



2011-2012 Media Review



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
July 2011	4
Halifax Metropolitan Community Church closes, facing budget pressure	4
Frank Magazine's Pride Week Comments	5
Verses cry out for new understanding	5
Violent attacks against Halifax's LGBT community continue	6
Government-sponsored lesbian orgies are the very best kind	8
Local historians document Halifax's queer history.....	9
Nova Scotia activists to march for sex rights at Halifax Pride	10
What is the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project?	11
Halifax gears up for Pride Parade	12
Transgender health care 'medically necessary'	13
August 2011	15
I'm all for gay pride — but make sure it's kid-friendly	15
Parade About Awareness	16
September 2011.....	18
Elderberries reach out	18
Dal Gazette editor asked by Charles McVety to publish transphobic message	18
October 2011	20
LGBTQ News Briefs	20
Halifax discusses HIV nondisclosure prosecutions; 19 years of serving free	20
November 2011	22
Elderberries: a social group for queer seniors in Halifax.....	22
Bringing transgender issues to light	22
December 2011.....	25
Out of the Village: The advocate	25
January 2012	28



prideHealth wants you!	28
February 2012	29
Transgendered Halifax man upset by new travel ID rule	29
Meet prideHealth	29
March 2012	32
Halifax looks to create queer business group; Chic-fil-A meets Willam and friends	32
ISCANS Award Winners	32
April 17 - 20, 2012	33
Homophobic slurs heard during "violent beating death" on Gottingen Street	33
Violent Gottingen Street beating victim identified	34
Raymond Taavel killed on Gottingen Street	34
Halifax murder victim Raymond Taavel had a 'lovely, joyous presence'	36
Friends remember Taavel with vigils, tributes	37
Haligonians gather to remember Raymond Taavel	39
Accused in gay man's death returned to hospital	41
Halifax gay bar owner launches fund for slain activist's family	42
April, 2012	44
Transgender man fights hysterectomy bill	44
May 2012	46
Memorial service held in Halifax for slain activist	46
Wolfville marks day against homophobia	47
Halifax Marks Day against Homophobia and Transphobia	47
Halifax gay rights activists rally for acceptance	47
June 2012	49
Salon owner suggests 'gaybourhood watch' to fight crime	49
It Wasn't A Hate Crime	49



Introduction

Submitted by Kirk Furlotte, Administrative Coordinator

As part of NSRAP's ongoing efforts to ensure equality for all Nova Scotians, we compile an annual media review of stories that are relevant to the LGBTQ* communities of Nova Scotia. The primary purpose of this review is to see the media coverage NSRAP receives when we are involved with a news story.

This last year has seen a marked increase in coverage of NSRAP. What follows is not guaranteed to paint a complete picture of the last year but will highlight key stories. When multiple media outlets covered the same story (such as the murder of Raymond Taavel) only a few selected stories will be included.

Articles in this year's Media Review are presented in chronological order. You may refer to the Table of Contents to find the relevant month. Please note that this review only contains print (including online) material.



July 2011

Halifax Metropolitan Community Church closes, facing budget pressure

Xtra, 2011-07-5

NEWS / Church was first in the region to accept gays

Shannon Webb-Campbell / National / Tuesday, July 05, 2011

In a queer world, it's natural to seek a safe harbour. Halifax's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community lost one of its spiritual docks last month when Safe Harbour Metropolitan Community Church closed its doors because of financial trouble.

When the church realized it couldn't afford to pay its pastor even \$36,000 a year, Safe Harbour made the decision to shut down. It has struggled since 2008, when the pastor of nearly two decades, Rev Darlene Young, died. Rev Bob Bond served as acting pastor from 2009 to January 2010, until Jennifer Paty took over.

The Chronicle Herald quoted from a letter dated March 2011, in which Bond questioned the decision to name Paty as his replacement.

Bond wrote: "I believe the selection of [Paty] was for the wrong reasons. I knew from my arrival at [Safe Harbour] that some influential people in the congregation had decided on [Paty] as the next pastor for the church... Power struggles were conducted to make certain the right people were in power positions to make this happen."

Paty left Safe Harbour in late April.

The congregation found out about the church's potential closure via Facebook. Bond's letter addresses the "significant hurt and anxiety" the closure caused churchgoers.

