



NSRAP MEDIA SURVEY 2010

A Sampling of News Reports by and About

Nova Scotia's LGBTQ Community

Decision on park gate deferred

AIDS group questions motive behind Truro proposal to move barrier

By MICHAEL TUTTON The Canadian Press

Tue. Jan 5 - 4:46 AM



Al McNutt and Karen Kittilsen of the Northern AIDS Connection Society leave a public hearing in Truro on Monday. (Photo by ANDREW VAUGHAN / CP)

TRURO — Truro town councillors put off a vote Monday on whether to restrict access to a park entrance the mayor has labelled a gay pickup area as an advocacy group warned the town could develop a reputation for intolerance. The issue over the gate's placement sparked controversy last month when Mayor Bill Mills said it was being moved to reduce sexual activity by gay men.

"It's a favourite pickup spot for guys from all over the Maritime provinces," Mills said at the time. "They go up and have a rendezvous and then they go into the woods and do their thing. It's been known for years and years and is becoming more and more of a problem."

During Monday's meeting, several councillors reiterated their opposition to the mayor's comments and said they want to proceed debating whether moving the gate makes sense for other reasons. Charles Cox said he felt he was caught in a personal dilemma because he felt the current layout of the gate creates safety risks to skiers and bikers from cars driving into the small parking area.

"I've almost personally been backed into," he said. "I wish we could figure out a way to solve some of the safety issues and not move the gate immediately so that we could remove those fears of prejudice."

But Al McNutt, a spokesman for the Northern AIDS Connection Society, made a presentation to the council where he argued that the mayor's comments had shifted the issue to one of discrimination against gay men. He said the gay and lesbian communities have not forgotten when the mayor, citing his religion, refused to fly the gay rights rainbow flag at the town hall during Truro's inaugural gay pride celebration in 2007. Mills's remarks have raised questions about the true motives behind moving the gate, said McNutt.

"Because of the flag issue and now this issue, it's really not saying very much about Truro," McNutt said. "Truro has a reputation from way back of stigmatization, discrimination, all those issues. We don't want to add another little bit to it."

McNutt said his group isn't condoning the sexual activity in the park but believes that is an issue best left to police. "Leave the gate where it is and let the police do their job patrolling and charge anyone involved in inappropriate behaviour," he said.



Mills didn't participate in Monday's debate. "I'm under investigation for hate crimes, so therefore it would be inappropriate at this time to offer comment," he said.

During the meeting, the town's police chief said there was limited evidence of illegal activity in the park's entrance area. David MacNeil said there have been 45 complaints in the park in the past four years, including one complaint of an indecent act, two of public nudity and 10 of suspicious persons in vehicles. At the end of the meeting, several councillors agreed they were unclear on what the particular plan was for improving parking in the area, and asked for the matter to be delayed until the first week of February.

Retrieved January 5, 2010 from The Chronicle Herald.

WAYVES MAGAZINE; MARCH 2010

THE NSRAP REPORT: MARCH

Welcome to a new monthly feature in Wayves: a regular report from the Nova Scotia Action Project (NSRAP). We appreciate Wayves allowing us this space to speak with you directly. This year marks the fifteenth anniversary of NSRAP. Anniversaries of this kind provide NSRAP an excellent opportunity to evaluate our primary goal of "Equality for All!" In future columns we will examine some of our past history and take a look at the current 'State of the LGBT Movement' but we wanted to take the opportunity of this first report to tell you what we are working on right now.

It has been a long cherished dream of many in our community, including NSRAP, to see an LGBT Community Centre in Halifax. In 2007, NSRAP received funding from Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) to study the idea. We partnered with other community organizations to host a Town Hall meeting where the subject of a community centre occupied the majority of the discussion. The ideas that emerged from that conversation fed directly into the questions that made up the survey conducted by NSRAP at Halifax Pride's Community Fair last summer. Two hundred and thirty people responded to fifteen questions ranging from "Do you live in HRM?" to "What is the most important issue facing the LGBT Community in Nova Scotia today?"

In addition to tabulating data from all 230 surveys (each with more than 90 possible responses), NSRAP has been conducting interviews with staff at other LGBT Community Centres across Canada, exploring the programs they offer, the degree of community engagement, and their sources of funding. The final report is nearing completion and will be made public at the beginning of March, along with a series of recommendations on how to move the process forward. We will be very keen to hear what your ideas are, and how, as a community, we can build this dream together.



In the meantime, we can tell you that 95% of those who took the survey (including straight allies) said they wanted to see an LGBT Community Centre in HRM. Out of the 47 respondents who came from outside of HRM, 44 (94%) wanted to see the centre built in Halifax! Among other interesting information, the survey reveals the Youth Project is by far the most recognized and admired LGBT service provider in the province. This is a great testament to the hard work and dedication of the staff and volunteers of this pioneering organization!

We learned that our community cares deeply about health care, particularly issues related to trans people and LGBT seniors. NSRAP has been working with the transgender community and its allies to advocate on behalf of the community. NSRAP is also making LGBT seniors issues a priority.

According to those who took the survey, by far the most important issue facing LGBT Nova Scotians is acceptance by the broader community. Despite gaining our full legal rights, LGBT Nova Scotians strongly believe that we have yet to achieve social equality. There have been enough incidents in the last few years to know that belief is rooted in fact. Whether it was the mass spewing of hate in response to M.P. Scott Brison's Christmas card showing himself and his husband, the recent banning of the Rainbow Flag in Pictou County and other communities, or the anecdotal evidence that many of us could easily supply, we all know that homophobia and transphobia are still facts of life in Nova Scotia.

Last December in Montreal, Justice Minister Kathleen Weil unveiled the "Quebec Policy Against Homophobia: Moving Towards Social Equality." Earlier that month the Quebec government committed \$500,000 to LGBT seniors' issues. Previously, the Quebec Human Rights Commission, working with LGBT community groups, academics, and government agencies, undertook a large scale study of discrimination against sexual and gender identity minorities. These latest funding and policy announcements grew directly from that study. There is no reason why such a study, and such a policy, should not be implemented here. NSRAP believes that more must be done to bring Nova Scotia's LGBT Community the full social equality that it deserves. We are committed to that struggle.

