

**Archiving Hamilton's 2SLGBTQ+ Histories:
Critical Conversations**

**Thursday, October 21st, 2021, 6:30pm – 8:30pm EST, via Zoom
Roundtable Transcript**

<https://buildingthearchive.hamont.org>

Featuring: Richard Douglass-Chin, NaWalka Geeshy Meegwun (Lyndon George), Pauline Kajiura, and Cole Gately

AMBER DEAN: Hello everyone welcome, or welcome back if you were with us also on Tuesday night, and thanks so much for joining us tonight on what's a rainy uh Thursday night in Hamilton. My name is Amber Dean and I'm an associate professor in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster and I'm really delighted to be co-uh co-hosting and co-organizing this week's Taylor conference events with my longtime friend Cole Gately, who you'll hear a lot more from tonight because he's also one of our panelists um but uh in addition, he's also one of two community stewards of the Michael Johnstone 2SLGBTQ+ community archive at Hamilton public library, along with Bill MacKinnon. Just a couple of housekeeping things to take care of before we get underway tonight, we uh had a very lively, lively chat on Tuesday night which was wonderful because it allowed us to engage with all the people in our audience and so we hope for the same tonight. We have several um wonderful chat monitors, who are there to help and remind people of our community guidelines, participation guideline agreements and they are identified as co-hosts in the participant bar.

So, if you have any questions about the chat you can reach out to them individually, you can you can post messages to the host and panelists or to everyone in your chat bar and CART live captioning is available tonight from Canadian Hearing Services and if you um wish to access that well I'll actually, actually check with Simon about that because i'm not seeing the button but I'm pretty sure that the button will be there uh shortly at the bottom of your screen on the um next to the participant bar and you can turn on live captioning if um if that would be helpful to you, and finally if you have questions for one of our panelists or all of our panelists which we hope you'll have many questions tonight um in addition to posting them in the chat you also have the option of using the Q&A button which will uh pop up just for the panelists and I and um and we will make sure that we get to your question we'll do our best to get to everyone's questions and depending on how many questions we have we may save some over, we'll see how it goes.

So we realize that our audience is joining us from all over tonight but mostly here in Hamilton and it's important for us to acknowledge that our work here in Hamilton happens on the territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Mississaugas, and on lands protected by the Dish With One Spoon wampum agreement. Um as I was saying on Tuesday night we really feel like our shared work around building this archive needs to deepen that acknowledgement which in our view commits us to decolonizing struggles. We're also committed to anti-racism and anti-oppression as core values for building the Hamilton 2SLGBTQ+ community archive

because we are keenly aware that mainstream queer spaces are not always or too seldom centering the work of challenging racism, colonialism, imperialism, ableism, sexism, biphobia, and transphobia among other forms of oppression. So I was thinking a lot today, when I was thinking about joining us here tonight about how much settler colonialism has relied on imposing a heteronormative family and kinship structure and very narrow binary gender roles on Indigenous communities and it's a real uh point of kind of incredulity to me, I kind of still find it unbelievable that that hasn't been a central part of queer and trans histories and struggles in Canada as well, um and so it's part of our project I think to build awareness that the ongoing ever present Indigenous resistance to settler colonialism is actually central and necessary for gender and sexual liberation as well.

So about two and a half, maybe three years ago, Cole and I started talking uh more about queer and trans histories in light of Michael Johnstone's passing and his donation to Hamilton Public Library um and we started thinking a lot about how these histories get passed on or how they don't get passed on to younger generations of queer and trans organizers. We were especially interested in the stories about Hamilton's um queer and trans histories and which ones seemed to get around a lot, Cole, we were just joking about whether Cole or Lyndon gets around more, but I think the stories that we were thinking about were really not just who's been dating who for how long, and um at what point in history, but um, but also like the stories about political organizing and which ones get passed on

uh to younger generations of activists and organizers and which ones don't. So, and which ones get retold differently from how we remember them as well. In the archiving and retelling of gay and lesbian histories there's been a lot of pushback over the years for a tendency to record the lives of predominantly white gay men and to a lesser extent white lesbian lives, and for a lack of representation of the lives of more marginalized members of our communities, and so at this founding moment for the Hamilton 2SLGBTQ+ community archive, we actually wanted to ask what can we actually learn from that fraught history and from the critical and creative engagements and the kind of counter archives that have been generated by those whose lives haven't been centrally represented in those histories, and that's kind of where we started the conversation on Tuesday night um with panelists who've been thinking about these questions through their own activist and artistic and archival work and tonight we feel like we're having a bit of a house party because we are focusing much more on the Hamilton context um and with both of these events this week, we're just starting an initial conversation in response to these questions about how to go about building this local Hamilton community archive um that we hope will shape the development of that archive and then we held off for so long having this panel, um as our panelists tonight will attest we strung them along for a really long time uh because we had wanted to get together in person um and when it seemed like that just wasn't going to be possible this fall we shifted to this zoom format, but it is our hope to have an in-person gathering at Hamilton Public Library in June hopefully of this year, when

local history and archives reopens and at that point we hope that we'll be able to actually work with some of the materials in Michael's collection as well as start to build that collection with new donations um to the 2SLGBTQ+ community archive of Hamilton hopefully in June. um so Cole, do you just want to say a few more words about the Michael Johnstone collection and then we have a couple of short videos from our friends at Hamilton Public Library.

COLE: Yeah, that's great. Thank you so much Amber and thank you to everyone for being here and everyone who has put so much work into this uh Michael and I have been friends for a long long time and uh just a couple of years before he died, we didn't know, he you know, he didn't know he was dying uh but we we reconnected and we were seeing each other quite often, and we actually discussed um his donating of his very significant and prolific archive of uh the last I would say since the 1970s, the early 1970s, so basically 50 years of collecting of uh little clippings and meetings, minutes and newsletters and posters etc. um collecting it from all over uh all the queer organizing that has ever happened since the beginning of the 70s, so there was the Hamilton United Gay Societies, which was called HUGS. He was a nurse and he worked for many many many years at the general hospital. He was also a founding board member of HANDS, which was Hamilton AIDS Network for Dialogue and support, which is now called the AIDS Network, um and he collected these archives as we know and uh I mean we really have we have about 40 or so boxes of you know tiny little newspaper clippings from not only Hamilton but

all over Canada as well, and so he decided that he wanted to donate it to um somewhere where we could use it and so he just decided to donate it, rather than donating it to the the Canadian archives or the Ontario archives he decided to donate it to Hamilton Public Library, and we're very very grateful for that. He appointed me, uh well my friend, my colleague and friend and long-time co-conspirator, Bill MacKinnon, who is uh also a United Church minister, he's involved with the United church that Michael was very involved with as well, and uh Bill MacKinnon and I are now uh the co-community stewards of the LGBTQ2S archives in Hamilton at Hamilton Public Library. So I'm very proud to be part of that and I'm really excited to be part of this tonight. Thank you so much.

AMBER: Great, and as I was saying we have two short videos from our friends at Hamilton Public Library um about the collection and then I will introduce our wonderful panelists, though they don't need an introduction uh to this audience too much, but I'm going to do it anyway. So Simon maybe we could get those videos.

PAUL TAKALA: I'm Paul Takala, the Chief Librarian of the Hamilton Public Library. On behalf of the library, I want to thank you for the opportunity for us to partner on these important roundtable events. We want to ensure that all of Hamilton public library locations and spaces are safe, welcoming spaces, where people can come together, be respected, and learn from each other. We're very pleased to host the Michael Johnstone archive. This archive will preserve

the documents that Michael carefully and meticulously collected over many many years, to ensure that that history is preserved, remembered, and learned from. We look forward to working together, to listening more, and learning about each other. Thank you!

KAREN MILLIGAN: Hi, my name is Karen Milligan, and I'm the manager of local history and archives with the Hamilton public library. Hamilton public library's local history and archives preserves and shares stories of the people and activities that make up this great city. We are working to be inclusive and diverse when preserving these voices. The Michael Johnstone archive was donated in 2018. Since then, we've worked with Michael's family and friends, and the greater 2SLGBTQ+ community, to launch the archive. We're now working on cataloging and digitizing key pieces. We're also proud to work with McMaster University to talk, learn, and share ideas and actions, how to ensure every voice in this community is heard and preserved for future research and understanding. Thank you for coming together to have these critical conversations. I look forward to working with you, to build and sustain this important archive.

