think the police probably got involved by the end, like, blocking traffic for us but they knew they weren't going to stop us! There was no fucking stopping us! And we went up Yonge Street, and around Bloor Street, and down Church Street. And it was like, you know, "We're going to take up space, and we're going to make noise, and we're here to protest! Our friend Michael is dead, and we're mad as hell about it!" That was just an amazing, amazing thing.

He was a very, very special man. You know, in terms of celebrating diversity, or whatever bumper sticker you want to think, he really helped open me up to that stuff. He taught me about apartheid—I didn't know anything about that before I met him. He taught me about feminism as a man. We met Radical Faeries and learned about that together. He was hanging out at CASNIP, (Canadians Allied in Solidarity with Native People) the Native peoples organization in Toronto. He made connections with folks there, and that's why we ended up going to Big Mountain for the survival gathering down there, at sun dance.

There was always part of Michael that was about helping out those other people over there, who might have it worse. Or are similarly fucked over, or whatever. That's really stuck with me as hugely important all along, and that's really a big part of my AIDS work. I could see in the evolution of the movement that the faggots were okay, they're going to look after themselves, they got some dykes on side too, you know, and they've got a handle on this medical thing. And it's going to be a rough ride, but you know, the folks who really need help are the sex workers and the street kids and the people in jail and whatever. And injecting drug users. I remember, there was a guy in jail, in the Don Jail, who was in the [Toronto] *Sun* for not getting his meds or something, I

can't remember, it was the first time I had heard about somebody in our local community, a prisoner living with AIDS. Michael was pissed right off about that, and he helped organize pickets outside Don Jail with me and some other people. Out of that, PASAN [Prisoners with AIDS Support Action Network] was developed. I carried on work with PASAN, helped to write their first public paper, I did the section on anonymous testing in that first paper. I felt really honoured to hear that that organization still exists and is still doing amazing stuff. Wow.

GK: Yes, they just had their 21st anniversary last spring.

KQ: Wow. Yes. So, Michael really helped push me in daring to speak out for them over there that are getting shut up, shut out, or whatever. He and I went to the San Francisco World AIDS Conference together. There was two big issues up at the time: one was about US immigration and people with AIDS, and one was about women treatment access stuff. So, he wasn't going in. He was protesting, staying outside. That's cool. But he wasn't planning on doing the civil disobedience thing, until the day that it was a women's action day, and I remember, I wrote a big sign that said "Sissys Support our Sisters in Struggle!" with a big snake on it. And Michael said, [whispering] "You spelled sissies wrong!" [laughter] But something, you know, when the moment came and the cops moved in, they were busting the women who were sitting down. I can't remember—it was a blockade thing going on. Michael said he just couldn't take it. He decided to get up and go over there and join in, right then and there. That was a total example of him putting that kind of care and consideration and empathy into action. Like, he was very sick, you know? It was probably hard on him to spend, whatever, that night or however long it was in jail. But you know, it was part of a movement. It was a big scene, a lot of support as well around that, I'm sure it was exciting. I loved doing that stuff, too. I'll never forget him, just like, "Herumph!" [laughter]

GK: So, Michael got involved in AIDS ACTION NOW!, which I guess you were involved a bit in, too?

KQ: Yes, I guess. I certainly remember AIDS ACTION NOW!, and would have gone to whatever protests were happening that I was around for. When you asked about the, I remember the Jake Epp effigy and the KKKanada thing. My thought about that was, "Uh oh, was I the one that wrote that?" [laughter] So, I don't know. I remember there was that protest. I don't *think* I was at it, but I'm not sure. I may have been involved in creating the effigy, and it could well have been me that wrote something like that on it at that time. But I don't know.

GK: My memory, is that, I think it was a public action meeting of AIDS ACTION NOW! I think you were at some public action meetings.

KQ: I went to some meetings there for sure.

GK: But my memory is that you and Michael took responsibility for getting the effigy together.

KQ: Well that's cool! That's a legacy—I'm willing to live with that one!

GK: I mean the controversy of course, is that Tim McCaskell and George Smith didn't like this, KKKanada. [laughter] Because of course, it got in all the media coverage.

KQ: Of course! Of course. There was... somebody made a sign here at Pride this year on the sunshine coast that said "Fuck Binary" or something like that, so the Pride committee people got their knickers in a knot trying to figure out how to manage public image stuff when all that came up. [laughter].

GK: So it's a continuing...

KQ: Oh yes, it's a continuing saga. I remember, one of the things I was most impressed about was people learning about medical stuff. Like, because they had to. And it was so complicated, and it was changing *all* the time. I remember, after discovering I was negative, I could see that somebody needed to do stuff around prevention education. Somebody needed to do stuff around support treatment. So I deliberately chose that I was going to focus on prevention education. At that point I felt personally responsible, or aligned with it. But I tried to stay as informed as I could about the treatment stuff. I sort of saw the AIDS movement evolving into treatment action group, kind of, in Toronto. More continentally, the ACT UP thing sort of evolved into Queer Nation a lot, which was really awesome at first. I remember going to meetings at 519, three hundred people or something, men and women. Again, it was about gay liberation, trying to grab those things we put on the backburner during the AIDS crisis and bring them forward again as a community. It was men and women together. It was beautiful, it was really exciting, except that, for some reason, it devolved into old gay men talking about feminazis, and angry women talking about misogynist old faggots. Not just talking, but yelling and insulting, horrible, horrible, like, I would go home and cry after meetings. I felt such potential there, such a big group of people, and to see it just—whatever. It needed to do what it needed to do, or it did what it did, or whatever. I remember a kiss-in at the Eaton Centre. Michael was part of that. It was probably maybe one of the last actions I remember doing with him.

GK: So, maybe just to come back to the point you were just making around how you sort of saw your focus mostly being around prevention and education around that. So, maybe we can come back to *Jerking Off* and *Coming On*. Like, where did those come from, the idea behind producing those zines?

KQ: Well, it started from my imagination. I invented a thing called the Queer Anarchist Network [laughter] and got a post office box at Station A in Toronto, so that I would have an excuse to create a zine that I could send around to exchange with other guys who were putting out zines, so I could do some pictures of some cute punk faggots. And maybe meet some other anarchist-oriented, queer punk, whatever.

AS: [laughter] That was the plan.

KQ: Well, that was the plan I think, yes. That worked. I can't remember the production of *Jerking Off*. I probably did most of that myself, but I'm sure I didn't do all of it. But by the time *Coming On* was happening, there was a big group of us that were putting that together, and there had been,

you know, we'd made contact with folks all over North America and Europe, and I did a trip over there to the World AIDS Conference in Amsterdam one year, and went touring around Europe and met some folks. So, it served its purpose as far as networking goes. But it was an opportunity. Like, we reprinted stuff from all kinds of sources, things we were inspired by, like Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, or Indiana Commune and all of the controversy around NAMBLA [North American Man/Boy Love Association], and children's liberation and children's sexuality and that stuff. And so we didn't shy away from the controversial stuff. We wanted to go there as much as we could. And you know, I don't know if I would print all those same things at this point, so carelessly, or so carefree... There was more artwork presented, people contributed stuff in terms of artwork. There was initially more range of stuff. It was huge. It was so thick, fat. I sacrificed a job at Kinkos for that—for *Coming Out*. [laughter]

AS: You did it all at Kinkos?

KQ: Yes! Well, not all of it. What's his name, Rob Johnson, he was a guy who drove around Toronto on a big flat bed delivery bike, and he had one of those flat woven hats, or whatever. He'd wear that and he'd bike around and had a striped shirt or whatever, he ran a speakeasy called Salon Parvenus. But he pretended he was whatever business, and made a deal with Xerox, and they delivered a photocopier, top of the line, to his place, and like, "We'll refill the ink as much as you want while you're trying it out this week," whatever. And it was the kind you could programme to print, "This section ink in red, and this section in black," or whatever, like nothing I had ever seen before. So we did the first hundred copies of *Coming On* in black and red ink on the machine at Rob's place. But I was working at Kinkos at the time, and Gay Pride was coming up in two days or whatever, and so I just spent my entire all-night shift, two days in a row, photocopying as many copies of the zine as I could, and stapling them together through that day and the next day. [laughter] It just had to happen.

