

Summary Report on LGBT Elder's Gathering

April 18, 2010

Background

The Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project (NSRAP) has worked to support seniors primarily through research initiatives related to health and health service delivery. More recently NSRAP has broadened its focus to include other issues related to seniors. In its broadest sense, NSRAP is a non-profit organization made up primarily of volunteers working toward equity and social justice with specific regard to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) issues. The impetus for this project grew from a recognition that there are few, if any, programs or services for LGBT seniors in Nova Scotia.

In 2003, NSRAP participated in the research project: *The Health and Social Service Needs of Gay and Lesbian Seniors and Their Families: An Exploration in Three Canadian Cities*. Conducted by the Gay & Lesbian Aging Research Project of McGill University, this study explored the needs and issues related to access and equity in health service delivery for gay and lesbian seniors. Specifically this project found that:

Gay and lesbian people of all ages, (but particularly those who are now 60 years of age and older and who lived their young adult lives at a time of great hostility towards gay and lesbian people), have experienced a variety of discriminatory attitudes and practices in the health care system which have contributed to their reluctance to reveal their identities, voice their concerns to health care practitioners and use health care services. What results is a lack of recognition of gay and lesbian seniors and their caregivers and a system that is unprepared to address their unique needs and realities. (Brotman, S., Ryan, B., & Cormier, R. 2003).

As a result of the findings in this study which will be discussed further below, NSRAP listed the concerns of LGBT seniors as a priority for 2010. Prior to *The Health and Social Service Needs of Gay and Lesbian Seniors and Their Families* study, NSRAP conducted a community research project on the health-related experiences of LGBT people.

In December of 2009 NSRAP applied for and subsequently received a Positive Aging Grant from the Nova Scotia Department of Seniors to establish programs for LGBT seniors in assisted care facilities and to develop training for care deliverers in one rural and one urban facility in the province.

Project Implementation: Phase 1

In April 2010, NSRAP conducted an LGBT Elder gathering to discuss issues relevant to aging people as well as the initiation of the project. Community participation was encouraged through posters (Appendix A), print media, and social networking. This group was established outside of assisted living facilities with the first meeting taking place at the Company House and subsequent meeting to take place at the Spencer House, which has agreed to participate in this project. The outcomes of the discussions and consultations will be incorporated into the overall plan and will be an integral part of the decision-making process.

The group consisted of over 30 participants and was facilitated by LGBT elder and activist, Lynn Murphy. The group was welcomed by NSRAP and turned over to the facilitator to discuss the issues. During the consultation process small groups gathered initially to discuss general topics for the first half and divided to specific small groups based on interest for the second half. The following is a summary of the April gathering.

Participant Responses

Participants were initially asked to identify general concerns for LGBT Elders that could be addressed through the ongoing work of NSRAP:

Group 1:

Social events - outside bar scene/outdoors

- Financial security - social events - 50 + club - OWLS

Health care/housing

- Retirement homes for LGBT-friendly not only LGBT
- Accessible housing
- LGBT health care - aware, friendly - specialists home care
- LGBT discrimination = elder abuse
- Other residents also LGBT friendly/ware - sensitivity training

Communication

- Keeping informed - column in Wayves / electronic / postal / radio - CKDU/Seaside
- LGBT education: partners/orientation
- Rural areas - homophobia/heterosexism
- In LGBT community
 - o Discrimination against age
 - o Fear
 - o Social events focussed on young
- Better promotion of seniors' events - Pride Guide, etc.
- Photographs of older people in Wayves
- Communication for older LGBT

Education is awareness - self-representation and support

Note: although it was emphasized that we were looking for general issues, not solely those of LGBT seniors living in "residences" or nursing homes, discussion focussed almost exclusively on the residence/nursing home experience.

