

AAHP
AIDS Activist History Project

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Interviewee:	Mary Louise Adams
Interviewers:	Alexis Shotwell; Gary Kinsman
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Persons Present: Mary Louise Adams [MLA]
Alexis Shotwell [AS]
Gary Kinsman [GK]

[START OF TRANSCRIPT]

AS: I always say this at the beginning. It's March 26th, 2018, we're in Kingston, talking to Mary Louise Adams about Toronto organizing. Thanks so much for making the time.

MLA: You're welcome. Thanks for coming. Thanks for coming here.

AS: It's been fun! We've had a really good time already.

GK: So we start all of the interviews with sort of a similar question, which is: When did you first hear about AIDS, and what did you hear?

MLA: Oh my god.

GK: Do you have any memories of that?

MLA: When I first heard about it, I was in Kentucky. Doing... now they'd call it an internship, we didn't call it that. But I was working at an Environmental Education Center in the middle of the woods, in Kentucky, and I was listening to NPR [National Public Radio]. And... I wouldn't have been out yet, then. Like, it would have been 1981, or something like that. And there was a news story on NPR. And I remember sitting in my little apartment thinking, like, "This is freaky and important". And that was kind of it. When did I hear about it in a way that resonated a little bit more? At first it would have just been with news stories. And when did I start thinking about it – wouldn't have been until *Rites*, probably... I did try to do a little tiny bit of homework for today, I have no files. I have one file with some AAN! [AIDS ACTION NOW!] newsletters in it. But that's all I could find. But probably wouldn't have started thinking about it in any significant way until *Rites*.

AS: And you moved to Toronto?

MLA: I had been at school in Peterborough, I had gone to Trent.

AS: Okay.

MLA: I worked for the newspaper. The school newspaper – So, I was like "Did we ever write anything for the *Arthur*?" I came out in third or fourth year, and wrote some queer stuff for the paper and there were like four out queer people ... But I don't know if there was any discussion about AIDS or HIV at that point. And there certainly wouldn't have been at school. So I'm guessing it would have been through *Rites*.

AS: And how did you get involved with *Rites*? I mean, so you had sort of a journalism approach ...?

MLA: The student paper, and then... Peter McGehee came to play in Peterborough. And I was at—

AS: And who is Peter McGehee?

MLA: Peter McGehee was Doug Wilson's boyfriend. And, was it the Quinlan Sisters?

GK: Yes!

MLA: And the Quinlan Sisters. I was going out with Janine Fuller at the time, and she would talk to him. I wouldn't. I was way too afraid of everybody. But she would have talked to everybody. And she, like, drags me over to talk to Doug. And, because I was on the verge of moving to Toronto. So, I was going out with a person who was more-or-less living in Toronto, going back and forth, and... and it was, like, the day before you guys [Gary and others] broke up with [the newspaper] *Pink Ink* [a short-lived gay and lesbian newspaper] and started *Rites*! And so I was talking to this very nice man who was, like, "Oh! You have to come and get involved in this newspaper!" and everything. And so it was a very fortuitous meeting. For sure. So then, you know, I went to Toronto like, the next week or something. And by then you guys had had, like, one meeting or two, you know. You'd already split up [with *Pink Ink*]. So then I found these people. But definitely through Doug.

GK: I'm sure you worked on the first issue of *Rites*.

MLA: Oh, definitely!

GK: Quite sure.

MLA: Definitely.

AS: Did you come out in Peterborough?

MLA: I'd come out as, you know, a "lesbian feminist" at school. I'd worked at the Rape Crisis Center in Peterborough. I had some gay male friends but I think I knew maybe two gay men? Three? David Bateman, David Ramsden, and Stephen Guy Bray.

AS: Two thirds Davids.

MLA: [laughing] Yes. That's right. And I knew other lesbians from the Rape Crisis Center. But I wouldn't have heard of the bath raids, or... I wouldn't have picked up *The Body Politic*.

AS: Yes.

MLA: Or known, really, why *Rites* was important in the context of *The Body Politic*, or anything like that. So, I had no real sense of queer organizing, which – of course, we wouldn't have said "queer organizing" either.

AS: At the time, yes.

MLA: "Gay Liberation Movement".

AS: Yes.

MLA: I didn't know anything about the Gay Liberation Movement. I knew about a little, tiny gay organization at school, and in Peterborough, at the time. That would have been all. There may have been other things, and probably mostly just social networks. But that's all I would have known about in Peterborough.

AS: Yes.

MLA: But I was moving to The City to be, well, to be more of a feminist, I guess. And, well, to go to the city.

AS: And so what was that like, to move to the city and to be involved with *Rites* —

MLA: It was fantastic. Like, it was, instant education. I remember, Gary, you went and, read one of my essays, or something, from school — which was this completely... I can't remember exactly what it was about, but it was, you know: "*Lesbians! Lesbians!*" — and very gently you suggested that there might have been some essentialist underpinnings to the paper at the time. But... it was, like, a crash course in... I'd been involved in a lot of politics at school. But *Rites* was a crash course in... getting stuff done, you know. So you had this one [referring to Gary]. You had Doug Wilson. Those would probably be the two main influences out of that group, in terms of, like, "Oh my goodness there are all sorts of things people could be doing". And it also... So, it was about finding a group of people. But also to be involved in the newspaper. Like, I think one of the first things I wrote about, there was a lesbian sexuality conference, and it was, like, "Oh! Go to the lesbian sexuality conference!" Like, I wouldn't have found that, otherwise. Right? So a particular kind of activism that got you to see other kinds of activism. And so that was really great.

AS: Right.

MLA: That was really good. And, you know, my politics changed a lot, I think. I learned a lot.

AS: How did they change?

MLA: They had been broader. You know. You think "Oh, well, you're doing 'The Gay Thing'", whereas before, one of the things I liked about Peterborough that I... and used to lament, a little bit, when I was in Toronto. Like, when we were, when we were at school, you did

everything. You did the Latin American solidarity work, you were doing the South African stuff, you were doing the queer stuff, you were at the Rape Crisis, like... You were the political students, and you did everything.

GK: Right.

MLA: So, in some ways, my world narrowed when I went to Toronto. And yet, in other ways, like the understanding of politics and political relationships and what activism might be or, you know, certainly we never would have used the word “intersectional” at all, but certainly I learned a lot about that kind of politic. I’d been in a very small town. I learned a *lot* more about who was in the world, and what kinds of issues were important.

AS: Yes.

GK: We don’t actually have a lot of people talking about *Rites Magazine*, so far.

MLA: Right.

GK: Sean Hosein talks about his column, in terms of the interviews that are up. But maybe you could just describe what, for you, was the project of *Rites*.

MLA: I certainly encountered the project of *Rites* through other people’s visions of the project. And I would say, you know, for Doug Wilson, it was national, like how to do this thing that was more representative, nationally, than *The Body Politic* would have been. I’m going to put words in Gary’s mouth. For Gary, I think it would have been maybe more about having, like, different layers of politics, international politics and anti-racist and solidarity politics and, you know, there was some of that in the *TBP*, but not tons. To be a little bit more revolutionary. Or a little bit more *broad*, in terms of not just understanding this one kind of homogeneous queer community. And I think, for me, I certainly learned about both those perspectives. But for me, it was like a feminist project. Certainly, at the beginning, less later on. And I was also involved in some of the feminist publications. And I was a paid Toronto editor for *HERizons Magazine*, when they used to have money. I worked at RFR for, you know, I can’t remember how many years, six or seven years – *Resources for Feminist Research* – at OISE [Ontario Institute for Studies in Education] before I went back to grad school. And you know, so I was certainly involved in feminist publishing. But, like, “Why aren’t you working at *Broadside*?” or “Why would you do this?” Now it just seems ridiculous. But it was important to be working with men, right? That was an important thing to do. Not everybody thought so at the time.

AS: Yes.

MLA: Including some people who eventually ended up on the collective.

AS: Yes.

MLA: [chuckling] Yes.

AS: Do you, how did you come to that, do you think?

MLA: I don't know. I think, so many of my decisions in my life have just been, like, things showing up or crossing my path, or... "Why did you go to OISE for your PhD?" Well, because I could ride my bicycle there. I was already there. "How did you end up working at *Rites*?" Well, I had a beer with Doug Wilson. It was just kind of about relationships, right? I liked the people.

AS: Yes.

MLA: I liked the people. And, you know, and Paul Bartlet was fun. Although we had a lot of arguments late at night.

