

# + POSITIVE DISPATCH

NEW SLETTER OF THE AIDS COALITION OF NOVA SCOTIA · SUMMER 2015

## Welcome Liz Harrop-Archibald



We have been out of touch for a bit and we're sorry! There has been a lot happening at ACNS this past year with the transition of Laura Toole and welcoming a new team member, Liz Harrop-Archibald to the position of Support Services Coordinator. If you haven't met Liz yet, please feel free to give her a call at (902) 425- 4882 ext 225 or email at [sc@acns.ns.ca](mailto:sc@acns.ns.ca) to introduce yourself. We are excited to have Liz with us, and look forward to her being a member of the staff team.

## We Have Moved!



We moved office spaces earlier this month! We are in the process of making our new space feel homey and we'd love for you to drop by and tell us what you think!

Our new address is:  
5516 Spring Garden Road,  
Suite 200, Halifax, NS B3J 1G6  
Our phone numbers and email addresses remain the same.

## Cha-Cha-Cha-Changes...

As you may know, ACNS has been involved in a renaming/rebranding process. We have proposed: "The Beacon: Support & Education for HIV, Hepatitis and STIs". We had some tweaking to do over the summer and plan to reach out to the membership again to move forward with a name change in the fall.

During our annual meeting that was held on June 19<sup>th</sup>, we gained support to expand our mandate to include the province of Prince Edward Island. This

will help us to take on some of the oversight for programming at the request of AIDS PEI, as they work towards shutting the organization down over the next year.

If you have any questions about these changes please do not hesitate to contact Maria at [ed@acns.ns.ca](mailto:ed@acns.ns.ca) or at 902 425 4882 extension 227.

## Persons Living with HIV Consultation

ACNS will be reaching out via survey to learn more about how your needs have changed over the years, and to learn about new concerns from those who are newly diagnosed. This survey will help us better understand what your priority for programs and services are.

We plan to accomplish this consultation in two parts: (1) a survey for you to fill out and return to us in the mail; (2) a teleconference to hear more and discuss thoughts and ideas about moving forward into 2021. We hope to have some initial findings from the surveys to help our teleconference discussion. We want to hear from as many people as we can through this process to

help inform our upcoming Strategic Directions and future programming. Surveys will be sent in the mail to you and enclosed will be an envelope for you to return your survey to us. The process and your feedback will be completely confidential.

Our teleconference is scheduled for September 22nd from 6-8 pm; all those who wish to participate can initially register with Liz Harrop-Archibald. We will send out a reminder and the special teleconference codes a couple of days prior. We look forward to hearing from you!!

## Programs & Services: Key Highlights from 2014

Our 2014 HIV-STBBI Knowledge Exchange & Health Promotion Forum (KEHPF) provided an opportunity for individuals and groups to meet through knowledge exchange and skills building activities in a variety of settings. A main component of this program was to share successful programming models so that other groups and communities can utilize them in their respective areas. The overall program provided a safe space for participants to learn from one another and to address the challenges that we face in supporting people living with HIV/HCV, in addition, to preventing new cases of HIV, HCV, and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) (STIBBs).

We were excited to continue with a focus on resilience from the previous year. Building upon what was already learned with the theme, "Making Connections" we delved further into the topic of resilience



and integration within our communities; what integration looks like and what it means.

We were excited to partner with CTAC in 2014 to offer a Positive Sex workshop the day before the conference began. Attended mainly by a small group of people living with HIV, the positive sex workshop focused on creating an environment for people living with HIV to practice talking about their positive status (disclosure) with potential sex partners. The workshop focused on negotiating disclosure styles by practicing various disclosure scenarios, building disclosure skills with a focus on confidence building, and learning ways of externalizing stigma-based negative responses through various role play and theatre based activities. The small nature of the group allowed for

comfort, and for participants to share and discuss issues many PHA's face when considering disclosure in their own lives.

# The Knowledge Exchange & Health Promotion Forum - Silos to Synergies

The AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia, in partnership with the Northern AIDS Connection Society, Atlantic Interdisciplinary Research Network, Hep NS, the Ally Centre of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia Advisory Commission on AIDS, Healing Our Nations, Mainline Needle Exchange and Direction 180, joined together to build a multi-sector community consultation on the future design of programs and services from an integrated approach.

Organizations who currently hold a mission to address one or more sexually transmitted blood borne infections (STBBIs), such as HIV, HCV and other STIs, have worked in partnership for many years. Looking towards the future, we explored how the integration of programs/services could benefit those we serve and help ensure that “any door is the right door” when accessing services. The “any door” concept lends from the idea that whichever organization or service a person arrives at, that they would receive the information and referrals they need.

A Multi-Sector Consultation: Designing Integration of Programs and Services that Address HIV, HCV & other STIs in Nova Scotia: Our overarching goal of the consultation was a multi-sectoral conversation that surfaced the collective ideas and insights from various perspectives - people living with HIV and HCV to those working in community organizations - about how to practically integrate programs and services that will best serve those most affected. We were able to reflect on current models of practice that are working in communities to explore what could work moving forward.