The Halifax Metropolitan Community Church was founded in 1969, the organization's only congregation east of Toronto. It was the first church in the Halifax area to accept gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people. When other denominations dismissed gay people, Safe Harbour opened its doors.

Nestled in the heart of the Hydrostone with views of the shipyard, Safe Harbour Metropolitan rented the board room of Veith House.

Originally founded in 1991 by JJ Lyon, Robert Byers, Bruce Moore and Terry Parker; the congregation first met above the AIDS Coalition office on Gottingen St. Once the congregation became a part of the Metropolitan Community Church, Safe Harbour began meeting at Brunswick United Church. In 2004 they relocated to a space in Bloomfield Centre and moved to Veith St two years later.



After a vote, the congregation of 27 disbanded in mid-April. Fifty worshippers gathered June 26 for a final service. Rev Elder Diane Fisher, a bishop of the Metropolitan Community Church, presided over the two-hour service.

Fisher says it saddens her to see another church close, though it's not unusual. She hopes that in due time sexuality and spirituality can exist together in all congregations.

At one time, the church's closing might have left gay Christians with few options, but no longer. Other gay- and trans-friendly churches in Halifax include Koinonia Church, Church of Saint Mary Magdalene, St Andrew's United Church, St John's United Church and St Matthew's United Church.

Outside of the city worshippers can find Bedford United Church, Bridgewater United Church, Caledonia United Church, Dartmouth's Christ Church and Stairs Memorial United Church, Trinity United Church in Shelbourne, Tatamagouche Centre, Truro's St Andrew's United Church and Yarmouth's Holy Trinity.

Frank Magazine's Pride Week Comments

Frank Magazine, 2011-07-20

It's Pride Week in Halifax, and is your pal Eddie excited. A little nervous, too. I've been hearing good things about the annual bathhouse for lesbians at Seadog's Sauna & Spa on Gottingen Street, and I'm not gonna miss it again this year. They let transfolks in, so I figure if I just shave real close and throw on a padded bra I'm good to go. And if I can get in, mer-cy!

You can tut-tut all you want, but I'm not gonna feel the slightest bit guilt. Pride Week gets bags of money from the Canadian Heritage Department, the N.S. Dept. of Communities, Culture and Heritage and Halifax Regional Municipality, so the way I see it I'm headed to a government-sponsored lesbian orgy. The very best kind.

Verses cry out for new understanding

The Chronicle-Herald, 2011-07-21

By ARI ISENBERG

It was in March 2005, mere weeks after I moved to Halifax to assume the spiritual leadership of Shaar Shalom synagogue, that I learned of my brother's true sexual orientation. I have a gay brother and, though people close to me have known for a while, this is the largest audience I have yet to share that fact with outright. Since it was, admittedly, with some anxiety and in a tentative manner that I initially began sharing it, perhaps this is, for me, a coming out of sorts.



To be sure, I would never fully equate the fear surrounding my own revelation today with that of a member of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community coming out for the first time. After all, when a person comes out, the news that he or she relays, with one utterance, effectively brings that person out from the social norm in human sexual orientation and forever brands that person with an identity mired in social stigma.

However, I am a religious leader with a very public role, and my ability to speak openly about someone significant in my life who is gay comes after a long journey of struggle, study, exploration and discovery.

Two phrases in the Jewish Bible, the Old Testament, a sacred and holy book that I believe is divinely inspired, have been understood for millennia to prohibit same-sex sexual relations. Not only were they understood as prohibited, but they were also considered particularly abhorrent.

Consider, if you will, the amount of sheer hatred, injustice, intolerance and shame resulting from this classical understanding of the unique Hebrew text.

That a text can be sacred need not preclude a process of interpretation. In fact, the Jewish tradition encourages multiple layers of interpretation of all elements of its foundational text. The Rabbis of the Talmud, Judaism's first rabbinic code of law, embarked on a sacred journey, analyzing and interpreting the Bible by arguing, disagreeing, questioning and challenging each other in order to forge a deeper meaning, to seek a deeper truth.

In light of what we know is true, that homosexuality is a perfectly normal and natural variation of human sexual orientation, the two phrases in the Bible cry out to us: "Re-read me! Reinterpret me! Understand me anew!"