AS: And then someone at Kinkos noticed? [laughter]

KQ: Oh yes, I got in trouble at one point and got fired or whatever. [laughter] But I was expecting it, I remember making that decision at one point, like, "Fuck it. I hate this job anyway."

AS: Yes. And they're thick zines. I mean, they're substantial.

KQ: Monsters. It was crazy. I started collecting material for a third one, which I probably still have somewhere in a file in a box. So something could come. But I've also had an idea of creating something... I wanted to do a zine, but I might turn out to be online now that we have social media and stuff like that. I want it called Prune: An Ode to Wrinkled Fruit, with pictures of wrinkly old people. [laughter] And you know, whatever, we'll see where that goes. But I've collected some photos and some images for that.

AS: That's beautiful.

KQ: Michael and I did the post-IGA [International Gay Association] conference mail out booklet thing together. And we spent all night, hours at *The Body Politic*, going through magazines and

everything we could find from all over the world to try to find images to put in there. Because we made it look like a zine, too, by the end of it. I'm not sure if you've seen that or not.

GK: Yes.

KQ: But it became very clear that it was very, very hard to find erotic images of anyone other than white people! Like, anywhere! Like, we really, *really* struggled. Like, we deliberately tried over, as much as we could, to find anything—*anything!* There's got to be something! So, we went a lot into that too. And I hope that that one gets linked to the Michael archives somehow.

GK: That's 1985. Okay.

KQ: IGA, post-conference.

GK: Yes, it was Sex and the State, International Gay Association, and Pride, all were, I think—

KQ: CelebrAsian, too, I think was happening around then.

GK: CelebrAsian was part of that whole week. For sure.

AS: We still have to find where all of that stuff from Michael was.

GK: I think we should be able to find the report at the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives—the report for the IGA conference, anyway.

KQ: I have a video copy of the thing we did at the CelebrAsian.

GK: Did you want to talk a bit about that?

KQ: Okay. The Kites Theatre Troupe thing had been in existence, or maybe it was still happening. So there were some people involved in that, there were some people involved from the Cathedrals. We had drummers and saxophone, John Leavitt, David Findlay, Jennifer Gilmore... but we did a basically street theatre-style thing, that was about a young guy falling in love with his male teacher and getting in trouble for it in class, and everyone saying, "Fuck you" or something. But it was just silly. It was fun. And I remember Charlie Shively sitting in the audience, shrieking with laughter throughout the whole thing. You can hear his voice really clearly on the recording [laughter].

GK: Alexis, do you know who Charlie Shively is?

AS: No.

GK: He was with *Fag Rag* in Boston.-

KQ: And *GCN* [Gay Community News].. I think he was maybe connected with them, too. I was doing prison stuff with the *GCN* people. I met with Charlie at one point, he was connected to the NAMBLA [North American Ma Boy Love Association] crew, too.

GK: Yes.

KQ: I don't know if you're supposed to say things like that about people or not.

GK: You'll get a chance to look at the transcript.

KQ: Yes, I won't care about editing anything. But if there are political or legal concerns about anything I said that might get anyone else into trouble...

GK: I don't think so. So, this sort of question probably should have come up earlier. But, so, there's a certain character, at least in what I've seen about *Coming On*, of a real explicitness around safer sex and safer drug use... sort of beginning to move in a harm reduction type of approach, and I was wondering if you wanted to talk a bit about that.

KQ: Yes, that's great, thank you. Absolutely I do. I spoke about having been assigned community service hours for *the STD Street Smarts* video. *Epicene Magazine* was happening around then, too, and I think I was living at Walnut at some of that time. Actually, I think the course made me live at Chris' house for a period of time... she had to sign her mortgage over as my bail, or whatever.

GK: Just to clarify a bit for Alexis: *Epicene* is after the death of the *Body Politic*, but is actually privately owned. Someone provided money for it. It didn't survive, like, three issues or something.

KQ: Maybe four or something. There was one that was ready-to-go and it didn't happen.

GK: Yes, that's how *Rites* got to publish one of Tom Waugh's articles.

KQ: And there's photographs of me jerking off with a condom in one of those.

GK: Oh, let's find that one.

KQ: [laughter] Again, I think it's the first images in Canada that were actually like, a hard cock in condom, rather than just bananas or whatever. So, one of those *Epicene* issues is me, in a series of pictures that Michael took. It's a little embarrassing, but not really.

AS: No! It's great!

KQ: Kind of sexy. But [laughter] so, harm reduction, how did that happen? Oh yes, so, the *STD Street Smarts*, we had already sort of at least come out to ourselves that we were drug users, and some of us were injecting drug users, I suppose larger than that since we had done this public video project. I had been on the road, I came back to Toronto, and there was a job posting for Alexandra Park AIDS Prevention Project. I pulled together a pretend resume that was based on most of the activism that I'm talking about, including the street theatre, and tried to make it look like it had been a responsibility or a job. I somehow, managed to convince Lee Zaslosvky, who was on my hiring team. A guy who was doing needle exchange through ARF [Addiction Research Foundation], Michael something, and Peter something, from Scadding Court Community Centre, they were my hiring committee. I went in a little jacket, and probably a tie. I was terrified. I was so nervous. And Lee said to me, after the interviews, like, "Next time you come in you should probably dress more casually." I was a shoe-in, and I didn't get it. It was set up at the housing project at Alexandra Park, in their community centre kind of thing, but there was a whole tension around it about the imposition of the Public Health agenda on this community, mostly people of colour, and you know, the drug-running crack scene, in the stairwells, all that going on all the time. You know, I was supposed to be teaching teenagers how to do whatever. I remember doing this thing, I suppose we were teaching kids who were maybe not going to go back to school the next year, about why they should care, and how to write a resume. They were like, "Whatever. I already make \$200 an hour by running drugs for my brother. Why would I want to work at McDonalds?" It took me a couple of days to realize there was nothing I had to offer. But anyway, this thing was supposed to be geared towards this housing project community, but people weren't coming in. Like, people wouldn't want to come in that office and pick up condoms or do needle exchange because the neighbors might see, or whatever. The community health centre that I guess was responsible for the grant or whatever, had a larger population it was responsible for. So, I moved the project from the housing complex over to the health centre on Augusta, and we started anonymous HIV testing and carrying on doing needle exchange there, before it was legal. They were connected with the Niagara Clinic on Queen Street West, as well, it was called West Central, and it got turned into something called Queen West Community Health Centre, I believe. I did my PASAN work while I was working there, I remember that happening.

I was on my way in the morning to a staff meeting, and I was going to be late, walking down the street, because I'd stopped to have a joint first. I'm sure that was it that day, actually, because I was beating myself up in my head over and over again, thinking, "You idiot! You're in trouble now. You're such a stoner, you're always late, everyone's going to know, nah nah nah nah nah." And I just stopped at the intersection and realized what I was doing, like, paid attention for the first time ever, to what words were going around and around in my head, about me. What I was presuming everyone else was projecting onto me. So, it was sort of a big epiphany moment for me, in terms of—again, I didn't feel like it was me that should have been doing the AIDS work for the housing project community, for mostly Black people in the community, it should have been someone up here, but I didn't know those words, I didn't understand those politics yet, but that was sort of my, "Aha!" around the whole harm reduction and drug user stuff. Because Walter Cavaileri took a group of us to the International Harm Reduction conference in Toronto that year, so I got to meet some other folks from Europe and Australia, from drug user organizations. It blew my mind that such a thing ever existed, let alone to meet people. And of course, we were all magnetically attracted to each other as soon as we meet each other in the conference. So, there's a whole

international scene in the harm reduction, drug user activist movement, there's amazing stuff going on out there, and lots of it around stigma and discrimination.

AS: And shame, internal...

