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Interviewee:	Eric Smith
Interviewers:	Gary Kinsman, Dani Normandeau
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Persons present: Eric Smith – ES
Gary Kinsman – GK
Dani Normandeau – DN

[START OF TRANSCRIPT]

GK: We start with some common questions that we ask everyone. Can you remember how you first heard about HIV and AIDS, and what you heard?

ES: Yes. I was pretty young, right, I was born in 1968, so already at age fifteen or sixteen it was in the news. I lived in the suburbs of New York, so my main source of information was *the Village Voice*. I was just coming out then, at the beginning of high school, and I wasn't sexually active so it was a bit abstract maybe. But I was following the beginning of the political response to AIDS in the left liberal circles as a young gay teenager who had just come out.

GK: So you would have at that point been reading the *Village Voice*. Do you remember anything more specific around AIDS that you would have been reading?

ES: No. I mean, basically my main interest then was left-leaning politics. I started reading publications like *The Nation* and other left publications, so it would have been just to the extent that they were covering it. This was before the activism really started. This would have been in 1984, so before the worst of the crisis.

GK: So you end up here in Montreal? Was it for school?

ES: Yes, I came to McGill in 1986.

GK: We always ask about political engagements you had before getting involved in AIDS activism. Were there any of those for you?

ES: Well, I was involved with *The Daily*, at McGill. That was great – this was just after the heyday of *The Daily*, so we were a little bit in the shadow of the periods before us when *The Daily* was really important to radical student journalism. I came in just after there had been a referendum in an attempt to shut it down.

GK: Any activism beyond that?

ES: Yes, mostly around Central America, activism around that at the time. But then I got really interested in the activism that ACT UP in New York was doing – their organizing skills and their graphics were amazing and that was something I was really interested in. I really admired what they could do visually. I was aware of ACT UP in New York while I was in Montreal, but I wasn't involved directly with AIDS organizing until Réaction SIDA. Well, I mean, I was involved in gay stuff, right, so I was involved with GALOM, now Queer McGill but then it was Gays And Lesbians of McGill. But in terms of actual activism, it wasn't until we had that meeting that I would say it started.

GK: The stories around how Réaction SIDA forms are a little bit different in terms of different people we've talked to. But related to it or the context of it is to some extent the murder of Joe Rose. Do you remember, or could you tell us a little bit about who Joe Rose was, and why and how that was significant for people?

ES: Yes. I knew Joe Rose. I didn't know him very well, but he was in the sister group to GALOM at Concordia. And he was a good friend of a good friend of mine, Peter, so I knew Joe through Peter. It seems – maybe I have the timing wrong – it seems that we were involved in AIDS activism before Joe's murder. I think we were. To my recollection, we'd already started and we were already kind of organized when Joe was murdered, and that that became one of the things we then shifted our focus to when that happened. As far as I remember it, it wasn't Joe's murder that was the impetus for the organizing.

GK: That conforms to what some people have told us. So, in terms of that first meeting that sets up Réaction SIDA, how did that come about?

ES: I don't remember.

GK: Do you remember Karen Herland calling you up and saying something had to happen, this AIDS conference is happening soon?

ES: It would make a lot of sense that Karen would be the person who told me about this! Yes, that would make sense that Karen would invite me to something like this.

GK: Do you remember anything about that first meeting?

ES: I fell in love! My partner of twenty-one years. I met him at that meeting. So I remember that! I remember we were both sort of laying on the floor. Yes. So, yes. That's really all I remember! [laughter] But, yes. That's when I met Gordon and that was the beginning of a twenty-one year relationship.

GK: And that meeting happened above L'Alternatif, which was an anarchist bookstore? Did you have connections there before the meeting?

ES: Yes, it was an anarchist bookstore. I had some connections there through *The Daily*. *The Daily* definitely had an anarchist bent, and so there was some relationship between L'Alternatif and some people at *The Daily*. I mean, we weren't all anarchists, but there were a number of anarchists at *The Daily*. And so I knew the bookstore. I never volunteered or worked there, but I knew it.

GK: So, the momentous getting together of you and Gordon happens at that meeting, and that's important and will be preserved in history now and for all time [laughter]. Do you have any sense of what Réaction SIDA would have then done? Some people have suggested either Joe Rose had been murdered just a couple of days before the meeting had been planned, and the demonstration around Joe Rose somehow comes out of Réaction SIDA. Do you have any memories of that?