Indeed, my own rabbinical school heeded the call and began accepting openly gay students into the program in 2007. Many synagogues have followed suit, hiring openly gay rabbis as their spiritual leaders. Finally, many spiritual leaders, myself included, have begun supporting gay couples by recognizing their union and commitment to one another as sacred, offering them family membership packages, and enabling them to mourn the loss of the other as a spouse.

May we all seize the opportunity to "re-read." I wish the entire LGBT community in Halifax a very meaningful, inspiring and joyous Pride Week 2011.

Ari Isenberg is the spiritual leader of Shaar Shalom Congregation in Halifax.

Violent attacks against Halifax's LGBT community continue

The Coast, 2011-07-21

Many victims fail to report crimes against them, say cops.

By Mick Côté



Last month's attack suffered by Chris Cochrane, a transgendered woman who performs as Elle Noir, has people wondering about the safety of members in the Halifax LGBTQ community.

Cochrane was shot in the arm by a man who claimed to be a police officer. Several shots were fired through her apartment door while her roommate called 911.

The shooting was not classified as a hate crime, and some in the LGBTQ community have criticized police response to it. Cochrane declined to be interviewed.

Kevin Kindred, spokesperson for the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project, says that many people who are victims of crimes, in the community, decide not to report to Halifax Regional Police in fear of being re-victimized.

"I actually find that Halifax is a pretty open and welcoming place for members for of LGBT community, but we know that all cities face problems with homophobia and problems with violence," he says. "I encourage people to be as 'out' as they are comfortable being and I don't like the idea of having to be reserved out of fear of how society would react. However, people are conscious of the risks of homophobic and transphobic violence and sometimes conduct themselves accordingly."

Last March, Dylan LaVigne and his partner Andrew were attacked on the way to a bar while walking hand-in-hand. Five men asked them for rolling papers and decided to pounce when LaVigne yelled back "No" after multiple demands. One man "yells 'Fucking faggots!' and punches Andrew square in the jaw and knocks him over," he says.

LaVigne was also struck by one of the men and was kicked in the ribs once hitting the ground. His partner called 911, something that doesn't always happen, according to Constable Debbie Carleton, the liaison officer with the LGBTQ community.

"The majority of cases where the LGBTQ community is targeted, we find that they either don't come forward to report the crime, or when they do come forward, it's very seldom that they will say that it's from their sexual orientation," she says.

Carleton says that Halifax Regional Police don't know if the community needs more support and advises people to come forward and help the police department determine what kind of relief is needed for LGBTQ groups. "As of this date, it's an underreported community and until we receive more calls, we can't give them the help that they need," she says.

LaVigne, on the other hand, says the attack has changed the way he and his friends act in public.

"If we tried [holding hands] on Spring Garden Road, we'd be called faggots at least five times before we reached the Public Gardens," he says. "Believe me, I've done it. It's not pretty."



Carleton urges victims of crime against their sexuality to contact her at 490-5016.

Government-sponsored lesbian orgies are the very best kind

Xtra, 2011-07-21

By Rob Salerno

Some lesbians and trans folk in Halifax are justifiably outraged over a brief editorial that appeared in this week's edition of Frank, a local gossip and satire magazine. A column bylined Eddie Cornwallis (Frank frequently has its satire writers use pseudonyms – Edward Cornwallis founded the city of Halifax in 1749) talks about a July 19 Pussy Palace-style event, taking place during Halifax Pride, as a good place for a straight man to have a good time:

It's Pride Week in Halifax, and is your pal Eddie excited. A little nervous, too. I've been hearing good things about the annual bathhouse for lesbians at SeaDog's Sauna and Spa on Gottingen Street, and I'm not gonna miss it this year. They let transfolk in, so I figure if I just shave real close, and throw on a padded bra I'm good to go. And if I get in, mer-cy!

You can tut-tut all you want, but I'm not gonna feel the slightest bit guilty. Pride Week gets bags of money from the Canadian Department of Heritage, the NS Dept of Communities, Culture and Heritage and HRM, so the way I see it, I'm headed to a government-sponsored lesbian orgy. The very best kind.

