



THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR  
**GENDER + SEXUAL**  
DIVERSITY



LE CENTRE CANADIEN DE LA  
**DIVERSITÉ DES GENRES**  
+ DE LA SEXUALITÉ

## MISSION STATEMENT

We at the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity have partnered with your school/organization to bring you this exhibition to showcase a few of Canada's 2SLGBTQIA+ artists, advocates, and activists, and the matters that affect and inspire them. These individuals and organizations have played an important part in paving a road to a more inclusive and diverse Canada, and their stories need to be told to inspire future generations to carry on their legacies.

There are gaps in our country's history, leaving many of our stories and struggles out of our textbooks, newspapers and archives. We rely on you to help us share Canada's 2SLGBTQIA+ history. Without you, there is no history.

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### VISIT OUR WEBSITE

To learn more about the work that we do on our journey toward a world free from discrimination.

[ccgds-ccgds.org](http://ccgds-ccgds.org)



# TRAILBLAZERS EXHIBIT

## ARTIST STATEMENT

We at the CCGSD have chosen these 12 remarkable individuals from the hundreds of Canadians that have acted as a voice for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and advocated for equal rights and freedoms. Although known acts of injustice experienced by Canada's 2SLGBTQIA+ people go as far as the 1600s, there is much to be unearthed and shared. Our goal is to showcase these struggles, protests and injustice that have happened within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in Canada and add these missing chapters into our history. We want to celebrate the lives and work of these individuals through our exhibition and continue to collaborate with the community in highlighting many others for years to come.

# JIM EGAN

A prominent Canadian 2SLGBTQI+ rights activist, known widely for his role in the landmark Supreme Court of Canada case Egan v. Canada and as an advocate for equal rights and the fight against unjust portrayal of the LGBTQ community in the media. His more public work in activism began in the year 1949 until 1964 when Jim Egan and his partner moved to British Columbia. Egan began to write into newspapers, letters to the editor, and publications under a pseudonym in order to provide a more positive account and portrayal of Gays and Lesbians in the media. Originally, he did this without community support, as there was little visibility in the 1950s due to societal homophobia that could lead to rampant discrimination involving employment, healthcare, and housing.



John 'Jack' Nesbit (L) and James 'Jim' Egan (R) on their farm near Chesley Ontario ca. 1954-1955  
James Egan fonds F0110, Courtesy of The ArQuives.

# SVEND ROBINSON

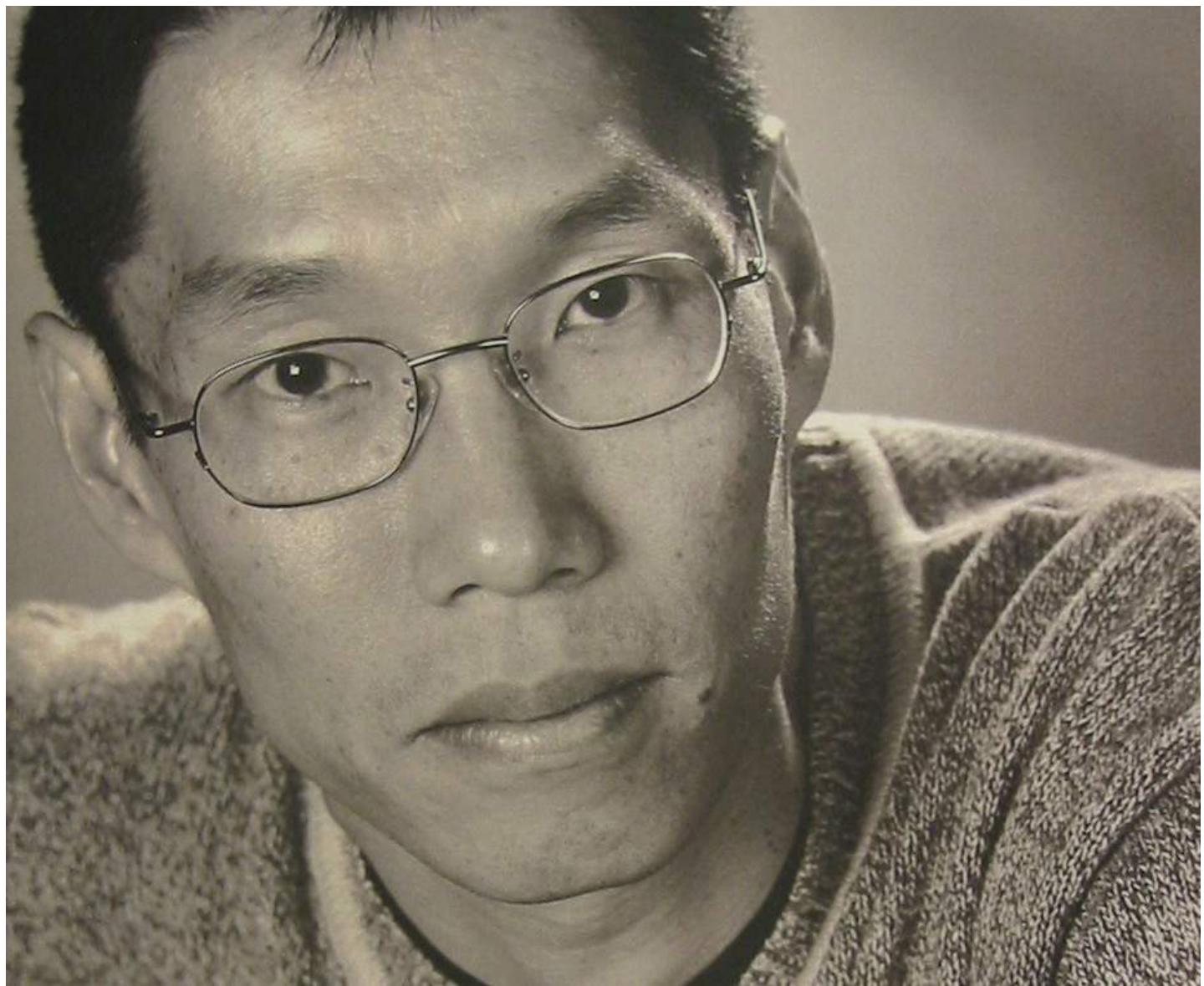
One of the longest-serving members in the House of Commons serving with the NDP in Vancouver, BC., Svend Robinson is noted as the first member of the Canadian Parliament to come out as gay while in office. He was the only openly LGBT member of the Canadian House of Commons until Bloc Québécois MP Réal Ménard came out in 1994. A large part of his work was to attempt to add sexual orientation to the equality rights section of the Canadian Charter, when it was under development in the 1980s. Although he was unsuccessful, sexual orientation was eventually included under the equality rights, thanks to the Supreme Court and later legislation.