AMBER: So we learned from Michael's niece, Sandra, in the chat on Tuesday night, that his uh donation to start this archive consisted of 55 boxes of materials um and as well as yeah a whole ton of photographs, which we had a really interesting conversation about Tuesday night,

and um some VHS tapes that we still don't know what exactly is on those yet but Cole and I are gonna find out sometime this fall and we we hope that there's some porn in there somewhere, uh because what would a 2SLGBTQ+ archive be without a bit of a collection of some porn. So, we'll keep you posted on what's on those VHS tapes. um, but as I was saying we hope to host an event in June in person at Hamilton public library where the community can start to um look at some of the materials that are in that collection and then we will have more information in the new year from local history and archives about how people can also continue to donate and build on that collection. So now for tonight's panelists, who I will introduce, and I feel like it's going to be a night of a lot of storytelling, so if you haven't already go maybe grab yourself a cup of coffee or tea or beverage of some kind and sit back and look forward to these stories. So we have four wonderful panelists tonight um just gonna introduce them uh each briefly, and if you want to hear more and learn more about them we actually have longer bios for each of them um on our website as well.

So Richard Douglass-Chin is here with us tonight, and Richard is an associate professor of english and women's and gender studies at the University of Windsor. He's a founding member of Researchers, Academics, and Advocates of Colour for Equity and Solidarity or RACES, and has appeared on CBC and CTV to speak about anti-racism and new ways of thinking about white supremacy. He has facilitated Walls to Bridges classes,

comprised of both incarcerated and non-incarcerated students within prison spaces, I want to talk to you about that some other time Richard because I'd like to start doing one of those courses too, and he's currently co-creating an online anti-racism bystander intervention course to be launched in 2022. um on Tuesday night he was busy facilitating a meeting for the work he's doing curating a new historical kiosk for Griffin house that will help highlight the rich Black history of Hamilton. So delighted that you could join us for yet another late evening on a weekday Richard, thank you.

NaWalka Geeshy Meegwun Longfeather, Lyndon George, is a member of the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nations. His father's from Aazhoodena, the Stony Point First Nation, and his mother is from Aamjiwnaang, the Chippewas of Sarnia First Nation. NaWalka Geeshy Meegwun is Anisnaabe Ojokwe, one of many Anishnaabe or Indigenous terms for members of the Two-Spirit community.

NaWalka Geeshy Meegwun has made presentations on Indigenous matters at local, provincial, national, and international conferences. And he's currently the Indigenous Justice Coordinator at the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic, but you probably uh know him or have seen him from about town, because he's kind of a prolific organizer on Indigenous and Two-Spirit issues, and most recently I was moved by your words in front of the uh the statue that uh is now no longer the statue in Gore park. uh Lyndon, so thank you for being with us tonight.

Pauline Kajiura has a wealth of experience working towards racial and social equity in communities and workplaces, as an organizational leader, volunteer, activist and musician.

Pauline is currently the Manager, Community Initiatives at the City of Hamilton and leads the City's Hate Prevention and Mitigation initiative. As a partner of Intersecting, she provides anti-racism and anti-oppression education and training, and previously she's worked as Executive Director of Information Hamilton and Financial Coordinator of SACHA, the Sexual Assault Centre of Hamilton and area. Pauline's intersecting social locations, as a lesbian, Black, and Asian woman bring relevant perspectives to her anti-racism and anti-oppression work.

And she holds a bachelor of science from McGill university and a GIS Specialist certificate from McMaster University and Mohawk college, and I was very happy that Pauline agreed to be part of our panel tonight because the working at the city is a very busy job, very full and busy job, so thank you for spending an evening with us.

And last but certainly not least, Cole Gately came out of the closet in 1991, the first year of Hamilton Pride, and since then he's been active in organizing within Hamilton's 2SLGBTQ+ communities. He spent the 1990s managing the Women's Bookstop, Hamilton's feminist bookstore, which I arrived in Hamilton just a little too late to experience but I have a long history with feminist and lesbian bookstores, that's a big part of

most of us who grew up and came out in the 90s, as part of a lot of our histories.

And he moved into social services by providing outreach to men who have sex with men through Hamilton AIDS Network, as it was known then. In 2000 he started his career in street outreach, connecting people experiencing homelessness to housing, health care and social services.

And in 2008 while completing an MA in Adult Education, Cole who was assigned female at birth, transitioned and lives full-time as a genderqueer man. He focuses much of his energy providing education to adults about trans inclusion and positive space, and uh as we already mentioned is one of the two community stewards for the Michael Johnstone collection.

So I have some questions to start things off tonight, um get some stories flowing, and then I encourage all of you to send in your questions um at any time. You don't have to wait for me to finish with mine, by just pushing that Q&A button and popping them into the panel, and as I said if we don't get to everyone's questions tonight we do promise that we will keep track of them and we'll either answer them on our website and social media um, or uh bring them back to our June in-person workshop. So we wanted to just start things off tonight by asking each of you to weigh in on the question of how you started to make Two-Spirit or, lesbian, gay, bi, trans community here in Hamilton and as part of that that story that you might tell about that, did you always feel you were part of the

queer and trans community here in Hamilton? And I'm gonna throw it over to whoever is smiling the biggest to start which I think it was NaWalka Geeshy Meegwun, off the top so you get to begin if you're willing.

NAWALKA GEESHY MEEGWUN: There we go let's start this off, I first want to say how humbled and honored I am to be walking this journey with each of you on the panel, and everybody whose put this together, as well as everybody who's watching and engaged in this process. This certainly is a historic moment I feel for the Two-Spirit and LGBTQIAPGNC community here in Hamilton and the visions that had go through my head and what I can see happening in the future um are are incredible. When I think about that question I am reflecting back to, this has been a very interesting journey, because I have to reflect back how many years ago it was that I first surfaced here in Hamilton, in the uh Two-Spirit and queer community and it's been almost 40 years ago now that I first surfaced here in Hamilton, and at that point in time things were magnificently different then. We weren't talking about Indigenous people, we weren't talking about Two-Spirit people, and the stereotypes and the racism and discrimination at that time for Indigenous people in Canada uh was super bad and it feels like it almost hasn't changed much, if not anything, it's become worse in Canada as a result of some of the the recent things that have been happening. I remember one of the first times coming here. It was the first time, it was to a bar in Hamilton called the Embassy, that a friend of mine was dating a young woman who was working there behind the bar, and walking in there and

feeling uncomfortable. There was an uneasiness walking into the club. It could have been because uh perhaps it was one of my first experiences in a a gay uh kind of atmosphere but it was that uncomfortable feeling, that uneasy feeling, um also came along with my one of my first experiences of discrimination as an Indigenous person in the queer community here.

And so walking up to the bar, and I realized that when we talk about our experiences there's going to be good experiences and there's going to be bad experiences, and this experience was not the best. So when I went up to the bar, the bartender asked me if I should be spending my welfare check drinking in the bar, and that kind of laid the groundwork for me of what my relationship in the queer community here in Hamilton was going to be like, uh but the years that followed, there's been some good times, there's been some bad times, but it was very difficult to see other Two-Spirit people in the queer community here. And so I often wonder, and through some of their stories had found out that they had experienced some of the same discrimination and racism that that I had experienced as well. So that's kind of one of my very first experiences but there's some really good fun experiences that followed afterwards with that kind of stuff.

AMBER: And we look forward to hearing those, but also it's just striking that uh you ever went back to the Embassy again after that experience, you know, because I think a lot of people that would be like, drive a lot of people out of community as well, and does do that so.

NAWALKA GEESHY MEEGWUN: Well Hamilton Hamilton wasn't the only city. Like I grew up along the water, that's where my community is, I grew up along the beach and I grew up on along the water. So to get here to Hamilton it was a two and a half hour drive but Hamilton was bigger than Toronto or bigger than London, and London being very conservative was extremely racist and extremely uh discriminatory. Then coming into Hamilton uh and that being one of the very first experiences that that led me to want to try and find some place a little safer for me to go to. So I lived a little bit closer to Detroit. So Detroit became my stomping ground. That was a choice where I wanted to go to but came back and forth to Hamilton and certainly over the years working in many different capacities in and around the city of Hamilton, so engaged in the community here and not really seeing a lot of Two-Spirit people here. So I would later find out that Two-Spirit people in this area would more feel more comfortable traveling into Toronto, where there was a larger Two-Spirit community.

AMBER: Yeah, okay thanks. We'll um we'll come back to hear some of the the happier stories in a bit. NAWALKA: Good! I'm looking to share them. AMBER: [laughter] um, Richard are you willing to go next on this one?