AS: Who was Paul?

MLA: He was the typesetter [with Rhinotype]. And he'd want to go home. It'd be 2:00 in the morning, and I'd be, like, "No, you cannot go home!" But, it's like, how could I stop him from going home, if he really wanted to go home? Yes.

AS: [chuckling]

MLA: I think I also liked doing something that had been a little bit different than what I had been doing before. Like the early 1980s rape crisis center was a challenging place to be, and so this felt ... less like eating your young. You know? It was actually trying to produce something out of youngness. Yes. But I think... and we have just been talking, a number of us were just talking about, you know, we look at our students – I could go on about this for ages – and, you know, they feel so disempowered to me. We were, like, riding our bicycles across the city at three o'clock in the morning, after putting the thing [the newspaper] to bed. And you know, I would have been twenty-four, I guess. But it was so exciting. And now there's a lot of this going, "Oh, your twenties are so hard" and everything. But that was so exciting. Now I just think, "That was really fantastic", you know?

AS: Yes. And you did a lot, right?

MLA: Yes! And it was, and you know, like, there were people who were doing like six times as much. There was a sense that you can do things, like, you really can do things. And I, you know, you see the grad students, and I am sad for them, that they don't feel that. Sometimes. I mean, some of them do. But some of them definitely don't.

AS: So, in *Rites*, you started off doing some of the lesbian reporting. How did *Rites* start taking, was it right away taking up AIDS stuff?

MLA: I think so. I think so. So, mostly at *Rites*, I did editing and production. And then some writing. Somewhere there is a file of clippings, which I didn't stumble across this morning. But that was definitely my education, like my introduction to, "Oh. There are definitely things to learn here". You know. Gary would have written most of the HIV stuff early on.

GK: Yes. Sean comes a bit later.

MLA: Yes. Sean comes in later, for sure.

GK: And part of it was just continuing—

MLA: And George Smith wrote—

GK: He had a column, but that's also a bit later.

MLA: Yes. And it was, you know, at first it was news. Like, it was news stories. It was definitely news stories.

AS: Yes.

MLA: I remember one story about the man who was called Patient Zero. And international stuff. And, you know, stuff about testing and... And then, when there was more activism, then just definitely reporting on all of that.

GK: Do you remember any sort of specific *Rites* content on either AIDS and women or safe sex for lesbians?

MLA: I know I wrote stuff on safe sex for lesbians, but I don't know if it was for... was it for *Rites*? I don't remember. So, I was in Toronto. I moved to Toronto in '84. I moved to England in '87, just for a year, to go to school. And I know I did some workshops and some writing and some conference things there, on lesbians and safe sex. I don't remember if I wrote anything for *Rites*.

AS: Were you, you were working for *Resources for Feminist Research* at the same time as you were working for *Rites*?

MLA: Yes. And that was paid work. That was, like, this incredible, incredible job. At 28% you were part of the Union [OPSEU], you had full benefits.

AS: Wow.

MLA: So. I think I worked half-time. And I worked there for a couple of years after I got back from the UK. And when I started my PhD, I was still working a little bit.

AS: And what would you do there? What was the work?

MLA: I was an editor. There was an editorial collective. At first, you know, when I got there, I was, like, a filing clerk. And then the person who thought I should be the filing clerk retired. And so then it was an editorial collective. The journal was more about gathering and publishing resources before. In its later stages, it was just a regular feminist journal with articles and everything. But, before the Internet, grad students at OISE used to sit down and abstract all sorts of feminist materials and gather things. And there was, you know, Frieda Foreman's Library, the Women's Resource Center.

GK: Yes.

MLA: At OISE. A lot of the Resource Centre material came from things that would have been sent to *RFR* on exchange, from other publications, around the world. And so it was a lot of sifting through stuff and massive book review sections, and an entire issue every year on book reviews, because there was no place else — putting out that kind of stuff, where you could encounter that material. And so it eventually became kind of redundant, when you could find things easily in other ways. But, before even email, it was important and very labour-intensive, and a lot of grad students at OISE helped put it out.

AS: Who funded it?

MLA: Oh... The Secretary of State Women's Program. You know, the government.

AS: Yes. So someone had, like, applied for money and said "We need a way to—"?

MLA: Oh, for sure. Yes. And then some money came through OISE as well. But I think, the bulk of the funding, for a while....I'm not sure what exactly happened. I maybe stopped working there in '92? Or something like that? Whenever I started taking school a little bit more seriously, I stopped. Yes. I'm pretty sure it was, for sure there was money from the Secretary of State Women's Program. But eventually that funding was reduced and then finally eliminated.

AS: And so was there any stuff that you remember about AIDS, in that work?

MLA: No. There might be, I might have done some HIV stuff or commissioned some AIDS stuff for *HERizons*, I'm guessing. I don't remember about *RFR*. There wouldn't have been anything in particular, you know, if there was, it would have been a one-off kind of thing.

AS: Will you just say what *HERizons* is?

MLA: *HERizons* is, it still exists, it's a feminist magazine that comes out of Winnipeg. And it also had enough funding, I guess in the late 1980s, to hire me, and to hire... Betsy Warland. The feminist poet, Betsy Warland, in Vancouver. Like, they had a Vancouver editor and a Toronto editor.

GK: Right.

MLA: And I think it was, like, \$400 a month, or something like that. And we used to have a meeting, once a year, in Winnipeg, and, you know, there was funding. It had a glossy cover! It still has a glossy cover. It still exists (which is incredible). And one of the women who was working on it then is still the editor now, Penni Mitchell.

AS: Wow.

MLA: Yes. So that's a lot of longevity in the feminist publishing world.

GK: Yes. For sure. So, so maybe before moving on to talk about AIDS ACTION NOW! One of the things that would have been happening, in and around *Rites*, and obviously your connections with feminist publications and the feminist movement, would have been the repercussions of the Sex Wars. Right?

MLA: Yes.

GK: And I remember there being some controversies in *Rites* around some of the sexual imagery around lesbian sex.

MLA: The cover, with Shannon Bell.

GK: Yes! That's, that's one controversy. But there was also one that we published, from *Kinesis*. The lesbian sex poster from Vancouver that had provoked such a lot of controversy..

MLA: Yes.

GK: Anything around that, that you remember.

MLA: I certainly remember the Shannon Bell cover.

GK: Which you might want to just tell us a little bit about.

AS: Yes. Would you describe it?

MLA: Good idea. There was a cover story about female ejaculation, and do we even have a different way of saying that now? I don't know. And, what was the actual image? Was it somebody, like... Was there actually an image on the cover of somebody's...?

GK: Yes.

MLA: Fingers in their own pubic hair, kind of, you know, leaning back. But you only saw, like, people only saw somebody's pubic hair and hand, basically. And maybe their hip? Very tight focus. And, you know, some people thought it was fantastic, and some people were horrified. I don't remember exactly, but horrified about the image. Maybe not the story. I'm

not sure. I wouldn't want to say. But certainly about the decision to publish the image on the cover. Is that what the image was? Something like that.

GK: I think so. And it might have actually shown some fluids.

MLA: Fluids.

GK: Flying through the air.

MLA: Yes. And fluid. "Fluid". Yes. A little stream.

GK: The picture was taken by ...

MLA: Ruthann Tucker?

GK: Yes. Ruthann took the pictures [Ruthann Tucker passed away in 2019].

MLA: Yes.

AS: People felt that it was too explicit?

MLA: I think so. Too explicit and on the cover. I don't remember the details, but I do remember getting... feedback. Or letters. Or, you know, responses from, I can't remember her name, but thinking "Ohhh..." Somebody I didn't want to piss off, and I was surprised that we had pissed her off. I can't remember her name... And I think, you know, there was definitely some attempt to be a little cheeky. And also, you know, the thing about *Rites* was there was a lot of coverage of women's issues and feminist issues and the assumption was that it was a sex-positive, feminist newspaper. And so this would have been part of that project, for sure. And how it came about, you know, like lots of things come about. You know, we definitely asked people to do stuff. But there was a lot of "I want to do this" or "I have this thing" or "I want to write about this" and so, yes. The assumption was that we were certainly on the anti-censorship, pro-sex, side of the "sexcapades" at the time. In a way that would have been different than, say, *Broadside* or... *Kinesis* would have been a little bit more mixed, probably. From Vancouver. The feminist newspaper from Vancouver would have had more complicated positions. And then *Broadside*... the odd time things would show up in *Broadside* that complicated the story.