Source: Canada's first openly gay MP, addresses an audience three days after publicly coming out on Feb 29, 1988. By Philip Hannan/Xtra

# RICHARD FUNG

Born in Trinidad, Richard Fung is a Toronto based video artist, writer, public intellectual and theorist. He holds a diploma from the Ontario College of Art, a degree in cinema studies and an MEd in sociology and cultural studies, both from the University of Toronto. He is a Professor in the Faculty of Art at OCAD University, teaching courses in Integrated Media and Art and Social Change. His work is comprised of challenging videos on subjects ranging from the role of the Asian male in gay pornography to colonialism, immigration, racism, homophobia, AIDS, justice in Israel/Palestine, and his own family history. In 2015, he received the Kessler Award from CLAGS: Center for LGBTQ Studies at the City University of New York for “a substantive body of work that has had a significant influence on the field of LGBTQ Studies”.



Source: The ArQuives National Portrait Collection.

# K.D. LANG

A western Canada native, k.d. Lang is a Grammy and Juno award-winning musician. Her best-known collaboration has been with veteran crooner Tony Bennett, with whom she recorded the 2002 Wonderful World duets album and continues to tour regularly, often in symphonic settings. Lang is also known for being an activist for animal rights, gay rights, and human rights. k.d. Lang has supported many causes over the years including, HIV/AIDS care and research. Lang was inducted to the Q Hall of Fame Canada for her work in furthering quality for all peoples around the world.



Source: Mandy Hall [CC BY 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>)]

# KENT MONKMAN

Kent Monkman is an award-winning Canadian artist of Cree ancestry who is well known for his provocative reinterpretations of romantic North American landscapes. His glamorous gender fluid alter-ego Miss Chief Eagle Testickle appears in much of his work as a time travelling, shapeshifting and supernatural being who reverses the colonial gaze, upending received notions of history and indigenous people. His art portrays important themes such as colonization, sexuality, loss, and resilience. (Source: [kentmonkman.com](http://kentmonkman.com))



Source: Miss Asia in progress. Photo by Ryan Van Der Hout. 2015.  
Image courtesy of Kent Monkman

# KAEL MCKENZIE

Kael McKenzie is noted as the first transgender person to be appointed as a judge to the Provincial Court of Manitoba in Canada. Kael was also the co-chair of the Canadian Bar Association's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Conference from 2012 to 2014. He has served as vice president of the Manitoba Bar Association, as Manitoba chair of the Canadian Bar Association, and president of the provincial Rainbow Resource Centre for Manitoba's LGBT and Two-Spirit communities. Kael is a proud member of the Manitoba Métis Nation and also served as a proud transgender man in the Canadian Forces.