ES: No, I don't. I don't.

GK: Do you remember there being some sort of big event around the murder of Joe Rose? Whether there was a vigil or something else?

ES: Yes.

GK: I mean, I know ACT UP does something the next year, but...

ES: No. I think I remember there was a vigil. But I can't place that in a timeline with the meeting.

GK: Okay. That's fine. So, there's the period of time between when Réaction SIDA is formed and the International AIDS Conference. Do you have any memory of what might have been going on during that period of time with Réaction SIDA? How was it organized? How were decisions made? Were there other things that people did aside from organizing around Joe Rose and then organizing around the conference?

ES: If I remember right, for decisions we tried to use a sort of anarchist consensus model for—

GK: Right.

ES: I don't remember if, at the time of the meeting, we already knew about the Montreal conference, and if we were starting to plan then. Were we? Or did that happen later?

GK: People have told us various things.

ES: Yes.

GK: Karen Herland certainly would contend that the reason why the meeting took place was because there needed to be some planning done for the conference, but then the Joe Rose thing happens around the same time.

ES: I will go with Karen on that. That definitely sounds right that, you know, we were all paying attention to what was happening in New York, the conference was coming up, we knew people were going to come up... Yes. We were starting to get organized then. And Joe Rose's murder was shortly after that, is my memory.

GK: Okay. It's just as good as anyone else's memory. So that's fine.

ES: [laughing] Right? Okay.

GK: So, Réaction SIDA would have largely made decisions based on consensus, which I think makes sense from what I saw when I came to the conference in '89 and saw how Réaction SIDA organized. Anything else that you think happened between the formation of Réaction SIDA, the Joe Rose action, and then the conference? And, I guess, one question I wanted to

ask you was, you've talked about ACT UP in Montreal, but were there any connections at all with AIDS ACTION NOW! in Toronto?

ES: Just awareness of AIDS ACTION NOW! in Toronto? What they were doing? I know there were people in Réaction SIDA who were closer to what was happening in Toronto, and people who were from Toronto, who lived in Montreal. I had less of a connection to Toronto. I immigrated from New York, right?

GK: Right.

ES: So I was probably more New-York-focused than most. But, yes. For sure, we were aware of what was going on in Toronto and we were following what was going on in Toronto. And there was the gay press in Canada which was covering both what was happening in Montreal and in Toronto.

GK: One of the things I can say, because I was involved with AIDS ACTION NOW! then, is that for a number of months prior to the conference AIDS ACTION NOW! and ACT UP Montreal were engaging in conversations. Initially with no understanding that there was a group in Montreal. Apparently Tim McCaskell actually came here to see what was possible a couple of weeks before the murder of Joe Rose, and could find nothing, right?

ES: Really? Because I remember Tim McCaskell from—

GK: He may have come later on. There definitely were connections by the time of the conference that were happening. But we... AIDS ACTION NOW! and ACT UP New York City, particularly through Herb Spears, were developing the *Montreal Manifesto*.

ES: Right.

GK: So that's something we were going to produce and have announced and distributed at the conference. Somehow connections get made with Réaction SIDA and I really don't know how that happens? But people in Toronto become aware of it and realize there's an activist group in Montreal and it has to be involved.

ES: Right.

GK: So, I think that comes more from AIDS ACTION NOW! than from ACT UP—

ES: Could be, yes.

GK: But. One of the things that happens is the Action Center gets set up for the AIDS Conference.

ES: Yes.

GK: And do you have any memory of how that happens?

ES: I don't remember how that happened. I remember the Center. I remember the long table, I remember what we did there, together, and how well it was set up. Like, it really ran really well. We brought some computers in, a printer, we were producing stuff there that was then used in demonstrations and direct actions. It was a great place to be, but I don't remember how it was set up. The space was probably connected to Milton Park?

GK: Right.

ES: I had known it because the IS [International Socialists] met there.

GK: Okay.

ES: And I had been to a couple of IS things. I was there with Trotskyists, but I had been to a couple of things at the IS, and so I don't know, I don't know if they had helped us get it, or not. I don't remember.

GK: But it was actually part of the Milton Park housing co-operative space? Is that what it was?

ES: I don't know.

GK: Some people have suggested you actually played an important role in acquiring this space. But you have no memory of that. [laughter]

ES: It's possible, but I don't remember that.

GK: Did you know Dimitri Roussopoulos?