One of our goals is to be more readily accessible to you, our community. Thanks to the generosity of Doug Melanson and David Landry, we now have office space at Menz Bar, 2182 Gottingen Street. The office is staffed weekdays, Monday through Thursdays, from 3:30 – 6:30pm. Please feel free to drop by with your questions or concerns. You can also call us at (902) 444-3206 and our email address is nsrap@nsrap.ca. We look forward to hearing from you and to working with you as we move towards "Equality for All!"

Gay rights section nixed for immigrants' guide

Immigration minister a past opponent of same-sex marriage

Last Updated: Tuesday, March 2, 2010 | 3:28 PM ET
The Canadian Press



Immigration Minister Jason Kenney says his department tried to make an 'inclusive' immigration study guide, but couldn't fit in every government policy and legal decision. (CBC)

Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney blocked any reference to gay rights in a new study guide for immigrants applying for Canadian citizenship, the Canadian Press has learned.

Internal documents show an early draft of the guide contained sections noting that homosexuality was decriminalized in 1969; that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms forbids discrimination based on sexual orientation; and that same-sex marriage was legalized nationally in 2005. But Kenney, who fought same-sex marriage when it was debated in Parliament,

ordered those key sections removed when his office sent its comments to the department last June.

Senior department officials duly cut out the material — but made a last-ditch plea with Kenney in early August to have it reinstated. "Recommend the re-insertion of the text boxes related to ... the decriminalization of homosexual sex/recognition of same-sex marriage," says a memorandum to Kenney from deputy minister Neil Yeates. "Recommend the addition of 'equality rights' under list of rights. Had noted earlier that this bullet should be reinserted into the list as a means of noting the equality of all based on race, gender, sexual orientation etc."

In the end, however, Kenney's view trumped that of the bureaucrats. The 63-page guide, titled Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship, was released with fanfare last November and contains no mention of gay and lesbian rights. About 500,000 copies were printed and citizenship applicants will start being tested on its contents March 15.

The \$400,000 project substantially updated an earlier edition of the guide created in 1995. The new version significantly expands sections on Canada's military past and on aboriginal people, drawing on the views of a panel of prominent Canadians. The new guide got generally positive reviews when it was launched, though some immediately noted the absence of gay rights, including same-sex marriage. The publication does include a picture of Olympic gold medal swimmer Mark Tewksbury, however, with a caption saying he is a "prominent activist for gay and lesbian Canadians."

Drafts and other internal documents related to the guide were obtained by The Canadian Press under the Access to Information Act. "Homosexuality was decriminalized in 1969 and more recently, civil marriage rights to same-sex couples was legalized nationwide in 2005," the earliest draft of the guide says under the section Towards a Modern Canada. And in the section on citizenship rights, the early draft said: "Equality Rights — Canadians are



protected against discrimination based on race, gender, national origin, religion, sexual orientation or age."
Neither sentence survived the minister's red marker.

Kenney has steadfastly opposed same-sex marriage since his time as an opposition MP in the House of Commons. He spoke against the Civil Marriage Act, or Bill C-38, when it was debated in the Commons in February 2005. And days earlier, Kenney told a session with Toronto-area Punjabi journalists that gays had every right to marry — as long as it wasn't someone of the same sex.

'Choices had to be made about content': Kenney spokesman

He reaffirmed his stand in 2006 when the newly elected Conservative government attempted without success to revoke the legislation. And last year, Kenney appointed a longtime Conservative who opposes same-sex marriage to the Immigration and Refugee Board, which among other things makes decisions about whether gays can be given refugee status in Canada.

When the new guide was released Nov. 12, Kenney brushed off a reporter's question about why it lacked any reference to same-sex marriage. "We can't mention every legal decision, every policy of the government of Canada," he said. "We try to be inclusive and include a summary. I can tell you that if you were to read the old book, you wouldn't even know that there are gay and lesbian Canadians." He then noted the caption under Tewksbury's photo.

Kenney's spokesman reiterated that the 1995 guide "produced by the Liberals" did not mention gays and lesbians. "We can endlessly debate what was included or not included," Alykhan Velshi said in an email last week. "Unavoidably, choices had to be made about content because we had to ensure the guide did not become encyclopedic." Velshi also noted the new guide does not refer to marriage at all, whether opposite sex or same sex.

The gay-rights group Egale Canada met with the minister in early December after learning the booklet made no reference to gay and lesbian rights, and is negotiating with the department to have them included in the next printing, about a year away. Kenney told the group that gay rights had been "overlooked" when the guide was being prepared, executive director Helen Kennedy said in an interview from Toronto. "I'm hopeful and optimistic that we're going to get it fixed because we're not happy with it." Kennedy expressed surprise when told draft versions of the guide did, in fact, contain references to gay rights and that they were ordered removed.

The Canadian Press previously reported that other sections of the draft version of the guide were excised at the suggestion of the panel of prominent Canadians. The deleted sections included one reference that said Canadian churches ran Indian residential schools, where aboriginal children were abused.



NOVA SCOTIA RAINBOW ACTION PROJECT

Queer MPs slam Kenney's decision to edit gays out of citizenship guide

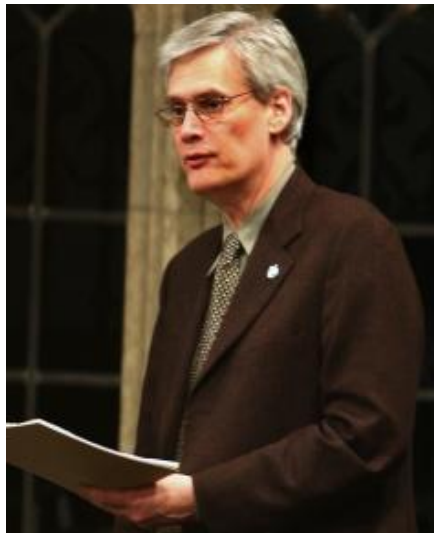
FEDERAL POLITICS / 'An obnoxious attempt' to 'edit gays and lesbians out of Canadian history', says NDP MP Bill Siksay

Dale Smith / National / Tuesday, March 02, 2010

NDP MP Bill Siksay, the party's queer issues critic, says Jason Kenney "has to commit to a revision of this booklet" to include gay rights.