AS: And *Broadside* was based...?

MLA: In Toronto. It was published by a feminist collective. And Susan Cole [longtime writer and editor at Toronto's *NOW* magazine] would have been one of the people writing, would have been the person in *Broadside* writing about issues of sexuality for sure. And we wouldn't have shared the same politics on this question.

AS: I don't feel like people have really talked to us about what's come to be thought of as the Sex Wars—

MLA: Yes.

AS: —Or about sex positivity. How those things interacted with thinking and talking about HIV and AIDS. Do you have any thoughts about that?

MLA: I think it was super important. Because it gave you a language for talking about sex. And I think one of the first ways I got into doing HIV stuff... Honest to god, I can't remember, but I know I did workshops for the AIDS Committee. I know there were teenagers involved. I know there were bananas or whatever we were using to show how to use a condom. And, you know, at some point, somewhere, if not in the UK, I can't remember if in Toronto, there were certainly public discussions or workshops around lesbian safer sex which, in the epidemiological sense, was not the biggest issue of the time, but, you know, looking or thinking back on it, as much about having some kind of conversation and solidarity, like... Well, if gay men's sexuality is going to be completely transformed, it's important for other people to be having those same kinds of conversations. And there were, there were a lot of conversations among... friends who would have shared the kind of pro-sex sensibilities or the "We want to be the fun lesbians who have a lot of sex" and are, you know, like, are having interesting conversations ... Maybe it was the...what year was the Sex And The State conference? '84? Or '85?

GK: '85.

MLA: '85. I remember, like, lying on the grass with Kate Lazier and Ingrid MacDonald,.. they both worked on *Otherwise*, the feminist paper at U of T [University of Toronto], lying on the grass, talking about, you know, whatever we'd just heard. Like, Liz Kennedy and Madeline Davis, a discussion about their Buffalo oral history project [which talked a lot about butch/femme lives in the 1950s], and ... certainly, in the, in my own circles of friends, who would have been young, white lesbians, and university-educated lesbians, part of our identity was certainly wrapped up around having particular perspectives or being super sex-positive. And the discussions around safer sex for lesbians became part of, an extension of, those conversations. And I think also those conversations made the ground of some kind of solidarity with gay men as "uber sex-positive". Having this, you know – felt to us like a more articulate understanding of what different sexual cultures could be like. Right? Like, there was, there was a lot of "Oh... I wish we could have something like this X, Y, or Z," whatever that might have been, that seemed to already exist in gay men's community. So there was a little bit of sex envy, for sure, or sexual culture envy, I guess. That somehow was a connection for people. There was, early on, also... you know, I'm thinking of Jay MacGillivray, and people who were feminists who ended up being active in, AIDS social services. Right away. So that was, that was another kind of entry point into the HIV stuff for me again.

AS: Do you think that some of the anti-porn feminists worried about particular sexual practices? Or sometimes I think of it as a particular kind of lesbian purism, coming out of lesbian separatism in the States. Did they have a view about HIV and AIDS? I've never thought about this.

MLA: It just was not on their agenda. Right?

AS: Yes.

MLA: That would be more like a “just... ignore it”.

AS: It doesn't matter.

MLA: Like, “This is not our thing” or, “Just ignore it.”

AS: Because there was a whole strand of people who were, like, “Women can't give AIDS to each other. Can't transmit HIV”. I mean, there still is. Like, I still have conversations with people, “These are low-risk practices ... We don't have to think about it because it doesn't have anything to do with the people we care about”.

MLA: The thing I remember is... “We have enough stuff of our own to do. This is not our thing. We have to do this and this and this and this” and... you know, “We did all the women's health stuff that now the men are learning from, and so there you go”, and a little bit of, like, “Oh, they're just picking up our things and stealing them.” But I don't know if that was huge.

AS: Yes.

MLA: I think more just, like, “We're not putting this on our radar”—

AS: “We have enough.”

MLA: —Would be more like, this kind of benign neglect sort of thing. And there certainly would have still been, in the late 1980s, women, who just wouldn't have wanted to work with men.

And some of that would have been a kind of separatist politic. But some of it would have been, like, “Oh, I'm not friggin' working with men, like, they're idiots”. Right? Like, so.... Which, it's a different thing. It's a rejection, right? And with a lot of good basis behind it. I'm trying to think, you know, some of the places where I saw more of that kind of... you know, the kind of caricature of the anti-sex position, or the stereotype, would have been in the UK. Like, you know, you would see signs up on, like, you know when there was a women's book store? And when there was a bulletin board and, with little notices, like... “*women-born-women only*” signs, you know, like that kind of politic was a little bit more obvious. But, you know, London is a very big city. So you would also have access to a bigger range of stuff. But, I don't know. I don't remember any kind of antagonism.

AS: Right. Just...

MLA: Just, like...

AS: Indifference.

MLA: “Oh, that... you’re spending your time doing that?” Like, “Oh, that’s kind of weird”.
Yes.

AS: Yes. And it’s interesting because, like, some of the people we’ve talked to, it’s been – especially in, I feel like, in Vancouver we talked to a lot of people who were really centrally involved with lesbian feminist organizing, who really said, “Because of my commitments to lesbian feminist organizing, obviously I got involved in working with gay men on AIDS”.

MLA: Right. Or women’s health organizing.

AS: Like, it was a natural outcome. And then similarly, we’ve had lots of conversations with mostly gay men who were like, “Well, of course we would go do abortion clinic defense. It was just an obvious outgrowth of our politics”.

MLA: Right.

AS: So, do you have a feeling of how starting to work on AIDS was connected to lesbian politics for you? Or was it?

MLA: I would have moved to Toronto as a feminist who was very excited to be a lesbian, you know. And had been involved in a lot of feminist stuff, and then would have seen, you know, all the feminist stuff is still there, but I don’t think I would have thought of my politic as a “lesbian politic”. It would have turned into, like, this feminist gay liberation politic, or something, and then in which case, of course, then it [AIDS work] just is obvious. But it also is obvious then because of friendship networks. You know, the politics? Yes, for sure. But then friendship networks, too.

AS: People. Being connected to people.

MLA: Yes. Humans.

AS: Yes...

GK: So one thing I wasn’t aware of—

MLA: Yes.

GK: —is that there’s probably something mediating between... in terms of how you get involved with AIDS ACTION NOW! Were you were actually involved in some other AIDS stuff, first.

MLA: A little—

GK: In terms of doing workshops.

MLA: I think so. And what I don’t remember is if that stuff was before I went away, or after I came back. Because AIDS ACTION NOW! started when I was in England. And so, and somebody — Patrick Barnholden, I assume — was mailing me *Rites* magazines while I was in England. And so that’s how I learned about AAN!, and then, I guess, when I got back, Doug Wilson was in the hospital, I think.

GK: Was Doug in the hospital at that point? Okay.

MLA: Did he have PCP? And was he...

GK: Was he running ...

MLA: And he was running for the election.

GK: Yes.

MLA: And so, and so that one just kind of blew my mind. (A) that he was running for the election, and (B) that he was in the hospital and still running for the election. That was right when I got back. And so then, I guess, that was just that. You know? And then I don’t know what transpired after that. [laughing] It’s like...

AS: Did you start going—

MLA: Gary says, “And you were on the media committee”?

GK: Patrick says you were. And yes, actually—

MLA: Yes, I think so... And I know I went to steering committee meetings. And then... I was on the first board. Then I got moved over by Tim McCaskell and, I think, Linda Gardner and Bob Gardner. The cabal said “You need to go over here now”.

GK: You refer to them as the “cabal” as well, so... Darien Taylor sort of said that, too.

MLA: No. [laughing] But in a very loving way.

AS: Yes. Where did you get moved? Where did they move you?

MLA: To the group that was setting up CATIE.

GK: Oh, okay.

MLA: Or TIE, I guess it was at first.

GK: It was TIE (Treatment Information Exchange), initially.

MLA: Yes. So I stopped going to the steering committee meetings, which is just... probably good, because often the top of my head felt like it was going to blow off over there, and I went over here, which was uber-practical. Unbelievably practical. And that was, practical wasn't, still isn't, really my specialty. And yes. Like... Alan Cornwall and Bob and Linda and Sean Hosein? Was Sean there?

GK: Yes.

MLA: Yes. And it was, like, before we hired—

GK: Sean is still there.

MLA: Yes! It was, like, before we hired Eric Mykhalovskiy and everything.