ES: Yes.

GK: The suggestion is that because of Dimitri's historic connection with the Milton co-op, that that might have been how it took place.

ES: Yes. And, in that case, it probably wouldn't have been me. So, Gordon's best friend, Natalie Klym, was there and was an editor of Black Rose Books.

GK: Okay.

ES: And she probably got help from Dimitri to do that.

GK: Okay. The Action Centre was an incredible resource. Without that space, we wouldn't have been able to do a whole bunch of stuff that we did.

ES: Yes.

GK: I guess we're now moving into, the conference itself. Do you have any memories of, the taking over of the opening session, or any of the actions?

ES: I did the Simultaneous Translation, right, at the opening session. I did the French translation. I can't remember who was speaking, so when people who didn't speak French got up, I did the Simultaneous Translation into French.

GK: Okay.

ES: I don't know if I was the only one who did it. That's what I remember because I was terrified.

GK: Some of that's recorded in John Greyson's video, *The World Is Sick [Sic]*, and it has Tim McCaskell who actually opens the conference, but speaking in English, although he says "SIDA" at one point on behalf of people living with AIDS and HIV. But, you know, that disruption went on for a long time.

ES: Yes. Some people came up to the mic, spoke in English, and I just translated what they were saying into French.

GK: I mean, so that was not, you know it was not the plan to take over the opening session. This was ACT UP New York City. This was their plan.

ES: Right.

GK: So the AIDS ACTION NOW! people were completely flummoxed by it when this took place.

ES: It was really exciting.

GK: It was wonderful.

ES: Right.

GK: But, Tim McCaskell and Glen Brown were all set up to have this little rally outside, and then everyone walks by them and goes in. That was sort of how that took place. That was totally ACT UP New York City's initiative and it was great.

ES: Yes.

GK: Do you remember anything else that happened during the conference? I do know that there were themes on different days, and there was an anonymous testing day, and you were the Réaction SIDA speaker.

ES: I don't remember that. I have a photo of me speaking, but I don't remember what I was saying.

GK: But I think that was sort of the method, that there would be an ACT UP, an AIDS ACTION NOW!, and a Réaction SIDA speaker at every one of these events.

ES: Right. And I was the Réaction SIDA one, one time.

GK: At least for the anonymous testing one. You might have done it more often.

ES: Right. Did I make any sense? [laughing]

GK: Well, I just know that it was reported that you were the speaker. It doesn't say what you actually said.

ES: Okay. Sure. [laughing]

GK: I'm sure it was a brilliant speech, I'm sure. Absolutely.

ES: No, I don't remember.

GK: Do you remember anything else about organizing during that week? Like, there were all the meetings at the Action Centre...

ES: I definitely remember the Action Centre. I remember monitoring the news and where we were getting coverage. And, I remember the sort of excitement in that space when we were getting stuff done. It was a really good few days. It felt like we were participating in something that was important.

GK: Yes and it did really change things at those international conferences.

ES: Yes.

GK: Now, one of the things Réaction SIDA organized more on its own, but no-one we've talked to has been able to tell us anything about it, was a specific action against the Quebec Health Minister. This was after most of the ACT UP New York City people had left. Because, they stayed for three days and there were two more days of the conference.

ES: I don't remember that. I remember that Therese Lavoie-Roux, the Quebec Health Minister, was supposed to speak at the opening, and we prevented her from speaking—

GK: That's good.

ES: —and that she was very upset.

GK: Sure. So they took her off the agenda, but because there was no time for her?

ES: Right.

GK: Because we took it up, which was too bad!

ES: Yes. But I don't remember a specific action aimed at Lavoie-Roux.

GK: Yes. All I have on it is that there's a whole bunch of stuff we did in *RITES* magazine as coverage of the conference and there is a discussion of about ten or twenty people unfurling a banner and preventing her from talking.

ES: I don't remember.

GK: So it's some specific Quebec thing she did as, maybe a session at the conference.

ES: I don't remember that.

GK: Okay.

ES: And I've got to say, in her defense, she wasn't so bad. Like, later on when we were doing a bit more, sort of, inside work. Any time I ever met with anyone from the Quebec government, actually both the Liberals and when the PQ were running things, we actually did get a really good hearing, and got things done.