News that the Canadian Press uncovered documents which show that Immigration Minister Jason Kenney nixed sections on queers from the new citizenship guide spread fast across Parliament Hill to universal condemnation from opposition members. "It's becoming more and more clear that the Conservatives did not intend this to be a Canadian citizenship guide, but instead a Conservative citizenship guide," says gay Liberal MP Scott Brison.

"Canada's Charter of Rights has helped make Canada one of the most progressive societies in the world and a magnet for those seeking equality. The Charter is not a buffet. You can't take from it the rights you like and ignore the rest." NDP MP Bill Siksay, the party's queer issues critic, echoes the sentiment. "Jason Kenney can't edit gays and lesbians out of Canadian history," Siksay says. "I think this is an obnoxious attempt to do that. Clearly he has to commit to a revision of this booklet, and the reprinting has to include these references." Siksay adds that if there's



anything in recent Canadian history that's important for newcomers to know, equality for queers is it. This means reinstating the section that talks about how gay rights began with decriminalizing homosexuality in 1969, and how it progressed to marriage in 2005. "The progression is important, and if you're a newcomer trying to understand Canadian society and Canadian values, there is some value in knowing that this did take some time and this was a series of important manoeuvres over a long period of time," Siksay says. "I think that is important." The NDP's immigration critic Olivia Chow says that this plays into the larger issue surrounding the rights of gay and lesbian refugees coming to Canada and facing uncertainty before the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB), especially given that the Conservatives have appointed people to the board who had previously expressed homophobic viewpoints publicly. "We've always said that the appointment of Immigration and Refugee Board members should be based on merit and not political affiliations," says Chow. "We're appalled that a minister, part of whose job it is to uphold the Canadian constitution and Charter of Rights and Freedoms,

would himself or direct his staff to remove text, and that he did this against the advice of his own deputy minister," says Liberal MP Marlene Jennings, speaking on behalf of Immigration critic Maurizio Bevilacqua. Jennings adds that it was under a Liberal government that protection was granted for refugee claimants entering Canada because of persecution for their sexual orientation. "For us now to have a minister who specifically removes the text in a citizens' handbook that points to these constitutionally and Charter-protected rights in Canada is telling me, telling my party, telling Canadians, and telling prospective refugee claimants that have a clear and convincing reason to fear persecution because of their sexual orientation in their country of origin — don't bother to come to Canada. And it's being ideologically driven, and that's unacceptable." Jennings also notes that the appointment to the IRB of adjudicators who have spoken out against queer rights in the past is no different from those who would speak out against someone's skin colour, gender, or disability. Openly lesbian Conservative Senator Nancy Ruth is attending UN meetings in New York, and she told Xtra via email that she was unable to comment. But she did point to a section of the Canadian Press report, which says Kenney met with Helen Kennedy of Egale Canada in December to discuss the guide and possibly getting gay content added to future printings. Moving forward, Chow says that she plans to put a motion before the immigration committee that would ask Kenney to reinstate those sections. "I don't think we even need to hear his point of view," says Chow. "How could he justify it?" Jennings says that her party would definitely support such a motion. Brison nevertheless has one more comment about this particular move on Kenney's part. "The Conservatives' attempt to sanitize the citizenship guide to narrow Conservative values is un-Canadian."



Submitted in March 2010, to Wayves Magazine – An Independent LGBT publication out of Atlantic Canada, by Megan Leslie Member of Parliament for Halifax

Recent news that Jason Kenney, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, actively banned mention of equality rights for the LGBT community from the immigration study guide is frightening. It is shameful that this conservative government continues to manipulate the public discourse, and now pretends that eliminating mention of LGBT history and rights in Canada was necessary for space reasons.

Let's be clear, Canada is a better country as a result of the achievements of its LGBT citizens. The future of any society depends how people treat each other and equality rights are very much a part of that, whether it be respecting sexual minorities, women, persons of colour or persons with mental and physical disabilities. Equality rights are core Canadian values and any text that purports to inform the reader about Canada should make mention of it, because it differentiates Canada from other countries. This point is important because the guide does not only reflect Canada to people from other nations, but to us as Canadians too. This action sees us going backwards, after achieving so much.

However, in contrast to Mr. Kenney's actions, there are stand-out examples of progressive thought and practice in Canada. New Democrats recognize the importance of prioritizing and advocating for respect for minorities in this country and the celebration of the full-inclusion of LGBT folks in the Canadian social fabric. To that end, our Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity critic (we *have* a SOGI critic!) Bill Siksay (MP - Burnaby-Douglas) has introduced in the House of Commons Bill C-389, an enactment which amends the *Canadian Human Rights Act* to include gender identity and gender expression as prohibited grounds of discrimination. This bill, that I was proud to second, would also add gender identity and gender expression as distinguishing characteristics protected under hate crimes provisions in the *Criminal Code*.

We find another inspiring example in the Quebec government's delivery in December 2009 of a Canadian "legislative first," the *Quebec Policy against Homophobia*. This policy, to be enforced in Quebec by the provincial Minister of Justice, was introduced in recognition that homophobia prevents the substantive, every-day equality for the LGBT community that extends beyond legal rights on paper. Homophobia impacts on the daily health and safety of LGBT adults, teens and families, as well as for anyone in Canadian communities who are perceived as transcending traditional, and frankly antiquated and limiting, gender roles. Working to fight against homophobia does not impact negatively on those who are not members of the LGBT community or their allies. It creates a more tolerant, caring society, which has a positive impact for all.

We continually see anti-equality arguments based on an "Us vs. Them" opposition. The reality is that we are all "them" as we are each different and unique in a variety of ways, not just with respect to sexual orientation. That is one of the most important modern ideas we have come to realize and something that Mr. Kenney is resistant to promoting as a cabinet minister. To that end, please join me in telling the government and Mr. Kenney's office that Canada's rights record should be celebrated and that the exclusion of the LGBT community from the immigration guide is shameful, counterproductive and frankly, anti-Canadian.

You can write Minister Kenney, postage free, at: House of Commons, Ottawa, K1A 0A6 – or minister@cic.gc.ca. If you write to the Minister, please cc Megan at leslie.m@parl.gc.ca



Harper's Canada excludes equality rights

by Kevin Kindred

The dominant mood among LGBT activists in Canada right now is a complete and utter lack of surprise.