RICHARD: Sure, so I uh same as you NaWalka, about 40 years. So we're talking 1981. When uh I, that's when I first came out and I remember, and it was before the internet right so, I was I was sort of in my basement at home, I was about 20 and looking for ways to connect with queer people. I was like you

know having the young angst, it's like oh my god trapped in my basement, queer, my parents don't know, and of course then I was a woman, I was living as a woman and my parents didn't know anything. So HUGS was the thing back then, the Hamilton United Gay Society, and so they would put um an ad in the classifieds of the Spectator, which I was always pouring over, trying to find somewhere, there's got to be somebody who's gay around here. And so I found this ad and I snuck out to like the nearest phone booth, because they were a thing back in the day we were talking about using that term. So I went to the nearest phone booth because I didn't have a cell phone, it's 81, and called them and it was really terrifying. It was dark, a dark stormy night. It was like that I was terrified and so, just in terms of I think what we were taught about ourselves, we were scared of ourselves I feel and so to make that move as a young lesbian like not even going to trans yet, like so my journey to trans is a whole other thing, but in 81 it was I think I'm a lesbian. That's about the best I could do back then and uh and so i think that they're very connected, especially for trans men. So I went to HUGS, a HUGS meeting, and um I actually, no they put us, they put me through to the Hamilton or the McMaster Homophile Society and it sounds like some kind of like pedophile or something, like it just didn't sound right. So I was like okay, so I went to that meeting and that's where I met my partner, Kathy, for the first time actually and she was like oh look at that young dyke, like she looks like so scary, and I used to have a big front because like NaWalka I knew it was around race, I was very aware of race, and it's like you know screw you, it's like don't come near me, don't approach me the angry black

woman. And so my partner, Kathy, of you know 33 years, she was like wow I really like her but I don't I don't think she's very approachable and so that was the very first time we met. Yeah and then we started going. I so I didn't connect with her for like another 10 years and I started going to Belize, which was the club then on what Rebecca and John is it? COLE: King!

RICHARD: King William, yeah upstairs of the Windsor. There was a hotel there, called the Windsor Hotel, and sort of all the gadflies used to hang out down at the Windsor. You didn't have to be gay necessarily but everybody would hang out down there, drinking their beers until club time, and then we would like blast upstairs and the music would start boom boom boom boom and we'd all go up there and become gay and it was wonderful! It was just fantastic and so yeah, so I should probably stop now because we don't have too long and we could go on for hours hey so yeah I'll stop with that. So that was my coming out, my first coming out experience. Very exhilarating really, I left home, I drove cab, just to add because my parents kicked me out. Actually I should say that's a lie, I left because they might as well have kicked me out, in terms of the negativity and the coldness that I received. I said screw this I'm leaving, I went on welfare, I started driving cab and so being queer became the joy. Billy, Billy's was such a joy to be queer and up there and partying, which was you know we did that really well, so that was a lot of fun.

AMBER: Wow thanks Richard, I'm sorry I missed the time of Billy's but also that's a really kind of, um yeah that's a really great and complicated introduction to the community right.

Where you so want to be there but then you also feel that barriers attached to racism and figuring out am I lesbian? Am I trans? And yeah, wow. Wow! I knew it was going to be a night of storytelling, this is fantastic thank you so much. Um Pauline do you want to answer this one next?

PAULINE: Sure um I I didn't come out until like 20 years ago, um but back in the, back in the day, back in the 80s, I so you know I think about this question and think was I, did I make community or did I join community? Because I, back in the 80s when I was still in high school I had friends who were coming out at that time and I and I had a number of friends who were coming out at that time and maybe they knew something that I didn't know, but I um was spending a lot of time with those friends and would find myself at Billy's or the Windsor, would see Rick there, who wasn't Rick at the time, but because I knew Rick from childhood, I felt really you know happy to see someone that I knew, that I looked up to that um you know was an older uh family member of sorts in the Caribbean community of our close-knit families and um but I do remember back then um you know someone asking me to dance and a woman asking me to dance and thinking oh no, I'm not a lesbian and um and have felt really embarrassed about that since then and over time um you know, I went away to university, I came back, I um again was going to the women's dances that were organized in Hamilton, um spending a lot of time with my friend who identified as lesbian, who later became my partner of many years, almost 20 years, and um so I I feel, I feel like I joined community and um experienced

community in different ways by being brought along I feel like. Um and then too, I have to talk about the um the women's movement, the violence against women's movement. Working at SACHA was instrumental, in terms of um being able to feel comfortable in my coming out, being in a small setting where it just didn't feel like it was othered, and the feminist community is was so um instrumental in that that comfort zone for me for sure.

AMBER: Yeah I was wondering about that, like you you joined community for sure, but also were part of building feminist community through the work with SACHA, and in the violence against women organizing movement, and that that kind of overlap of connection between feminist and lesbian community is something I want to come back to tonight for sure, but I'm also interested that you just said the feminist community is and then was and my heart dropped a little bit in that moment, but I also, so maybe that's something we'll come back to too. Is the feminist community a thing of the past? Which I'd like to think it's not, but uh sometimes I have the same wondering I guess yeah.

PAULINE: Yeah I wouldn't say uh a thing of the past but maybe was just saying was for me yeah yeah but but it is yeah

AMBER: Yeah, yeah great okay, and and Cole what about you um how did you first start to make community in Hamilton, queer community Hamilton?

COLE: Well, I came to Hamilton in 1989, and I came to go to McMaster University and very quickly I just decided, well I knew this already, but I decided I needed to be an activist and I needed to be active in uh community. So I did some anti-racism work. I did anti-apartheid work at McMaster, but then in 1991, I went on a road trip out west. I traveled across the U.S and um by the time I got to Vancouver I was a lesbian. So I just decided that I, I think I was just on a journey of self-discovery, and I was actually thinking of going back to Scotland because I wasn't really feeling, you know, necessarily involved in the community here, as as much as I wanted to be. But then uh I came back from Vancouver. I came out. It was 1991. Svend Robinson had just been here, I don't know if some of you remember Svend Robinson. He was the very first openly out gay MP, uh in Canada, and he was a part of uh Burnaby, I think it was Burnaby, and he was an out politician and he was invited for dinner in 1991 and I missed it by a week because I just came back from my my long term being away. But then I came out and I um I started working at the Women's Bookstop, which was the you know this was this great community hub in Hamilton, which started in 1985, and I started there in 1991. I started working there and I worked there until 1999, and um that was a place where lesbians came and you know trans people came occasionally, we were you know in those early days i have to say there was transphobia in the feminist community for sure happening, but um I came out in a in a context of women and women's community, and I I felt completely, I remember going to the Lucie Blue Tremblay concert, uh out at Mary Hill. Mary Hill is like this like little, you

know place out in Flamborough or somewhere, hopefully not to you know uh disparage anyone from Flamborough, but it's out there somewhere and it's, there was a church, and I went there one night to hear Lucie Blue Tremblay, and the place was filled with like 200 lesbians, I could not believe it! I've never seen so many lesbians in my life, I'd only seen one before, you know I thought you know perhaps. So it was extremely exciting part of my life and I felt very scared to go into the Women's Bookstop because I felt not only a bit exposed, but I felt pretty turned on as well. Like I just felt like very very excited about being with women finally um, I'm 21 years old and uh I hadn't really experienced that, and then um so that was my coming out. And then I worked at the Women's Bookstop so loads and loads of people knew me because I worked at the Women's bookstore, and so you know, the lesbians would come in and they'd buy their books etc., and um and then coming out as trans you know we had, you know it was a little bit uh different, although i did it much later than my great friend, Rick here, and who actually Richard uh was one of my mentors when I you know when I was trying, I was discovering myself. I mean Richard came out in like the late 90s and I didn't come out until uh you know, the you know 2010 or something or 2008. So um I, that was so my coming out and I was involved in you know you know organizing with women's, mostly lesbian and women's stuff, but also for um queer uh stuff as well and I I've just been um I just came out into a community that was very embracing, I have to say, yeah.

AMBER: Oh yeah, well I think we'll come back to that because I know one of the things that um well one of the questions I want to get to with you and Richard later is also about like yeah what does that second coming out due to to community? Which I think we'll get back to but um yeah I think that uh people have radically kind of different experiences there um but uh but but a bit more storytelling first. So one story, what's one story for, this is for everyone, about Hamilton's 2SLGBTQ+ history that you think more people need to hear, and may not be familiar with, or might might be a story that hasn't actually been widely kind of passed on. And um Richard, I'm wondering if you want to start because I know you have some some images. Is that to go with this story?

RICHARD: Yeah yeah, very much so. Yeah and I think the story has to do with how we, as trans men, have often come from the lesbian community and so these slides, I'm just gonna share my screen with people here. Uh there, can people see it? Yeah. It doesn't want to do current slide and I don't know why. That's funny, okay. So it doesn't want to do current slide, you're gonna have to put up with those slides on the side there. I don't know why it won't do it. But I took that title rise up because that's Segato right, Lorraine Segato, the Parachute Club. So this is the era. So when we were doing, being lesbians uh this is from 94 and 97, and some of you will remember some of these uh these photographs and so on. Uh here's one, um this was from New Years and so you can see like how clunky they are right. We used to, me and Paula Burroughs, who was a great friend and used to live in Hamilton, we used to make

these. And so we would cut stuff out of the newspaper, so this was New Years, I think 94-95. New Years affair, and so, as Cole was mentioning, we would have these great big dances, women's dances, and I used to be the bouncer, because back then I was kind of, for a woman, I was kind of you know I had nice muscles. Now I'm just a little guy. As a guy I'm just a little beauty guy, so it's all relative [laughter] but uh I fancied myself the bouncer at these dances and they were so much fun!