GK: Right.

MLA: That's how I met Eric.

AS: And can you talk about what was the activity that you would do at TIE, and later CATIE?

MLA: I went to board meetings and tried to understand what people were talking about, you know. I don't know, were they incorporating at that moment, like, they were turning this into an organization that was not like a fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants activist group. Eventually, I did some stuff on, you know, editing and writing manuals or editing materials, but I think I was a body. I think I was a female body at the table, there.

AS: Right.

MLA: And I don't remember, was Linda on that board? I don't know whether Linda was on the board right away.

AS: And they would have been putting out *Treatment Access News*.

MLA: I think so...

GK: Pretty early on. That, I mean, TIE started to do that.

MLA: Yes. I think so. And I understood the concept. I knew what we were doing.

AS: Yes.

MLA: I knew why it was important. But it was, you know, it was going to have to be, like, renting space and hiring somebody and getting some money and... was Bernard Courte on it, maybe?

GK: When does Bernard die? I can't remember... He was on the media committee of AIDS ACTION NOW!.

MLA: Right... I'm pretty sure...

GK: And you would have known him because he was also working at OISE, right?

MLA: Right.

GK: He did a lot of the French translation stuff. I'm not sure Bernard was connected with TIE or CATIE.

MLA: Maybe, yes.

GK: Could we perhaps, just move in a slightly different direction. You talked about going to the steering committee meetings of AIDS ACTION NOW! and how that wasn't great for you. Do you want to perhaps elaborate on that a bit?

MLA: I think, I think it was just that sense of very large meetings. I started taking knitting to the meetings. I remember that. Because I thought "If I'm gonna, like, scream"... It was just that thing about... you know, thirty people in a row saying exactly the same thing. And, you know, and, of course, I used to think [whining] "Ugh, like... Going to a meeting with men... It's just terrible..." But it was, they were very participatory meetings, and those aren't always the most efficient. So I think it was mostly things like that. The very sweet Greg Pavelich would often talk for a very long time.

GK: [chuckling]

MLA: And there were not very many women there. There was me and Darien and... I don't know. Susan Kasurak.

GK: —We have interviewed her. She's on the...

MLA: Kasurak. She might have come a little bit later. I think, in terms... So. ... Would Doug Wilson have been, like, the Chair of the steering committee at some point?

GK: He was certainly quite involved.

MLA: Early, early on. I don't know.

GK: But you're talking about the period when I'm in Newfoundland and then in Nova Scotia.

AS: When you came back, you came back from the UK.

MLA: Right, I came back in the

GK: Well, I was around for a while, but I would have been largely been away.

MLA: Yes. Then, right. That's right, I forgot these things, too.

GK: And then Sudbury.

MLA: Yes. And the meetings at some point, were in the 519, I guess? And at some point, there were meetings at, like, a table, you know, bigger, longer than this, but not huge. And then the meetings were downstairs in a big space with, big, round circles of chairs, so lots of people could make their commentaries. And the media committee, I think, was... George Smith was on the media committee? Yes. So that sounds right.

AS: And so getting involved in TIE was more like... people getting things done, less people talking?

MLA: It felt much more practical and less about politics, less about organized politics. It was about setting something up. And those were really not my skills. Whatever skills I had at that point, that one definitely wasn't among them. But I do remember Tim basically saying "We think you should go over there" and it's, like, "Okay... Sure". And either Bob or Linda, or Bob and Linda, were there for sure.

GK: Yes.

MLA: And so. Yes. And Alan... I'm pretty sure?

GK: Alan Cornwall?

MLA: Alan Cornwall. He was a lawyer.

GK: Yes.

MLA: Alan and... I don't know about Paul Maher [Alan's partner] . And I know I did something with Paul Maher. And at some point, like, Paul Maher and I must have done some workshops or something? But at some point, I actually had... not super seriously, but... I did actually think about quitting my PhD to become a public health nurse, so that I

could work more with Paul, like, do the kind of stuff [safer sex education] that I had been doing with him. He was a public health nurse.

AS: Can you talk about why that work felt important?

MLA: Because you were actually talking to humans, I guess. You were actually interacting with humans. And you could do some politics while you were doing your “Here’s how you use a condom” or whatever workshop. I know we did something that, like at a Canadian Public Health conference, like we did a workshop or something, the two of us. And it would have been something that he would have gone to anyway, because, I think he worked for the city as a public health nurse. It always seemed ridiculous to me that you had to be a nurse to do the things that we were talking about. Which were the things that public health nurses did. It just seemed like a way to engage people, I think. And it was really fun, too.

AS: But you kept doing your PhD.

MLA: Yes. I did. When I started, I had thought that it was going to be something HIV-related. Like, the Masters was. I didn’t know Foucault at the time, but it was kind of like a discourse analysis of stuff around people with HIV as “undesirable”. So homophobic stuff, and then racist stuff, and why were, and this was, like, in the 1980s, so these communities were not working together. It was like “Why don’t all these people who are subject to very similar discourses start working together?” But I didn’t have that language at the time, and I was in England, so I had no supervision at all.

AS: Right.

MLA: But, so I had done, and I’d done it in a Women’s Studies program. There were, like, “This isn’t a feminist project”. And, “Well, I’m a feminist, it’s my project, so I guess it’s a feminist project”. And so then I thought I would do something on HIV for my dissertation, but then I didn’t.

AS: And when you were working with AIDS ACTION NOW! were you involved with some of the women and AIDS work also?

MLA: I know I did some media workshops with Darien Taylor. At Voices for Positive Women? Or maybe at some precursor to that? I know I wrote about them, somewhere. But in terms, and I know I did safe sex workshops. Somewhere. I can’t remember where. But that’s... I don’t know as I was involved, if there was a women’s caucus... Was there a women’s caucus?

GK: There seems to be some dispute over this. But there is actually mention of there being at least a women’s committee in some of the issues of the newsletter.

MLA: Right...

GK: This would have been formed in the time period that you would have been around, not in that very first period, when you were away.

MLA: Right. I don't recall that I was part of that. You know, certainly... yes, in terms of work, in terms of, like, the media stuff or whatever, like... I remember doing some stuff with Darien. But not tons.

AS: Yes. Supported them and ...

MLA: Yes.

GK: I wanted to come back to the ways in which AIDS ACTION NOW! sort of overlapped with *Rites*. The two things in particular I'm thinking of are: Sean Hosein's column which, of course, also relates to TIE and CATIE. But also George's "Diary of an AIDS Activist." Do you have any memories of, of how that came about? Or how significant those were for *Rites*?

MLA: How it came about? I just figured George showed up and said he was going to do this.

GK: [chuckling] I think that's right.

MLA: That would have been how it worked. And, you know, and like a lot of people, I would count George among the sources of much of my education about a lot, a lot of things. ... Sean's... I don't know how that, like, you know, I remember that being there. ...I can't remember anything specific about either of them except that they existed. I would have seen George at school and, you know, he would have been coming into Dorothy's [sociologist Dorothy Smith's] class, being the Dorothy helper-type. And I think about that, now, and I just think, like, "Wow! WOW!" Like, imagine, in your grad class, having somebody come in and, help you teach your class. And, but the very first class I took at OISE was with Roxanna Ng, and George came into that class, too. And I remember having conversations about, kind of, activist writing and media work with George, in his office, at OISE. And I assume that, you know, that was more related to AAN! than it was to "Oh, you were just in my class yesterday, and I don't really understand what you mean by ontology". You know? I feel like his strategizing and his very clear strategizing about how to make the most out of one's limited resources, and how to use the media, and how to use journalists, and everything. Like, I think I learned that from George. And, you know, the notion that the whole point of the demonstration is just to be there when some cameras are there, and how to make your demonstrations look bigger than they are, how to make as much impact out of your media presence as possible. But that's all mainstream media. George's stuff in *Rites*, was more educational stuff for people around what was going on, around the AIDS politics in Canada. But certainly so different from... you know, and I teach his piece ["Political activist as ethnographer"] every year in my grad class. And it's, you know, it's still trying to, like...Where do you see that kind of work? Like, where do you see that kind of work? Where do you see that kind of work without George? So him being able to take advantage of *Rites* as a place to put forward his strategies and his approach to politics, which was... really

different than just that surface-orientation, or that, just more public “being angry” orientation.

AS: What he was trying to bring or give to activists, through the kind of writing he did in *Rites*?