We've read the reports that Immigration Minister Jason Kenny used his power to edit out references to LGBT equality from the guide to Canada for new immigrants. Staff had recommended that, in order to prepare for life in Canada, newcomers need to understand that homosexuality is not a crime here, and same-sex couples can marry.

These features of the Canadian legal system are well understood to Canadians—even those who aren't entirely comfortable with them. And they're a big difference between Canada and the country of origin for many immigrants. We're leading the world in recognizing LGBT equality, and new Canadians need to know it if they're going to understand their new home.

But with the stroke of a pen, the Minister made that part of the Canadian landscape—the part where my community and I reside—invisible to outsiders.

This is hard enough to swallow. But if that were it, then maybe, maybe I could buy that it was a simple editorial decision. After all, a booklet only has so much space, and Canada is a big place to get to know.

But the Minister made another, more telling, change, one which concerns more than just the LGBT community.

Where the booklet describes the rights set out in the Charter, it mentions everything from the right to vote, to mobility rights, to freedom of religion and minority language rights. With one glaring exception—no mention of equality rights. Staff suggested it be included, and Kenny specifically edited it out.

I'll say that again. The Conservatives want to present a vision of the Charter that leaves out its protection for equality rights—the fundamental basis of human rights law and one of the key protections in this cherished cornerstone of Canadian law.

And I'll also repeat: a complete and utter lack of surprise.

We remember that this is the same government who cut the Court Challenges program that disadvantaged groups used to enforce their rights. The same government who cut funding to Status of Women for being too "political" in the struggle for equality. The government whose first act was to re-open the debate on the then-settled issue of same-sex marriage.

When we were advocating for same-sex marriage, there was a clever button I saw on some activist lapels: "Stephen Harper is bad for my Constitution."

With a vision of Canada that exclude equality rights completely, his government certainly is living up to those expectation.

Kevin Kindred is a lawyer, activist, and spokesperson for the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project.



NSRAP Report: April 2010

NS Government invests \$10K in NSRAP to aid LGBT Elders

It was a bad news/ good news month for Nova Scotia's queer community. The bad news was, of course, the bashing incident in Cape Breton and the revelations out of Ottawa that LGBT rights had been deliberately removed from Canada's citizenship guide for new Canadians, likely by Immigration Minister Jason Kenney himself. We'll get to these homophobic attacks, but since we so rarely get to discuss positive outcomes for our community, let's start (and hopefully close) with the good news.

Ironically, in the same week the bashing story broke in Cape Breton, NSRAP learned that our application to Nova Scotia's Department of Seniors had been approved. The province has allocated \$10,000 to assist NSRAP with plans to ensure that long-term care facilities are safe and welcoming to LGBT seniors. Starting this fall we will be working with Northwood in Halifax to ensure that their staff are ready and able to deal with residents of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Work of this kind has already been undertaken in a few Canadian jurisdictions, notably Québec and Toronto, but Nova Scotia is showing genuine foresight in supporting this project. Dalhousie University's Prof. Brenda Richards has done some groundbreaking research on local LGBT seniors, and there are other precedents that NSRAP can build upon (including our own work in the Halifax Rainbow Health Project). Early in 2011 we will be extending the program to include a residential care facility in a rural community. Our aim is to develop a template that, with some tweaking for local needs, can be applied to other care facilities across the province. We are thankful that the Nova Scotia government recognizes the importance of this work and that they share our enthusiasm for this project.

Meanwhile, as part of our partnership with the Department of Seniors, NSRAP is hosting a gathering of LGBT Elders. We know that older LGBT folk have concerns that aren't being properly addressed. Whether it's advocating for affordable housing or a need for more social outlets, NSRAP is ready to work with LGBT Elders to be part of the solution. On Sunday, April 18 at 2pm, NSRAP is hosting a Gathering of LGBT Elders at The Company House, 2202 Gottingen Street. We hope to hear from those who are over 50 (and those who just feel they are!) about what issues matter most to them. We very much hope that this will be the beginning of regular gatherings, and we will do all we can to facilitate that.

Homophobes in Action: Attacking Our Community

Hopefully by the time you read this, police will have apprehended those responsible for the verbal and physical assaults at an LGBT dance in Sydney, Cape Breton. NSRAP extends its support to the community there, and particularly to all those directly impacted by this violent, hateful crime. We commend the work being done by community leaders, including Pride Cape Breton's Peter Steele and the police, who are properly treating this as a hate crime.

We also learned of the deliberate deletion of LGBT rights from *Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship*. NSRAP responded quickly with an Op Ed piece from Kevin Kindred in the Chronicle Herald and a letter to the Hon. Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. Our letter states, *"The Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects all Canadians from discrimination, including people of colour and people of faith. We urge you immediately to commit the Government of Canada to reinstating all references to the decriminalization of homosexuality, the passage of the Civil Marriage Act, and the equality guarantees enshrined in the Charter. Finally, if you cannot be the Minister of Citizenship for all Canadians, regardless of their race, creed, sexual orientation or gender identity, we urge you to consider resigning your office to one who can."* This letter was copied to all Nova Scotian MPs, as well as to the Prime Minister and any MPs with a connection to the issue. While we have heard from several opposition members, we have yet to hear from anyone in Minister Kenney's office.



Fondation Émergence, the Québec organization that launched the International Day Against Homophobia (May 17) has a slogan on its website, "Participez! Cette journée VOUS appartient!" which translates as, "Get involved! This day is about YOU!" NSRAP is currently planning its May 17 event for Halifax, and we know that Pride Cape Breton is moving forward with plans in Sydney as well. We hope that, wherever you may find yourself that day, you take a moment to reflect on our LGBT brothers and sisters who are still facing discrimination. Whether it manifests at local dance in your home town, in the Parliament of Uganda or the Parliament of Canada, homophobia and transphobia affect us all. If you want to be a part of NSRAP's plans for MAY 17, please contact us at the numbers listed below.

By the time you read this article, NSRAP will have released its community centre report entitled *Towards a Home for the LGBT Community in Nova Scotia*. It will have been delivered to all LGBT community groups and organization, as well as to all three levels of government. It will be posted on our website for anyone in the community to read at their leisure. We hope this will be the beginning of a real community dialogue and engagement in making this centre a reality.

