



**LGBTQ**  
Religious Archives Network

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Contact: Mark Bowman, [mark@lgbtqreligiousarchives.org](mailto:mark@lgbtqreligiousarchives.org)

## **Sydney Sheedy's Lesson on "Spiritual Sluts" Receives 2025 Educational Resource Prize**

The LGBTQ Religious Archives Network (LGBTQ-RAN) has honored Sydney Sheedy with the 2025 LGBTQ-RAN Educational Resource Prize for her slideshow: "Spiritual Sluts: Mobilizing and Mediating Spirituality in Response to AIDS."

Sydney Sheedy (she/they) is an interdisciplinary researcher and writer in Tiohtià:ke (Montréal, Canada). Her doctoral work comprised an ethnography on the rise of magic, astrology, and related occult practices as resources for community building and political work in Montréal. Their upcoming postdoctorate at Universiteit Radboud, funded by the Fonds de recherche du Québec, will explore the occult as a form of "ancestor work," or a strategy to disinherit colonial whiteness to make possible other forms of kinship. She has published work in the *Arc Journal of Religious Studies* and the *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, and is teaching the course "Queer Youth and Sexuality Education" this fall at Concordia University in Montréal.

Sydney's work is focused on queer historiography, feminist spirituality and religion, biopolitical affect, whiteness and critical race studies, and histories of knowledge. She completed their Master at Central European University in Budapest, undertaking fieldwork at London's Inclusive Mosque Initiative investigating European homonationalisms. With funding from the Community Radio Fund of Canada, she recently co-produced a docuseries, "Discordia," on histories of student activism at Concordia. She is hoping to pursue more public scholarship as part of their postdoctorate next year.

The Prize-winning "Spiritual Sluts: Mobilizing and Mediating Spirituality in Response to AIDS" slideshow accompanied a lecture presentation that explores the spiritual side of queer organizing and political resistance at the height of the AIDS epidemic. The slideshow focuses on the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence and the Radical Faeries, two queer groups that used spirituality as a resource for community building, healing, and self-empowerment during and in the wake of the worst of the crisis.

The presentation also offered a critique of settler politics at the heart of some of these movements. The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence wearing drag as nuns operated as parody because of the ways the church and queer cultures have been constructed as inimical to one another. Forms of Indigenous sovereignty appealed to white and/or settler Radical Faeries as a way to appear naturally tied to something beyond themselves. Class discussion centered on the need for spiritual belonging and whether this can be created outside of institutions without enacting cultural theft.

Sheedy made this presentation as a guest lecturer for Dr. Karen Herland's "HIV/AIDS: Social, Cultural and Scientific Aspects of the Pandemic" class at Concordia in 2020.

"Spiritual Sluts is a good example of how slides can be used effectively to teach," the jury members said in awarding the prize. "This rich visual slide deck offers a critical perspective on race, whiteness, and the suggestion of a critical decolonial framework that insists on naming "settler colonial" as an often unmarked category. The presentation brings together sophisticated concepts including parody, postsecularism, and settler colonial spirituality. It is impressive in making complex concepts accessible and grounded in clear and well-documented historical case studies. It also takes seriously spiritual activity outside of the bounds of traditional religion."

The "Spiritual Sluts" slideshow is available on the "Teaching Resources" page on the LGBTQ-RAN website, <https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/teaching-resources>

Sheedy is the fifth recipient of the [Educational Resource Prize](#), which LGBTQ-RAN initiated in 2021 to honor scholars and teachers who develop curricular and instructional materials for the teaching of LGBTQ+ religious history at all levels of education, from primary school to higher education, as well as in congregational or community settings. The prize is intended to support and amplify the development of these educational resources and to make excellent resources available by publishing them on the LGBTQ-RAN website.

Submissions for next year's LGBTQ-RAN Educational Resource Prize must be postmarked or received electronically by June 30, 2026. Complete information on submission guidelines for the prize can be found here: [www.lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/educational-resource-prize-guidelines](http://www.lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/educational-resource-prize-guidelines)

The [LGBTQ Religious Archives Network](#) is a groundbreaking venture to preserve the history of LGBTQ religious movements around the world. Its three primary purposes are to:

- assist LGBTQ religious leaders and groups in determining how best to preserve their records and papers in appropriate repositories; onds de recherche du Québec
- provide an electronic information clearinghouse for these archival collections and other historical data about LGBTQ religious history; and
- encourage research and study of LGBTQ religious history.

Learn more about LGBTQ-RAN at its website, <https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/>

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