MLA: I think giving people a sense that you could actually intervene in processes. Right? That you could actually get yourself in a place where you could be shaping things, or understanding how things work, for sure. And then deciding what to do about them. And so, super-super practical. But very, very different from simply expressing your anger. Which is a lot of what the politics, well a lot of what politics still is. And, not that there wasn't a place for that, at all. But. And smart. Just smart.

GK: But I think it's really important to underline that George intentionally came to *Rites* around this. There was a way in which I think he felt the stuff coming out around *The Body Politic* wouldn't be a home for that type of contribution that he wanted to make.

MLA: Right. And so what would he have thought would have happened at, or that he just wouldn't have had the space to do what he wanted.

GK: Yes. They would have, that we were more open to that type of participation than they would have been.

MLA: Yes.

GK: And perhaps they wouldn't, we would have more understanding of what his project was.

MLA: Yes.

GK: Not that we necessarily fully understood what it was.

MLA: Yes. Typical.

AS: One of the things that I feel like we don't have because of not having George alive, is... some of the, kind of, way to understand how the academic-intellectual shift that he's making in rearticulating institutional ethnography in terms of political activist ethnography. How that academic space translates, or is transformed, in doing the activist work— Do you want to say anything about having bridged some of those with him? Can you typify that or think about it?

MLA: I think maybe not so much as some people, like Eric Mykhalovskiy, but, you know, I think I was, I was seeing George in the two places [school and AAN!] at the same time, and learning, you know. I had no idea what we were learning at school. I felt like I was dropped

in from another planet. And so George was one of the translators of what we were doing, in Dorothy's classes, around institutional ethnography. And then there's George explaining at steering committee meetings what might be happening, much of which involved interacting with government officials or things that a lot of people would have been, like, "Why are we doing that?" "What's the point of doing all that? Aren't those people the enemy?" And so I think his tenaciousness, having this idea of how things should work, partly because of his version of sociology, and his absolute sense, from his own position, as a person who was HIV positive, about how important having strategies that would actually do something. It was a message that definitely came across, both at school – we are not just here to theorize, and we are not just here to think big thoughts. You know, people are dying, we need to figure out ways of intervening— and stopping that. And then in the activist circles, you know, George just, he was older than lots of people, but he wasn't, like, ancient. But, he was like this kind of "elder statesman" with a lot of gravitas and, you know, you would listen. I would listen to George. And there were people I wouldn't listen to quite as much as I would listen to George [chuckling]. That's when the knitting would come out. And I think he really had a sense that he was teaching people. You know, somebody like Tim McCaskell, with masses and masses of experience and incredible sharp analysis...was also teaching people, all the time; but George was teaching people. Tim's just going about his work, and you're watching Tim. But George, I think, really felt like that his part of the project was to get people on board with this different way of doing things. And I think he liked being the teacher, too. [chuckling] I think he liked that.

AS: And where do you think that came from in him?

MLA: Hanging around in university, for a long time. I don't know.

GK: He had a, he had a very rich life, right?

MLA: And how old was George?

GK: I'd have to check.

MLA: Yes. I don't know what he would have thought, but certainly the institution [OISE] would have benefited from George having a faculty position [he was a researcher], and having his own classes, and being able to teach things. So he was also super generous with his time—

GK: Yes.

MLA: — in terms of being Dorothy's "translator," because communication is not her strong suit. You understand better when George writes it than when Dorothy writes it. And to some extent, you understand it better when George explains it to you. And he certainly encouraged, like, there were definitely conversations around the building with other students, at that point, with him, too.

AS: I have a couple of students that are doing work basically on, “What’s the difference between what Dorothy does and what George does?”, in that moment.

MLA: Right.

AS: Do you remember if you felt like there was a difference in their intellectual projects? That was more than George translating Dorothy?

MLA: Yes. I don’t, I don’t know as that would have occurred to me. They both were, they were like this [gestures – hands intertwined]. They were a unit. And George was the one who... a person felt comfortable talking to. Like, I would get my papers back from Dorothy and they’d be, like, “Dear Anne Louise” or [laughing] you know, and I’d think “I’ve made a really big impression on you”.

AS: [laughing]

MLA: At OISE you got an advisor before you had a supervisor. She was like, I’d been hooked up with her, and I think I went into OISE thinking I was going to work with her, well, because I knew all these other people who had, right? And so I just assumed I would, too. I would ride my bike to school. I would keep working where I was working, and I’d work with Dorothy, too. And then that didn’t happen; I did other things. But, they just felt like a unit. And they were funny together. They were, you know... There they would both be, at the front of the classroom.

AS: And, like, what would happen?

MLA: Well just, like, they would have little kind of jokey things with each other. Clearly they had been doing this for quite some time. And, at that point, you were really reading these unedited, unpublished manuscripts that Dorothy had written. And imagine having class where you only teach your own work? I just cannot conceive of it, right? Like all you are teaching is your own work, and these unedited manuscripts, chapters of whatever book it ended up being a chapter of, and you’re just thinking, you know, “In. Compre. HENSible”. And I, when I had worked at *RFR*, I had... at some point, I had had to edit – before I’d gone back to grad school – I’d had to edit something of hers. And I was just, like, “Who is this person??” I didn’t know who she was, you know. And like, “What?? Argh, this is, like, crap!” So, then, George was an important presence in that context. But, there were definitely conversations among people, like, “How come George never finished his PhD?” Like, “Obviously...” you know.

AS: He’s brilliant and, yes.

MLA: Yes. But then OISE had this thing [staff position] called a “Research Officer” that gave him a lot of freedom that he wouldn’t have had as a faculty member.

GK: Yes.

MLA: And I have never seen that kind of position – and we were at *RFR*, we were Research Officers at OISE too and that's why we were in the Union. And, you know, I've never seen a position like that anywhere else.

AS: Yes.

MLA: But, I haven't been many places. I've been in your [Alexis's] department [at Carleton]. I've been in this department [at Queen's]. And I've been at OISE.

AS: Yes. And so that allowed George to do some of the thinking about HIV and AIDS.

MLA: And so there's that line, in that paper of his ["Political activist as ethnographer"]: "and I wasn't phoning them out of my position in my office, with my office telephone". I'm all "Like *hell* you weren't"!

AS: [laughing]

MLA: —You were in there doing all sorts of things. That whole bit of that article, I'm like, "Uh-huh?"

GK: But, I mean, one of the differences between Dorothy and George at that point would have been, Dorothy had been an activist, right?

MLA: Yes.

GK: Quite involved in organizing. But no-longer really was.

MLA: Yes. Right.

GK: And I think she was really invested in this tenacious battle in the academic world to actually have her work recognized.

MLA: Right.

GK: George, though, was still an activist. Actually, he'd been involved in the Gay Liberation Front in Vancouver, and other things, earlier. But he was still quite an activist, and really engaged in that, and I think a lot of his pedagogical work was actually done in that context.

MLA: Right.

GK: So, what you're talking about, in terms of teaching, was actually in a very different context.

MLA: Yes. I came out after the Bath Raids, and all that organizing, afterwards. How did it look at that time, in terms of his involvement, with that organizing? Like, with the organizing around that. Was he trying to be a teacher then, too?

GK: It had a lot of similarities to AIDS ACTION NOW!, but I think it was a broader, more diverse, group of people.

MLA: Yes.

GK: So. There's a number of different directions we could go now. Is there anything more that you wanted to say about AIDS ACTION NOW!? And how long do you stay involved with it?

MLA: The one other thing I was thinking about AIDS ACTION NOW! was how important it was, and this is, like, the John Greyson angle, and the other artists angle. Fantastic graphics. Fantastic, you know, just flipping through the newsletters that I found this morning and, like, "Oh! I don't remember what we were talking about, but I remember those signs, and I remember that backdrop on that stage." And, you know... the visual presence was something that I think was new for our community, at that point, and the attention to graphic art, for sure. But then, also, the fact that there was a lot of art, and that there was an attempt to be a little bit funny, periodically. All that kind of performance-y stuff made a huge difference, I think. And just remembering the things on the side of the street, on Church Street, on Pride Day. Like, the booths were always beautiful. The t-shirt was beautiful. Was that David Vereschagin did the t-shirt?

GK: I think.