KQ: Yes, lots and lots. So, that let me then decide that we were going to put some of the energy from the West Central AIDS Project towards TRIP—the Toronto Raver Info Project. Because I was going to rave parties and hanging out, and it was... so, anyway, we started off with a simple sticker, and it just said Sex + E = TRIP Condom, like when you do a math equation. I'd have a pocket full of them and hand them out at parties. Sometimes the people putting on the parties would be happy about letting me come in, sometimes I'd have to sneak in. I'd have "How to take ecstasy safely, drink enough water" photocopies in my pocket and handing them out to people. But eventually, that turned into what I call, I don't know, Tim Potts and I came up with the Toronto Raver Info Project name, and that's another one that's still going on. They're still doing amazing work with a huge crew of people. We were struggling with people, producers for the parties, not wanting to let us in, because of course, that would admit that there was drug use going on at their events. So, like, the big names, now they're like, inviting TRIP to come and they're involved in pill testing—amazing, amazing stuff. We just started with photocopies and stickers and free condoms, and it grew from there. That's when my partner, Brian [Mackenzie], who I've been with for twenty-one years now, we met in '95, just before leaving Toronto together. He became one of the head, chief volunteers involved in the TRIP project. He picked up one of the pamphlets one day in Rave Central, where you picked up your flyers, wherever that is. And the DJ's go, "So, that worked!" [laughter]

AS: Success! [laughter]

KQ: In a way, I see my relationship with Tim and my relationship with Brian as really being examples, the epitome of peer support and peer education on a lived basis. We're committed to how we are in the world and with each other.

AS: Yes. Political love.

KQ: Yes. And all about peer support, and on being able to be honest. Like, one of the things, you asked "anything you want to talk about in the end" that I was thinking about was the whole stuff about fentanyl right now. The Physicians and Surgeons thing in BC, anyway, I presume in Ontario and across the country, are putting out recommendations or advice or whatever for the doctors to reduce opiate access for their patients, and particularly people who are injecting. And like, the less access that people have to a legal supply, the more it's going to drive people to what's on the streets. It's just, it's not working. The current system, like, there's no way that I can have, as an injecting drug user, an honest relationship with my healthcare provider, my opiate prescriber, without risking my supply, or my freedom, or whatever. So it's just like, that's where that politics has evolved to for me at this point in time. It's like, that's a real big priority. Like, two people in our personal circle died in the last month.

AS: Oh, god.

KQ: Both of them were involved in dealing, so had been long-term users. Should have known—if anybody knew, you know?

AS: Functional, yes. Yes, it's disgusting. It shouldn't be happening.

GK: We have other questions we can go to.

KQ: That's great if you have other questions, I'm for that. Just wondering if I got where I needed to get with that harm reduction thing. I can tell you a little bit more about that. After, when Brian and I got together with the TRIP project in Toronto, shortly after that we moved out west and started up Mind Body Love, which is a similar rave, safe-sex, safe-drug use, peer support thing in the rave scene out here. But we decided it was going to have more of a focus on building community rather than public health, because TRIP had come out of public health. Because Vancouver's just more groovy that way, or the west coast is, anyway. That worked really well, and Mind Body Love blew into this huge community scene for a while. Some folks from there ended up working with Dance Safe down in the US, and some of them are still involved in pill testing stuff at parties at like, Shambala, big parties. Warren and Ken... Ken's involved with the Health Department in Victoria, and he came out through our volunteers at Mind Body Love.

AS: Can you say more about that difference between community care and public health?

KQ: It was important to have a spot at the parties that could be identified, that people could point out to each other, that you know, if you get lost or whatever, find me over here. And somewhere where you could go and sit down if you needed to sit down, get a hug if you needed a hug, talk to someone if you needed to talk to somebody, get left alone if you wanted to be left alone, you know? Help you to create chill space, was really a big part of it. But also, access to drug testing, when that became possible, and just information about how to party safely and look after your friends, that kind of stuff. So, I think I went to a party one night in Vancouver, it wasn't set up there, but I noticed this kerfuffle going on in the corner, and it ended up with a group of security guards beating the hell out of somebody who was a friend of mine who was tripping, and he was tripping really hard. So he was like, every now and then, trying to hump the cop's leg, and slipping in and out of different versions of reality, and the cop's so scared, he just didn't get it. I managed to talk with them and eventually managed to take me and him to a private space in the back, with one security person there, preferably not in uniform, you know? They let me go in the ambulance with him. That was the kind of stuff that we were doing. Just by instinct, because that's what was called for at that point in that moment in time, to help out. So that's where it came from.

When I first moved out west, I got diagnosed with Hep C just before leaving Toronto. So, over twenty years ago. And I probably got it when I shared needles the first time in San Francisco in '82, but I don't know. I didn't share needles hardly ever. If ever in a situation where there was really a risk involved, they weren't cleaned, or whatever. Which may not have been good enough for Hep C, it turns out. Anyway, I wasn't into sharing needles, I was into clean equipment. But I didn't know about Hep C, and learned about it after I was diagnosed with non-A/non-B, and taught myself and the health people I was working with at West Central as we were going, and figuring it out. So,

when I came out here, I joined a Hep C support group that was mostly folks who'd been infected through the tainted blood supply doing the fight the Red Cross court business. The whole stigma around drug users was like, right there, staring you in the face. Like, these people were freaked out about the stigma around being identified as someone with Hep C, because they could potentially be thought of as someone who might be a drug user. What about people with Hep C who *are* drug users? So, anyway, I started to talk openly about that there, and it was hard. It was definitely another world. But I managed. I had to fight like hell, but I managed. Like, the day before the Canadian Red Cross came through with funding for me to go to present at the first Australasian Hep-C conference in Sydney about living in Canada as a drug user with Hep-C, I did my thing, and I had a copy of my resume, and at the end of my talk I said, "Oh, by the way, I have a copy of my resume if anyone has a job!" And people from the New South Wales Users and AIDS Association were there, or some of them were there, and offered me a job. And that took months. I came back to Canada, and it took months for all of the immigration and stuff to sort out, but I ended up working for four years as education coordinator at the New South Wales Users and AIDS Association. There I was elected as a Team Rep, to be on the steering committee, organizing committee, for AIOL, the Australian Injecting or Intravenous... I forget what it means now, but it's like the national version of that. It has representatives from each of the states and territories around Australia... and it's all federally health funded, drug user organizations. And some are very strict about, you've got to be a user yourself to be working here. So I'm glad we have some places for allies. But, self-representation is key for most, at the top of the pile. It's a completely different culture than here around that stuff.

AS: It's amazing.

KQ: It was mind-blowing to be introduced to that. And not only introduced to it, but because of that work that I was doing, it meant that when I was living in Sydney, my access to the queer scene and the whole community there was completely different than it would be as a tourist. So, not only did I get to go to the Mardis Gras parades, but I got to *work* at the Mardis Gras parades doing harm reduction stuff, like we were talking about, the rave parties. Like, with 20,000 people, making sure the needle bins were cleaned out and the condom bins were full. One of those parties there were DJs in the bathroom. Like, the whole culture there is completely over the top in a whole different way. People are encouraged to be kind of as freaky as you can be. But just don't be too noisy about it, it's different than here. Here is so careful. I didn't understand that until I came back home, after living there for four years. It didn't hit me until I was back here. I cried for two years. I remember waking up in the morning like, "Ugh, Canada!" [laughter]

AS: "What did I do?" [laughter]

KQ: So, the work I was doing there, as I said, I represented the New South Wales group at the national level with Australian Injection and Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL), and then I represented AVIL at the Australian Federation of AIDS Organizations, AFAO. So, I got to see all of that stuff about policy and drug law reform, a whole aspect of that, that whole world I'd never been exposed to before. That was really, really cool. I did a presentation at the International Conference on AIDS in Asia-Pacific, or something like that in Kuala Lumpur. It was basically just speaking about living my life as an out drug user. But you know, in this city, in this culture of

people, you just can't do that there. So, I was very cognizant —I recognized my privilege, and chose, you know, it wasn't as big a risk for me to stand up and say those things there. So I chose to do that. I was going to go out with needle exchange folks who were working there on the back of a motorcycle one day, but they decided they didn't want to do that with me, they didn't want to put me in that risky position. So, they didn't let me go. But I did do street walk one night, with some folks in Guatemala.