1. Health Care Providers Curriculum

- Doctors
- Nurses
- CCA
- Social workers

2. Politicians

- Literature should be queer-friendly
- “Normalization” within government literature
- Dept Heads

3. Other residents - families - Gay Straight Alliances

- Posters, ads, education - visibility (think this meant promotional materials for senior facilities should also show LGBT partners and mention LGBT activities)

4. Administration - survey and interviews

5. General public - youth - schools and universities - families - IWK

6. Spiritual care - education to LTC's

- Build list of queer-positive faith groups
- Encourage dialogue and service in long-term care
- QEII spiritual care
- Queer community needs to support our supporters

Interviews

- queer residents
- queer family members who visit (stigma)

* Discrimination based on sexual orientation a form of abuse: incorporate into policies.

NSRAP (and queer community) - instigate and build constituency through letter writing campaign: also contact MLAs, MPs, Department of Health, Department of Seniors.

NSRAP contact District Health Authorities to survey them = strengths and weaknesses do they feel they have in terms of addressing needs of queer population.

Group 2:

Priority needs

- a) Acceptance in LTC facilities / CC
- b) Medical care providers who are aware and educated
- c) Isolation and loneliness (social interaction)
- d) LTC facilities to indicate welcome/acceptance of LGBTQ (e.g., rainbow stickers etc), also brochures
- e) Indication of the presence of a community in their residences
- f) Education regarding: trans issues, needs in terms of medical care
- g) At assessment - inclusion of trans needs
- h) Entertainment options - cable stations, DVDs, reading materials, social activities that are queer oriented - social ties, shuttles to major gay events
- i) Sexuality and seniors - needs (recognition of)
- j) Computer/internet use: sexual content
- k) Queer LTC facilities (co-ops for senior care). May be [leveraged?] By the straight community (units).
- l) Acceptance of all forms of consensual sexual expression among senior residents, including gay/lesbian/bi/trans seniors.
- m) Mandated by province - each board to have a queer member who can advocate, educate.
- n) Spiritual care for queers in LTC
- o) More ads, posters featuring seniors (queer) kissing, holding hands, etc

Social

- Spencer House - open for LGBT
- Hosting Committee facility (set times)
- Veith House
- Advertises in manors and complexes

Activities

- bingo nights
- dances
- card night
- movie night
- day outings (vans, buses)

Set up communications to keep in contact with all other areas - a newsletter!

Action Plan:

Set up date and time in Wayves/Herald/Coast/radio etc: for LGBT Elders and supporters to set up a group what/where/when/and how to explore social events that would be of interest.

This is the starting point.

Group 3:

Brainstorming: Purpose: Identify the four top issues to the LGBT community: e.g health, history, social events, etc

- a) recorded history
- b) Perception that the history project is well under way
- c) LGBT aging has been talked about for a long time with no action
- d) how to live in an elder care facility and not go back into a closet
- e) Toronto and Vancouver have tried this - it hasn't worked.
- f) St John's United is restructuring their facilities - a church with an attach assisted living centre for elders, possibly LGBTs, in partnership with St Vincent's Guest House. The facility *must* be in accordance with Affirming . A cooperative facility (but not among the residents) possibly with government, St Vincent's Guest House; it needs to be about 30-32 people to be viable.
- g) Senior abuse is rampant; only regulations keep the existing guest houses from serving Kraft Dinner three times a day.
- h) meeting place / activity centre, seminars, intellectual activities, combo of organized & unorganized activities. would there be enough people to make
- i) SAGE:
- j) The other cultural centres do not have the problems of the members being closeted and being repressed - we have a different problem.
- k) Would love to have a bunch of queers living together, having queers come into your house to do pcw
- l) Queer homecare / PCW service
- m) Activity Centre:

Four ideas

1. Assisted living centres
2. Queer friendly home care
3. Community centre / activities, activities that are not necessarily centralized, outdoor
4. History: idea that the history project is well under way - it is not

Action Plan: Cultural Activities

- a. shut-down of the previous Over 30s group: was that it grew too big; it was primarily male; it was great, and a great way to get to know people and a city; was run by just a few people for three decades

