



Realize ANNUAL REPORT 2018 - 2019

Turning Up the Volume for HIV and Wellness

Realize is on the leading edge of work related to HIV, disability and rehabilitation. Our focus on strategic issues of HIV and aging, access to rehabilitation, labour force participation and income support and mental health has never been more important. These are key cornerstones in people's ability to truly **live full and active lives with HIV and other episodic disabilities**.

We can only make this happen with your help! Join us to turn up the volume for HIV and wellness.

- Become a **Realize** advocate and share our work with the people you know.
- Become a **Realize** member – see our website at www.realizecanada.org.
- Become a monthly supporter – an easy and affordable way to give that helps Realize plan more effectively.

Our Reach

Realize has individual and organizational members across Canada, and strong partnerships internationally. Our Board members include a strong mix of health care and other professionals as well as activists from the HIV community. We convene or play a vital role in many key agency coalitions that focus on issues of critical concern to people living with HIV and other episodic disabilities.

In addition we have a national constituency of over 3,400 people we reach annually through our courses, forums, and think tanks who apply their learnings working within a wide range of community-based organizations, professional associations, care centres, clinics and research groups.

Realize

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Incorporated 2002
Charitable Registration number 85699 5535 RR0001

Our Thanks

The impact of **Realize**'s work transcends the size of our organization because of the expertise and dedication of our volunteer Board of Directors, as well as our staff, members, partners and donors – individuals, corporations, and public institutions.

For that, we thank you.

We particularly wish to thank the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Government of Ontario, Gilead Canada, the M·A·C AIDS Fund, and ViiV Healthcare Canada for their generous support.



Message from the Co-Chairs

2018

marked a significant milestone for **Realize** – our 20th Anniversary!

These 20 years have been a turbulent journey with many highs and lows for everyone living and working with the complex realities of HIV and episodic disability in Canada and beyond. We've seen significant breakthroughs in medical treatment. Many people are now looking to a future they didn't expect to have, even a few years ago.

However, there are a broad set of challenges and difficulties that remain to be overcome. **People living with HIV and other episodic disabilities continue to face social stigma, discrimination and barriers to employment.** The world is only beginning to come to grips with what it means to age with HIV in terms of health, the long-term effects of anti-retroviral treatment, sustainable livelihoods and mental wellness.

These critical issues are at the center of **Realize's** mission.

Quality of life has always been our focus. **Realize** is the only organization in Canada and dare we say, in the world, that has worked consistently over time on issues related to rehabilitation, HIV and episodic disability. Our role as a convener of thought leaders from the HIV and disability communities, the care and treatment sectors and policy makers has had a catalytic effect in helping create a 360 degree view of living with HIV and episodic disability. This has led to innovation in care and support.

In this anniversary year, we co-hosted our annual Forum with the Canada-International HIV and Rehabilitation Research Collaborative (CIHRRRC) of which we are a founder. Researchers, practitioners and community members from Canada, the UK, US and beyond gathered in Toronto to **explore how we can translate innovations in HIV, aging and rehabilitation interventions into practice.** It may sound clinical and esoteric, but the practical applications have the power to transform people's lives for the better.

Our guiding understanding of wellness was also reflected in our 2018-19 Think Tank. **Physical activity has long-proven to have a beneficial influence on both physical and mental health, but access and participation hasn't factored significantly in HIV care.** In March 2019 we brought together people from the HIV and fitness communities to discuss potential synergies and ways forward. This was the first national Think Tank of its kind.

In social policy development, we were excited to see the thinking of **Realize** and our partners concerning the nature of episodic disabilities incorporated in new federal disability legislation through the Accessible Canada Act. This was a hard-fought breakthrough that will help many people.

We welcome and help foster these changes for the better, but there is still much more to do. The hurdles **Realize** and other organizations faced in opening a space at the 2018 International AIDS Conference for meaningful discussion of what it means to age with HIV are an indicator of the long road that remains before us.