Obviously, there's something disturbing about a grown man writing about getting his rocks off by sneaking into a private women's space. And the idea that shaving one's beard (or more) and throwing on a padded bra is enough to make one a transsexual is offensive and asinine. As a caricature of a ridiculous straight male thinking about lesbians and trans folk as sex objects, it would be fairly spot on, but that's clearly not the writer's intent, given the ensuing paragraph, which calls the event a "government-sponsored lesbian orgy." Framing the event as a government-sponsored orgy is just incorrect and a lame attempt to make hay out of a non-story. And with some governments already attacking the idea of funding Pride festivals, we should take seriously any attempt to whip up emotions against our Prides.

Does Halifax Pride get funding from the agencies Cornwallis lists? Yes. Do partner bars and clubs directly receive money from Pride for the events they run? No, of course they don't. At most, they receive the benefit of the group marketing of the Pride events that the government grants fund. But the vast majority of Pride scheduling is made up of lecture series, art presentations or community events, such as the parade itself.

Incidentally, this isn't the only controversy "Eddie Cornwallis" has drummed up this summer. Last month, four of Frank's five staff writers resigned in protest after the writer published a column on sexism.



So far, it seems that Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project is going to ignore Frank, while the local gay rag, Wayves, has decided to laugh it off on Twitter.

Still, I am curious about the last sentence fragment quote above, which says that government-sponsored lesbian orgies are "the very best kind." How many kinds of lesbian orgies are there? Are government-sponsored lesbian orgies really the best kind? I trust you'll let me know in the comments below.

Local historians document Halifax's queer history

Xtra, 2011-07-21

HALIFAX PRIDE / Writers and readers hunger for queer stories, archivists say
Rob Salerno / National / Thursday, July 21, 2011

Queer communities in smaller centres face both challenges and great opportunities to document their history, a trio of activists and historians told a crowd gathered for a panel discussion at Halifax's Spring Garden Road Public Library on Tuesday.

The activists agreed that parts of the queer history of Nova Scotia remain hard to pin down because many of the early community leaders chose anonymity and because chunks of the history simply weren't preserved.

On the other hand, in the smaller communities of Nova Scotia, it can be easier to trace the witnesses and history-makers and compile oral histories.

Daniel MacKay, who publishes Halifax's queer magazine Wayves, started up the LGBT Halifax Encyclopedia, a wiki where anyone can post articles about the local gay community. "The goal of the project is to have a page for every person, place, thing and event that is of significance to the Halifax gay community ever," MacKay says. "We have pages that go back to the 1892 visit of Oscar Wilde to Halifax, and at the other end of the spectrum, when we have a drag event and someone's crowned Miss Halifax at 1am, by 3am the wiki is updated."

The modest but surprisingly comprehensive website is a treasure trove of stories from the city's rich queer history. Everything from an index of present and historical queer-owned businesses in the city to a catalogue of the city's drag queens is available across more than 1,500 pages. There are even sections for writers to post original fiction and humour.

But MacKay laments the largest gap in his project. "The biggest hole is the story about how and why the LGBT community in the early '70s formed," he says. "There were also a bunch of social parties in people's houses in the 1960s."



Lynn Murphy, a part of the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project's Elderberries club, says big chunks of queer history are tucked away in community members' attics and basements and must be brought to light to be preserved.

"It might be flyers or letters or videotaped rehearsals for a drag show, or the first 15 chapters of an unfinished novel about growing up gay in Ketch Harbour," she says. "This is gay history and primary sources. The cellar and attic are absolutely the wrong place for them. They are unavailable to the public, they're vulnerable to damage, and they're vulnerable to becoming part of an estate. Few heirs are interested in preserving Grandma Sue's years as a lesbian activist."

Murphy suggests that people donate these artifacts of queer history to a community archive.

"In an archive, the documents will be protected, and they'll provide a catalogue for searching the materials. Researchers will be able to use your materials to create books and articles," she says.

Unfortunately, Nova Scotia does not have an archive dedicated to gay and lesbian history.

Murphy suggests that gay and lesbian artifacts can be donated to the municipal or provincial general archives, university or religious organizations' archives where relevant, or donated to the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives in Toronto.

