

# The C.H.E.W. Project Values CATIE

An Excellent Online Resource for Health Educators

([www.catie.ca](http://www.catie.ca))

**I am an inclusive educator who advocates for sexual and gender minority (SGM or LGBTQ+) youth and young adults. During my youth, I dealt with the ignorance and fear constricting my gayness. I survived homophobic bullying and ongoing threats to my health, wellbeing, safety, and security. Now, I work everyday to address homophobia and transphobia, which are unrelenting stressors for youth and young adults dealing with sexual and gender differences. In this work in our communities and institutions, I engage with so many amazing police officers, healthcare workers, social workers, youth workers, parents, teachers, and other significant adults who are there for ALL young people. What a wonderful community I have come to know and value in Edmonton and across Canada.**



**The C.H.E.W. Project came about as one response to alarming provincial statistics. In 2013, Alberta Health reported that age-gender-specific rates of newly diagnosed HIV cases among 15 to 29 year olds in the province were disturbingly high (2013a, 2013b). In Edmonton, consecutive 2010 to 2012 rates as well as the 2013-annualized rate of HIV were the highest in the province. As Public Health Agency of Canada (2010) asserts, youth need to be a primary focus since individuals aged 15 to 29 years olds have accounted for 26.5 percent of all positive HIV test reports since reporting began in 1979. With sexually transmitted infections [STIs] including syphilis, gonorrhea, and HIV generally increasing among young people in Alberta, there are significant associated costs in social, emotional, health, and economic terms; for example, the “lifetime direct cost of one HIV infection is [at least] \$750,000” (Government of Alberta, 2011, p. 2).**



**When the C.H.E.W. Project's listing of the resource *Zebra: Sex from A-Z Cards* was targeted through Internet trolling, I concluded that targeting our programming was tantamount to targeting the vulnerable youth we serve. I removed the cards temporarily so I could prepare this response to provide an overview of our project and to affirm our use of CATIE's resources. Once again, I talked to colleagues, reviewing why we listed this educational resource in the first place. Of course, detractors, one of whom still provides full access to *Zebra* on their Facebook page (thank you), thought this was some admission that the cards were inappropriate. This was an expected response, but an untrue assertion.**



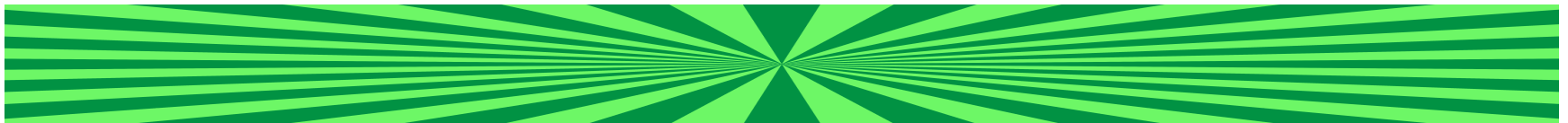


**As an educator, taking time to review *Zebra* once again was my way to have a reflective space to reaffirm what I saw as its pedagogical and community value, especially for street-involved and homeless SGM youth and young adults who need sexual-health education so they might stay alive. I write this perspective to provide context.**

**Sadly, as many young SGM people tell me, their families and schools failed to provide them with adequate (or even any) comprehensive health education with regard to sexual and mental health. Let me be crystal clear: These youth and young adults deserve better. They count! They do not compose some disposable population. They are persons and citizens. They are human beings, many of whom were abandoned by their parents, proving my point that not every parent is a good parent. Fortunately, good parents compose the majority. Everyday I engage and work with so many of them. They are there, fully and completely, for their SGM children.**



**Those of us working with the C.H.E.W. Project are so grateful to CATIE (<http://www.catie.ca/>), a superb online resource we use in our intervention and outreach work with vulnerable SGM youth and young adults. The acronym CATIE stands for the Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange. CATIE has ongoing funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada, which was an early funder of the C.H.E.W. Project. CATIE's other funders include the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. There are many ministries and agencies at the provincial / territorial and federal levels across Canada who are supporting good work like that done by CATIE and the C.H.E.W. Project. They are helping us to keep vulnerable persons alive and well. We thank them wholeheartedly.**



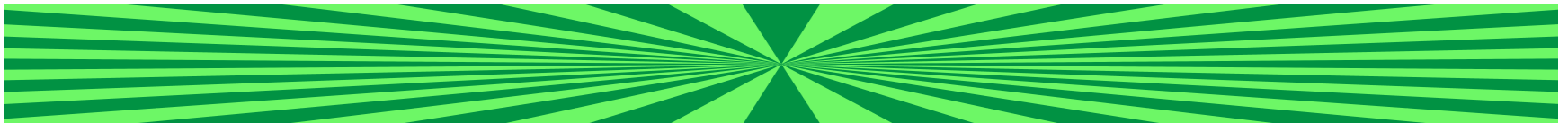
**For us, CATIE is an exceptional resource, providing balanced and impartial HIV information. CATIE, like the C.H.E.W. Project, engages in intervention and outreach work so vulnerable individuals have the connections, resources, supports, and care they need to live lives with integrity.**

**We should all live lives with integrity. As R. Buckminster Fuller stated, “If humanity does not opt for integrity we are through completely. It is absolutely touch and go. Each one of us could make the difference.”**



**On their website, CATIE provides an apropos description of *Sex from A-Z Cards: Information for Young Gay and Bisexual Men*, a resource produced by the AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT) in 2014:**

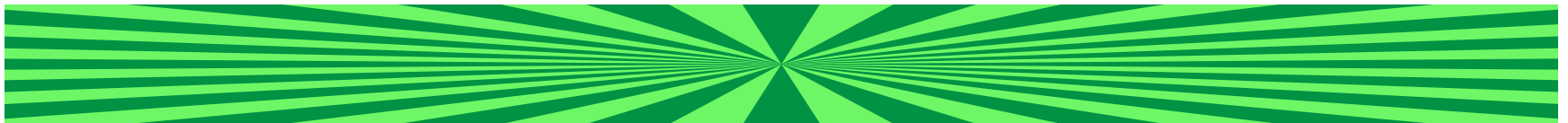
***“Sex from A to Z is a set of cards intended for gay and bisexual youth. This is a fun and accessible resource that facilitates humorous and frank discussion among youth about sexuality and HIV and STI prevention. It can also be used by service providers as a discussion tool in workshops and training sessions.”***





**As a service provider engaged in outreach with street-involved and homeless SGM youth and young adults, especially in inner-city Edmonton, the C.H.E.W. Project will continue to list and use *Sex from A-Z Cards* as a valuable resource. Lessons that young people learn from viewing these cards could help them to stay alive.**

**Need more HIV and/or Hep C information and resources?  
Contact CATIE toll free at 1-800-263-1638 or online at  
<http://www.catie.ca/>.**



**To the youth and young adults that the C.H.E.W. Project serves: We care about you and we are there for you unconditionally. When you ideate about or attempt suicide, we are there. We understand you have your reasons for wanting to end your hurt. Significant adults and institutions have let you down. Purportedly caring adults in communities and on social media won't let you exist, won't let you be. We are there for you when you have worries and needs in relation to your mental, sexual, physical, social, and spiritual health. We want you to be *happy, healthy, and hopeful* – still no mean feat when you're a young SGM citizen, even in post-*Charter* Canada. Always remember, we are here to help. We will help. And please use our resources. Stay alive.**

**André P. Grace, PhD  
The C.H.E.W. Project**



**THE C.H.E.W. PROJECT**  
**EMPOWERING SEXUAL & GENDER MINORITY YOUTH**



## References

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