So, the whole Australia thing was like, out of the blue. I had been involved in buying land on Lasqueti Island with Tim and other friends, and there were a couple of other Radical Faeries who were involved in that with us. We were best buds at the beginning, and turned out to be monsters from hell at the end. So, when I left for Australia, I turned my share over to Chris [Bearchell], and she and Tim [Potts] lived together, until she died I guess, and Tim's still there as far as I know, but I haven't been in touch with him for a while. He and I started the TRIP thing together, so he was involved in the harm-reduction drug user stuff at the beginning in Toronto. Brian and I carried on doing that work together. We did a lot of stuff, went to Paris, international harm reduction conference together, and presented about Mind Body Love there. We did a whole bunch of neat things. So, coming home after four years there, the organization was falling part. There was this looming organizational restructure thing, the whole time I was there, that never happened. People who I was working with resented my position as a sub-middle-management education coordinator. They resented that the position existed there at all. And then they resented that it was filled by a Canadian, not an Australian person. Like, "Why are you the expert on this thing?" So, people I was supposed to be supervising wouldn't behave at all. And when I finally put my foot down, the woman I was in conflict mode with then took an indefinite leave of absence immediately. Like, that was sort of how they responded. Which blew my mind, too. I was coming from a place—this was the first real job I had other than at West Central. This wasn't a six-month contract, it was a paid position, ongoing. Like, for me to have an opportunity to work for a funded drug-users organization, a gift from God! Holy cow! I thought when I went there that everyone else was going to have the same attitude, and we were all going to be really excited to do this great thing together. It wasn't like that at all, because they had had fifteen years of whatever, state funding politics and experience of struggling over funding, or positions, I don't know. So people were into having the restructuring thing happen so that they could rebel against authority and get rid of these middle management positions. Anyway, I wasn't able to get my contract renewed after the four years of temporary residence, it would have just taken two more years, and then I could have stayed permanently. I was absolutely crushed when I had to leave and come back home. I went to Delhi and did a presentation about work that I had been doing educating cops at the New South Wales Police Academy about stigma and discrimination and drug use. When I first got home to Canada after Australia, I flew back to Delhi to do that. It was my final thing there. Around that time I was really starting to develop symptoms for my Hereditary Spastic Paraplegia, so I needed to start dealing with that. I just did treatment for Hep C last year. I needed to deal with that, I needed to deal with stopping drinking alcohol far too much, far too regularly, and that process. It was pretty huge, too. So, I'm moving my activism into stuff around disability and poverty politics.

AS: Yes. And those are so connected, right?

KQ: So, yes, it's been a lot of dipping in a way, it feels like. As I said, I tried to write things down on a twenty-year calendar thing, like, "Where have I been? When was I where?" And it's like a lot of

stuff, all over the place. Holy cow. So, yes, like I said, that job in Australia was the best I job I ever had. The longest I ever worked anywhere was four years in a row at the same place. And it wasn't until we got back here that I finally lived somewhere for more than a year at a time, since living at like, maybe my parents house. Sometimes I'd been moving two or three times a year or whatever. Like, Brian and I have now been in this place for over a decade, and that's by far the longest I've ever lived anywhere.

AS: What's it feel like?

KQ: I'm gettin' old! [laughter] I'm absolutely in love with my husband. I just, I'm at a loss of breath and words to think about what to say. He's been there for me so much on this journey. And you know, he was there, I was diagnosed with Hereditary Spastic Paraplegia just after I met him. So, he's been there through the whole thing. He's seen that all developing, and he's still sticking here with me. And his family are cool. His folks are from St. Catharine's, and they're supportive of us. His sister is queer, too. My family are still in the same place on Vancouver Island and are still red necks but... that's the way it is. I was really sick last year, really, really sick. This year I'm mostly better, some not-so-good days. But we're starting to do more foraging out into the community, making personal contact with folks, including the people involved in the Pride committee here on the coast. There's a men's group called Moose Hyde that's part Aboriginal, part non-Aboriginal men, with a focus on stopping violence against women and girls, partially about bringing up boys to be non-sexist, non-violent, that kind of thing. So, we're involved in a regular circle with that group of men. Starting to do some work with a friend who, her name is Jordan Curtain, they call it Access Revolution, that's about getting stabilized paddle boards with wheelchair mounts, or these things that are called trail riders, or a one-wheel device that you can put a disabled person in, and somebody pushes and somebody pulls to haul it through the forest. It takes a lot of energy to push and pull those things. We did an up the mountain access challenge one year with a team, up Mount Tetrahedron with me in one of those and Brian and three other friends helping to push and pull. I thought I was never going to get to go in the forest again. Like, hooray, wow! It was the hardest work. Even with me sitting in the chair, it was the hardest work I think any of us have ever done! Up over the logs and the rocks, we went above the alpine tree line. It was gorgeous. So, I'm doing some work with the woman who did that, to try to have access to paddleboard and trail rider machines in our local community.

AS: That's great!

GK: The major remaining areas are some questions we would have—coming back again to dealing with maybe some stuff around AIDS ACTION NOW! And maybe some more stuff around Michael.

KQ: Mmmhm.

GK: Those are what I see. I don't know if you maybe have other questions. Is that an okay way to proceed?

KQ: Yes, I guess I could do Michael and the Radical Faeries.

GK: Sure, we haven't had anyone talk about that. So that would be neat.

KQ: AIDS ACTION NOW!, I feel like I'm failing the test and letting you down, but I'm not remembering being involved in particular moments or activities.

AS: No!

GK: Well, maybe just one question around that is, there were like, internal tensions and debates within AIDS ACTION NOW!, and I know you wouldn't have been directly involved with them, but Michael was. So, I was wondering if you—there were particular conflicts around how AIDS ACTION NOW! was dealing with questions of gender and race, in particular, but also how it was organized, because AIDS ACTION NOW! is actually organized quite differently than ACT UP.

KQ: I remember him coming home sometimes like, hair pulling. And he was always concerned about what's happening with the people of colour, or the women, and so on. So, if something was going on politically at that point, it was about women's access to treatment, or people of colour, or whatever, he would have for sure been in on it. Even to the point of fault. There was a period of time in our feminist history together, around the time of the anarchy thing, just before the anarchy convention, there was stuff called Stop the City... or there's another name for it somewhere else, this day of action shut down, whatever, the financial district, so we did one in Toronto, a practice run before the big one during the anarchist conference. But one of the places we hit was a porn shop, or a stripper shop, on Yonge Street. And at that point, the politically correct line of thinking was porn = rape = war. That was where we were coming from. And don't oppress women. Until somebody said, there's women who work here. That was my first exposure to sex worker politics, and that whole thing, which was also a huge part of my life with Chris [Bearchell]. Anyway, just as an example of like, to a fault. We were politically correct, vegans to a fault at times. That's another one for sure where I've definitely chilled out a lot more. It turns out I had a secret craving for smoked salmon all the time. [laughter] Yes, so that's all I guess I have to say right now about the AIDS ACTION NOW! thing.

Michael and I, during our road trip adventure, at like, the Big Mountain survival gathering and sundance thing on the Navajo reservation, like, again, it just sort of makes my brain go [claps] trying to think about it, or even remembering it all is just so much hugeness, wow. But, he and I had been in touch with something like Gay American Indians, which was just starting, and so we decided to put some posters up on the notice board at the survival gathering, just about gay Indians. "We're allies, or queers anyway, can we have a circle around the fire over here at this time?" Or whatever. We were getting threats from a lot of the men, including people pulling out knives, and we were getting warnings from a lot of the women, saying, "You guys better not do that here, because our men will fuck you over." But we did it. We did it anyway. And we held a circle and it was almost only just us and a group of women. I don't know if any other queer Indians or non-Indians actually showed up, but it was definitely pushing the boundaries in terms of risk-taking to carry on. Anyway, it was on that same trip that we met with some Radical Faeries, and there was a group in San Francisco called Nomenus, which at one point used to mean "No Men Us,"

but I don't think they do that anymore, the Radical Faeries were a lot about gay men getting in touch with the female part of ourselves—the sacred feminine, that kind of stuff. And loosely or largely based on Aboriginal history teachings, historically, with Harry Hay and John Burnside, so there was a whole pagan, back-to-the-Earth type of element to it as well. And the Nomenus group in San Francisco had just purchased land at Wolf Creek in Oregon, some gaming guy who had died, his partner sold the land to the community, and that became a Radical Faerie sanctuary. It's a place where gatherings are held ongoing every year, and some people live throughout the year. Michael and I went to our first Faerie gathering there, and many more after that, including like, in San Francisco, there were Faerie circles that happened once a week at the anarchist bookshop, basically getting together to be silly or drum or put on makeup, talk, or sing. It was as much about having fun as anything—but outrageous as possible, sort of like the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, and not even sort of like, but they're definitely part of the Faerie tribe, a lot of them anyway.