GK: Good. [...] So, I guess the sort of more final questions around the conference, because I mean, clearly it was an amazing experience, it really tired people out too. I was there. It was almost like you had the adrenaline to stay up almost all night and watch the news casts comment on them, people complaining about, like, "we didn't get enough coverage," I mean, "Tiananmen Square happens, and that's taking attention away from us"—

ES: Yes, at the same time.

GK: All that sort of stuff is going down. But were there also some tensions between the different components of the group?

ES: I don't remember those at all.

GK: Okay.

ES: I mean, I remember that after that, people started having different focuses. And some people were more focused on doing prevention work, there were people who were doing prison work,. The people doing sort of buddy work, support work, for people with HIV and with AIDS. But, I don't really remember the tensions. Except the regular linguistic tensions which were sort of a background to everything back then. But they were no different in AIDS activism than they were in everything else.

GK: So, what's your sense of what happens with Réaction SIDA after the conference? Are there more things that Réaction SIDA does?

ES: Yes! There were definitely a few more. I do remember that there was one that I spoke at, and I don't remember what it was about. So it was outside Complexe Desjardins—

GK: And what's that, sorry?

ES: Complexe Desjardins, it's actually a mall, but it's sort of para-governmental space, right? Because of the Desjardins movement. It's kind of in between, so... there are three buildings: Hydro Quebec, Complexe Desjardins, and Guy-Favreau. Guy-Favreau is federal government, and then the other two are more provincial.

GK: Right.

ES: So, it's three major complexes downtown that are all sort of government, or semi-government. Why we were specifically at Complexe Desjardins, I don't remember. I don't remember what I was protesting. I do remember that I had a bull horn.

GK: Bull horn, yes.

ES: And we made a bunch of posters. But why there and what we were specifically protesting, I actually don't remember. But it was a Réaction SIDA event. It was maybe twenty of us. And we were loud. And, I mean, we were noticed. We thought of it as a successful intervention. But what we were actually doing, I don't remember. [laughing]

GK: And do you remember any specific Réaction SIDA actions done around prisons and people in prison?

ES: Possibly? Whether it was Réaction SIDA or whether it was more the anarchist contingent of Réaction SIDA, but yes. They were definitely some people in Réaction SIDA who had been doing prison work independently of HIV/AIDS work. That was specifically just their thing. I wasn't involved. I think I moved more to the insider track after Réaction SIDA. Because some of us were invited to sit down with various government... I guess, people in the Ministère de la Santé. And we got some money released and we got some projects growing. Mainly around, you know, condom distribution. CACTUS started then, too!

GK: And what was that?

ES: CACTUS was the needle exchange program.

GK: Right.

ES: And the Quebec government was good with that. Like, that was set up and backed up and, sort of, supported in spite of some objections from the neighbourhood that it was set up in. And it's been successful. It's still going. I was a bit involved, but not directly involved in CACTUS. It was both a needle exchange and they had outreach people who would go out and advertise the needle service and do direct needle exchange and direct trading of needles in the streets. I can't take any credit for doing any work with that. Except maybe a couple of meetings at the Ministry. And I think

for some of the meetings at the Ministry I was only there because my French is pretty good. So I was sort of, again, the interpreter.

GK: Right. So, your sense about Réaction SIDA is it just sort of withers away, or...?

ES: Eventually, yes.

GK: People go in different directions?

ES: Yes. But, I think everyone who was working with Réaction SIDA, most of us just kept working. We were just working in different groups.

GK: Right.

ES: Yes. There's a group whose name I can't remember. Well, there was AIDS Community Care [Montreal] too, which was, I think it was a Toronto group that had a Montreal branch. And there was another treatment organization, like an organization of people who had HIV, sort of a support group, but I can't remember what that was—

GK: Was that the one that came out of CSAM?

DN: CPAVIH [Comité des personnes atteintes du VIH du Québec]?

ES: CPAVIH. Yes.

GK: One of the other questions then, is how does ACT UP Montreal emerge? And were you connected with that at all?

ES: Not directly. I'm not sure I could say where Réaction SIDA ended and where ACT UP Montreal began. Like, to me, it was all sort of one big group. Have you talked to Blane?

GK: No. But Blane has been interviewed by the ACT UP Oral History Project. [See also, "An American Take on ACT UP Montreal," aidsactivisthistory.ca/2020/04/22/an-american-take-on-act-up-montreal, April 22, 2020].

ES: Oh, okay. Cool.