There's a valentine's day one. These are all between 94 and 97. Uh lipstick lesbians to diesel dykes, and there you'd see you know where we had them at the Y. This is the YWCA, that we often had them there. Halloween. There's a halloween one and What's this one? Just for no reason I guess, just beat down the door and dance, and say, [overlap] VOICE: And Ellen, Ellen came out of the closet

RICHARD: Yeah, coming out of that closet. And so we, it was great times, and so as I say trans wasn't on the scene yet, I don't feel you know, I hadn't transitioned yet. Uh there's, Theatre was another thing, I think that's important, uh Half the Sky Theatre, and was part of how a lot of us became lesbians. My partner, Kathy, became a lesbian through meeting me, as I mentioned earlier, and we started to do theatre together. And so, while Half the Sky is not a lesbian theatre group, and people probably know the term lesbian baiting, it's like oh well you belong to Half the Sky, you must be a lesbian then. And of course that's meant to keep women down and in their place, but no a lot of women went into Half the Sky and came out lesbians. And there was one play in particular, Albertine in

Five Times, when there was a lot of fooling around going on and actually, that's how I lost my first lover and got with Kathy, and a lot of stuff behind the scenes. And it was just like whoa, I quit that play because my lover dumped me and then I I was like so devastated, so out of that Half the Sky a lot of stuff came. And uh this, Last Summer at Bluefish Cove, uh Yvonne Vande Weyer, some of you will remember her, was the the main character, and basically she played herself because she didn't have acting experience. She was great in the role. Uh these is again, about the Last Summer at Bluefish, a lesbian play. And so it's a lesbian woman dying of cancer, which actually Yvonne did die of cancer. And so um we, we felt very brave doing this in, I think about 86, so yeah we we were out there. Hannah Free was another one we did in 97, 10 years later, and that was about growing old. Lesbians growing old. So yeah and I won't bother with this one, that was a Black play we did, actually I will just say a little bit about it. It wasn't, I was the queer character in this play. It was a black, this comes from the spectator, it's called Mama Weusi Juu, which means Black mother, what is it? Black mother magic kind of, anti-racist play. But um I was a lesbian in that play, 1993. And so, these are just some of the things that I think are important to share around, because out of the arts uh a lot of lesbians came, and did a lot of this kind of work. And so I think it's really important to, for people to know that.

AMBER: Yeah, and to know that history of Half the Sky and not only to know some of the like history of the incredible

performances that came out of it, but also the great stories of relationships made and and broken. That's the stuff that you can't really put in an archive right. You could archive the poster or something

RICHARD: It was like a soap opera [laughter].

AMBER: yeah

RICHARD: It was better than the play!

AMBER: That's why we have to do events like this, so then we'll have you know, with all of your permission, we'll donate the recording to the archive and people can get the back story. Yeah thanks Richard, those are incredible images. Uh who would like to go next? And NaWalka Geeshy Meegwun, we have not heard from you for a little while, do you have a story that we should know about Hamilton 2SLGBTQ+ history?

NAWALKA: I was just trying to rest my big fat Ojibwe lips because I feel like I was yapping on and on there for a long time there but, yeah you know it it's, again it's been an interesting journey recalling memories of the many years of being in and around the queer community in Hamilton, and everybody's talking about partying, I remember some of the best parties we're at the Windsor and it's gone, it had gone through so many different names, Windsor, Life, and just so many magnificent things there. But as as Two-Spirit people what often we would do, because sometimes we just didn't feel safe

in non-Indigenous surroundings, and that there wasn't a very large representation that we could see of other Indigenous queer out in the community, we would call our Indigenous friends, our families, our cousins and tell them hey we're going out to the Windsor tonight or we're going out to the Were and we usually would start going to hang out at the Werx first because the Werx offered enough space for us to be able to almost be invisible in the community. Where we could escape outside onto the terrace, onto the patio, or go into the basement, uh or on the main floor and stay playing pool, or going upstairs. But I remember, in some of the memories that I have, again some of them are not the best memories, but they certainly are part of the queer community here in Hamilton and I think it's important, when we think about archiving stories and archiving history, we have to remember the good with the bad. So this is both a good and a bad story. I remember witnessing a horrible fight at the Werx one night and it was between members of the queer community. And it seemed at that point, it's like the gay men were fighting against the gay women, and it turned into this physical fight where the police were called and it went out into the patio and and it just got really messy. And that was that was a little frightening to watch happening within within the community that you want so much want to belong in in a community where you would hear in media that were family but you would watch this family in such chaos and such violence. But then several months later, when something another situation happened in uh the Embassy, where there was this big massive drug bust that had happened. The police showed up and there was some kind of drug deal going on in

the bathrooms, in the basement, and chaos broke through and people were filing in and running into the Embassy. The queer community really stuck together and they fought for one another in that instant so it's it was beautiful to kind of see both the good and the bad with the queer community, and and in my vision what I see happening with with Hamilton in the queer community here is, I want to see that cohesiveness. I want to see that family kind of atmosphere. I want to be able to walk out my door and know that there's some place that I can go where there's a queer community, and we don't have that right now. There's no place for us to go. So I'm hoping in the future that's the kind of stuff we're going to see, and then of course I think that we need to continue to get the stories of the violent pride that happened recently. And once again we would see the queer community in Hamilton with allies stand up and stick together and that's such a magnificent beautiful feeling.

AMBER: Yeah, I think that's such an important point and one of the things we might talk a bit more about too, is that your story captures the complexity of the bars so well right. Like they were spaces where we could go and find community and they were also complicated spaces that were sometimes violent spaces or sometimes spaces that left us like vulnerable to police attacks or police raids or yeah.

NAWALKA: Absolutely right. Like some of my fondest memories actually are at the Werx. I remember one night, I'm just gonna tell you a crazy story there, and it's about Blistex. One night a bunch of Indigenous folks, I called them up, we

went out and were up on the top floor of the Werx and we're dancing away because it was like a disco kind of place up there. They had the black lights, the strobe lights and everybody's partying away, and my lips were really dry so I put on some Blistex and I was feeling really sexy that night. You know I'm younger and I'm out there dancing away feeling real sexy, and I notice all my Indigenous friends, my relatives, are back on the table, back there, all pointing at me and laughing at me. So I went over and to check and see what's going on and they're laughing because I had no clue that Blistex and that little tub, the little blue tub, when you put it under a black light it glows! So I was up there dancing away on the dance floor, thinking I'm all sexy, everybody's looking at me but they were looking at me because my lips were glowing. So within an hour my little tub of Blistex flew around the whole bar, and everybody was putting different kind of Blistex marks all over their face and everybody was glowing on the dance floor. That was a fun night. AMBER: That sounds like a very fun night. [laughter]

COLE: So much did happen at the Werx, I have to say, so much stuff happened at the Werx.

AMBER: Sharing the glow.

Um Cole you spoke up, Do you want to tell the next story?

Oh! You're muted my friend.

COLE: Well a story, I mean I just have so many stories but uh I would say that one thing that happened actually that I'm interested in talking about is that uh, I work for the city so disclaimer just putting it out there you know uh, but back in uh the late, and I think the late 90s early late 90s, um Vilma will remember this because she called me up to tell me about it, but the um the women's bathhouse was raided in Toronto and that was a place for lesbians and women who love lesbians and trans people to be able to go there, and we know about the bathhouse raids, I mean most people here probably know about the bathhouse raids that happened in the early 80s that started uh Toronto um uh you know the queer movement etc., but in Hamilton there are you know a couple of bathhouses, and uh one of them was, well the one in Toronto was raided by five plainclothes police officers who decided to have fun that night and to go and interfere with the women who were going to be unclothed and you know start to hassle them etc., and it was called the Pussy Palace, it's now called the Pleasure Palace, because it includes uh trans women who don't have pussies, so um but yeah it was called the Pussy Palace in Toronto. I was actually in Vancouver, I was on the uh advertising uh leaflet for that thing, but I didn't end up at the one that was raided because I was in Vancouver, and Vilma called me up and was like guess what it got raided by these police officers. So um and eventually I mean, as people might know that the the outcome of that is that the police were uh told off. They were told that they should never have done that and they they were actually challenged and required to pay the costs of the uh the uh the lesbians who were running the workshop and also um they had

to do you know trans sensitivity or queer sensitivity training or what have you. But so what I decided to do, there were a few people in town who decided to do a few different things in Hamilton around cop, around you know police intervention in queer communities, and so what I decided to do with a couple of other people was to to create two uh three actually three women's bathhouses, that we had at the bath house um that had been um that was then raided, sorry you know this had happened in Hamilton a few years later, Hamilton Public Health decided to raid uh the gay men's bathhouse um because of you know uh issues around electricity and you know steam rooms or what have you, but what had happened is two people got arrested for having sex together while another person was watching. And this uh manager from public health came in and um saw this happening and decided that it offended her sensibilities and so she reported it to police, who were all also there, and they um arrested the two men actually the probably the three men and ruined their lives, I would say. Two weeks later, all charges were dropped because we realized that like what had happened where there was a raid in the police in the uh sort of the by the police in the RBG, back in 1992 or so, there were men who would go and cruise each other down in the RBG and there were reports which were not true I don't think, you know naked man in the middle of the day, having sex on the path. Obviously that's not happening. This was at night, people are cruising each other. So the police went down there and dressed up as gay men and invited touching and then charged people with indecent assault uh etc. And so um 12 years later you know after you know the LGBTQ, you don't