## KEHPF Performance Markers:

- 92% of respondents reported that they will use/apply the knowledge gained at this education conference in their paid or volunteer work.
- 85% of respondents reported that the conference sessions and/or plenary increased their knowledge of HIV.
- 92% of respondents thought the forum provided an opportunity to network with others doing similar work.
- 100% of respondents thought the forum sessions and/or plenary increased their knowledge and understanding of the issues around HIV/AIDS, HCV, and STBBIs.
- 100% of respondents felt they had learned new strategies that will help to build resiliency in their life, work and community around HIV/AIDS.



The continued inclusion of strengths and resilience based focused subject matter resulted in an encouraging and engaging atmosphere where participants stated that they felt safe to share their personal experience, as well as explore new and unfamiliar content in the workshops.

Our report for our 2015 KEHPF will be available on our website early in the fall, check out our website!

## The Positive Living Program

This past fiscal year we held two Positive Living Program series. In the spring, we held a session specifically for positive women. Feedback we received from our members suggested a ‘women only’ group would be beneficial. Through this group, we were able to reach women who had been living with HIV for 20+ years, and connect them with women who were more recently diagnosed. Beside the delivering of the program content, we were able to provide a space for HIV positive women to share their experiences and learn from one another.

In the winter, we held a session in the Truro area. Although we had a small turn out for the group, we were able to make connections with some PHA’s who were feeling isolated living more rurally. We also received important feedback from the program participants that will be valuable for the future development of the series.

## Positive Living Program Performance Markers:

- 83% of participants reported increased access to care, treatment, and support after participating in the project series.
- 83% of participants reported increased capacity to manage their health after attending the project series.

## Social Media



This past year, ACNS ran its first social media awareness campaign during AIDS Awareness Week in November of 2014. Through consultation with provincial AIDS Service Organizations, we developed different types of messaging to share with our wider audiences via Facebook and Twitter. We delivered 7 key awareness messages about HIV. We reached 1,500 of our followers and the content is still accessible. Look for us on Instagram in Spring of 2016!

## Check Out Our New Website

The ACNS staff team has worked tirelessly over the past year to build a new website platform that will encompass information for the needs of persons living with HIV, and/or HCV, and provide information about risk and referrals for HIV, Hepatitis and other STIs. Our overarching goal with the new site is to create a safe place for learning and engagement that is both current and sex positive.

Our web address remains the same, so check out our new look at [www.acns.ns.ca](http://www.acns.ns.ca). We hope it is easy to access the information you need. We certainly welcome feedback; let us know what you think! Email Maria at [ed@acns.ns.ca](mailto:ed@acns.ns.ca) or give us a call if you have any suggestions.

## Gay Men's Health & LGBTQ Programming

**Gay Men's Health Workshops** were held in the last year targeting men who have sex with men, LGBTQ leaders and health professionals. 88% of participants reported improved awareness/knowledge of HIV prevention and services available in NS. 70% of service providers reported an intention to improve practices around stigma & discrimination after participating in the sessions.

**Ass Class** is a program that seeks to teach gay, bi, bi-curious and trans men about their physiology and the biology of HIV-STBBI transmission. Originally run in the United Kingdom, the program continues to generate moderate but steady interest (and solid feedback). People from as far away as Fredericton have come to participate in the program. We are tweaking and improving it on an ongoing basis and presently have a young gay medical student reviewing the anatomy section (a core and unique component of the class) for possible improvements. We are also exploring a transgender-only presentation in the fall with a community member co-presenter. This is a great class that will be used as a lead-up to the national CPATH Transgender Health conference that takes place in Halifax in early October of 2015. As 85% of participants indicated improved awareness/knowledge of HIV, HCV and other STIs after attending the class, we plan to continue this class and hope to be bringing the program to Sydney, Cape Breton in the next year.

The **Check Me Out Campaign** was re-launched again this past fiscal year at



Halifax Pride with a new "group shot" poster, and updated checklists for gay / bi / bi-curious men re their sexual health maintenance. Three versions of the men's list are now available; one for Halifax, Sydney, and the rest of NS as location options for getting HIV / STI testing done vary considerably. As well, plans for releasing the campaign's outcomes (based on the over 300 feedback surveys) are underway. This summer, we released the results from the Check Me Out campaign. 23% of those who participated in an online survey about the campaign indicated improved awareness/knowledge about HIV, HCV and other STBBIs after viewing some portion of the campaign. We had 1146 unique web views; distributed 450 hard copy checklists; and received 327 evaluation surveys. There has been interest in adapting our campaign for all of Ontario by the province's Gay Men's Sexual Health Network (GMSH) and CATIE is also exploring making a version of our materials available on a national basis. Check out our website to see our info-graphic and what we learned!