AS: Did you and Michael ever connect with the Faeries in Tennessee?

KQ: Um, Michael I think actually did go to Short Mountain, I think. I know he was in touch with some of those folks. Brian's been in touch with some of those folks too, since before he and I were ever in touch with each other, he was already doing the Faerie thing, too.

AS: Apparently there's been a staging of something called *Person Livid with AIDS*, somehow connected with Faeries in Tennessee, and so we're trying to find out.

KQ: Cool. Well, there's a Short Mountain in Tennessee, and near that is a place called IDA.

AS: IDA is, I feel like, what I heard about when I was in California.

KQ: That's all I know about it so far. *RFD Magazine*, they're just doing an issue on substance use that Brian and I both didn't get accepted—our articles didn't get accepted to, which I'm very disappointed about. But, it just means we might have to produce something ourselves to put that out there. So, keep your eyes out for something new around those lines. But the whole thing about coming out, like, when I was writing my article for the *RFD Magazine*, I was thinking about, what do these two things have in common, drug use and Faeries? It's just the repeatedly coming out thing, over and over and over again. Like, coming out within the gay community as a drug user, coming out, you know, whatever version of that. So it's largely what I learned out of writing that article, the short version. Michael and I were lucky enough to get to meet Harry [Hay] and John [Burnside] at that Wolf Creek gathering. We even were invited to stay at their house in L.A., spend about a week there. Michael and Harry had some *furios* arguments about hardcore communist politics. [laughter] Which was great, it was lovely. John has this amazing machine called a symmetricon, it's something he invented that projects light through a – it's like a film projector shooting light through a rock, gemstone, kaleidoscope thing that turns. So it's like, early, early light show material. Way before any high tech thing. So he played his symmetricon for us.

AS: And totally analog, right? Like actually literally shining through gems, that would be amazing.

KQ: It was very amazing. Beautiful, absolutely beautiful. There were three or four of them that were created in the world. I know that their house burned down, and I hope they didn't lose everything. Yes. Harry's room, his study, he had a mail slot in the door of his study, and he'd given up even going in there anymore. He'd just shove pieces of paper through the mail slot. [laughter] So, we got to meet Harry and John and spend some time with them, getting to know them. I had the pleasure of having been tongue-raped by Harry Hay, as have many other particularly younger at the time, attractive young Faeries. Harry was not so cool about respecting boundaries or asking for permission first, or whatever, sometimes. He was a lovely man. He was a beautiful man. There are stories about that aspect of Harry, his personality, that I know people will tell...

I mean, that was a big thing for us at that gathering. There was a group of six or seven of us young fags, Faeries, who were getting groped inappropriately by desperate older men. And you know, all completely understandable, but not acceptable. [laughter] And we called a heart circle about it and we brought it up at the main circle at the gathering as an issue, and asked people to approach us from the front and ask for permission before making physical contact, that kind of stuff. And that was all a big issue for sure, in terms of how we were exploring Faeriedom right from the beginning. I walked down the train tracks hand in hand with another man, and had an erection in the day, in the sunlight, in front of him. That was again, another "Glory Hallelujah!" type of moment for me, to have that experience at that gathering. So we went to different Faerie circles in different places. I think New York was having regular gatherings. There's a place in Ottawa, near Ottawa, called Emerald Fox, that's Faerie land, they're doing annual gatherings and Michael and I went there some. Brian and I went there too, when we first got together. When we were over in Australia, we were sort of central to helping bring together the Australia Faeries and we were having circles regularly at our place in Sydney, and the whole west coast like, Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney community were buying a parcel of land together in Northern New South Wales, which they have done, or were doing just as we were leaving. It was so hard to leave that! I call it Faerie Land—it's a place where you could live. But, not me, not now.

AS: Nation states.

KQ: Well, yes. There was a woman I met over there from Canada. She was very serious about this and said, "Some point soon you're going to have to decide, where are we going to spend the rest of our lives? Because there's not going to be airplanes and stuff to take us back and forth anymore. We're not going to move from one continent to the other so freely. But I don't know, there will still be boats. [laughter] I don't know. I would have loved to have stayed in Australia. I would have loved to have been able to stay there, and it would have made such a difference in our lives, just in terms of participating in an active queer community and be outrageously out. And again, because Brian was doing volunteer work with a group called Sex Workers Outreach Project over there, and I was working with the drug user group, so there was a connection with the AIDS scene, and AIDS Inc., or Sydney AIDS Inc., or whatever. It was great. It was fantastic. I won the People's Choice Award for the Bondi Beach drag race one year.

GK: Really?

KQ: I was Misty Soirée. Brian and I had been fighting that day [laughter] and we were riding on the bus. I was mad at him for cruising some boy I think, I can't remember. I hadn't decided yet if I was going to go to the Bondi Beach for drag racing, or if I was going to go if I was going to participate. So, I just shoved a bathing suit and a pair of shoes in a bag and decided at the last minute, "Okay, I'm going to go." Then on the way I realized, because I knew my paraplegia was coming on, that this might be the only time in my life where I'm going to be able to do this. I didn't register ahead of time, I showed up at the last minute, and squeezed my way in, and got to be an entrant. Vanessa Wagner was the MC, she's another outrageous drag queen sort of MC person in the queer scene there. She and I did some work in prisons together, around Hep C care and harm reduction stuff. She went in drag, anyway, that was very cool. Unexpected. Where was I going?

AS: You were in as an entrant.

KQ: Oh yes, the drag race. [laughter] So, it was this thing, it's like, the balance beam, and everybody has to wear high heel shoes, that's one of the rules. And it's on the sand, and so, sort of like Olympics style. The ball with the stick with the ribbon and balancing kind of thing. There was a lesbian couple, you had to have a meaningful interaction with, as part of the obstacles. [laughter] I can't remember what they all were, but some of it was like, it ruined my shoes. [laughter] The sand ruined my shoes. The final obstacle was, supposedly, a packed crowd on the dance floor, and you'd have to squeeze your way through to get past. So, everybody was body checking, your heels on the sand... so, eventually, they just picked me up and carried me over the crowd, which was fantastic. I spoke in a French accent, and I was "Misty Soirée! A girl from Quebec!" or whatever. But they loved it, they absolutely loved it. So, I got cheered and applause and then won the People's Choice Award for that year. But, because I hadn't actually entered the thing, my name wasn't on any of it, so it didn't get printed up anywhere! [laughter]

There was one other glorious moment there. I don't know what it's called, *W...* it's a women's magazine. Anyway, there's a thing like Baywatch down there, and a sort of Pamela Anderson kind of girl, whose name I cannot remember, with blonde hair and big tits, who doesn't like factory farmed chickens. Anyway, that's all I remember about her, but she was there at the event, and her photographer got me to pose with her. And so I got featured in this national Australian women's magazine in drag, with some snarky comment about my chest hair showing, how I should have shaved from a different line, or whatever. I can't remember. [laughter] But they'd never done that before with that magazine; they'd never had fags or drag queens in it before, it was always just pretty women, so that was the first time that had happened. That was really neat.

AS: And you could get on side with the no factory farming of chicken.