know this but the LGBTQ police task force was formed as a result of this whole raid on the park. And I was actually a member of it. It was in 1992-93, I was like this young baby dyke and I came out and a friend of mine, who has now passed away but a lesbian, said I'm going to help you to get involved in this committee and we were involved in this committee and we we told the police what to do. How to, you know, be more inclusive of trans people and queer people and gay men and then what happened was 12 years later even though they had this community this committee going on, they decided that they were going to raid the bathhouse even though they've told everyone from the park go to the bathhouse, because you will not, you're not having sex in public there. No one is going to get you there and just go there. This is what the police had said, then public health shows up 12 years later and raids the uh bathhouse, arrests these two guys for having sex in a private space, where no one could see it except for this person who walked in on them uninvited, and then their lives were ruined. Within two weeks the charges were dropped and within a month or so I, I and two of my friends, organized uh women's bathhouses at the bathhouse and we said, try raiding us and see what happens because it's not going to happen. We're not going to stand for it. So you know there's been like a lot of defiance there and so that's one really good uh sort of example of you know how queer communities have been intervening when um you know the mainstream community and the police and you know whoever, talks that talk but doesn't walk the talk, and so uh that's, I'm very much interested in queer communities like taking up space and saying this is not okay

and we are actually parts of your communities as well and we're going to be uh you know challenging the status quo around that so.

AMBER: No thanks Cole, I think that's so important and uh we're just in my queer archives class at McMaster tomorrow, we're reading about bathhouse raids in the 80s and and the Pussy Palace raids in the early 2000s. And I think for a lot of young queer and trans people today that seems like ancient history like they don't know anyone for whom it is a kind of living history or a living experience right so so thinking about how do we like capture those stories and pass them on and also how do we yeah how do we pass on the stories of those whose lives were destroyed in those moments without exposing them again in a in a different way too, is also I think important to to keep thinking about.

COLE: And I think that like also just to remember that like there's there's uh transphobia, there's homophobia, but there's also misogyny involved in all of that, you know and the whole idea I mean these these uh five police officers who uh decided you know just by themselves to go and raid the thing they were really there for their own edification. Let's go and try and humiliate the lesbians, and let's try and find some naked women out there, and you know I just have to say that it's such I was I'm so cynical about uh that kind of stuff that happened yeah.

AMBER: Yeah.

Um Pauline, you haven't had a chance to uh tell a story, the ones one story that you think people need to know about Hamilton's 2SLGBTQ+ histories, and then we've got a couple of questions queuing up in the Q&A panel that I'll uh I'll turn to after your story.

PAULINE: Just quickly, I would add um honorable mention to the the Take Back the Night um movement and its growth in Hamilton and um how that was, you know, a predominantly lesbian space back in the 80s. I was gonna say back in the day, but we will stop saying that um and how that space was such an important um just in organizing, so many important conversations happened about trans inclusion, about whether it was solely a white space um but that was that was where lesbians were were organizing. And again, you know, the violence against women's movement to watch, when you look at Take Back the Night today, um and you think about how it was not that long ago that only a small crowd would would be there and then as gender-based violence becomes more um talked about more widely better understood it's added to the to the curriculum um now we see that it's a massive movement. Even in Hamilton, where it used to be a relatively small gathering and I can remember going to Toronto one night with other staff at SACHA, we said well let's let's go to Toronto's Take Back the Night and it was just so massive and the music was amazing and our Take Back the Night was coming up in a couple of weeks, and we rented a truck and I brought my sound equipment. It was the first time that we had,

you know massive music out on the streets, and just a few years later it just was huge with, um many people will know how integral Cricket was in bringing you know tons of students from Mac, just making it at, an event, an annual event that included community-based organizations and and Mac students and lesbians and queer and trans folks coming out in in droves which happened over a very short period of time.

AMBER: Yeah thanks and an interesting, like an event that changed over time too right, from, to be trans-inclusive, but also I remember conversations when Cole and I were involved with um Big Susie's around sex worker advocacy, about okay so how do we simultaneously challenge violence against women and also support sex worker rights at the same time and like how can we build that into um some of the chants and things there were some good conversations that happened. Difficult conversations I don't want to down play the difficulty of them, but I think um yeah so so kind of compelling that there was and is a movement and like space to kind of try and work those things out. And it's those moments of trying to work those things out across differences that I think are a really important um movement moments, but also teaching moments and that kind of leads to the question that's here in the chat from Mike, about how, how he's wondering, how can we integrate this history, stories and the archives, into elementary and secondary schools so that everyone but in particular the youngest queer and trans youth can see early on how community,

their community, has been made in Hamilton. The support and family, the movement, the leaders, the struggles. So it's a good question, I don't have an answer but I'm thinking probably some of you have some thoughts about it Anybody want to tackle school curriculum?

RICHARD: I I would say uh working, I work mostly in Windsor with school curriculums and curricula and with Black communities, and uh going into the schools is a wonderful thing. And just to speak to what Mary Cahill put in the chat there about we don't need to reinvent the wheel. These young people need to know that there was a history. Uh it speaks to the other question in the chat around how do we animate the histories? Uh we animate them by talking about them, by recording them, by showing up live in the schools to talk about these things uh I mean we would talk through them I guess in terms of you know some of the sexual stuff, but depending on the age I guess, but um you know the young ones need to know. And this is how in terms of race, in terms of queerness, we get erased all the time and we do have to, we're left to reinvent the wheel because the young ones don't know and so where with the mainstream stuff, the young ones always know, you transmit Shakespeare studies down and down and down and down and down. You don't transmit Black studies in that way. I'm teaching a course right now where I have to start with like stage one to teach my students, these are grad school students, about Black history because they don't they have no clue. Same with trans history, queer history, the young ones have no clue and so it's really important to go into the schools

and speak to them. Show them that we're alive, that we're here, that they can see us. It's like yeah if he can do that, if they can do that, I can do it too. Like kids really need to see that.

PAULINE: If I can add um I'm thinking of uh virtual spaces like Hamilton 175's um, platform, um so in gearing up for Hamilton 175, or maybe it's past. Anyway there's a Hamilton 175.

COLE: It's this year, we still have a couple of months.

RICHARD: It's November.

PAULINE: The uh the Hamilton 175 staff at the City of Hamilton are creating this virtual platform to augment the museum spaces that we have. The museum spaces that are city run tend to be uh historical spots um using the actual buildings that um that have some significance and then putting and then curating within those spaces um which then means that there isn't, we're not seeing that diversity in in terms of curation. But a virtual platform, like what Hamilton 175 is is creating, allows for different groups or associations to say hey we want to have a space on that platform and um the archives that will be created are going to be in the library but the if there is some connection with this this living space that's not meant to go away after the 175th anniversary then you can, just like bringing kids to the children's museum, you can share these um these virtual spaces that are meant to be artistically curated and to have you know public art associated with them to uh to share with with classrooms, and to, and to you know add to curricula um and to

have it not be um static and and boring and reading newspaper clippings. Which some people love but not everyone.

AMBER: Yeah that's for sure. That's a good point. We had a good conversation Tuesday night too about like how do you make an archive live beyond just the files of stuff that goes into an institutional kind of setting. So it's a really great question, that was the other, one of the other questions that Richard already partly addressed in the um in the Q&A, was just about this issue of like without Richard's explanations and stories to go with those posters and clippings and ticket stubs, they they wouldn't necessarily have the same meaning. So I do think like capturing um some of the stories through forms like this or oral history interviews or things like that and then finding ways to make those live outside of an archive um can be really useful and helpful in schools and things too I think. Uh Cole did you have a a school thought you wanted to?