MLA: Yes. And that was important. That would have been important to Doug Wilson. Then there were artists involved who could help with that. I don't think I have been involved with anything since that would have had that sensibility around having some kind of unignorable visual presence. And the thing about the media, I remember someone, we were at some demonstration, it was out in Scarborough or somewhere, there were, maybe six people or ten people. A very tiny demonstration. And somebody, I don't know who, but they talked to the photographer, who somehow got it. All the coverage looked like, you didn't know there were only ten people there. But, this way of kind of manipulating the representations of what was happening was conscious. And, you know, I still, whatever lonely little demonstrations sometimes happen in the middle of winter, down in the market square here, I'm like, "Okay, I'm going, but I'm going until the CKWS people go away, and then I'm going home because it's too cold!" The whole point of the demonstration is the media coverage. And, like, just little lessons like that. I still think of those kinds of things now, for sure. The task of cultivating reporters. I remember that, and that was George. There was somebody at the *Toronto Star*, Kelly Somebody—

GK: Toughill.

MLA: Toughill. Like, “She’s going to be supportive. We’re going to ... do this for her”. Making relationships there. Yes.

GK: So you sort of leave AIDS ACTION NOW!, or are no-longer involved at some point?

MLA: Once I started doing the stuff with—

GK: CATIE—

MLA: CATIE. Whatever, in fact, I was doing. I did less over there. And, you know, we did the hiring. That’s how I met Eric. I hated him at first.

GK: You hated Eric? We can edit this out, if you want.

MLA: Oh, no, I’ve told him this a million times.

GK: [laughing]

MLA: He came for his interview, and I don’t know where we were, but there were, like, little couches or something. He had a leather folder thing, and his nice pen, and everything, and he seemed so prim and professional, and everything. And that’s because we were hiring for someone to lead a formal organization – not an activist group. And then, you know, then we hired him. And the first time I go into the CATIE office, he’s, like, lying on the floor, on the rug when I came in. I thought, “That was such a performance you did at your interview”.

ALL: [laughing]

MLA: “You are so not like that...” Anyway. Yes. My opinion of him changed drastically very soon. He was great and great for CATIE. And then I left Toronto in ’95 to go to Carleton. And did nothing there, except work.

GK: Right. Did you do any other AIDS-related work, anywhere else?

MLA: I’ve been at HARS for, like, I’ve been on the board at HARS forever.

GK: And HARS is?

MLA: HIV/AIDS Regional Services. It’s the AIDS community organization, here in Kingston. And, you know, it’s a small city. So HARS is, in terms of queer politics, anti-poverty politics, like, HARS is a very important organization in the community. So, in terms of queer organizations, there’s HARS and there’s Reelout, the film festival. And both of them are fantastic. But that’s kind of, like, if you need something, you go to HARS, you rent their space, you use their resources, you get them to tell people. Reelout’s [Kingston’s queer film and video festival], office is in the HARS office. It is a big, community space but, you know, it also houses all the standard service organization kinds of things. The organization itself

doesn't have a super strong activist agenda – it's a service organization – but it supports activism. So, I've been doing that, it was a few years after I got here that I started ... maybe twelve years, fourteen years, something like that.

GK: So, I remember you mentioning in an email, I don't know who it was to, both of us or to me, that there was some sort of history project? That might have been related to, AIDS organizing in Kingston. Maybe I'm, maybe I'm making it up.

MLA: Or maybe *I* made it up! We have set up a queer archives project through the archives at Queen's, which is also the archives for the city of Kingston. There is a small collection of documents there, and a few summers ago, we hired a student to do some oral histories.

GK: [laughing]

MLA: [chuckling] Who knows? I don't know. I tell, you a couple of years ago, when that ACT UP film came out, the top of my head was blowing off as I was watching that. And I can't remember entirely what it was, except for the New-York-centricity of their analysis. But... I think I saw that film at Reelout. We started talking about, like, "We have to fix that!" you know? But, now you're fixing it, so it's good.

GK: Right.

MLA: Yes. I'm super-glad you're doing this.

AS: Yes.

GK: So, if there's not anything more that you can remember around AIDS-related stuff you did. One of the things that we're really trying to do some focus on, and you've already talked about some of these people here, is to remember people who died. You've told us a fair bit about George. You could tell us more, if you want to. And you've told us a little bit about Doug Wilson. But, I think we haven't really had someone tell us a lot about Doug.

MLA: Doug. Doug would have been the most important person for me, and I'm going to cry. Doug and Heather Ramsay have the same birth dates. In October. And I think, partly because he was, like, the first day I got to Toronto, there he was. And fun? Fun, fun, fun. And Peter [McGehee, Doug's partner]. And so they were... they were kind of my entry into... I'd been a very political lesbian feminist who thought it was, like, you know, a capitalist plot that you would make your apartment look nice, or something like that. So, they had this great apartment, like, full of cool things, little freaky art things and stuff they'd made and photographs and, you know... A great big huge armchair that was painted. Like, the slip-cover was painted with white house paint. They did very fun things in their apartment. And parties and dancing and... it felt like the quintessential gay space to me, in terms of how they organized how people were in there, and that they were also this unit of production. The Peter art production. And Doug supporting the Peter art production in many ways. And

then just all the different things that Doug was doing. So, I guess, you know, I learned masses from him. And, also just had a lot of fun there. And, you know, my lesbian feminist history had not been quite so much fun. I mean, it was fun in different ways, but. But they Doug and Peter were party girls. And the fact that he was, like, doing anti-racist stuff with the Jesuits and the Board of Education, with Tim McCaskell and so... The Jesuits. Like, what would be the name of the organization? I don't know. He did consulting work. Progressive, anti-oppression kind of consulting. Educational work. With the Jesuits. And that's all he ever called them, so I don't know what the actual organization would be called. And he did some stuff with the Board of Ed., I guess with Tim. And he still had really good connections with people across the country and some sense that, you know, we couldn't just be doing politics for people who managed to find themselves in the middle of downtown Toronto. Which was... a good lesson. Still is. And then, you know, running for the NDP, and —

AS: Yes. You said it was surprising when you came back and he was running for the NDP.

MLA: Well it was. He was running for the NDP [in Rosedale] out of his hospital bed, basically. And had been active in AIDS ACTION NOW!, I think he was, I think he and Darien, at some time, might have been co-chairs together.

GK: I don't know if Doug was ever Chair.

MLA: Yes, just unbelievable. Well, like, also this one, too [referring to Gary]. Do you guys every sleep?

GK: Doug didn't actually need to sleep more than three hours a night.

MLA: Is that—?

GK: Did he ever tell you that?

MLA: No, I don't remember.

GK: He said that he regularly slept about three or four hours a night.

MLA: Like, just, like, a big unit of production. And, you know, and then a little while, for a while I lived on the same block, before Helen Humphreys and I moved to Ottawa, we lived on the same block of Salem Avenue as Tim McCaskell and Richard Fung, and I'm like, "Oh, there's a unit of production up the street" and it's kind of, like, I'm just doing my homework. That's all I can do today. I can do my homework. Maybe make a meal. [laughing] Kind of done. But, Doug and Peter and Richard and Tim... You know, the other thing about Doug and Peter, they had lots of connections, and lots of different ways to connect, not all of whom were, like, these intense, activists who were doing all this stuff all the time. But, the older lady down the hall, and you know. He made a nice little community, I think. And so, Peter died, in 1991, I think. And Doug died a year later.

AS: And you were living in Ottawa then?

MLA: I was still in Toronto.

AS: You were in Toronto.

MLA: And Peter had had a big care team. Doug organized a big care team for Peter. And that was a way of meeting some of their other people. And he, I'm pretty sure Peter was at home the whole time. And then there, Doug had a gazillion friends and so, that year, Peter had written the first two books of what was supposed to be a trilogy. And Doug spent, intense, intense time, that next year, trying to finish it. He had all of Peter's notes and he actually, like, wrote the third book, and I forget what it says on the book. Something like "Peter McGehee with Doug Wilson" or something like that. But Doug wrote it from Peter's notes. And he wrote that manuscript, and then he died—

AS: He spent the last year...

MLA: Yes. And then he died, like... Pretty much exactly a year later.

AS: And were you on his care team?

MLA: Yes. It wasn't as super-formal as Peter's. I don't think. He was Peter's executor, and I was his executor. And, which, of course, I had no idea what that meant. And then we had Michael Haddad, who was a lawyer, who had, when *Rites* rented the front room of Denis Findlay's house, Michael Haddad rented – was a gay man, a lawyer – who rented the middle room, and then Denis Findlay had his bakery in the back. You know, he [Michael] just told me what to do, basically. There was a lot of time spent in their apartment with other people, after Doug died. I was not thrilled with being the executor. Not that I didn't want to do it for them, but I didn't have a clue.