- b. Spencer House: Seniors House on Morris Street
 - a. have specifically welcomed the queer community
 - b. Traditionally: separation of men's and women's events
- c. many events have internalized ageism
 - a. photography club
 - b. games night: trivial pursuit, yahtzee, bridge, cards
 - c. walkers join the Front Runners on Saturday morning
 - d. reading group
 - e. The UU Church have a queer book discussion group
 - f. gay writer's group // journalling
 - g. information sessions: how to deal with wills // how to choose a nursing home // finances
 - h. death
 - i. food / recipe exchange
 - j. mountain biking
 - k. hiking
 - l. bowling night
 - m. movie night: showing movies / attending movies
 - n. history club
 - o. notice that most of these ideas involve being physically active
 - p. there are some activities existing, and we need to let people know what's going on
 - q. idea: a pot luck where people talk about existing social activities, like a "trade show"

Proposal:

- a. society / team / club to organize / promote social events
- b. Actions:
 - c. invite SAGE to do a presentation in Halifax?
 - d. Pretend that we already had a SAGE chapter here in Halifax?
 - e. Re start the pot lucks / Over 30s groups.
 - f. Somehow philosophically work out the difference between lgbt ghetto and people wanting to spend time with their

SECOND Social Events Committee

- Get a couple of events
- Advertise: queer community magazines, Herald, Eastlink, the Manors, longterm care facilities
- Set up a event to bring people in to discuss what they want for themselves
- Get a model set up in Halifax since NSRAP is a Nova Scotia organization

Group 4:

Priority needs

- a) *Celebrate & make use of our strengths*
- b) *Maintaining independence as we age*
 - *seeing that our wishes are carried out*
 - *awareness and education of our legal rights*
 - *advocacy and developing resources*
- c) *Assess spiritual (emotional, social) needs, especially those without resources*
- d) *Education of care giving team*
- e) *Integration or “separation? OUR choice*
 - *Sexuality and gender*
- f) *Intergenerational dialogue*
 - *Oral history, cultural continuity*
- g) *Healthy and diverse meeting space(s)*
- h) *Education and awareness of 1: Entire care giving team, 2: other residents*
- i) *Senior abuse*
- j) *Accessible housing & homes*
- k) *Social networking & groups*
 - *Entertainment*
 - *Events, especially 50+*

Conclusions

As a result of this community consultation the NSRAP Elders' Initiative will consist of the following priorities:

- I. Continue to assist in the organizing and planning of an LGBT Elder's group in the broader community with a core group informing the following:

