



BREKLYN'S SUCCESS STORY

(She/Her) from Hamilton, ON

Breklyn (above, right) at the Canada Pavilion's selfie wall

Breklyn's role in Canada's HIV response is multilayered. She is a voice for people living with HIV in Canada, a proud gifter of knowledge through capacity building, as well as a support within the HIV community. As the Executive Director of the Canadian Positive People Network (CPPN), Breklyn is a pillar within her community, advocating for support and health equity for people living with HIV across Canada.

Thanks to funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada, Breklyn was chosen to represent her community at the Canada Pavilion at the 25th International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2024) in Munich, Germany. With a theme of "Empowering Communities: Leaving No One Behind", the Canada Pavilion

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— Breklyn Bertozzi, Canada Pavilion Representative at AIDS 2024

shared Canadian best practices, effective interventions and achievements to address HIV and other STBBI, as well as showcased community innovation and the community-based response to HIV and other STBBI in Canada.

"This experience was life changing," says Breklyn. "It was truly outstanding and I have so much gratitude for my experience as a Pavilion Representative at the 2024 International AIDS Conference."

Breklyn says that her experience and knowledge gained opened her eyes to different ideas and approaches.

"The amount of knowledge I received, as well as experiencing a global sense of Community had a very positive impact on me," she reflected. "Germany was exceptional".

Breklyn is excited to bring these new ideas for programming and outreach back to the CPPN; the only Canadian, national, independent network by and for people living with HIV and HIV co-infections.

Breklyn feels her participation in the Canadian Pavilion helped give the CPPN momentum, and a new infusion of energy. She knows that her community will benefit from the connections she made at the conference.

"It is important for Canada to be present and represented at the International AIDS conferences because Canada has valuable research to share and learn from all the countries representing their research," says Breklyn. "Canada's more progressive policies and acceptance of people living with HIV can inspire other people and countries to make positive changes that will have positive impacts on lives of people living with HIV."

One example that highlights Canada's leadership in this area was the difficulty accessing cannabis while in Germany.

"For many people living with HIV, cannabis



Breklyn (top right) with the Canadian Positive People Network (CPPN) team at the Canada Pavilion

is an important component of their holistic treatment. Unfortunately, there were difficulties and challenges in accessing cannabis while in Germany and the lack of access caused distress. The IAS needs to understand the importance of people needing access to specific medications."

"Overall, this experience was outstanding both personally and professionally,"

Breklyn thanked the Canadian Association for HIV Research (CAHR) for their leadership of the Canada Pavilion, and looks forward to sharing her experience and new knowledge with the HIV community in Canada.