GK: So there is an interview, it includes information Montreal. We have constructed a link, but we haven't directly interviewed him. He's somewhere in New York State.

ES: Is he?

GK: But not New York City. And he's changed his last name. That's about all I can tell you. But, I mean, if you go to the ACT UP Oral History Archives—

ES: Oh, great. Yes.

GK: But, yes, he's clearly quite crucial.

ES: Yes! So, I'd met him at the conference and he was so very much in the same sort of circle of friends. And Nicolas Jenkins.

GK: And so Blane moves here after the conference, right?

ES: Yes.

GK: We've talked to a number of people who were involved in ACT UP at various points and it sounds, from talking to Hugh [Ballem] last Fall, that he was sort of instrumental after the AIDS Quilt, which he was really involved in, trying to help set up the ACT UP Montreal chapter. And Blane was one of the people and then Michael Hendricks and other people getting involved. Can you tell us anything about that? If you can't, that's fine.

ES: No! No, to me, it was sort of the same group. I mean, Réaction SIDA would have been happy to be ACT UP, if it wasn't for the language politics I think. I think we needed to have a French name to work here. And I think that's the only argument against ACT UP Montreal. Yes. Had it not been for the linguistic situation, Réaction SIDA would have been ACT UP Montreal.

GK: Do you want to tell us a little bit more about the sort of language conflicts and language politics in Montreal around that time. Do you want to tell us a little bit more about that?

ES: Yes. It was the period leading up to the [1995] Referendum. It was before the PQ came back into power, but the PQ was ascending and they – there was tension around language in the city. As there is at different times. It doesn't change, really, have the same feel, but this. It was just public, and people were conscious of it. People were paying attention to it more than they are now.

GK: Yes. I do know at the time of the conference that it was hard to remind the ACT UP New York City people that English wasn't the basic language here.

ES: But some of them were really good.

GK: Yes. But that was also true about some of the AIDS ACTION NOW! people, too, by the way.

ES: Yes. Some of them were good. I remember being really impressed with some of the ACT UP people who, not that they spoke French, but they had a really good understanding of what they were walking into. I just remember being on a bus, and I don't remember where the bus was going or why I was on that bus, but it was a bus for ACT UP people and there was a New York person at the front who got up and did his little Quebec History precis, and it was good. Like, he had a pretty good history of—

GK: Was this when they all went together to some sporting event?

ES: I don't know. Was it a baseball game? Yes. I think. It could have been on the bus there. And he was—

GK: I just wasn't into baseball, so I wasn't going to go.

ES: [laughing] But he was a really good, for someone from outside the country, he had a really good breakdown of what was happening.

GK: Okay. So you talk about sort of moving more into this “inside” approach. Do you want to talk a little bit more about what that meant for you?

ES: I'm happy to talk about it, but I don't remember much. Because... I did start doing a bit more work with Ken Morrison?

GK: Yes.

ES: Yes. So, he was pretty plugged in to people in the Ministry. I went with him to a couple of things, but he was the leader. A lot of that was around prevention work. Either needle-exchange or condom availability and sex-education.

GK: Right. ... So, how long do you stay involved, or connected with various different AIDS groups?

ES: I don't know. Yes, I mean, there was definitely no break, right? It was just that it sort of faded away. I mean, I guess it faded away as a crisis. But, yes. I couldn't give a point where I stopped being involved.

GK: Right. So just to come back to three events that happened in the year after the AIDS conference. That December, you have the Montreal Massacre, which is obviously a really important event.

ES: Yes.

GK: And the following summer, which is after the official formation of ACT UP Montreal, is their first event that is actually the second sort of Joe Rose event a year after he died. That's their first public event. But, that summer, you have almost simultaneously the Oka Crisis and Sex Garage, right?

ES: Right.

GK: So, do you have any memories about that period of time?

ES: Yes. I was at Sex Garage, but left before anything happened.

GK: Right.

ES: Gordon was the bouncer.

GK: [chuckling]

ES: So he was there when the raid happened. I was definitely very involved in demonstrations after Sex Garage. And yes, I was at all of them.

GK: And you managed not to get arrested?

ES: I got a billy club in the ribs, but I did not get arrested.

GK: Billy clubs in the ribs can't be very good.

ES: No, it wasn't good. [laughing]

GK: No. And were you involved in any of the solidarity with people around Oka? I know that Penny was quite involved, right? And had been involved in Réaction SIDA. But I don't know about other people.