NSRAP Fundraiser: Wine roulette!

We have lots of work ahead of us, and to help us move that forward, we are delighted to announce a new NSRAP fundraiser! Please join us on April 30th at The Company House for Premiere Wines and Spirit's *Wine Roulette*: an interactive wine tasting which is fun, casual and informative. The evening begins with Sommelier Drew Curlett leading the group through a wine tasting which profiles 5 grape types. He discusses each wine, where they came from, typical flavours and smells and food pairings as well as some tips on tasting and evaluating wines. Part Two of Wine Roulette starts with splitting into teams and trying the wines again "blind". Working as a team each group analyzes each wine. The team that gets the most correct guesses wins and becomes the reigning Wine Roulette Champions. It is a great way to learn wine tasting methods and apply what you learn immediately while having a whole lot of fun. There will also be a silent auction, featuring a few local getaways and a deluxe trip for two to Montreal, courtesy of Via Rail. Tickets are only \$35; \$300 for a party of 10. Capacity is limited!! For reservations call (902) 444-3206.

With these and other projects ongoing, we are always looking for dedicated individuals to serve on our many committees, so if you are at all interested in developing the rich potential of Nova Scotia's LGBT Community, please give us a call! Or drop by our office (generously donated by Doug Melanson and David Landry) at Menz Bar, 2182 Gottingen Street. Our new Executive Director, Hugo Dann, is there Mondays through Thursdays, from 3:30 – 6:30pm. Please feel free to drop by with your questions or concerns. You can also call us at (902) 444-3206 and our email address is nsrap@nsrap.ca. We look forward to hearing from you and to working with you as we move towards "Equality for All!"

Teen charged with punching man leaving same-sex dance

By LAURA FRASER Cape Breton Bureau Fri. Apr 2 - 4:54 AM

SYDNEY — Police have arrested a 17-year-old suspected of punching a man walking home from a dance held by Pride Cape Breton in February. The Sydney teen faces an assault charge in connection with the incident, but police did not say whether any hate-related charges were laid against him.

Peter Steele, chairman of Pride Cape Breton, told The Chronicle Herald last month that the attack targeted a primarily gay and lesbian dance and should be considered a hate crime. "People went out of their way to seek out somebody from this community to harass and cause injury to," he said in an interview days after attack. He could not be reached for comment Thursday.

Three males reportedly drove by the South End Community Centre at about 2 a.m. on Feb. 28. They spotted a 28-year-old Riverview Rural High School teacher leaving the dance with a friend.

Steele said the car drove by the two men, someone shouted a derogatory term and the vehicle pulled over. The group got out of the vehicle and started to pick a fight with the men walking home from the dance, Steele said last month. One of the vehicle's occupants punched the teacher in the face before driving off.

Steele said at the time that the victim had trouble remembering what happened, perhaps due to emotional trauma.

Witnesses were able to give police a description of the car and the occupants, which led to Wednesday's arrest, said Desiree Vassallo, a spokeswoman for Cape Breton Regional Police.

The youth has been released and is to return to Sydney provincial court on June 2.

Alleged assault on teacher called hate crime

By LAURA FRASER Cape Breton Bureau

SYDNEY — A high school teacher punched outside a Pride Cape Breton dance feels his alleged attacker committed a hate crime and should be charged accordingly, the chairman of the gay and lesbian organization said. Police charged a Sydney teenager Wednesday with assault for punching the 28-year-old in the face shortly after the teacher and a friend left the Feb. 28 dance. Peter Steele, the organization's chairman, said the victim does not want to speak with the media.

"I have spoken with (him), Steele said Friday. "Although he is glad that somebody has been charged (because) it gives him a bit of closure, he, too, is disappointed that a hate crime has not been part of the charge. He definitely does believe that he was targeted because he is gay.

Three alleged assailants showed up at the South End Community Centre at about 1 a.m. and slipped into the dance. Steele said someone noticed them and asked them to leave because two were minors. He said he believes they may have planned to cause trouble at the dance itself. An hour later, when the teacher and a friend left the community centre and began walking home, the three teens drove by, shouted "faggot and pulled over. Steele said the teens claim someone threw a snowball at their car.

A 17-year-old allegedly punched the teacher in the face and drove off with his friends. Two women who saw the attack recently came forward to police and helped identify the suspect.

The victim has had trouble remembering what happened, likely because of stress brought on by the assault, Steele said. The teen does not attend classes at Riverview Rural High School, where the teacher works.

"I certainly understand from the police perspective that this was not by (legal) definition a hate crime, Steele said. "But I firmly believe that homophobia (motivated) this attack. If the alleged attackers intended to make the gay community fearful, their actions have had the opposite effect, Steele said. Attendance at the past two dances has increased. "This seems to have pulled the community together in very many ways, he said. "It isn't about (vengeance), it was just about people having a good time and being proud of who they were.



Event focuses on needs of gay, lesbian seniors

By MICHAEL LIGHTSTONE City Hall Reporter [Chronicle Herald. Published: 2010-04-17]

If gay rights pioneer Harvey Milk hadn't been murdered in San Francisco's city hall in 1978, he'd be turning 80 years old next month. He was 48 when he was assassinated, along with the city's mayor, and never reached retirement age or beyond.

But many of Milk's gay and lesbian contemporaries have, including those living in this province. Hugo Dann, of the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project, said Friday society needs to attend to these seniors' needs better because they're part of the community that decades ago blazed the human rights trail for today's lesbians and homosexuals. "This is the generation that fought the hard fights back in the '70s and '80s, before we began to win our rights, and through the terrible years of the AIDS crisis," he said. "We need to do better by them."

To that end, the group will be hosting an event Sunday in Halifax for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender elders that aims to collect information on what issues are most important to them. The get-together is open to people 50 years of age and older.

Dann said there are matters of concern with respect to aging community members that aren't being addressed. He said older lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender citizens can have issues aging heterosexuals don't have to manage. Some issues are related to a person's physical well-being, he said, but others are linked to the attitudes of health professionals and how many can be unfamiliar with the needs of people they're caring for.