COLE: I just talk quickly about um you know uh communities who are marginalized within queer communities as well. So um I was part of a group called the Women and Liminal Committee. Uh which was actually you know sort of um, it was supposed to be part of uh Hamilton Pride and part of the AIDS Network, you know back in you know not the AIDS network really, but part of Hamilton Pride and we were a subcommittee of Hamilton Pride back in the uh I would say 2000, maybe seven or eight, nine, something like that. And we decided that we were going to uh refuse the military and the police from uh coming to our our parades and coming to our marches and to be part of our

communities, uh to recruit people to join the police or join the military. And back, you know 20 years ago or actually maybe not 20 years ago, 15 years ago or so, it was really dangerous for people who were queer to be in the police force. It still is in many cases I would say, but also to be in the military. And so it was women and trans people who actually started up a group called the WLC, Women and Liminal, liminal means betwixt and between, so uh trans people. The Women and Liminal Committee we were told by the Pride Committee at that time that we weren't allowed to be a subcommittee of them, so we decided to just be our own committee and then what we did was we organized um for four years in a row, we organized uh women and trans only march. We refused the the police intervention or or, the police always came on their bikes with big smiles, and we were always like okay cool, but we are the marshals, not you. And so we just took up space and I feel that um you know women and trans people, lesbians and trans people actually are you know very important in these uh in these uh endeavors because we've always been the ones who are uh you know marginalized even within queer communities. There's many many white gay men and lesbians, who think that they were the ones who invented queerness and they didn't. Okay there's lots and lots and lots of people who went through hell in order for these rights to be here and so um the Women and Liminal Committee every single year I was involved in it, there were only five of us and I was the liminal person in there, and we would always go to the Pride um event.

We would always have our event an hour before. We would march. We would have a rally. We would march. We would go and join the uh queer committee, the you know the Hamilton Pride, and then we would you know we would take up space. And we would not take up, take over the space, but we would take up space in this uh situation and then we would um you know invite people who didn't feel all in all that invited at queer communities to go and march down and take up space all over the place. So, it really did take, for people who are trans and racialized and uh you know queer to be able to even take up space within queer communities itself, because as soon as gay marriage became legal everyone thought that well lots and lots of people thought that the the struggle is over. We've achieved our penultimate thing. Which I am not in agreement with. You know I don't think that's true and also um so even now we have uh you know we have we have to understand that you know there are intersections around our identities. There are racialized people. There are Indigenous people. There are people who are trans. There are people living in poverty, because of all these things and so um the Women and Liminal Committee whenever we wanted to speak at pride, we were never involved. We were never invited to speak. So we'd always just make we'd just take up space and say hey we need to speak and we're going to take up space. No matter what you do, so you know women and trans people and and um racialized people have been doing this for many years, even in Hamilton as well.

RICHARD: I just want to say a really quick thing to remind people, in terms of colonialism, that we are the late comers. That as much as we think that we're rad. Indigenous peoples had many many liminal peoples way before christianity and colonizers came here. So I feel it's very important for us to acknowledge that. That we are really late and we need to look to the the Indigenous peoples where you know, I was reading a winnebago trickster story. It says the trickster kept his penis in a box. I was like yes! And this is an oral story that goes hundreds of years back. They're way before us so let's not forget that in terms of colonialism.

NAWALKA: Well and to add to that I think it's safe to say that had everybody listened to Indigenous people we wouldn't have to have these forums that we're having right now. Right? So the other thing that I want to be mindful of as well is that, anybody who knows me knows knows that I am huge on community consultation, and I I always feel that we are accountable to community and we must be held accountable to our communities. And so when we talk about educating our kids, I feel that it's important as well that, and given my history of having worked with family and children in the past, that information that we provide for children on the history of Hamilton's queer community must be also accessible for parents. So I and when we talk about a really good example is while kids are learning more now about Indigenous people in school, they're coming home to parents who have no clue about who Indigenous people are, and asking questions and parents are starting to feel challenged. So learning from that

example if we already provide the information about the history of queer Hamilton to parents then when the kids come home, the parents are much better equipped to be supportive to the children, and help their children down that journey. Rather than being, feeling threatened by not having the same knowledge their grade four or five child has and shutting them down, they'll be able to support them. And that and that's kind of an Indigenous traditional approach to education, is that everybody is learning the same thing at the same time. And I think that would be beneficial as well.

AMBER: Yeah, I think that's a tremendous point and it makes me think about um uh NaWalka I wonder if you would talk about like what might the challenges be of um building Two-Spirit histories in Hamilton into this Hamilton LGBTQ+ archive, because um there's a Two-Spirit archives in Winnipeg right, like a national Two-Spirit archives and so I was wondering about like is it important, does it feel important to you to actually have a Hamilton specific archive? And if so, what challenges might we anticipate with um trying to archive the histories of Two-Spirit contributions to queer and trans life in Hamilton?

NAWALKA: Well I think first most importantly is we have to remember that each of our territories are governed by different treaties. So that alone is going to be different. So the treaties that we have here in and around Hamilton are going to be different uh somewhat in Toronto, somewhat in Winnipeg. So we have to be mindful of that. We have to be mindful as well, I think one of the biggest challenges is going to be first we have

to help people understand first Indigenous people to understand Two-Spirit people and we have to understand things like our construct of family is radically different and our constructive gender gender identity is also radically different. And then why it's so important that Two-Spirit stand alone from what I call the gay acronym. Right, the 2SLGBTQIAPGNC, we have to be mindful of the fact that there, some of the major differences between Indigenous people and other members, brothers and sisters in our queer communities, in our queer nation, is that there's no other group under the queer nation, under that gay alphabet, that is governed by a piece of racist discriminatory legislation known as the Indian act, that Indigenous people which includes Two-Spirit people. There's no other group under that queer acronym, the gay acronym, the gay alphabet that has ever been forced to go to the residential schools here in Canada, in our own territory so, Two-Spirit needs to stand separate. So that our voices don't get lost again and that our experiences don't get lost and those very important things that I've mentioned here, family construct, gender, are just a couple of things. But when we look at archiving Two-Spirit people, we need to be able to look at what's different from community to community, from nation to nation and a lot of those are going to be about our roles and responsibility. Our terms are going to be different, I use Anishnaabe Ojokwe, but from my community somebody else who is identifying as an Anishnaabe from my community, may have a different term that helps describe who they are and what their roles and responsibilities are. That's another thing that keeps us really separate from the the gay alphabet is that

our understanding of who we are is not based on what happens underneath the sheets. It's based on what our roles and responsibilities are to ourselves, to our families, to our communities, and to our nation. So when we look at archiving that, we're going to look geographically, they're going to be very different based on treaties, based on our communities, those types of things. So that's going to be the biggest challenge and I think another big challenge to that is trying to create safer space for Indigenous people in 2021. And I don't think it's any secret to anybody the the enormous amount of hatred and discrimination and racism that's happened against Indigenous people here in Canada since things like, the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action have come out, since the calls to justice have come out from the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girl, trans, trans identifying Two-Spirit inquiry. Those things have really put Indigenous matters uh to the forefront for many people and it's, with the good has come the ugly. Right, so we're seeing more racism. Those are some of the challenges that I see that are happening in terms of archiving but for Two-Spirit people.

AMBER: Yeah absolutely and that's really um important to think about the just the differences in different territories. So then maybe there is something valuable about having a like a physical archive that's here in Hamilton, but we need to really think about how the 2S gets taken up and and and documented in that and yeah yeah. Um one of the suggestions on on Tuesday night from Tuesday night's panel was just setting up an advisory group for that. Right for the archive as it's in its kind of

forming moments that would represent all the different voices in our community so.

NAWALKA: I just I just want to add I watched Tuesday's night session too, and it was it was so thoughtful. It was well done. One of the things that I've done, somebody had asked a question about folks first experience with archival uh information items that kind of stuff, and what that made me think about as an Indigenous person. So part of my identity is I am a first generation residential school survivor. My mother is the survivor. I am a survivor of federal Indian day school, but I'm also a family member to Dudley George of the Ipperwash Crisis. So I grew up walking up and down the highway, shutting down a highway, fighting to have our territory given back. In that process my father and the direct descendants were spending most of their time at the archives looking for information that directly put me and my family on the land that was known as military-based Ipperwash. So when they come home with all this copied material with the names of my ancestors, the power that you feel when you can actually see the names and how we evolved from just the names along how we evolved from just one name, or first from a symbol because some of my ancestors had a symbol that would represent who they are, not a name. Then from one name and then you can see how colonization started to happen, and then there was British names being added uh to our name. So that kind of archival information was really powerful and seeing how you're connected to territory, to land, to water beautiful. That session was just so good for me, it was very healing so thank you and to

everybody who was part of that. Now I'm going to shut my big fat Ojibwe lips.

AMBER: But it's such an important story. I think it speaks to, I mean we talked a lot on Tuesday night too and we've talked here about, yeah archives are also like colonial spaces and they do have, they've tended to be predominantly white spaces, but yet there's something really powerful as you say about finding the evidence of your ancestors there and being able to actually use that evidence to try to pursue greater justice right. So so yeah.

NAWALKA: I think about, my mind goes crazy when I think about all of our sacred items that are being held in non-Indigenous spaces. And so we have roles and responsibilities to those items as as Indigenous people. We have ceremonies that we have to do to recognize the spirits that are are engaged and are part of those items. And when when I think about them being locked up in museums, and in exhibition halls, it drives me absolutely crazy.

AMBER: Yeah yeah.

NAWALKA: So let's go break into an art gallery or something shall we.

[laughter] AMBER: Uh that's what would happen if we were gathering in person right now. [laughing continues] it's gonna be our next stop um.