ES: Through friends. So no, I wasn't directly involved. But, again, through the *Daily*. A lot of people at the *Daily* were very involved. I wasn't personally involved, but I was very close to people who were personally involved and some of them were behind the barricades. So I had good friends who were very involved, but no, I wasn't personally involved.

GK: So just moving back to Sex Garage, for a moment.

ES: Yes.

GK: Were a number of the people involved in Réaction SIDA and/or ACT UP Montreal quite centrally involved in that?

ES: Yes.

GK: That's sort of my sense.

ES: Yes, for sure.

GK: And the Sex Garage thing seems to have a major impact in shifting things around in Montreal. Do you have any sort of sense of that? Like, around AIDS, but not just around AIDS, right?

ES: Yes! I think it was an important time everywhere, right? In the AIDS crisis as well because it sort of was the beginning of the end of homophobia. And yes, that was a seminal, that was a crucial point in society changing. Pretty dramatically, pretty quickly, for the better.

GK: Right.

ES: Yes. I think the police—It's funny. Actually, with Penny, about a year or two ago. Our friend Marcie was in town and we went to a sort of a not-totally-legal, or over-crowded, house party that got broken up by the police. It was sort of a queer themed party. The police were so easy to deal with. But there were these kids. We were by far, the oldest people there. But these kids were all sort of talking about Sex Garage, that this was "Sex Garage Two" that was happening, and [laughing] it was not Sex Garage Two. [laughing] The only thing the police were really concerned about were people wandering into traffic. Other than that, they were all pretty chill.

GK: So they didn't arrest anyone, or anything?

ES: They didn't arrest anyone.

GK: Yes, so if they didn't arrest people, it's certainly not Sex Garage Two.

ES: Yes. It was funny.

GK: So I have just a few more general questions. How long were you involved with the McGill *Daily* team? That was a question I meant to come back to.

ES: Yes. Probably until about 1990.

GK: Okay.

ES: Not much longer.

GK: What's your sense of what happens with AIDS organizing through the 1990s? You know, it starts off with the AIDS activism around the conference, ACT UP Montreal, and Sex Garage. And then what sort of happens after that?

ES: I think after that it was really just more community organization, right? Like the public health stuff and support stuff for people living with HIV and AIDS. After Sex Garage, there wasn't really much in terms of activism, or that I remember. Someone may correct me.

GK: Right. So I'm largely moving into the last sort of number of questions. But, Dani, is there anything you wanted to ask? Anything?

DN: I think, just in terms of what you've been saying throughout the interview, you say, like, "you can't remember". But I feel like you do remember a lot of really important things. But, I feel like they're more of a feeling?

ES: Yes.

DN: So if you could describe your memory through feeling and the feelings this conjures up for you, how would you describe it?

ES: It was really exciting. I mean, especially the conference. I mean, I was twenty-one, right? And it felt like we were really doing something. I really admired the New York people. And it just felt like we were doing it with “The Pros”.

I felt really lucky that it was in Montreal, that it was in our city, and that we got to host something that really felt like it was important. Sex Garage, that was more just anger. And, also exciting. But it was less serious. I wasn't nearly as personally affected by AIDS and HIV as people a little bit older than me. Only because, by the time I was having sex, we really did know what to do. So, yes. I mean, I was lucky I think, just in timing. That the riskiest period, I just missed by a few years. Just by when I was born. So in a strange way it did feel like, even then, it felt like AIDS was sort of the generation, that we were sort of already a generation closer. Which isn't true. I mean, obviously, people my age did get sick. But fewer.

And people I know now, who are my age, who have HIV, are, you know, they are okay. They're in treatment. The treatment obviously changed. It stopped being nearly as lethal.

GK: Right. So that sort of leads into one of our last questions. Which is to always ask people, because we want to try to remember people, not just the people who are still around, but people who passed away during this period of time. I mean, AIDS activists who died of AIDS. Or other things, during this period of time. Is there anyone who you sort of remember from—

ES: Kalpesh Oza.

GK: Right.

ES: And Ian Stephens.

GK: Do you want to tell us a little bit about them?

ES: Well, Kalpesh was someone who was on two sides of things, right? So he was both the activist, but he was also a scientist.

GK: Right.