KQ: Oh yes, I was up for that for sure. [laughter]

One thing I wanted to say more about Michael... I guess I was working at Inner City with Chris and Tracey. Chris and I had gone to Ottawa, I think, for some Canadian AIDS Society educators' thing. We flew home to the Toronto Island airport, and Tim [Potts] and Irit [Shimrat] came to meet us at the airport. I guess they'd already been in touch with Chris before, I didn't know until we'd landed. They were showing up to tell us that Michael had died. I was completely shocked. Like, I didn't

even think—he's not even that sick, you know? Like, what? Then I found out that it was Dr.-assisted, and I was mad about that, like, why didn't he tell me ahead of time? He must have talked to somebody. I just remember being so shocked, so out of the blue. That was the first person in my life that had ever died, as well as the first person who turned out to be first among many friends and lovers who died of AIDS. But it was a big, huge, ka-bomb. Yes, I think I was a zombie for a week or so, or longer.

There was, one of the people who was involved in, when we did the Mr. Tim thing for Much Music, we got a phone call—Michael got a phone call from Much Music. They'd heard about Mr. Tim and "I Love Another Man," and so they wanted to put a one-minute chunk from the music video on the TV. There was no music video! So we made a one-minute chunk [laughter] and sent it to them. So, David Findlay, who you've probably already heard about, through other stuff, he was there in one of our video techs, and Mark Terrell, was my boyfriend for six months, from summer solstice to winter solstice. We started on psychedelics at Dragon Fly Farm and ended on psychedelics on Dragon Fly Farm. Anyway. He was helping with the video stuff for that as well. He was an OCA [Ontario College of Art] student, so we had access to studios and equipment through that. And Dave knew how all this stuff worked—I had experience, but more old school, back in the days when editing was a razorblade and tape. Mark was another person who was my lover for a while, and he became HIV positive after we were together. And also died. The night before, Brian and I were getting ready to go in Vancouver, we'd just arrived some few months, and were getting ready to go start, the first night we were going to launch the Mind Body Love project at a party, and I got a phone call out of the blue from Mark. He told me about being positive, told me about being sick, told me about studying Buddhism and we told him what we were doing, and like, could we get together, not tonight, because this thing's on we've been planning, but great to hear from you, whatever. Then he died shortly after. I never got a chance to talk to him or see him after that. But one thing he expressed to me was that, like when we broke up, years before, I was absolutely devastated. He didn't get it. He's like, what's the big deal? So he was able to tell me on the phone that he'd had a relationship situation where it was the other way around for him, where he was with someone and was completely blown away and devastated, and the other person didn't get it, and so he was able to understand, with retrospection or whatever, what I had been trying to express. So that was really cool. That was very nice. But his family, he's from a small town, out of Kitchener maybe, somewhere up in there. His mom came out west and took all his stuff away without acknowledging his partner at the time, or anything like, was one of those problem stories. So, anyway, Mark appears in the Mr. Tim video clip, wearing a gold sequin, doing a lovely dance, a gold sequin vest.

GK: Do you want to just say a little bit about the Mr. Tim stuff? It's been mentioned in some of the interviews we've done, but it hasn't been really talked about.

KQ: It's probably Scott or someone maybe would have more to say than I would about production and the music. Michael loved to act. He loved it. He was into street performance stuff all the time. We'd have conversations in funny voices on public buses about political topics, just to stir up the shit among people on the bus. Like, he was always like that. He was always on. He had a couple, an elder man and an older woman, called Wilbur and Wildred.

AS: They were internal characters?

KQ: Yes! And either of them could come out and interact with each other or whatever. That was fairly constant. I don't know where that came from or where I was going with that. [laughter] But that was part of Michael. He was always on show, he was always ready to just put it out there. Like, he came from London, via Winnipeg, before Toronto, and he had some connection with the Winnipeg queer community that he spoke of. He spoke of old friends in England and London, I guess, he went to Oxford. But I don't know who any of those people are or where he came from before that. I did go visit his brother in Berlin after Michael died. And that was really cool, I spent some time at Dan's place.

AS: So Mr. Tim came out as one of those expressions?

KQ: Yes, okay. Michael wanted to be... the disco glam, drag queen of the decade, or century, or something.

AS: Millenium!

KQ: [laughter] Whatever, go for it! And he made an A-side and a B-side to his song. And it was very much about gay liberation politics, "I Love Another Man." And the B-side was full of audio samples, tons of talks from Jerry Falwell, and people saying stupid horrible things, Michael cut them in or whatever. So, when we did the video, I remember part of it was like, we had this clear dildo and a condom, and a picture of Jerry Falwell playing, and we were trying to wind it up so we could roll the condom down over Jerry Falwell's head while he was saying those lines for that part. It worked out pretty good. Like, that's where we were at in terms of tech in those days. And so even the whole thing about samples was like, kind of new. Michael brought that in with Mr. Tim, which I think, maybe other people were doing sample stuff before that, I don't know, but he was very visionary that way. He would have *loved it* if his song got played at the disco, you know? That's like, exactly what he dreamed of. He would have loved to make more songs.

When Michael died, a friend of his from previous to our meeting, Helen Posno, she and Michael had done some, maybe clowning or theatre stuff together? But she's kind of a down and out, you know, maybe junkie, maybe welfare mom kind of poor person, who's probably had a hard time with the mental health industry or something, kind of thing. Like, that's where she's coming from. Anyway, she got introduced to me through Michael and she hit it off with me, and I think that was something that also then, in terms of Michael always being on, he was able to connect with people, to break down those social barriers and cross those bridges and reach through those gaps, and I think that Helen saw that in me, too, because she wanted to meet really quickly when I was introduced to her. And not very long before Michael died, she gave me a framed collage that she made in memory of Michael at his memorial thing. I was important enough in her experience in relation to Michael to turn that over to me. Anyway, I wanted to remember to bring that up, because I have that here on the wall if you wanted to take a picture of it, because it probably does not exist anywhere else.

AS: Yes.

GK: So, I don't think we have any more questions, unless you have one. Unless there's anything else you wanted to say.

KQ: Let me look at this page, because I did scribble a couple of things down there. I spoke about when I went to the job in Australia, and I know this was post-'95, shortly after, the end of the '90s anyway. And expecting to find a team of enthusiastic, dedicated activist peers, or whatever. Brian and I had been involved in starting the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU) just before I went overseas, and so that got left. He was on the first board, we wrote the first funding proposal, I came up with the name. Anyway, that got taken away from him. I had to choose between carrying on with that or taking this job in Sydney.

So, I was going overseas—this was the chance of a lifetime. And Brian, we got funding for one position, and Brian was basically threatened to not take the position—don't apply for it, because this other person was going to take it. And this person has consistently remained in the only paid position in the organization, which is supposed to be about drug user peer support, through the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users. And it pisses me off to no end. That's an ally misbehaving, as far as I'm concerned. That's a position that should clearly be for a substance user. And there's so much stigma around drug users being able to manage money—can they be trusted, and whatever, like, all that stuff needs to be dealt with, and it's not going to happen if some kind of care-worker type person is sitting in that position. In Australia, the organizations are run by drug users. Sex worker organizations are run by sex workers. People with AIDS organizations, etc. So, anyway, we came back here, I did the Delhi conference. The next year was the International Harm Reduction Conference in Vancouver. And Brian and I got on the organizing committee with a group of drug user activists from across Canada. Again, I was suckered into feeling enthusiasm and hopefulness and expectation that we were going to actually form a peer support, national network thing. But the whole argument came down to self-representation versus not-drug users being able to have a role in organizations. I just can't—it was like, we brought this whole crew of people over from Australia specifically to give a presentation to this Canadian group about how it works in Australia, and why it's important that it be "Nothing about us without us." But like, there was just some resistance, and it's a really small number of people actually, but they were determined and stuck with it, that have prevented the whole, as I see it, the development of a real solid drug user peer-support movement in Canada. There is a group called CAPUD – Canadian Association of People who Use Drugs – that's connected to INPUD, which is the International Network of People who Use Drugs. I was helping to create that while I was working in Australia into the '90s. But I haven't been involved in what that's turned into. I've tried several times to get in touch with the CAPUD thing, but they haven't really gotten back to me. There are supposed to be monthly teleconferences or something, drug users doing some sort of harm reduction stuff.