PAULINE: Screens will go black.

AMBER: yeah, there's uh there's another question I just want to raise from the um the panel that I think would be great to hear from any of our panelists on, and um uh Adria is asking how, saying many of our, of your stories come from a time when there were dedicated queer spaces in Hamilton for many of the city's 2SLGBTQ+ communities, and then as we all know, there are no longer any dedicated spaces in the city for these kinds of gatherings. If there were to be a new dedicated community space in the future, what would you like to see from it? What do you think it could do better than spaces in the past? And could you see an archive integrating into a community space, and how could you see that happening? Yeah, Cole and I and uh another friend of ours, we're just joking recently that maybe we could um uh buy the Cat in the Fiddle, which is shutting down but it's like, if you know Cole, you know that's where Cole kind of holds court, and then have the archive there. COLE: Yeah.

AMBER: Yeah, why not yeah. Yeah we don't have that kind of money but um um yeah it's a it's a good question. So what would you like to see from, would you like to see a dedicated uh queer and trans space back in the city? And then what would be important to be mindful of in creating a space like that?

NAWALKA: Can I can I, I'll just hop in quickly. I'd love to see a space that people of all ages could come in, so that you're not

restricted by alcohol, you have to be of age to get into it. Because this is going to be the space and this, it's going to happen in Hamilton. We're going to see a space that all ages could come in, where we can bring our friends and our families, and then we're going to sit down and we're going to be able to share these stories. And I'm I I know it's going to happen, and that's how our history in queer Hamilton is going to happen. That's how it's going to happen I feel for Two-Spirit people. I feel that we're going to have these spaces where we're going to be able to sit down and share the stories that we've been sharing here. That that's what I would like to see. That's the kind of space I want to see.

AMBER: Yeah.

NAWALKA: And of course it's got to be glamorous with really nice lighting.

AMBER: Yes, that would be really ideal. Uh Pauline, do you want to jump in?

PAULINE: Sure, I think, at this point I think we need more than one space. Our stories um talked about the different places that we, where we met, where we um gathered, where we discovered ourselves, where we came out. Um and so there's so much talk about a space these days, and it's it's tremendously important to talk about a space right now. If there's one space, it of course has to be multi-purpose, but I I just when we're talking about one space I think of how many

people will continue to be marginalized. Black women, racialized women are invisible in, so often. So if we create one community space why would we imagine that women who are not feeling safe and haven't for for years will come out to this community space. I think that we need different spaces. We need to foster a culture. We need to foster an understanding in Hamilton where it is safe and viable to have to open queer bars, queer spaces, youth spaces that are for the 2SLGBTQIA communities and we should really think about how those all closed down, why they closed down, what happened that made these spaces not viable and um we need to think about that the diversity within our communities and not recreate spaces that are predominantly white spaces, predominantly male. We need to be thinking really differently and I hope that you get the Cat in the Fiddle, my girlfriend and I had our first date there.

AMBER: Yeah it's funny for us, a space that's yeah um never never been like exclusively queer but has a long queer history that's for sure yeah. Uh Richard did you want to weigh in on the question of space?

RICHARD: Just really quickly, I just just to echo what um what Pauline and NaWalka are saying, just we need an ecology of queerness and it would, and I'm speaking very specifically about environment because we need to incorporate all the different histories and I I feel we can do it in a single space, but we have to, as you said Pauline, we have to approach it from a very different way because this is why we've kind of gone mainstream. There's no bars because supposedly we're

mainstream now. It's like no we're not. We've been co-opted by the mainstream, so we need to rein- not reinvent, but we need to take up the space and and have our ecology of queerness and it would involve colonial, how colonialism has worked, how how colonialism has actually worked to separate us and convince us into thinking that we all have separate uh needs and oh well we're white lesbians over here, we're Black lesbians over there, and we're Two-Spirit over here, like how has colonialism separated us into feeling that that's the case, cause it's not the case. We're part of an ecology and how do we create that ecology, separate from the mainstream that wants to create us

AMBER: Cole looks like he wants to jump in, but he's also writing down a thought

COLE: No I am.

AMBER: That's good, you can write down a thought, I just wanted to know that - oh, Marta is pointing out in the chat that there's there are some things that have been starting up recently, like Hamilton queer hangs and fruit salad, as starting to kind of reestablish these intersectional spaces. There are um if there's links you can put Marta in the chat for those on social media or something like that, I think that would be great. I think they've been like moving from space to space so it's not quite the same as having a dedicated space but it is starting to generate um community again, not that it's ever gone but it's just uh we haven't had the dedicated space. Go ahead Cole.

COLE: Well to tell you the truth, we have had dedicated space for the last 30 years or so, because we've had women's dances, we've had women and trans dances, we've had Oral Groove. I don't know if any of you remember that but Oral Groove was a place that actually provided dedicated spaces for uh trans people and uh you know to you know to party and to hang out together, okay it was at um uh different bars but guess what we didn't actually have a space. We took up space right. So we took our space at the Casbah. We took up space at um you know other at the uh Gallagher's, who which was on, so I think that the revolution or the sort of you know the the forward movement of uh queer people taking up space was actually that we're we're not going to, we don't need space. I remember when the Steel Lounge, which my good friend uh Emily Groom uh opened that place up, and I was always so supportive of um opening up a queer-run queer, because not all the, the Embassy was never queer run. It was run by straight people okay. So it was you know and that's why all sorts of lots of problems happened there but the the Steel Lounge was run by queer people. However then it just didn't really take up. It was there for like three years or something, and it really didn't nothing much happened and I remember asking this young uh trans guy that I know why are not, why are people not going, not showing up at Pride at the queer bar, why are not they showing up at New Year's Eve or whatever, and he said because we don't really need to go to bars anymore to pick people up, each other up, and I'm like well where are we picking each other up? And he goes it's on the internet Cole. And I'm like oh yes good point okay, sorry I'm so old. However like the thing is that like um

Oral Groove was, I don't really love the name but it was called Oral Groove, and it was a dance party that was done, put on by lesbians and trans people to let women and trans people in and so and to let us get away from the whole Embassy idea because the Embassy was filled with you know, queer people of course for sure, but there were also straight guys and couples who went there down there to try and pick up lesbians to have sex with right. So we've also been involved in these situations where um we've been you know marginalized and we've been used by uh cis and heterosexual communities and so then we started taking up space at different places, rather than actually having a gay bar. And when I said to him like why don't we have a gay bar anymore, he says well we all pick up each other online, I'm like okay well not me, but you do too and that's that's absolutely fantastic. Uh the other thing is that um so Oral Groove we had um it was a women and trans uh dance that happened and it was, we did have a trans guy uh being at the door. We just thought like well let's have this guy at the door, but there were people, trans people, trans men, who would come into that space and be sort of scrutinized and be like why is this guy in here, in this space, you know so even within our queer communities, I mean I don't want to ever put queer communities down, but within our queer communities there has been transphobia within queer communities and I think it's something that's worth mentioning as well because um really queer people whether people, queer trans racialized women were the people who made it okay for every other queer person right now to have a voice and to have space. It was queer trans women of colour in at Stonewall, who put

themselves on the I mean they were already on the line, they were getting they were getting raped by people, they were getting raped by police, they were getting raped by other people, they were being uh you know completely vilified and yet they are the ones who actually made it okay so that we can actually have a conversation today. so I think we really need to remember that as well because not this conversation does that or much of this history doesn't recognize that. AMBER: Yeah yeah and just, I'm gonna have to say some thank yous fairly soon, but I did want to ask both you and richard one thing that I was wondering about was, like what kinds of challenges will come up trying to archive trans histories in Hamilton in a broader 2SLGBTQ+ archive? So we've kind of you know you touched on some of the histories that can arise between trans and queer communities and organizing but do you foresee or anticipate challenges with building a um a trans aspect into that the local archive?

RICHARD: For me not particularly. I mean what I would say is, I mean I think there's been a lot of trans activism in the last 10 years. I transitioned in 96, so that's actually more like 20 something years right, I'm getting old, but um there's been a lot of [unintelligible] what's that?

COLE: 25 buddy.

RICHARD: That's right, 25 almost 30, and so there's been a lot of activism in that time. I would say that I've pulled back and so what you might find, I pulled back from trans activism and I I

present as male, I go as male, and I do a lot of race work and so there's a couple things happening there. One is that those of us who are racialized, and so obviously there's a continuum of racialization, there's there's white approximate, some of us approximate whiteness, some of us don't. So I choose to fight the battle of race, that's all. And why do I, why do we have to choose really? I'm not sure, but I stepped back and I've started to fight the battle of race and so that would have to be captured I feel in a trans archive. The trans activism is happening, is it mostly white, Cole? I don't know in the city because I've stepped back from it. I'm doing a lot of race work so I don't know, you can probably speak to it better. Is it mostly white?

