

AIDS CANDLELIGHT VIGIL

Toronto AIDS Candlelight Vigil Returns to Barbara Hall Park for 33rd Year

Themed “In the Spirit of Wellness & Healing”, as tribute to the indigenous community, the annual event will take place on June 20, 2017 at 9 p.m.

TORONTO, ON (May 17, 2017) - On the evening of **Tuesday, June 20, 2017**, thousands of LGBTTIQQ2S+ community members will remember, honour and celebrate those who have passed from AIDS or AIDS related illnesses, or have given their lives in the fight against HIV/AIDS at the 33rd annual [Toronto AIDS Candlelight Vigil](#) held in **Barbara Hall Park (519 Church Street, Toronto)** at **9:00 p.m.**

“As we continue the fight against HIV/AIDS, this open community event provides an opportunity to recognize and honour the millions of lives that have been impacted, along with those that have been affected by this disease, including caregivers, friends, lovers, family members or social workers,” says *Steven Hobé, AIDS Vigil Committee of Toronto Co-Chair*. “With this year’s theme of “In The Spirit of Wellness and Healing”, we aim to shed light on the struggles the indigenous community faces with HIV/AIDS in Canada.”



In 2014, Canadian indigenous people were [2.7 times more likely](#) to contract HIV compared to other ethnicities. Leonard Benoit, *Client Care Coordinator in the Indigenous Community*, adds “This year's theme speaks to community: it acknowledges that we leave no one behind.”

The evening will be hosted by **Leonard Benoit** and **Louise Binder**, and will include performances from **FORTE Toronto Gay Men’s Chorus, Ballet Creole, Francois Gallant and Bernice Chan**. The event will close with a **reading of the names** of those who have passed from HIV/AIDS or AIDS related illnesses, followed by a **candle lighting ceremony**.

Benoit, who holds registration with the College of Nurses of Ontario as a Registered Practical Nurse, works as a Client Care Coordinator in the Indigenous Community, where he provides a variety of services to those that have or are affected by HIV/AIDS. Binder, a lawyer and health advocate, started her work in this area in the HIV community in the early 1990s after her own diagnosis and before effective treatments were available for HIV. Binder also co-founded the Canadian Treatment Action Council (CTAC)

in 1996, which successfully ensured access to treatments and quality care for people living with HIV by working with the federal and provincial governments and other relevant stakeholders to enhance drug review and approval systems, pricing policies and access to liver transplants for this community.

The names read prior to the candle lighting ceremony will be engraved on the long-standing AIDS Memorial in the heart of Barbara Hall Park.

For media accreditation, photos or interview requests, please contact:

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About The Toronto Candlelight AIDS Vigil:

The AIDS Candlelight Vigil is an open community event held annually at the AIDS Memorial to remember, honour and celebrate the people who have died of AIDS or AIDS related illnesses, or who have given their lives in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Every year, thousands of candles are lighted to honour and remember those who have died, and to encourage and support the tens of thousands of others who live with this disease every day.

The Vigil embraces diversity, accepting and respecting people of all cultures, faiths, traditions and communities. The Vigil welcomes all people who have been infected or affected by HIV/AIDS and embraces anyone who has experienced a loss or losses due to HIV/AIDS.

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