

2014 *In Her Skin* Helping Women Move Forward



Speaker Bios By Order of Presentation

Devorah Garland

Devorah Garland is the Women and HIV/AIDS Community Development Coordinator at the AIDS Committee of Durham Region. Less than 3 years ago, this position was created through funding from the AIDS Bureau of the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. With a focus on community development, this position includes developing educational programs and materials, serving on various committees, and planning and/or participating in community events throughout the year.

She is a member of 10 inter-agency committees: the Durham Elder Abuse Network, Durham Advisory Council on Homelessness, North Durham Social Development Council, Community Development Council Durham, Women's Wellness Alliance of Durham Region, Sex Trade Workers Support Circle of Durham Region, Women Abuse Awareness Committee, Aboriginal Advisory Circle, Pickering Advisory Committee on Diversity, and the Violence Prevention Community Council.

She founded and chairs the open membership of the Women's Wellness Alliance of Durham Region (www.durhamwomenshealth.ca) and founded the annual Tea and Talent event which celebrates the artistic contributions to our community by people of African, Caribbean and Black heritage.

Rita Liepins

Rita Liepins has studied Aboriginal shamanism for 20 years, delving into the Navajo, Hopi, Cherokee, Lakota and Maya traditions. She has studied with the Arizona-based ICSS Institute for Shamanic Studies (Deer Tribe Metis Medicine Society and Sweet Medicine Sundance Path) and the ISM Institute for Shamanic Medicine (rainbow serpent society), which is based in Toronto and has schools in Ottawa and Vancouver.

Latvian by descent, Rita was ceremonially adopted into the Cherokee Tribe in 2003; in her tobacco pouch, she carries a pinch from the pouch of their ancestors, a gift during her adoption that ensures every pinch she offers as part of her healing work carries on the long tradition of healing passed down from the ancestors through the generations.

Skilled as a healer using a variety of Aboriginal traditions, she interacts with Aboriginal communities across Southern Ontario and the United States, where she has been well received and supported in the

practice of her craft. These tribes have given her many tools to further the cause of healing and have openly expressed their gratitude that she is committed to keeping the old ways and the traditions of healing.

Rita can be reached at jaguara@hotmail.ca.

Marvelous Muchenje

Marvelous Muchenje is a true leader in advocacy for women living with HIV. She has devoted herself tirelessly over the past 19 years to helping to ensure policy-makers, service providers and researchers understand the needs of women living with HIV and provide services and funding to meet those needs.

Diagnosed with HIV in 1995, she continues to participate passionately in various initiatives in the HIV movement; volunteering, providing programming support to support groups of individuals living with HIV/AIDS, and promoting HIV awareness internationally.

Marvelous Muchenje is currently the Community Health Coordinator at Women's Health in Women's Hands Community Health Centre (<http://whiwh.com>).

Joanne Ashley

Joanne is a retired Registered Nurse primarily employed within The Mental Health Services at The Ontario Shores (formerly The Whitby Mental Health Centre). Throughout her career, Joanne accepted challenging positions within the facility always offering empathy, professionalism and a gentle touch of humour. Her last appointment as Manager of a volunteer association was a rewarding experience for herself, her volunteers and most importantly for the patients; tapping into her creative energies and enhancing patient care and connecting with the community in many ways.

Upon retirement over a decade ago, Joanne launched herself into acquiring an extensive Sexual Education diploma course through the City of Toronto Public Health Department. With this knowledge she has led The Rotary Club of Whitby into AIDS awareness and education as the Founder and Chair of a highly regarded programme called RADAR. (Rotary Action for the Development of AIDS Responses). She conducts plenary sessions and innumerable workshops for fellow Rotarians locally, nationally and internationally. Of her many awards, one of her most cherished is The Queen Elizabeth 11 Silver Jubilee Medal (2012) for her devotion to AIDS Education.

Yasmeen Persad

Yasmeen Persad is a trans woman of colour. Presently she works at the 519 Church Street Community Centre Trans Access Program as a highly skilled facilitator/trainer and teacher. Over the past 8 years she has used her extensive skills and knowledge to teach and train agencies and service providers to better support their trans clients.

Molly Bannerman

Molly Bannerman is a Registered Social Worker and Restorative Justice Practitioner who has worked with marginalized populations for more than 15 years. Her harm reduction focus is on homeless, street based and/or sex working women who use drugs and have experienced high levels of violence.

Molly's practice and passion concern legal responses which do not work in women's best interest and the use of art as a tool to address trauma, isolation and pain. Molly has conducted research and workshops with a variety of community-based and academic partners.

Brittany Cameron

Brittany Cameron has been living with HIV for 8 years. She lives in Peterborough, Ontario with her husband and is the proud mother of 3 children aged 8, 3 and 2. She will graduate with a degree in Social Work from Fleming College this September.

Brittany prides herself on being involved in her community. She is part of the Speakers Bureaus for both Peterborough AIDS Resource Network (PARN) and the AIDS Committee of Durham Region (ACDR). She graduated from the Positive Leadership Development Institute, and is currently developing a program to implement peer leadership training at PARN. Brittany is an accredited Youth Advisory Committee Member with The AIDS Committee of Durham Region and helped create the chapter "Children and Disclosure" in the book *NOW WHAT? The Possibilities of Disclosure – A Guide by HIV Positive People for AIDS Service Organizations and Their Allies*.

Jay MacGillivray

Now in her 30th year of practice, registered midwife Jay MacGillivray has been an outstanding advocate for people and communities who are marginalized because of HIV/AIDS, disability, poverty, immigration or other systematic barriers to success. She is a popular speaker on advocacy, social justice, health care and marginal communities.

She is co-director of the Positive Pregnancy Program for HIV Positive Women at St. Michael's Hospital (Toronto) which provides comprehensive pregnancy, birth, and postpartum care to HIV-positive mothers and their babies. By referral from obstetricians and midwives, Jay works exclusively with HIV positive women; she also does outreach with women vulnerable to HIV through injection drug use, sex exchange (trading sex for drugs) and sex work.

She was honoured with the prestigious Casey House Award (individuals or organizations across Canada that have demonstrated leadership in the fields of HIV/AIDS and/or social justice) for individual excellence in health care innovation, social justice and HIV nationally.

Her office can be reached at 416-792-3383.