Source: CBC

# SHARP DOPLER

For over 20 years, Sharp Dopler has been an educator, community worker, and activist. Sharp is originally from Newfoundland and is of Aniuyunwiya/Meskawkie/Ashkwakie and Irish descent. Sharp has been an advocate for topics including but not limited to: Cultural Competency, History of Indigenous People in Canada, Decolonisation, HIV/STI's/Hep C, Healthy Sexuality, Anti-Oppression, and Anti-Bullying. Sharp Dopler is honoured to be considered a Traditional Knowledge Keeper and carrier of Ceremony in the Ottawa community as well in other communities. Sharp uses this traditional knowledge and Indigenous ways of being in the world to inform how the work is done.



Source: Ottawa two-spirit activist Sharp Dopler after taking part in Day of Pink festivities in the Senate on Parliament Hill on April 12, 2017. Credit: Dylan C Robertson/Xtra

# MONICA FORRESTER

Program coordinator at Maggie's Toronto Sex Workers Action Project, Monica Forrester has gone from living and working on the streets to creating programs for trans and street-involved youth and advocating for transgender people in Toronto. Alongside others, Forrester was instrumental in creating a drop-in and an outreach program for transpeople at the 519. She was also part of advocating for trans women to be allowed into women's shelters and in creating policies to prevent shelters from discriminating against trans women. Her career in Toronto has been long standing, taking Monica from the 519 Centre, where she worked for ten years, to co-organizing the Toronto Trans March, and she is currently continuing Sex-Worker focused outreach at Maggie's.



Source: Monica Forrester and Jennifer Porter of Maggie's, a sex worker support centre, say the disappearance of Alloura Wells is unusual. (John Lesavage/CBC News)

# TEGAN & SARA

Grammy-nominated musicians and songwriters born in Calgary, identical twins Tegan & Sara have released eight studio albums and numerous EPs. They are both advocates for the LGBTQ+ rights as well as music education, literacy, and cancer research and were awarded Outstanding Music Artist at the GLAAD Media Awards. In December 2016, and in the wake of the United States' presidential election, they founded the Tegan and Sara Foundation, to fight for "economic justice, health and representation for LGBTQ girls and women". They have since announced a two-year break from touring to focus on their foundation and to create a new record.



Source: Tegan and Sara pose with Governor General Julie Payette after receiving the Governor General's Performing Arts Award in Ottawa June 1. (CBC)

# DR. LEE AIRTON

Dr. Lee Airton is an Assistant Professor of Gender and Sexuality Studies in Education at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. In 2012, they founded They Is My Pronoun, a Q+A-based blog about gender-neutral pronoun usage and user support with over 30,000 unique visitors in 2017 alone. Dr. Airton is also the founder of the No Big Deal Campaign, a national social media initiative that helps people show support for transgender peoples' right to have their pronouns used. In recognition of their advocacy work, Dr. Airton received a 2017 Youth Role Model of the Year Award from the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity. Dr. Airton's first book, *Gender – Your Guide: A Gender-Friendly Primer on What to Know, What to Say and What to Do in the New Gender Culture* offers practical steps for welcoming gender diversity in all areas of everyday life, available from Adams Media (An Imprint of Simon & Schuster). (from [leeairton.com](http://leeairton.com))



# SYRUS MARCUS WARE

Syrus Marcus Ware is a Vanier Scholar, a visual artist, community activist, researcher, youth-advocate, and educator. Syrus' work explores the spaces between and around identities; acting as provocations to our understandings of gender, sexuality, and race. For 14 years, Syrus has worked with Blackness Yes! to produce Blockorama (the black queer and trans stage at Pride), and other related events throughout the year. Syrus is also a founding member of the Prison Justice Action Committee of Toronto and is a core-team member of Black Lives Matter-Toronto. (Source: [syrusmarcusware.com](http://syrusmarcusware.com))



# ESTEFAN CORTES-VARGAS

Elected in 2015 to the Alberta General Election to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, Colombian-born Canadian politician Estefan Cortes-Vargas served as deputy chair of the Special Standing Committee. Upon election, they became one of the first three out LGBT people elected to the Alberta legislature, alongside caucus colleagues Michael Connolly and Ricardo Miranda. Although Cortes-Vargas was misrepresented in media coverage during the election campaign as female and lesbian, in December 2015 they formally came out as non-binary using they/them pronouns in the legislature during a debate on the inclusion of transgender rights in the provincial human rights code. To date, they have been the youngest government caucus whip in Alberta. They have now left office and are currently the executive director of the Pride Centre of Edmonton.



Source: Estefan Cortes-Vargas at the 2015 Alberta Premier/Cabinet swearing-in ceremony. By Connor Mah - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=40428488>