Along with the other members of the Board of Directors, **we are redoubling our efforts to ensure that Realize remains vital** with strong governance, transparent decision-making, strategic leadership and more secure, diverse funding. **We are determined to turn up the volume for HIV and wellness.**

Stéphanie Claivaz-Loranger and Paul Curwin
Co-Chairs, Board of Directors

realize FOSTERING
POSITIVE CHANGE
FOR PEOPLE LIVING
WITH HIV AND OTHER
EPISODIC DISABILITIES

Access to Rehabilitation

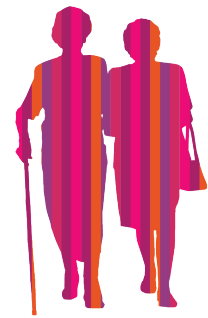
Realize continues to **turn up the volume on the important role that rehabilitation has in the lives of people living with HIV (PLWHIV)** – promoting increased public access, education of rehabilitation professional students and participation in physical activity are three areas we focused on in 2018.

In June 2018, along with the Canada-International HIV Rehabilitation Research Collaborative, we brought together 77 rehabilitation professionals, researchers, and people with lived experience from around the world to discuss the most recent research on HIV and aging and current best practices in HIV and rehabilitation. Following the success of this inter-sectoral dialogue we began making the economic case for rehabilitation.

We developed a model in which regular physiotherapy assessment and, if necessary, treatment, is integrated into routine primary care for PLWHIV, including those with other chronic health conditions. We partnered with a health economist who assessed the physiotherapy model and together we developed *The Business Case for Publicly Funded Physiotherapy Services as a Component of Optimal Care for People Living with HIV* – a global first. Our models represent a cost-savings or are cost-effective. We are sharing these results with policy-makers across Canada to increase access to rehabilitation services at all jurisdictional levels.

In addition we have been working to increase participation in physical activity for PLWHIV. We will continue to work closely with community-based HIV organizations to spread the message of the benefits of physical activity for PLWHIV.

**“Thanks to *Realize*,
I have a better handle
on how to age well
with HIV.”**



HIV and Aging

In our 20th anniversary year, **Realize turned up the volume on issues of primary importance to older adults living with HIV** – a fast-growing but overlooked group around the world. When we saw that the program for the International AIDS Conference in Amsterdam paid little attention to the needs or lived experiences of older PLWHIV we took action with our #AIDSageism campaign. We engaged hundreds of people at Pride in Toronto and HIV community leaders in Canada and internationally in our efforts to develop and deliver a global village workshop at AIDS 2018 on HIV and aging as a human rights issue. Several of our global collaborators organized their own satellite sessions on aging at the conference, and the National Coordinating Committee on HIV and Aging used our #hashtag and messaging as a jumping off point for our fourth annual World AIDS Day social media campaign.

We engaged elected officials from across Canada to raise awareness about the unique needs of older adults living with HIV and how their well-being could be improved through changes to existing policies.

To build awareness and competency amongst health and social service providers, **Realize** implemented two training initiatives on optimal care for older people living with HIV. Workshops in Victoria BC, Guelph ON, and Fredericton NB brought together front-line service providers from community-based HIV organizations, preparing them to deliver interventions within their home communities on tolerating uncertainty in the context of aging with HIV. We partnered with Sheridan College to integrate our *HIV and Older Adults* blended learning course into their health and social service curricula and we co-facilitated interactive learning sessions for pre-entry-to-practice nurses at Fanshawe College in Woodstock, Ontario.

Labour Force Participation and Income Support

After almost 20 years of relentless action and advocacy, in 2018 the concept of 'episodic disabilities' that **Realize** helped pioneer gained important recognition. The Federal government for the first time ever included 'episodic disabilities' in the wording of federal legislation - the Accessible Canada Act – which recently received Royal Assent. This growing awareness of episodic disabilities was so much in focus that in December 2018 a special session on Parliament Hill of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA Committee) was convened with the primary focus to solicit testimony from witnesses with the aim of providing recommendations for legislative and policy changes necessary to ensure that the needs of persons with episodic disabilities across the country are adequately protected.

Subsequently, a report by HUMA titled, 'Taking Action: Improving the Lives of Canadians Living with Episodic Disabilities' was released with 11 recommendations for consideration by the House of Commons and the Government of Canada.