We (jointly with community partners) have begun the process of adapting the **Totally Outright** program. This program was originally developed in B.C. a decade ago, and is gradually spreading across the country to solid acclaim. We will be offering it to young gay, bi, trans, queer and two-spirit men across Nova Scotia who are interested in being informed, peer community leaders. **Totally Outright** is a four day leadership / life-skills training program. The program is developed on the notion that providing training to youth peer leaders on up-to-date safer sex and harm reduction practices can better inform populations and encourage safer supportive communities. Topics that are covered include: LGBTQ community history, advocacy, community development, relationship skills and various other subjects. The goal is that training these youth will have ripple effects to improve health and overall wellbeing of their friends, partners, peers and other members of their communities. These "young leaders" will participate in interactive, thought provoking presentations from local community leaders and experts in GBT2S men's health early next year.

## Transition House Training Support

Planning and program development is underway for upcoming training sessions with the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia. ACNS has created a provincial planning committee to gain feedback and expertise around training session development from our partners. ACNS, with the support of our partners will offer full day training sessions to housing staff and volunteers across NS in the coming months.

Through our partnership with the Transition House Association, we have also compiled a small committee comprised of staff members working in various houses across the province to help us assess training needs, and capture feedback from front line perspectives on what they would like to gain from the training sessions.

## Coming in 2016: A PHA Retreat!

We've heard great feedback over the years since our last PHA retreat. In response to this feedback and several requests, we are planning a PHA camping style retreat for the fall of 2016! As part of the program development, we are bringing together a group of dedicated PHAs to provide feedback and input. If you would like to be part of a planning committee, please contact Michelle at (902) 425-4882 ext 226 or through email at [pc@acns.ns.ca](mailto:pc@acns.ns.ca) by September 10th.



## AIDS Walk Halifax 2015

**Banque Scotia** **Scotiabank**

**MARCHE ACTION SIDA** **AIDS WALK FOR LIFE**

[www.aidswalkforlife.ca](http://www.aidswalkforlife.ca)

Sunday, September 27th, 2015

Walk with us. Help end the Stigma  
#stigmafighter #signedup #walkforlife

THANK YOU TO OUR LOCAL SPONSORS

Enter as a team OR individual! Prizes for top teams and walkers. Great Family Fun!

follow us on @AIDS\_NS and like us on **AIDS 20** Coalition of Nova Scotia **YEARS**

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## Support Services Program Highlights

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- Poz Guyz peer group met monthly over the past year
- ACNS provided more than 130 referrals to programs and health services for people living with HIV
- ACNS provided more than 750 one on one support sessions either in-person or over the phone.
- ACNS distributed hundreds of hygiene items through our 'Making Ends Meet' program
- ACNS provided scholarships for PHAs to attend our annual KEHPF

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## Newly Elected ACNS Board

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This is the Newly Elected ACNS Board as of June 19th. If you want to learn more about each member of the board check out our new website in the contact section.

Al Mc Nutt,  
Suzanne Kennedy  
Augie Westhaver  
Dave St. Laurent  
Kristen O'Keefe  
Eric Ross  
Megan Longley  
Mike Sangster  
Alex Gallant  
Tara La Pointe  
Margaret LaPointe

PHA Board representation: Have you thought about joining the ACNS board before? We are looking for new board members. If you would like to join us in an introductory teleconference entitled: On the ACNS Board 101, please email us at [board@acns.ns.ca](mailto:board@acns.ns.ca) to register. Learn more about how you can contribute and become educated at the same time.

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## prideHealth Update

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As some of you may know, we have been without a prideHealth nurse for a year now. Recently, this position has been filled. We are excited to welcome Ashley Sharpe as the new prideHealth clinical nurse specialist. Ashley will be filling the position that was formerly held by Anita Keeping. She will be working with ACNS in a similar manner (i.e. providing testing, health consultations, referrals, etc.). We are planning a meet and greet for the fall, so keep your eyes peeled for the date and time, and your chance to come in and meet Ashley!

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## ACNS Staff Team

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Maria Mac Intosh, Executive Director  
Michelle Johnson, Program Coordinator  
Ned MacInnis, Program Support  
Chris Aucoin, Gay Men's Health Coordinator  
Kenda Riles, Fund Development  
Liz Harrop-Archibald, Support Services

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## What's Going On...?

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### September

10 - Poz Gay Guys Group; 5-7pm  
20 - Wolfville AIDS Walk  
27 - Halifax AIDS Walk

### October

8 - Poz Gay Guys Group; 5-7pm  
22 - Women's Get-Together; 5-7pm

### November

12 - Poz Gay Guys Group; 5-7pm  
24-30 - AIDS Awareness Week

\*These are the dates for regularly-scheduled events. For more information on specific programs and events, call Michelle at 902 425 4882 ext 226 or email her at [pc@acns.ns.ca](mailto:pc@acns.ns.ca)