"There are different rates of cancer that affect the gay and lesbian population. For older transgender people, there can be hormone therapies that have to be continued," he told The Chronicle Herald. "It's being familiar with those things, but it really is more about the cultural competency. "Starting this fall, the action project will work with staff at Halifax's Northwood seniors care, preparing cultural competency training so that personnel are prepared to deal with residents of all sexual orientations and gender identities, said a recent release from Dann's organization.

The training program is to include a manual that'll be researched and written, he said. The group received \$10,000 from the provincial government to help with its cultural competency program. Dann said now's the time to start preparing for what will be a segment of the province's population that is aging but not necessarily benefiting from the health expertise available. He said many gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender patients must educate their own health-care providers about issues related to their well-being.



Group explores plight of gay seniors

By IAN FAIRCLOUGH Staff Reporter [Chronicle Herald, Published: 2010-04-19]

Middle-aged members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community met in Halifax on Sunday to discuss long-term health care and other issues. Lynn Murphy of Halifax ran the sessions and said she and other organizers were pleased with the turnout of more than 30 people. Murphy said she expected that several issues would emerge as particularly important, "and I hope we'll be able to get some groups together to work on those issues specifically."

Participants spent a lot of time discussing the situation in nursing homes and seniors facilities, she said.

"Seniors are kind of trapped there, in a way, if there is negativity coming from the staff or other residents who don't understand," Murphy said. "Some people are almost driven back into the closet because they say, 'If I come out, I'll have to deal with these negative comments and I'll just keep quiet,' and that's a shame because, like anybody else, they need to live their own life."

When members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community are younger, she said, they are perhaps able to find an apartment building to live in where there are other community members. But as they age and move into retirement homes or nursing homes, she said they can become isolated as their friends die or move to different homes.

In some cases, people needing government placement in a long-term-care home have to take the first spot that opens up and can't get into a building where they know people or have friends, Murphy said.

"I imagine there is a part of the community in every long-term-care facility in the province, but they may not be identifying themselves as such," said Hugo Dann, executive director of the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project, which organized the meeting. "You come to a point where you have to put your trust into the people who are your caregivers and you may become a little bit anxious about revealing that part of your life to strangers." His group has received a \$10,000 grant to work with officials at long-term-care facilities to ensure they are safe and welcoming for seniors from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. The organization will start by working with the Northwood seniors centre in Halifax to prepare a training program for staff on dealing with residents of all sexual orientations and gender identities. The group will do the same training at a rural facility in 2011. Those programs will create a template for training at other facilities.

Andrea D'Sylva of Halifax said her discussion group saw housing and health care as the two most important issues members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community must deal with. "We're looking for housing that is not only LGBT friendly, but also LGBT aware," she said, using an acronym to refer to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. "This (requires) an awareness and a friendliness not only from health-care providers, but also from other residents." She said doctors and other people in the medical community, including home-care providers, must also use that approach when dealing with members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. "We will need home-care people so we can stay in our homes longer, and we want to make sure they're . . . aware of our orientation, they're aware that we have same-sex partners, and that they're friendly toward us, that they don't have any bigotry, and if they do, that they keep it at the door."



NOVA SCOTIA RAINBOW ACTION PROJECT

Halifax landlord pulls ad after complaint

NOVA SCOTIA / "It made me think of brutality towards trans women," says Mary Burnett Angelina Chapin / National / Friday, April 16, 2010

"Worry about the size of her adam's apple, not where you'll live next year," reads the yanked Killam Properties ad. (Hilary Beaumont photo)

When you log onto the Killam Properties website, a robe-wearing landlord named Lou pops up on a levitating cushion and asks, "What's worrying you?" "I am worried that you are transphobic," wrote Halifax resident Mary Burnett in the space that says, "Type your worry here," and clicked submit.

After seeing a poster on April 6 advertising the Nova Scotia residential landlord's student housing that read: "Worry about the size of her adam's apple, not where you'll live next year," Burnett started a Facebook group ("F U, Landlord Lou") in protest. "It made me think of brutality towards trans women," says Burnett, who has an undergraduate and masters degree in women's studies and lives with her recently transitioned partner, Jake. "It normalizes a disgusting and violent response." She posted on the Facebook group that "333 trans people have been murdered in the past two years," and she urged trans allies to boycott Killam Properties.



When Jeremy Jackson, vice-president of marketing for Killam Properties, saw the ad designed for his company by Halifax agency Colour, he didn't think anything of it. "I guess we weren't thinking from the perspective of the transgendered community," says Jackson of the moment he and his staff saw the poster. "No one around the table fully appreciated what the ad was about."

The ad is part of a three year campaign to promote student housing using the character Landlord Lou. This year's theme is "Put One Big Worry to Rest" and other ads include "Worry about what you'll do with your arts degree — not where you'll live."

Jackson says the campaign has always been "a bit weird, wanky and edgy" to appeal to a younger audience. In 2007 they hired local comedy troupe Picnicface to make provocative videos obscurely promoting Killam (currently they revolve around the theme: Book now or live in a dump) that even offended some of the company's staff members, he says.

The day after creating her Facebook group, Burnett wrote an email to Killam and called Lindsay Kaiser, who works in the company's advertising department. She received a call back that day from Kaiser who said one of their tenants had also complained and Kaiser apologized for the ad. The next day all the posters, which were plastered around the city and Dalhousie University campus were taken down and on April 9, Kaiser posted an apology on the Facebook page.

Burnett wants Killam to issue a public apology and will call again if it doesn't happen. Jackson says the company is satisfied with the measures they've taken, and though one complaint was enough, he wonders if everyone in the transgendered community was offended. The same debate has been sparked on the Facebook page, where comments from the 88 members range from outright support ("I look forward to leaving Killam properties for good") to disagreement ("I say, lighten up. The ads aren't advocating violence. It's meant as humour.") "It's a pretty big leap from an adams [sic] apple joke on a poster to actual human slaughter and to draw comparison offends me as a transvestite," wrote Facebook user Zach Trash. "It is a cheap shot at the expense of those who have actually suffered." Burnett says: "It's naive to think that an ad that encourages a culture of transphobia isn't at all related to transphobic murders." Jackson says Killam supports minority groups, and though they have never specifically supported the gay community, the situation has given them reason to examine ad content more thoroughly in the future. "It taught us to be more sensitive," he says. "So that next time we look at a wonky campaign, we will pause for reflection."