AS: And—I organized with my collective in Ottawa a thing, this was the May Day thing, and we brought the Toronto Drug Users' Union out, and they seemed really cool and amazing. And also just when you were talking, I was thinking about that event, and also like, totally been done before, twenty years ago, and like, still seems like, here's this brand new intervention that's never happened!

KQ: When I came home and went to the Delhi conference, Walter Cavalieri was there, and he says, “When you get back to Canada,” because literally it was the next month. He says, “When you get back home, I’ve got a job for you.” And I applied for the coordinator position for the first Canadian harm reduction conference, to be held in Toronto. And there was a national hiring committee of 12-13 people from all across, doing telephone interviews, and I got interviewed twice and unanimously accepted for the position by this national group. Except that the woman who was to be my supervisor had it written into her contract that once the position was filled, she had sole firing responsibility. So, this makes my heart pound, thinking about this. Like, this is the end of my career. I got offered this job and was told that it was going to start in September or October, work for a year contract making this conference happen. I was totally up front about limitations in my experience, my ability to network and finding people who needed to know, I could do it no problem, and people believed me. So, I was ready to go. We went back to Toronto, Brian and I, for Pride Day that summer, to visit with his sister who was living near Toronto with family in St. Catharines. And so, I just thought, since we’re here, I might as well go say hi to this lady who is going to be my boss with the conference job in the fall. This was like in June. So, we arranged that, and Brian and I went over to say hi, it was casual at this point, I thought. We had a conversation, and I also wanted her to see that this was this amazing guy that I’m with, and if you’re hiring me you’re not just getting me, you’re getting him, too, and it’s two bangs for your buck, or whatever. But she said, “It’s changed. You have to start right away.” And no willingness to negotiate anytime in Vancouver, it had to be Toronto. So, it’s gay pride weekend, and we’ll give you till 9am Monday morning to figure out a place to live in Toronto and arrange everything you need to arrange about you moving, and bring us a proposal for how much you think it will cost for your moving. Which I couldn’t do, because there were no moving places in Vancouver open by 9am on Monday morning when I was in Toronto. Anyway, so, it was just set up by her and whoever at the Health Department, to get me out of there. Because they were asking me stuff in the interview, like, “If there was call from the community to have a safe injecting space at the conference, would you support that?” I was like, “Yes, if that’s what the people want.” “What about a safer smoking space?” People were thinking about amphetamines, pipes, whatever, I was like “Well,” and it hadn’t been decided yet, like I don’t think it’s still been decided yet, like, how people would respond to that in terms of being able to do that in a healthcare environment. As far as smoking goes. But, I was certainly willing to give it a go if that’s what people wanted, sure. So, I was very clear about where I was coming from and my orientation as a community-based activist. And they ended up hiring some private company to do bullshit conferences for governments. He put the thing on, had no contact with the whole drug user or harm reduction scene at all. I didn’t go to the conference. I was devastated. I thought I’d come back from Australia, four years of experience under my belt, did this amazing thing, get offered this conference job, clearly wowed the hiring committee. Then, *kerthunk*. So, I spent a decade being miserable. Drinking myself into oblivion until the Hep C treatment became available. That gave me an excuse to get off the bottle, start living again.

AS: Yes, there’s a whole depressing story about the minutia of bureaucracy and how it fucks over the possibility for community control.

KQ: The other thing I wanted to say about that is the evolution of AIDS activism into AIDS Inc. At the time when I made that shift over through Inner City Youth, the *STD Street Smarts* thing, or

West Central Community Health, it was still possible to fake your resume based on your activist experience and get in there. But more and more and more, those positions are requiring that you have a university degree.

AS: You have to have like, an MSW [Masters in Social Work].

KQ: Yes, way more professionalized. So, there are way less opportunities for people at the community level to get in there. Except for maybe, “Come to this meeting and we’ll give you pizza and bus tickets.”

GK: Right, that’s the type of involvement you can have.

AS: Yes, and then we’ll take your experience and write it up into a report...

KQ: And take credit for it. Like, the Toronto Health Department did with the needle exchange, after we’d been doing it for years illegally, they finally announced it like, “Look at this great thing we’re doing!” So, that whole professionalization of community-based activism. Like, it was an opportunity for me to get paid for what I was doing anyway, to get those contracts or to get those jobs, so it was a cool aspect that way. But it has evolved into this monster, organizational nightmare thing. You know, it serves a function, it is able to sit at the same table with the health bureaucrats, and be somewhat representative of a community of real people with real needs. But, in terms of social change, absolutely we need still stuff happening on the outside of the system, as well as figuring out how to sit at the table with the big boys when you can. But not one or the other.

AS: Yes. And that can’t be the only thing that’s happening.

KQ: Yes, that by itself—sitting at the table with the big boys, by itself that’s not enough.

AS: Yes. I think that’s a really important point.

KQ: So, yes, I’ve learned that over the years, over and over again. And real legitimate self-representation, peer-support. It’s gotta be from within, for ourselves. For each other. I think that’s it.

GK: There’s no other...?

KQ: I talked about the fentanyl thing already. Disability activism, Helen... okay... [looks through notes] There’s my first two pages of what I printed out is like, the timeline thing I had wrote up, and the rest of it is your questions. Let me look at this part, to see if there’s anything there you want to ask me.

I didn’t talk much about Hep C I suppose, and one of the things I’m seeing in your question about AIDS activism, I wrote down a lot about buyer’s clubs for meds, and that’s happening with Hep C stuff too, now. One of the first things I heard about it, in terms of AIDS activism, was Prevention

Point's needle exchange in San Francisco, using a baby buggy to disguise their needle exchange, and to push their equipment around on the corners and do their stuff. Amazing people. Great people. Some of the folks involved with Prevention Point were also involved with Starhawk, and her Reclaiming circle. So, again, overlap on different levels of community, spiritual and health and politics.

AS: Yes. Stitching those together.

KQ: There's a fairly new medication available for Hepatitis C, several versions of it now. The last year I took Harvoni, which took care of the virus that I'd been carrying around for thirty-five years, probably. Now my liver function test results are all in normal ranges for the first time in years and years and years. Basically for my full adult life I've had this virus in me, I guess. Suddenly I had the opportunity to do something about it. It was suggested to me that we try the interferon treatment, fifteen years ago or twenty years ago, but the side effects are so horrible, and the effect rate is not high enough to make it worth it, as far as I'm concerned. I'd been misinformed that my liver was in better shape than it turns out it actually was. So, just before treatment I found out I had cirrhosis and stage 4 liver disease. So, I was worried that I was going to start getting liver cancer or die, before I even had the chance to get my first pills. I had got my prescription, but I had to do retests for the government to make sure I had the right genotype, and bad enough liver damage before they would OK my treatment. Because it's \$80,000 or whatever for this stuff from Gilead. But now there's generic medicines, and you can get it for \$5,000 or less. And there's a network through Canada, a Facebook group called Hep C Canada, that's doing work helping people access generics. But there's also recently been some discussion about creating some buyers' club, like based on what I saw with the AIDS movement way back when, when people died and their pills were left over, whatever, because the bloody things are so goddamn expensive and so hard to come by. So, it's kind of neat that way, I see things over and over. Reliving things over and over again. Reflections of things I've seen before. I'm doing a lot of work online in terms of like, getting and giving peer support stuff around Hep C, and the whole social media thing now is mind blowing. I wish that existed back then so we could do video clips of all those cool things. But it has enabled me to reach out to an international community at my fingertips. I don't even have to get my ass out of bed to do it! So that's kind of neat [laughter] it's not just ALT [alanine aminotransferase] test dot drugs whatever list serves anymore! [laughter]

GK: Is there anything else?

KQ: I don't know, let me see. John Kozachenko is a remarkable creature. Unlike anything else. He and I had a really good snuggle together one night at a church in Toronto. The night before one of the civil disobedience things at Litton Systems. Got in the sleeping bag together. We sort of had a bit of a playtime together, but we weren't really lovers. Not nearly as much as I had been with Michael for a while, but we played. We meshed on our anti-authoritarian activist kind of orientation. Although, you know, he was a hardcore leather daddy, and I was hardcore vegan, so we had our differences. [laughter] I remember walking down the street with John, and he couldn't keep his mouth shut. He'd see a group of cops across the street, and he'd yell at them, "Fucking fascist pigs!" And I was like, "John, shut up!" [laughter] I found him inspiring in that way. Just in

terms of, again, just cross the lines when they needed to be crossed, push it harder when it needs to get pushed harder.