AS: It's not like you get a lot of training, you know.

MLA: No. Exactly.

AS: And then you're, like, usually the executor is also, like, completely devastated and, like, having to do these practical things that don't feel possible. It's hard.

MLA: And. Yes. And, it clearly wasn't going to be a relative or something.

AS: Yes.

MLA: You know, he had sisters, but it wasn't until then that I understood what Doug had been involved in in Saskatchewan. And I knew he was, like, this famous gay man who'd been on the cover of *The Body Politic*, but I didn't really know that much about it until later.

And Valerie Korinek, a historian at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, at some point, wrote an article—

GK: Yes.

MLA: —for the *Canadian Historical Review* on Doug, and I'm like "Oh! This is..." And I think I actually got sent the manuscript to review. I'm like, "Oh. I didn't know all of this stuff".

AS: Right.

MLA: All of this stuff. And I just saw that the guy who was a very good friend of Doug's, who was an archivist ... Neil Richards. He just passed away, two weeks ago, or three weeks ago, or something.

GK: Really? I didn't know that. Too bad.

MLA: You know. He [Doug] started all these collections and, yes. So good, queer, history presence in Saskatchewan. Partly because of Doug and Neil working together. But, yes. He had friends all across the country, and then, you know, after Peter died, he, took a Greyhound bus trip basically all around North America, taking little film canisters of Peter's ashes around and putting them places. On the bus. Never had any money. Like, yep. Just cobbling together fares and stuff. And lots of writing. And lots of consulting kind of writing. That kind of stuff. And maybe he did things for the United Church? But, I wouldn't be surprised if he had,

GK: Yes. I mean, he was also friends with John Foster, he was part of that Oxfam, International Solidarity sort of network.

MLA: Yes. Exactly.

GK: His first work when he came to Toronto, was around Central American solidarity work.

MLA: Right.

GK: Yes.

MLA: Yes. He was pretty fun.

GK: Doug was wonderful.

MLA: Very, very, very, very fun. And he was forty two when he died. Yes. I still have a box of things in the basement. You know, you're supposed to keep the things for, like, seven years or whatever, but. It's full of those great big huge floppy disks. [laughing] You know, I think, like, I guess I could throw those out, now.

GK: Maybe not...

MLA: Yes? Like, do archives keep them? And it's probably just his tax returns, I have no idea what they are but, like, would the Archives have a computer that could read those old things?

AS: Yes. I used to be an archivist, and—

MLA: Yes?

AS: So, one of the tasks, is how do you have the machines that—

MLA: To keep, to keep the obsolete machines.

AS: —to read those things. And a lot of those things have this, there's this digital... catastrophic digital data loss because analogue things go... they are, like, reel-to-reel tape—

MLA: Right.

AS: —will get gradually, gradually worse, and you can often recover it, but a lot of digital things ... it disappears entirely.

MLA: All of a sudden, it dies.

GK: So thank you for telling us about Doug.

MLA: Yes.

AS: Yes. That's good.

GK: That was really great. Are there other people who would have been involved in AIDS ACTION NOW! around that time, that have died, that you have any memories of?

MLA: There would...

GK: I mean, you've told us about George.

MLA: Yes...

GK: I don't know if you had much connection with—

MLA: George for sure, Bernard a little bit. And then just, like, this constant rearranging of who's sitting at the table. Like, so I do remember, and it must have been at the 519, in one of the rooms upstairs. Like, having meetings. Steering committee meetings? I don't know.

Having meetings at these tables, and people would come in, and somebody who had been sitting there last week, “Oh, so-and-so passed away”. Or, “Oh...” I think it was Michael who was the Radical Faerie.

AS: Michael Smith.

MLA: Michael Smith with the long hair. You know.

GK: Oh, yes.

MLA: Yes. I remember being at his memorial — So, the constant stream of memorials. And then—

AS: Do you want to say anything about Michael’s—

GK: —memorial service?

MLA: That it was Radical Faeries [laughing] There were some Radical Faeries present. I remember... lots of them were in that same funeral home, wherever it is, and whatever it was. Was his dad there?

GK: I think so...

MLA: And, and I remember thinking that... you know, here’s this guy in his, like, faerie skirts and his long hair and everything, and I remember thinking “I’m glad his dad is here” or something like that. I know I was at it? I don’t remember much more than that.

AS: It turned into a march, didn’t it? Wasn’t that...?

GK: Yes.

MLA: [whispering] I don’t know...

GK: It did. That, I mean, in some ways it’s the closest thing that we’ve been able to find to, the political funerals that they had in New York City and other parts of the States.

MLA: Right.

GK: But it wasn’t quite like that, either.

MLA: Yes. I don’t remember.

AS: Yes.

MLA: I do remember a Die-In. At Pride Day. You asked something about a Die-In. I remember, like, chalk. Church and Wellesley. ... Was there more than one Die-In on Pride Day? [chuckling] Probably.

AS: Yes. They're probably all piled together in your mind.

MLA: Yes... I don't know. Doug and Peter would have been the closest people, for sure.

GK: Right.

MLA: But then, just this constant— And, you know, people you don't know well at all, like. You know. Like, imagine somebody you see at work, and then find out they've died, and you think, "Well, that's really sad. I don't know them very well, but..." But this constant, constant, because people would get super sick. And then they'd end up at AIDS ACTION NOW!, eventually. Some, you know, not everybody, obviously. And, for some people, they were quite sick, by the time they got there, which is how they got there. Right? And so, then they were only there for a little while. And... so people you never got to know, the name Ross is in my head...

GK: Ross Laycock?

MLA: Maybe? And then, not being able—

GK: He had visible Kaposi's Sarcoma lesions?

MLA: I don't know. And then, not being able to remember people who you didn't really know anyway, but it feels bad to not remember them? ... Which reminds me of somebody. So. Bob Gardner and Tim McCaskell and Richard Fung and I all belonged to the same karate club. A very large karate club that had, maybe, seventy people at any given time. And one of our little "AIDS side-projects" was, there was a young man there. We were all senior belts. He was a green belt. He was there with his boyfriend. We didn't know they were boyfriends. People wear their things, you called them by their last name, you don't have time to chat with them, there's seventy people, you know, nothing... One of the men, I guess, had HIV and ended up in the hospital. And then we find out that the other man is his boyfriend. And the karate teacher asked them not to come back to the dojo because it's dangerous because of the blood. So, Tim and Richard and Bob and I say, "Well, we're going to have to quit, too, then". And, well, and then Tim comes out [as HIV+] to the Sensei and explains all this thing, and then. So it was a little AIDS ACTION NOW! action at our karate club. And then, what happened after that was all the brown and black belts had to carry bleach kits in their bag and get, there was "bleach kit training", and if there was blood, you would run and get your bleach kit and clean the floor, or something, and I don't know as that's the standard of universal precautions anymore, but that's what we did at the karate club.

AS: All of you stayed, though?

MLA: We did all stay, yes.

AS: And did the—?

MLA: We convinced him that he didn't actually know how many other people in his club might have HIV, and you can't just kick people out because then people won't tell you, and then you don't know, "For instance, Mr. McCaskell is HIV positive and he's a senior black belt. Would you like him to leave?" and all this kind of stuff, so. It was a little AIDS ACTION NOW! side-project.

AS: Wow.

MLA: It was cute!

GK: That's a really good story.

AS: Yes.

MLA: Yes. It was a good story. ... And then the man died shortly after.

GK: So there's people who died later, like Greg Pavelich or Bob Gardner or Glen Brown. And I don't know if you wanted to tell us about them at all.

MLA: Yes...

GK: You already did mention Greg. Been talking too long. You said he was sweet.

MLA: Greg. I did mention Greg. [laughing] Sweet. He was very sweet.

AS: Very talkative.

MLA: And very talkative. And Glen... You know, I would have known Glen a little bit from *Rites*, a little bit from AIDS ACTION NOW!, and every other possible place he would be in town. And...Doug and Glen had the little Saskatchewan thing going on. I didn't know him super well. And I didn't know Greg at all except from meetings. Glen was another person who had a lot of skills. So there's, there's, like, the activists who had, like, millions of skills? And the activists who just have energy. And, you know, or maybe one or two skills. But, he'd be in the category of, like... totally competent and totally able to do lots and lots of things. But I mostly knew him, I think I probably knew him a little bit more through *Rites* and editing his stuff, and I can't remember what he would have written about. And I think... working at *Rites* is how I ended up meeting people. Because that was, you know, trying to get people to write things, editing people's work... Volunteering with people in the middle of the night. That kind of stuff. And Paul... Paul Maher was Alan Cornwall's boyfriend, and Alan. What was Paul Bartlet – from Rhinotype ... But he was one of the first people who died that I knew.