NSRAP REPORT: MAY 17: PARTICIPATE! BE VISIBLE! THIS DAY CONCERNS YOU!

A young teacher is called faggot and beaten in the face while leaving an LGBT dance in Cape Breton. Another Nova Scotian teacher is told by her principal to remove the picture of her same-sex spouse from her desk. Truro and other municipalities in Nova Scotia pass laws that ban the flying of anything but government flags from municipal buildings, just to avoid flying the Rainbow Flag. An openly gay Nova Scotian M.P.'s holiday card, featuring himself and his husband, receives such hateful comments on the Globe and Mail website that they take the comment section down. The Canadian Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism orders (twice!) that all references to LGBT rights be struck from its guide for new Canadians, *Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship*. What thread ties these homophobic incidents together? One word: visibility. Those who hate and fear us want nothing more than for us to become invisible, they want us to be silent, the way we used to be. And once we are silenced and hidden, they can strip away our rights one by one.

"In families, schools and workplaces, it is not unusual for individuals to face rejection, bullying, and even violent behaviour triggered by homophobia. This in turn forces them to keep their sexual orientation a secret in order to avoid social disapproval. An inclusive society such as ours must take the necessary steps to combat homophobic attitudes and behaviour patterns and move towards full acceptance of sexual diversity." It may surprise you to learn that the author of those words was not a frontline, queer activist, but the Honourable Jean Charest, Premier of Quebec. Last December, Premier Charest's government published *Québec Policy against Homophobia: Moving Together toward Social Equality*. This policy grew directly out of the 107 page report, *De l'Égalité Juridique à l'Égalité Sociale (From Equality Under the law to Social Equality)*, produced in 2007 by Québec's Human Rights Commission. Once again, Québec is in the vanguard of social justice for its LGBT citizens.

We know that every child who enters the school system in Nova Scotia is going to be impacted by homophobia and transphobia. They may be subjected to bullying and harassment for "failing" to meet conventional gender norms. They will hear the words *faggot* and *dyke* used as insults thousands of times before they even get to high school, thrown like verbal punches around the schoolyard. We know that the homophobia and transphobia we experience as children continues to impact us as adults: higher rates of alcohol and drug use; higher rates of depression and suicide; higher rates of HIV infection. Together with the incidents cited above this should be enough to inspire Minister of Justice Ross Landry to follow Québec's lead and direct the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission to do an intensive investigation of homophobia in *this* province.

We trade stories of homophobia amongst ourselves all the time. While preparing this article, a friend shared that he had recently been insulted and punched at Halifax's pizza corner. If done properly, a comprehensive study would bring those stories into the open so the straight community could see how homophobia affects our whole society. It could explore the challenges facing rural queers. It could begin to document our community's extraordinary heritage, for surely our journey towards social justice is as integral a part of Nova Scotia's history as that of any other cultural group. If done with care and compassion, it could offer the healing of a truth and reconciliation commission. Finally, it would be an indelible public record of where we have come from and who we are today. We could not again be hidden away, no matter how much the current Mayor of Truro might wish it. We will be visible.



While hoping that government may act, what we can do in the meantime? As Harvey Milk urged us so many years ago, we can come out. Ever LGBT person who starts to break open their closet door blazes a trail for a friend or relative to follow. Make May 17 your coming out day! If you are already out, on May 17 be as visible as you can. Many communities across Nova Scotia will be holding events on or near May 17. Here in Halifax, NSRAP will again be holding a rally in Grand Parade Square, starting at 5pm.

The International Day Against Homophobia commemorates May 17, 1992 the day the World Health Organization stopped classifying homosexuals as mentally ill. 18 years later, on every major continent our people still face harassment, government sanctioned discrimination, and even death. We are so lucky to live in Canada, yet even here the fight against homophobia is far from over. How can we help our queer brothers and sisters in Uganda and Iran if we do not stand against homophobia here at home? Be visible! Participate! This day concerns you!

Why I'll Mark May 17

By Raymond Taavel

The evening began routinely enough as I got together with the Wayves team for our monthly planning meeting. After a quick discussion we settled on an obvious and important theme for the May issue, marking International Day Against Homophobia. It turned into a particularly engaging discussion and on this particular Tuesday night some of us decided to regroup at Menz Bar to carry on our conversation over a few beers.

I decided to walk home, which is a normal thing for me to do. I was feeling a beer-inspired peckishness and so I dropped into The Big Slice at Halifax's capricious Pizza Corner. The detour is not routine, but not unusual. I was in my 'hood, barely a block from my door.

All seemed pretty normal to this point—I bought a slice and struck up a conversation with the guy in line behind me, the kind of thing that tends to carry on to one of the many stand up tables. As I chowed down on my pizza slice another guy who seemed to be accompanying the one I was chatting with suddenly, caustically, asked me if I'm gay. I gave a matter-of-fact "yes," shrugging my shoulders as if to say "... and your point is?" He retorted with, "Well you're too gay for me"—or something to that effect—and before I knew it I was on the receiving end of a backhand to the head.

Shock, fear, bewilderment, anger. These were some of the feelings that flashed through me as I glared at my assailant and his friend, who quickly made their way toward the exit.

Anger is what lingered, though as I pulled out my cell phone and dialed 911. I followed the two out the door and told the 911 operator what had transpired and attempted to give a description of my assailant. With the operator on the line I followed them down the street... down Argyle, then up Sackville and onto Brunswick, where the two split up and ran in opposing directions. I did my best to describe my assailant as I pursued him down Brunswick, to Duke where he turned north toward the harbour.

It was at this point on Duke that, out of nowhere, four of Halifax's finest appeared on foot. My assailant had evaded us by this time, but to their credit, the four members of HRM police continued the pursuit.

I wouldn't be sharing this with you if this whole experience weren't so terribly laden with irony, given the subject of the Wayves meeting earlier in the evening; unwelcomed reminders at best. But it reminded me first-hand about how vulnerable we are, even when we don't think so. It reminded me that as a member of Halifax's LGBT community, I take my own safety for granted and I do so because I live my life freely and openly.

I took some important things away from this experience; I cannot take my safety for granted.