ES: And he was working on HIV. So he was very valuable in the activist movement, and he knew people. He knew [Dr.] Mark Wainberg. He'd go out with him. And he was a great guy. Like, he was a really, really sweet person. Ian Stephens? Ian was someone I really liked and admired. He wasn't directly involved in the activism part, but he was, he was very involved in the music scene in Montreal. He'd been in, first in a band called Disappointed A Few People, and then did a project called Wining Dining Drilling. He was definitely connected to the same scene. Anne Golden made a music video of a song that he did and I was in the video. [laughing]

GK: Oh, yes? Oh, we'll have to get that! You know you're also in John Greyson's video *The World is Sick [Sic]*.

ES: No, I didn't know that.

GK: Yes, you should see it. We have a copy of it.

ES: Oh, yeah?

GK: *The World is Sick [Sic]* is about the activism at the '89 AIDS Conference. And I'm sure you're in the raw footage from the person who, from ACT UP, who did all kinds of media stuff.

ES: Right.

GK: The only bit of that that's been put into something that's more accessible is the sex worker protest [*Our Bodies Our Business (2016)*].

ES: Okay. Right.

GK: Anything else you wanted to say about anyone who passed away during that time? Because we want, we've got a number of comments around Kalpesh already, because Kalpesh also moves to Toronto, so he's also pretty interesting in terms of AIDS ACTION NOW! as well as CPAVIH. The CPAVIH Treatment Action Group and the ACT UP Montreal Treatment Action Group seem to basically be the same people.

ES: Right.

GK: So he made a whole bunch of cross-overs. He also became quite a star in the South Asian community in Toronto.

ES: Right. I'll bet. [laughing]

GK: At Desh Pardesh. Performances on rollerblades.

ES: Wow. Yes. Kalpesh and Ian are the two people who I knew well, who died.

GK: So, we also give people towards the end of the interview an opportunity to just talk about things that have arisen for you. Like, thoughts or memories or feelings that you haven't yet had a chance to talk about. This is your chance.

ES: No, no. I think it's great that you guys are doing this. It's a really interesting project. And I hope you can find something coherent from all the different vague memories that we all have. But—

GK: It's all coming together.

ES: Okay.

GK: Yes. We're learning a lot from every interview. This is really very helpful. So the last sort of question that we ask people is if there are other people you feel we should talk to? We can't necessarily make a commitment that we will be able to talk to them, but it would be nice for us to know people that you think we should talk to.

ES: I think for the Montreal story, Blane's really interesting. Just because he really did come here and became part of the community. Like, he was learning French and really, really became, and it was interesting to have him up here just as someone who sort of moved into our community.

GK: Do you want to describe him a bit?

ES: [laughing]

GK: I mean, you don't have to.

ES: He's hard to describe. I mean, he was very... he was super personable, right? He was really quick to be very friendly and open. No, I don't know, it's hard to... I mean, he was a scene person, right? He was sort of, I mean, I wouldn't say he was a club kid – well, maybe I would. Because, you know, he dressed up, he went out, he was super gregarious. But also really interested in, you know, adapting to a new place. I think he really enjoyed Montreal. I think he liked his time here. He was sort of an exciting edition to the Montreal community. Have you talked to Jen Den Trang?

GK: No.

ES: She's in Toronto now, but she was in Montreal at the time, and she's just someone else who I remember. The last I saw here, she was tending bar at a gay night on Queen street, but I can't remember what the bar was. She was involved in the conference. Like, I just remember working with her in the conference offices. She was one of the graphics people.

GK: Okay, well, we'll see what we can do about that one. And anyone else you can think of?

ES: No. Gordon, but he's dead. [laughing] So, no.

GK: So, I think we've got...

ES: I think you've talked to most people. I mean, there's obviously lots of other people, but—

GK: There are lots of other people. We've got a long list for Montreal and we're never going to be able to finish it.

ES: Yes. [laughing]

GK: But you were definitely on our priority level for people we absolutely had to interview.

ES: [laughing] Oh, yeah?

GK: And I'm really glad we were able to talk to you before you were off to Mexico.

ES: Oh, really? Great!

GK: Although we could have maybe produced some justification for going to Mexico—

ES: [laughing] Yes! It's a nice place!

GK: —but we don't really have the money to do that. Anyway. This has been great.

ES: Great!

GK: And it's really good to see you again.

ES: Oh, hey, thanks. Yes, cheers.

GK: And you remembered a lot.

ES: Really?

GK: Yes! This has been very helpful.

ES: Thanks.

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END TRANSCRIPT