

UofT honouring sexual diversity activists in Indigenous communities

Awards are given annually to people whose work contributed to conversations about sexual diversity in Indigenous communities.

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Kent Monkman is one of four recipients of this year's Bonham Centre Awards for their contributions in advancing sexual diversity in Indigenous communities.

By: [Gilbert Ngabo](#) Metro Published on Wed Apr 26 2017

The University of Toronto is honouring individuals who have made educational contributions to the issue of sexual diversity in Indigenous communities.

As Canada marks its 150th year anniversary, U of T's centre for sexual diversity studies is putting a spotlight on four people whose work has helped drive conversations about LGBTQ issues among Indigenous groups across the country.

Since 2008, the Bonham Centre Awards have recognized authors, community advocates and athletes who advance broader views on sexuality acceptance and tolerance.

"Let's talk about people who were here before the Canada 150 narrative even began," said the centre's director Brenda Cossman, noting Indigenous Two-Spirit, queer, trans and gay people predate colonial settlers.

The event, which takes place Wednesday evening at Hart House, is part of the university's ongoing efforts to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations. Cossman said one of the goals is to introduce a course on Indigenous sexuality to better understand the history and identity of those communities.

The recipients:

Kent Monkman: The Canadian artist of Cree descent whose new project “Shame and Prejudice: A Story of Resilience” explores the country’s history 150 years before confederation.

Candy Palmater: A feminist comic and activist who has created her own TV series, The Candy Show. She has also starred in various shows and is a radio host.

Teddy Syrette: An outspoken queer advocate and storyteller who is a Anishnaabek, Two-Spirit gender-fluid person of Batchewana First Nation.

Lee Maracle: An award-winning author and teacher currently mentoring Aboriginal students at UofT, where she’s also the cultural director at the Indigenous Theatre School.