I thought HRM police did an awesome job. (Aside from their awesomely burly good looks!) They offered to walk me home. I declined - reluctantly. At press time I haven't heard any new developments regarding the incident. The guys at The Big Slice upon my return—yes, I returned—wanted to make sure I was okay and were kind enough to replace my pizza slice as I finally made my way home.

Being shocked by this, in a way, is a good thing because it indicates we may have come to understand this kind of thing as an increasingly infrequent occurrence in our more tolerant and accepting community.

I feel the experience empowered me because instead of doing nothing I chose to act. Perhaps my assailant caught the drift that I wasn't going to give up my pursuit when he began a full gallop down Brunswick Street. But, I note, not everyone would have responded the same way as I.

It's tempting in this day and age of legislated liberties to think that a personal or collective vigilance is no longer required. It's easy to lull ourselves into complacency, thinking there's nothing more left to fight for, or nothing more to achieve. Fighting back comes in many forms: reaching out, building bridges, educating and, if need be, defending ourselves from physical harm.

I've been reminded first-hand via a backhand why I'll be marking May 17.

- Excerpted from *Wayves Magazine*, May 2010, with the author's permission.

Truro Daily News - News - Local

'We're just like everybody else'

Published on May 16th, 2010
Jason Malloy

Kite event raises awareness for today's International Day Against Homophobia

TRURO - The colours of the rainbow flew high above Truro yesterday as the winds of change blew a strong message of acceptance into town. In support of today's International Day Against Homophobia, the Truro-based Rainbow Proud group hosted a Go Fly A Kite event in Victoria Park.

"I'm having a ball," said Truro resident Marty Ettinger. "I haven't flown a kite since I was a kid." The 55-year-old grew up in the United States and remembers what it was like telling his classmates he was gay. "I lost a lot of friends," Ettinger admits. "I actually wanted to quit school and," he said, pausing momentarily, "I wanted to die. I didn't, here I am and I am enjoying myself. I try to be as much of a support to the younger generation as I can." He is pleased to see gay-straight alliance in high schools like Cobequid Educational Centre. Ettinger said it was not something that was available when he was in high school, but he was lucky to have a supportive mother he could lean on. "I could always go to her and just talk to her. She accepted me ... she just wanted me to be happy."

Wendy McGregor has also seen change since coming out in 1980. "I was terrified. I was beat up a lot at school," she said keeping a close eye on her kite sailing above the large trees near the park's bandshell. But now she is legally married to a woman she loves and can access her spouse's health insurance. Those are just two of the rights gays and lesbians have fought for in the past decade or so. "We have kids, grandkids, a dog. We work, go to school, pay our bills. We're just like everybody else," she said. "We just want to live our lives."

Salmon River resident Annie Beals attended the event with her 12-year-old daughter Adele to show support for the International Day Against Homophobia. "It's time that we understand there's no need for homophobia," she said. "We're all just people. We're talking about brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles. Everybody does know someone who is gay or lesbian or transgender. These are human beings we are talking about ... respect that and respect them." Beals was having a blast flying a kite, something she remembers doing as a child making homemade kites from sticks and garbage bags.

While many people said a lot of change has occurred more is still needed and they hope celebrations like Sunday will go along way in raising awareness in the community.



Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project Report: June Wayves The Year in Review and the Annual General Meeting on June 28

By Matthew Numer, NSRAP Chair

As we approach our Annual General Meeting on June 28, it's good to look back on what we achieved in 2009/2010. This year we mounted two successful fundraisers and published a Needs Assessment on a Rainbow Community Centre for Nova Scotia. While we produced several community events we also received \$10,000 from the Department of Seniors to work on issues affecting LGBT Elders, especially those in long-term care. We recently began discussions with the Human Rights Commission and the Department of Justice to address homo/transphobia on a larger scale. We are currently rebuilding our membership and unveiling a new website as part of our communications strategy.

NSRAP's Health Committee continues to work with health-care providers, government, and community stakeholders to address the needs of the Trans Community. Progress in this area must at times seem painfully slow but it is being made and our resolve is steadfast.

With the theme of *Beyond Our Borders*, our 2009 annual gala brought former Egale Director, John Fisher to Halifax. John shared with us the inspiring work he is doing with ARC International, advocating for LGBT human rights around the world. We were very proud to honour Kim Vance, John's colleague (and NSRAP co-founder) with our 2009 Community Hero Award. Through money raised at the gala and at our Wine Roulette fundraiser, we were able to hire Mr. Hugo Dann as our Executive Director and fund a number of community events.

NSRAP's work in presenting *The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later* was recognized in the Nova Scotia Legislature. Along with theatre companies and LGBT Community organizations on five continents, NSRAP participated in offering this historic world premiere on the 11th anniversary of Matthew Sheppard's death. We also hosted *A Gathering of LGBT Elders* in April. More than thirty people participated in a discussion around issues facing our aging community. NSRAP was honoured to mark the International Day Against Homophobia & Transphobia by travelling to Sydney to join the community in Cape Breton for their events, and on May 17 in Halifax we held our largest rally to date. More than 500 people gathered to hear Justice Minister Ross Landry, M.P. Scott Brison, and others, and to enjoy the performances of DaPoPo Theatre and The Women Next Door. We stood together for a moment of silence, recalling those who have been victims of hate. In the spirit of Harvey Milk, the rally concluded with hope and the joyful, exuberant chants of queer youth; 'the Queerios' from the Youth Project and the Gay Straight Alliance Network.

2010 marks the fifteenth anniversary of NSRAP, and we can look back on other achievements, including the Halifax Rainbow Health Project and same-sex marriage. NSRAP's AGM is almost here, and the summer Pride season is coming fast upon us. We have come so far as a community in the last 15 years, yet as rally host and NSRAP Director Catherine Meade observed. "There is still work to be done." We cannot forget that discrimination still exists; that it is a long journey from legal equality to social equality. There is still work to be done, but with your support, we can meet the challenges ahead with the good will, humour and resourcefulness our community has always shown. We hope you will consider supporting NSRAP by joining the membership and attending the AGM, on Tuesday, June 28 at 6 PM at The Carelton, 1685 Argyle Street, Halifax.



Contact NSRAP

Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project

NSRAP Office, Studley Gymnasium

6185 South Street, Dalhousie University

Halifax, Nova Scotia

(902) 444-3206

nsrap@nsrap.ca

www.nsrap.ca