



Story Money Impact

THE BROADCAST TAPES OF DR. PETER

CASE STUDY

IMPACT PRODUCING IN A CANADIAN FRAMEWORK

FUNDED BY

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Story Money Impact 2021 Pod Team

THE FILM

THE BROADCAST TAPES OF DR. PETER (1993)
60 MIN (BASED ON 111 2-MINUTE EPISODES)

SYNOPSIS

Full of raw honesty and heartfelt testimony, *The Broadcast Tapes of Dr. Peter* feature the video diaries of Peter Jepson-Young, a 32 year old doctor living with AIDS. By using himself as the model, this TV series and feature documentary chronicles Dr. Peter's last two years of life as he looks directly to camera and speaks about what it's like to be a gay man living with and dying from AIDS.

In 1990, 32 year old Peter Jepsen-Young was a promising doctor living with AIDS in Vancouver. Though AIDS had spread rapidly within North America's gay communities, it was largely misunderstood. The government refused to fund meaningful research or appropriate care. A cruel stigma was attached to the disease as young men filled hospitals during this epidemic called "the gay plague."

Dr. Peter started to lose his eyesight and could no longer practice medicine. Straddling the

unique perspective of both patient and doctor, he visited the local CBC newsroom with the hope that someone there would be interested in helping to demystify AIDS by telling his story. He met director David Paperny who had recently been inspired by a film where subjects spoke directly to camera in a diary-like format. The two decided to collaborate and *The Broadcast Tapes of Dr. Peter* was born.

For the next two years, David filmed Dr. Peter once a week while he talked about what it felt like being gay with a stigmatized disease as well as his symptoms and the deterioration of his health. For the first time ever, viewers were able to witness the intimate struggles of a gay man living with AIDS in a highly personal way. Alongside this frank discussion, Dr. Peter's joie de vivre and indomitable spirit shone through. Endearing audiences around the world, many were profoundly altered by the viewing experience.

VIDEO



FILM TEAM

- Director - David Paperny
- Producer - Sheila Nevins
- Writer - Peter Jepsen-Young
- Editor - Arthur Ginsberg, Paul Hartley
- Cinematography - John Collins

THE IMPACT



Released more than three decades ago, we can assess the extraordinary impact of *The Broadcast Tapes of Dr. Peter* over time. When the weekly series first aired, the CBC was flooded with calls and fan letters from across the country. Due to its immense popularity, the CBC ran the diaries for a remarkable 111 weeks. Excerpts continued to be featured on national specials right up to Dr. Peter's death in the fall of 1992.

The broad appeal of the video diaries and its embrace by liberal and conservative viewers alike had a profoundly beneficial impact on public conversations about AIDS, sexual orientation and social stigma. When *The Broadcast Tapes of Dr. Peter* were deservedly nominated for an Academy Award, exposure and impact were amplified even further. Wide dissemination of this frank, engaging and powerful film deepened public understanding and empathy about HIV and AIDS. Arguably this film did more to unravel stereotypes and humanize gay men living with AIDS than any other educational effort or media of the time.

Three decades since the first video diary entry, the Centre is still going strong, serving over 70,000 loving meals a year while giving comprehensive, stigma-free care for those most in need. Without the successful impact of *The Broadcast Tapes of Dr. Peter*, would The Dr. Peter Centre even exist? While that's an unanswerable question, what is certain is the incredible impact of this film. Whether we look at the legacy of *The Broadcast Tapes of Dr. Peter* in the form of the Dr. Peter Centre or the demonstrable shift in public consciousness, Variety's Jeff Silverman was correct when he wrote "More than any ribbon worn on any Hollywood lapel, [*The Broadcast Tapes of Dr. Peter*] has helped bring an identifiable human face to AIDS." That is the power of this film.



But the legacy of *The Broadcast Tapes of Dr. Peter* reaches even farther. Due to the program's popularity as well as efforts by Dr. Peter's partner Andrew Hiscox, sister Nancy Hennessy and mother Shirley Young, the Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation was formed. At first The Foundation provided vital care and comfort to AIDS patients who were sometimes abandoned by even their own families. But in the following years, the Foundation received support from the BC government to build the Dr. Peter Centre to provide daytime support for people living with HIV and AIDS and a palliative care facility for those in the late stage of the illness. The Dr. Peter Centre is now a world-renowned model for community-based health care.