- a. Social gatherings
- b. Project guidance
- c. Planning and consultation

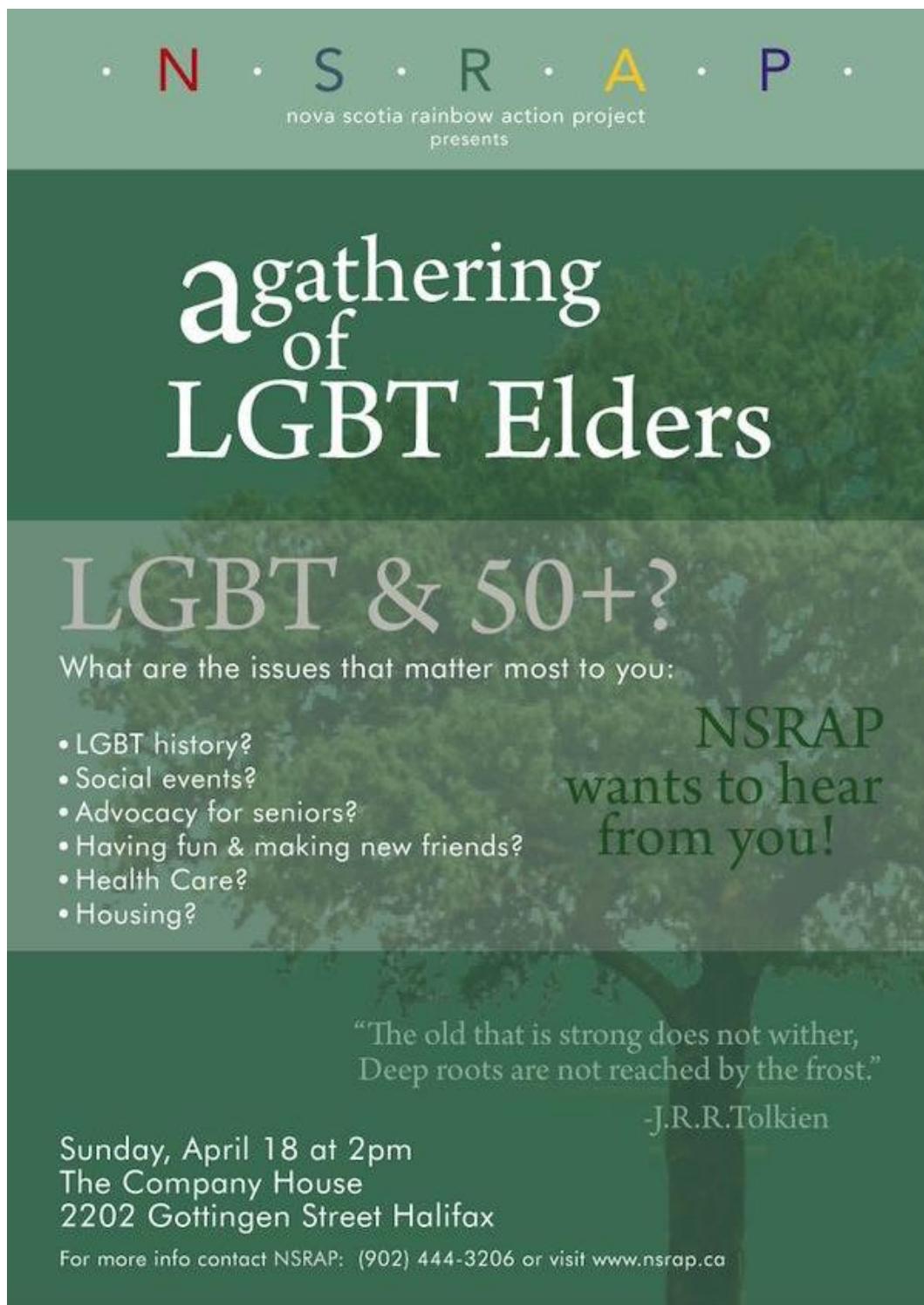
In consultation with interested members from the first meeting, NSRAP will seek to facilitate planning meetings and outings in partnership with Spencer House.

- II. Initiate Phase 1 of the Positive Aging Grant based on the key areas of concern identified in this report

- a. NSRAP will initiate discussions with staff at Northwood. After consultation with staff and residents, an "LGBT & Allies" seniors group will be established along lines adapted from Gay/Straight Alliances.
- b. NSRAP will attempt to recruit participants in a LGBT Elders' group in Long-Term Care facilities

- III. A working group of researchers and community members will be established to carry this work forward in other key areas identified by participants (health, financial planning, etc.)

APPENDIX A



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nova scotia rainbow action project
presents

a gathering of LGBT Elders

LGBT & 50+?

What are the issues that matter most to you:

- LGBT history?
- Social events?
- Advocacy for seniors?
- Having fun & making new friends?
- Health Care?
- Housing?

NSRAP
wants to hear
from you!

“The old that is strong does not wither,
Deep roots are not reached by the frost.”

-J.R.R.Tolkien

Sunday, April 18 at 2pm
The Company House
2202 Gottingen Street Halifax

For more info contact NSRAP: (902) 444-3206 or visit www.nsrap.ca



**NSRAP Presents
A GATHERING OF LGBT ELDERS
APRIL 18, 2pm
The Company House**

The Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project (NSRAP) Presents "A Gathering of LGBT Elders." If you are LGBT and over 50, what are the issues that matter most to you?

- Health care and affordable housing?
- Retirement planning?
- Preserving Nova Scotia's LGBT history?
- Social events & making new friends?

NSRAP wants to hear from you! Even more, we want to help!

This event is free, and we welcome all, regardless of age, with an interest in issues affecting older LGBT people. There will be some light refreshments, good discussion, and friendly people. For more information about this event, please call our office at (902) 444-3206, or email us at nsrap@nrap.ca

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