AS: Yep!

KQ: He brought back stories for me about his connections with ACT UP in the States. And he was in Vancouver when the quarantine discussions were happening. So, I was getting some of that information from John at that time. It was shortly after that, I guess, when he moved to Toronto. I'm not sure about the timing. Or, maybe he went to Vancouver for a while and came back, or something.

AS: I think he had travelled back and forth a bit. He talked about that a little bit. Once you get access to the site, his interview's up.

GK: I met John when I was in the Young Socialists, and he was really young. And not gay at all. He went to the west coast, came back, and he was this flamboyant gay. [laughter] But John's quite neat.

KQ: Lynna Landstreet, someone else from those early days, in Cathedral B.

AS: Are you still in touch with her?

KQ: Yes. She's one of the people who came out to my thing in Toronto, anyway. It was great to see her... I was friends with her before we lived together through the Peace movement stuff. And she and I were both involved in Pagans for Peace together. That was the, coven leader called Sam Wagar, and we did our circles in the nude. Which made sense to me, if you're going for it you might as well go for it. So, we had a sort of pagan bent to our presence at the Litton Systems protest. Lynna had an Everything Liberation Front banner for a while. It came through Pagans for Peace. There was a connection there to Dragonfly Farm in Northern Ontario somewhere. Maynooth?

AS: Maynooth, yes. I've been up there.

KQ: I've been to Dragonfly a bunch of times. Have you been to Dragonfly farm?

AS: I've never been to Dragonfly. The people I know have Blackfly, which is just across the road.

KQ: It's a great, great scene. Just amazing. And that again, was connected to the anarchist scene in Toronto, with Jim Campbell and Sunday Harrison, and Stu Kerr is still up there. Jacquie Ravazzo is one of the other people who was with Kentucky Fried 5 with me and David Baresh, Linda Cotnam, and Gale Emo. Jackie is living up near Dragonfly and has been for the last while. She knew Michael as well. But yes, we used to go for blowout weeks up at Dragonfly, all piled in the car downtown and go up to the woods, out to the farm, trip our brains out. [laughter] I guess we were first introduced to, Sam was doing regular pagan gatherings up there for a while. Can't remember what he called them, so that was how we first got involved up there. I remember, one summer we went

up, and Sam was with us, and there was this big huge pile of wood that people from the farm had been putting aside for a bonfire pile. He just lit the whole thing on fire. [laughter] They had intended that it be used to feed the fire a little bit. It was a gigantic, huge, monstrous—they were over there with garden hoses, spraying it down, we were all tripping our brains out, laughing too hard to be able to do anything at all other than that! [laughter] None of us would still be sane if we hadn't had those opportunities for insanity that Dragonfly offered in terms of escape from the city. We'd inundate them with a little herd of freaks, and we'd totally lose our minds for a little while, then go home. It was a very special place [laughter].

AS: That's great.

KQ: It was an interesting thing for me personally, around sex worker politics. Because I'd been a hustler when I was a teenager in Hollywood, it was not a big long career, it wasn't a politically active sex worker, I didn't have that orientation or whatever, it was just survival stuff at the time. Then, when I encountered stuff with Maggie's in Prostitutes Safe Sex Project, all that, I kind of felt like I was an outsider, because I wasn't a current worker. So, I wasn't able to claim that part of my experience, part of my identity. Whereas, after having gone to Sydney, and seeing SWOP [Sex Workers' Outreach Project], and they have a male outreach partner of SWOP. Same as with trans. At this point, I've come out as gay a long time ago. Now I'm in the process of coming out trans. It's like, I'm not a woman, I don't want to have a sex change operation. But I'm definitely non-binary as far as gender orientation goes, and I've always been that way. I don't wear makeup and skirts around as much I used to, but it's just a lot of hard work. [laughter] It doesn't matter so much. There was a time where I really loved it when the little boy on the bus would come and look at me because I was the freak in the skirt with the pink mowhak or whatever, and mommy and daddy would be in the back like, "Shh!" Like, "Look at that!" I love it. I'm glad I got to play dress up and do that kind of stuff for a while, publicly. It's hard work.

AS: It's hard work.

KQ: It's very encouraging to see the changes happening, particularly among young people, around the trans stuff. The whole understanding of sexuality and sexual orientation has taken on a new direction, new meanings that I could never have thought of or imagined before. And you know, it's not the way I had in mind that it was supposed to go or whatever, but it's great. It's awesome. I just heard a story about a girl in high school here who told her mom that she just got it on with the prettiest girl in school. It's not because she's a dyke, it's just that they did that, and that was it, and she enjoyed it, but she's not into it, whatever, as a lifestyle or commitment. But like, kids weren't like that when I was in high school. Wow. And the trans identity thing is, you know, to ask somebody what pronouns do you prefer to be referred by, it's a little bit clumsy, but it's indicative of an opening, an awareness, that's increasing. And again, it's in a different territory or aspect of what has been queer liberation for years, I see it evolving into this.

I spoke about the Moose Heights Circle, and spending a fair amount of time, like, as I said, I grew up on the west coast. My nana had a shop where she sold carvings and baskets and Indian sweaters in Cowichan Bay. So, I grew up with all that stuff around me all the time, and I visited the reservation in Cowichan Bay, so I knew some of the carvers and the knitters, and I knew what

reservation third world looks like in Canada. I saw Indian kids at school getting picked on for being Indian kids. That was very clear to me, from forever, that there was something unpleasant about that. So my politics evolved while I was back east, and I was hearing about stuff like Walbran Valley going on out here, out west, and part of me always was wishing and hoping that there could be an opportunity to go back to BC, to connect with whatever activist thing out here, to do stuff around Native rights and around forests. I'm finding myself in the position to be able to do that, more so than I ever imagined. So, that's exciting. We're both hoping that we can make the right connections happen so that we can do some work in the schools around homophobia with boys, which is way edgy. When I was with the Kites troupe? Did that six-month thing, wrote our own show, part of what our training was was stand up comedy. I wrote a piece that was about being a faggot and a teenager in a gym locker room at school, and don't get a hard on, jokes about don't get the walls all white, or whatever, so and so has got a hard on, or whatever. Anyway, when we took the show on tour, when the script got written, that was in it for many of the shows, except that we weren't allowed to show that scene, among a few others, when we did the show inside Kingston Women's Pen [Prison for Women] But we did another show outside Montreal in a group home for juvenile delinquent boys, I don't know what it was called, but like 300 people in the audience in this gymnasium, you know, bad boys. We talked before hand, like, "Should we do this scene about the gym locker room?" And like, "I don't know, I don't know, I don't know!" In the end, we did it. I was surprised at the end of the show, a couple of guys came up out of the audience, in front of everybody, to the front of the stage, to call me over, and asked to talk to me, and said, "Man, you've got balls. We don't talk about that kind of thing around here," Like, I had never dreamed that it would have had that type of response. Like, "Wow, yay!" So, I'm hoping that there can be opportunities to put some of this energy back into my local community. I really appreciate some of the learning that I've been doing with local Native community, and also the Teaching Rocks near Peterborough. But some of the stuff that I've been learning in terms of Native culture, its intersection with ours, is about respect for the generations, and that there's a role for the kids and there's a role for the grandparents and they come together and they learn from each other and that's how evolution happens. There's so much wisdom there, and it's all so simple. Like, just get over ourselves. Anyway. There's a lot of hope for the earth in the future. Sometimes I feel pretty sad about the whole state of things, but I still have hope. It might take angelic intervention or something like that, but whatever! I'll take it! [laughter] I think I'm done. .

GK: This has been great.

AS: This has been amazing.

GK: Thank you very much for spending this time with us.

KQ: Yes, well, thank you very much for asking me to do that. It's really special that this stuff is being recorded.

AS: It's been really amazing. And I feel so grateful to you for talking to us about it.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]