COLE: I think it, well I I don't know. I mean I completely don't know but I think that there is yeah, it's mostly white. I mean in Canada we're mostly white, so uh I think it is mostly white but definitely there are other narratives. Counter-archival narratives up there.

RICHARD: yeah.

AMBER: but the other thing, oh sorry.

RICHARD: Oh no, I was just going to say that I think what Pauline said is so true, that we get silenced, like as Black people, as Indigenous people we get silenced. And so actually I'm not even interested in a counter-archive because I'm I'm so attentive to language. I'm not counter anybody. I'm myself and

I want to see Indigenous history. I want to see Black history, African Africans are Indigenous by the way, and so we also have an Indigenous history that goes back to Africa, very similar to what you see here and um I want to see those. I'm not counter. It's like I'm not in reaction to white people. I'm just like I'm doing my own, I'm trying to do my own thing. And so I feel we need new language as well in the creation of archives AMBER: Yeah, I was just thinking about all the work you've been doing on the Black history of Hamilton and also but but why isn't that work recognized as an important part of trans activism that's happening in Hamilton because you're at the forefront of it. So I also think that it's a limitation with, you you talked about how colonialism creates these identity silos, but I also think we get into these activism or organizing uh silos a little bit and you're doing on um on Black history should be recognized as part of a trans history of Hamilton.

RICHARD: Totally yeah, again it's the struggle to resist the mainstream, which is all about power over, and we don't want to do that. We want to do the power among, to share our power, and there's not one pie with pieces, you know, limited pieces and we need to have a different approach and so it's always a resistance against that counter, that's a mainstream culture. That we develop our own and our histories are very rich and exciting, that's the great part. There's so much to recover. It's very exciting to me.

AMBER: Uh and Pauline did you have any thoughts about, so when trying to archive lesbian and queer women's histories and

and how those maybe uh intersect in interesting ways with feminist histories to, uh Richard, Cole, you might also have thoughts on this this question, but what kind of challenges might then come up um for for trying to archive some of those histories, do you think?

People may not want to revisit some things for example, like I can think of some really good examples of like conflicts or stories that actually people might prefer just not to revisit because they were so hard. PAULINE: Yeah they were hard but they're important stories to tell and um yeah that can be that can be a real challenge in um you know how comfortable are people in in sharing things that were painful. Um I know in our, in the Japanese Canadian community that is a really poignant piece for us that uh my our generations that experienced internment directly um often don't want to speak about it but it's so important for the next generation. I'm Sansei, so my uh the uh the generation that immigrated to Canada is Issei. My father is Nisei and I'm a Sansei, and future generations need to know the story and and who is going to tell that story when it there's pain that makes it so that some don't want to tell their stories so um a challenge lies there absolutely for the uh lesbian and women of color communities um in you know who who gets to tell the story? How do you pull out the story from people? Um and I I think to that, and it happens in in so many um archiving projects and and in history, that some uh some information is more prevalent because of the privilege of being able to have access to your story, have access to your history, and so how do you fill in those gaps, when um

people who were struggling weren't in a position to collect their their information, their stories to articulate it in that way and and how do you have this this fulsome uh collection of sorts.

AMBER: Yeah I think that's so important and the there's a someone had posted their last kind of question um and I said that that was the last question, it will be, but I think this is a good reflection actually. I'll bring it up in the Q&A box and the person posted that Hamilton has a big history of people or small groups doing great work and getting burnt out, things growing and dying, and some people then are left with sour feelings after doing good work and not being appreciated or not being sustainable in Hamilton, and how do we get their good stories into a complete history? Well I think the idea that we would ever get a complete history is a mirage right. We have to kind of do away with that idea because there will always be more stories to add um but in in light of that comment, which I think is true, people do get burnt out but I also think people kind of renew and just get re-energized in a way and that's part of what we see in some of these conversations, or that I've seen anyway, in some of these conversations that have come up around building this um 2SLGBTQ community archive um for Hamilton, is that if we if we can find ways of passing on stories that in and of itself can actually be kind of both re-energizing and useful to new activists and and the ongoing kind of struggles I think. To know that some of us have thought about some of these things

and struggled through them in the past. Cole, it looks like uh you want to jump in –

COLE: Yeah, I want to say I worked for the women's Bookstop for you know nine and a half years, and I sat there, people would come in, they would buy books but really they wouldn't be buying books. They'd be coming in to try and meet other lesbians, and they'd be trying to find community and uh I remember uh this great woman Kathy, Pauline was friends with her as well, Pathy- Cathy Murray who died just recently. Uh Pauline and I were at her funeral uh recently, or her memorial service, but she used to come in. Oh my goodness she used to go to the women's dances. She was a lesbian in the community, she used to come into the, this was yeah I mean she was like, you know, not unusual. In that, she would come into the women's Bookstop on, uh we'd have a dance on a Friday night or a Thursday night, after Take Back the Nights or whatever, and then she would come in on Saturday or Monday, and dissect the dance. And tell me all about like, who was like sleeping with who, and who was like had broken up, and they were sleeping with their person, and blah blah blah and it was just all, I was like really? I was there and I have no idea what was going on there, but people had just such you know uh you know real community senses of being able to come into the bookstore and like let's discuss this stuff. So we had a real you know uh sense of being together and I mean there were definitely, I remember a woman, a trans woman, came into the store and um she told me her whole life story, and I I'm you know it was the first trans woman I had ever met. This was back

in like 1993 or something or 1993, and she came in and told me all about her life and I didn't tell anyone. I was just like okay I'm in there but then you know, we went into a there was a dance and she was there and uh she thought that I had told her girlfriend that she was trans, which I hadn't done this, but the thing is that we were such a small community that you know um we had like you know there was there was so much issues of identity out there and I was just like very very supportive of trans people, but um I was in the bookstore and I sat there as a sitting duck, people would come in and they wouldn't, they would be buying books but mostly they'd be talking about their lives. And because there was nothing else out there for people, so I just tried to be as supportive as possible but it was a very uh, I mean our community has done informal uh you know sort of support for many many many years right because the formal supports were not there.

AMBER: Yeah, yeah and that kind of community space which those bookstores were um is is I think really important. So it was great to hear everyone's reflections on what a future space could bring to us and and uh and I know that that those conversations have been ongoing with the city for a while so hopefully they will keep going. Uh Cole, Richard, uh NaWalka, uh Pauline thank you so much! This has been such a rich discussion and I think, I feel like it could go on, and there are more stories in there and there will be but um this has been a great way for us to start thinking about the potential of forming this archive I think. Um I have a few other thank yous before we say good night and I know people have been thanking our

panelists in the chat a bit, um and um and saying their goodnight's there as well. Yeah it's great to see. So thanks to Nancy Taylor and the Taylor family for their financial support of the department of english and cultural studies, yeah the John Douglas Taylor conference fund, that makes events like this possible. Thanks to our partners at Hamilton public library, local history and archives. Especially, Karen Milligan and Shelly McKay. A huge thanks to our technical wiz uh Simon Lebrun who's kept everything running smoothly both nights! Behind the scenes, which has just been an amazing relief for all of us, and uh thanks to our brilliant chat monitors! Who've done such a great job of keeping things going in the chat, Vilma Rossi, Emma Croll-Baehre, Marta Croll-Baehre, and Adrianna Michell. And finally thanks to all the McMaster students who contributed to organizing this week's event, Lindsay Corridon, Emma Croll-Baehre, Marta Croll-Baehre, Aseja Dava, who's been out there live tweeting and keeping things going on social media, Theresa Kenny, Adrianna Michell, Laurel Richardson, Emma Rockwood, and Katrina Sellinger. And then thank you so much to everyone who's been joining us tonight for this discussion and Tuesday night, and we hope that you will keep uh in touch with us keep an eye on our website. These talks have been recorded and we will edit them and caption them and then make them available on our website in case you want to revisit them, and coming out of these conversations actually a lot of resources have been generated and so Simon and I spoke about generating just a list of the resources and books and um some of the organizations and histories and and we'll send that out to those who are on our

mailing list. So thank you very much everyone and uh have a restful rest of your Thursday evening.

COLE: Did NaWalka want to say something? I thought NaWalka wanted to say something?

NAWALKA: I did, I did, I did have my hand up. I was just I was just thinking as Cole was talking with me, so wonder if we could figure out some way, I don't even know what it looks like, sometime my brain goes weird, but I was just thinking it would be so beautiful beautiful we could figure out in our queer communities right across the universe how is it that we can support each other and encourage each other? How we might be able to keep our community stronger? Whenever we have a brother a queer brother or sister who's achieved something monumental that brings us forward a little bit, one more step, let's look at how we can support them and honour them in this work because we've had some amazing trailblazers doing some incredible stuff. let's keep encouraging our young people to look up to those queer trailblazers and and continue the work that many of you wonderful folks have started to do. That's it i'm shutting up now.

AMBER: That's a great idea, yeah I like the vision. It's good to end with a vision too.

All right, good night everyone.

PAULINE: good night.