Realize could not have achieved this milestone without the support of all of our key partners who are members of the national Episodic Disabilities Forum. **We must turn up the volume to turn these recommendations into actions.**

Mental Health

Over the course of our 20 years, **Realize** has become known for bridging the silos between sectors that have not worked together before in a coordinated way. In 2018, through **Realize's** Positive Outlook program, more than 100 front-line staff in community organizations, along with others in helping roles, in 5 different cities across Canada received face-to-face training on engaging with people living with HIV (PLWHIV) who may be experiencing mental health difficulties.

Mental health is an area of serious concern for PLWHIV, and the organizations that support them. Some studies show that major depressive disorders occur twice as often among PLWHIV as compared to HIV-negative individuals.

The one day, face-to-face Positive Outlook course for front line workers in community based HIV organizations gave workers the opportunity to enhance communication and helping skills and to learn about the impact of mental health issues on their clients. Through this project, we also continued to engage with mental health community organizations to bridge the silos between the two sectors. Positive Outlook provided an enhanced understanding of the local mental health services context and an opportunity to develop networks and connections to facilitate more appropriate referrals. Community-based mental health organizations gained enhanced understanding of HIV and the impact living with HIV can have on an individual's mental health.

"Realize's work on episodic illness afforded my clients, myself, community organizations and employers a way to view how life could resume..."



Elisse Zack Award for Excellence in HIV and Rehabilitation 2018 Recipients

Nancy Mayo,

Professor, School of Physical and Occupational Therapy,
McGill University

In 2012, Dr. Mayo teamed up with Drs. Fellows and Brouillette from McGill University, to lead a multisite, trans-disciplinary, Canadian study entitled Positive Brain Health Now (BHN+). The main goals of the BHN+ cohort study were to identify, understand, and optimize brain health in people living with HIV. Dr. Mayo fostered a rehabilitation perspective in this trans-disciplinary team, making disability, function, and quality of life a key focus. Dr. Mayo has also trained graduate students in HIV research, helping build a critical mass of rehabilitation-oriented HIV researchers.



Kenneth Poon,

Health Promotion Worker, Asian Community AIDS Services

Kenneth Poon marks his two year residency at Casey house, during which he lost his sight due to HIV, as the moment that uniquely equipped him to understand the challenges and barriers that people living with HIV (PLWHIV) face on a day to day basis. He learned to be resourceful in dealing with his illness and disability. Being active, staying busy, contributing to the AIDS movement and wider society through volunteer work, and equipping himself with knowledge on complimentary therapy and holistic health are among the many things he has done to overcome health problems. His unique perspective on life in general, and courage exemplify PLWHIV.

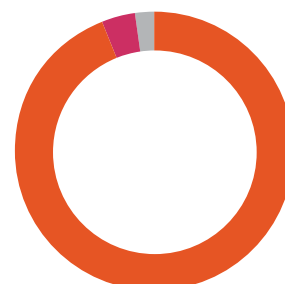


Poz Youth in Transition Program, AIDS Committee of Durham Region

The AIDS Committee of Durham (ACDR) pioneered the purposeful, planned movement of adolescents with chronic medical conditions from child-centered to adult-oriented health care. Involving Poz Youth from the region through their Pozzy Program, and in collaboration with community partners, ACDR secured province-wide funding to ensure that no youth is lost during transition. The Pozzy brought youth from across Ontario to draft the Transition Accord – a document articulating the most effective way to transition a child born with HIV from pediatric AIDS care to adult care to ensure they remain undetectable and un-infectious.

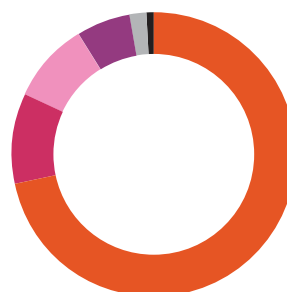


Revenue



- Grants 94.1%
- Memberships 3.9%
- Donations 2.0%

Expenses



- Program and Contract Staff 71.8%
- Occupancy Costs 10.4%
- Travel 9.3%
- Financial Administration, printing and materials 6.0%
- Evaluation 1.8%
- Membership meeting 0.8%