GK: That was pretty early on.

MLA: And he was the person I— I knew nothing about gay male culture. Like, how did you find—? So if you go to Sunnyside Park, how do you end up getting to have sex with somebody? How does that person know, and this person?” What happens if you go to the park? How does this work? Paul was my “explainer”. Of... certain forms of sexual activity about-which I knew nothing and was fascinated by. It was like, Oh my god, you mean people can go to the park and have sex? And I lived near Sunnyside at that time. I lived in High Park, and I was like, all those men in their cars are waiting for other men to have sex? Well, most of those men in their cars are— Well how do you know which men in their cars are waiting to have sex with other men? I would think. So. Yes. He was very funny, too.

AS: And Bob Gardner? Do you want to say anything about him?

MLA: Yes. Bob and Linda. He was just good to, and well, and so... [tearfully] So we would go to karate all the time and Bob was, like, the worst.

AS: [laughing]

MLA: Tim and Richard were, they’d been going for years and years, and Bob would go through periods of going in and out, but. You know, we’d sit on the floor and stretch for a little while, at the beginning and the end, so there’d always be, well, you know, there would be debriefs about whatever meeting we had been to the night before, or something like that. But also, like, Bob was just... he played soccer, he went to karate, they [he and Linda] watched Coronation Street. He had routines and things. But the two of them are also, like, another unit of production. The odd time Bob read stuff for me, for school, or like read over, like, “Oh, I’ll read that for you”, you know, or something like that, or. So he was definitely a sounding board for, not just, like, activism-y kind of ideas, but for school and—sociology.

AS: Yes. Intellectual.

MLA: Yes. Stuff like that. And he would run into people and they’d go, “Oh! He was my TA” like, “When I was a school” and everything. He was incredible. And the fact that he could manage his great big huge jobs, like, his real, paid jobs and be so active, and produce so much writing, and everything, was always pretty impressive to me. And the two of them, together, were just... they were very good friends. You know, taking care of people and having people for dinner, and checking up on people. And they had cats. They had that nice house... on Mackenzie Crescent, I think? So I would have hung out with Bob more than Linda. And then, once a year, we would all have to go to this thing for karate, and — I forget which one, Bob or Linda, had a sister or brother that had a cottage — I think we stayed at the cottage once, stayed overnight either on the way up or on the way back. But there were always, like, these big, long car trips to the karate thing. Tim, Richard, and Bob and I. And so... yes. There would be lots of analysis of our karate subculture, but also lots of gossip about it. Bob was a good gossip, too. Less gossip with Tim.

AS: And Tim would—

MLA: [laughing] You could gossip with Richard.

AS: [laughing]

MLA: Yes. So. And, just ... going out for Chinese food, or, like, whatever. But very, they, you know, the Gardners as the heterosexual support wing—

GK: [chuckling]

MLA: —were important. Just really important, I think. And I think lots of people would say that they were super important—

GK: Yes.

MLA: —to their own kind of consistency or ability to stay involved, or feel okay about staying involved.

AS: And that was just, that was because of that, like, checking in, having dinners...?

MLA: A little. They were both super good at what they did. They had really good socialist, connective politics about bringing people from different causes together. They were a good argument about the limits of identity politics. And the importance of political analysis as the basis upon which we should be organizing our political relationships.

GK: Right.

MLA: Like... very, very hard working. And consistent. Right? And no drama, just nice, steady, presence sort of thing. Yes. And then it was nice to be able to see, to be able to interact with Bob in different contexts, too, and see how all these bits of somebody's life would fit together. I think I would have known of them through the abortion stuff. But I think I didn't meet them until AIDS ACTION NOW! or maybe some stuff through *Rites*.

GK: I think, actually, Bob, under a pseudonym, wrote something...?

MLA: I think so, too.

GK: Yes.

MLA: Yes.

GK: Yes. From, it was like an OCAC type analysis, because that's where they came from.

MLA: Yes.

AS: Do you want to say what an OCAC analysis is?

GK: Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics.

MLA: Yes.

GK: Which they were both quite involved in. And a number of people around AIDS ACTION NOW! did support work for.

MLA: Yes.

GK: Including Brent, myself, other people.

MLA: Right.

GK: So... There was an important connection there. For a while.

MLA: Yes, they were good.

GK: And then, after the legal victory, OCAC sort of goes into a lull.

AS: Oh, yes.

MLA: Yes. When they left.

GK: And I think that's when Bob and Linda get much more involved in AIDS ACTION NOW!.

MLA: Yes. And then one, or both, of them were on the board of CATIE, for sure. Or TIE.

GK: Yes. So they were involved in that. Yes, we did try to interview Bob, but he was already too sick for...

MLA: Right. They were great.

AS: Yes.

GK: So we've only got two question left.

MLA: Yes?

GK: And we've only a little bit of time left, so.

AS: A little bit of time. This is perfect.

MLA: Yes.

GK: One is, is there anything that you remember that you'd like to talk about that's sort of come up as we've been talking? Sort of your chance to say whatever you want.

MLA: Nothing in particular. I'll remember things tomorrow, though, in which case I'll send you an email. I think one of the things that made, and I don't know about how AAN! has worked in the last two decades, but one of the things that made it possible was that it was also fun. Like, that, you know... hanging out with people on Pride Day at the booth, or I remember parties at, one at Alan Cornwall's house or... that there was, there were certainly things that were difficult. In terms of some kind of consensus focused politic in this huge group of people with very different politics and different skills. But, there was fun stuff. And, and fun stuff around some of the demonstrations and things like that. That, I think, makes a big difference.

AS: Yes.

MLA: Not everything was fun, for sure.

AS: Right. But there was some joy.

MLA: Yes.

AS: In the work.

MLA: And goofiness.

GK: For sure.

MLA: Yes.

GK: And our very last question is—

MLA: Yes.

GK: And this is probably not the most relevant question to ask you now, because we're actually saying that maybe you're one of our last interviews.

MLA: Right. [laughing]

GK: We're running out of funding. But.

MLA: Right. Who else should you talk to?

GK: Yes.

MLA: So, in Toronto, which women have you talked to?

GK: Susan.

MLA: Susan Kasurak?

AS: Darien.

MLA: Darien Taylor.

GK: Maggie Atkinson—

MLA: Right.

GK: Who's probably later than you.

MLA: We were around at the same time, but I never knew her.

AS: Dionne...

GK: Falconer. Yes. We talked to her around Black CAP.

MLA: Yes, okay.

GK: Tracey Tief— Who was more around AIDS and sex worker organizing—

MLA: Right.

GK: —and would have been a good friend of Michael Smith's.

MLA: Yes. Right.

AS: Renee du Plessis?

MLA: Well, I believe it. Yes. I forget everybody's name now.

GK: I mean, more from the earlier period of AIDS ACTION NOW!, so Maggie is sort of like one of the people from later? Yes, Renee du Plessis. Who would be way before you.

MLA: Right. I don't know her.

GK: When do you get involved in AIDS ACTION NOW!? I, it's better to get a clear idea.

MLA: '88, probably. In the early times, I was definitely— I would have been one of the *few* women at steering committee meetings. You know, Darien for sure, but. One of the few women, to the point of, “Oh, make sure that Mary Louise is the MC here”—

AS: Right.

MLA: Because we need a girl here. Which was, which was fine.

AS: Yes.

MLA: But it was, you know, there were other people who were more skilled and qualified and could have been the MC, but weren't girls, let alone anything more diverse than just having a girl.

AS: Right.

MLA: Yes. So. Early on, I think I did fulfill that function, and then more women—

AS: Came.

MLA: —started coming in.

AS: And Voices of Positive Women got more going,

MLA: Yes. That's right. Other people? ... Nobody that you wouldn't have already talked to, I'm sure. Like, the obvious, obvious people.

GK: And we have interviewed Eric.

MLA: Yes. It would just be all the, all the super obvious people.

GK: Thank you so much for this.

MLA: Well, thanks. This was fun.

GK: And you remember so much.

AS: You remembered so much.

MLA: I remembered some things!