St Mary's University historian James Morrison says collecting oral histories from queer community members is also an important tactic for preserving queer history. "Oral history is inclusive history. It's being used by historians to include people who'd been left out of history. Forty years ago if you went to the archives, you'd end up with only rich white men. Oral history has opened it up to anyone who wants to know about their past," he says.

Oral histories can also plug the gaps in records that do currently exist. At one point, MacKay noted that there are lots of preserved minutes from activist group meetings where those attending don't have last names, prompting Murphy to out herself as one of those members.

"Until I retired there were things I would not do. I would not go on TV. I would be 'Lynn M,'" she says. "Once I was off the job and my parents had died, I didn't have anything to give up. But that was only four years ago."

Nova Scotia activists to march for sex rights at Halifax Pride

Xtra, 2011-07-21

HALIFAX PRIDE / Rainbow Action Project hopes to get people talking about queer issues

Rob Salerno / National / Thursday, July 21, 2011

The Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project will be marching in the Halifax Pride parade on Saturday, July 23 with an in-your-face message for those who come out: it's time to decriminalize queer sex in Canada.



That may come as a surprise to many who think that gay rights have advanced beyond such legal battles, but the law makes some queer sex into criminal acts, says NSRAP's legal and law reform committee chair Kevin Kindred.

"Not everyone thinks of anal sex and law reform every day. Not everyone thinks of prostitution as a queer rights issue," Kindred says. "We're trying to get people talking and thinking differently about what is a queer rights issue and reemphasize that sexual liberation impulse that is important to the LGBT community and the work that we do."

The NSRAP marchers will carry placards that call for major reforms to the Criminal Code to end legal persecution of queer people.

Two placards, reading "Legal Anal Sex" and "2's Company, 3's a Crime? Legalize 3somes," call attention to section 159 of the Criminal Code, which criminalizes anal sex when any of the partners is under the age of 18, the partners are not "husband and wife," or the act takes place in public or when more than two persons are present.

That section of the Criminal Code has been struck down on equality grounds by superior courts in five provinces: British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec and, most recently, in Nova Scotia. But it remains on the books and is still prosecuted in the other provinces and territories.

More placards will call for reform to sex work laws, equalizing the age of consent, ending raids on gay bathhouses and cruising spots, and enhancing sex education in schools.

Kindred says he isn't worried that the blunt messages in NSRAP's march will offend Halifax's more conservative elements.

"I don't think our participation is going to offend or shock anyone, but I do hope it causes some good conversations about sexual liberation and activism," he says. "It's true that you don't see the sorts of things you see in larger Pride parades. People aren't excited about marching down the street nude. But I don't think that people have negative feelings towards expressing our sexual identities."

What is the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project?

Rob Salerno / National / Thursday, July 21, 2011

NSRAP was formed in 1995 from the ashes of the Gay and Lesbian Association of Nova Scotia, which had been active since the early 1980s but dissolved in 1994. The organization focuses its efforts on local issues, and according to its website, it "believe[s] in working collaboratively throughout the Community and with government, business, institutions and individuals to foster change."



The organization is staffed largely by volunteers who work on multiple boards and committees, including ones focused on legal affairs, communications, events, health and seniors.

One of the organization's long-term goals is to establish a Rainbow Community Centre for Nova Scotia.

Aside from lobbying for the community, NSRAP sometimes offers basic legal advice to combat discrimination. Kevin Kindred says the group was active in the case to legalize same-sex marriage in Nova Scotia and with a human rights case that recently resulted in changes to the way birth certificates are registered to lesbian moms.

Kindred says it's important to have a local organization pushing for queer rights.

"There's a reason why it's good for NSRAP to take on those issues rather than nationwide groups to work with local officials and understand the subtleties of what arguments work," he says. "Egale has proven good at dealing with federal issues, but sometimes it's better dealt with locally."

Halifax gears up for Pride Parade

CBC News, 2011-07-22

The route is set, the floats are decorated and thousands will be lining the streets of Halifax for the 24th annual Pride Parade on Saturday.

Halifax hairdresser Jay Wells will be wearing a fascinator in the Pride Parade. "Sticking to my fascinator theme, this is made with a pencil holder and a flip flop from the dollar store," Wells said Friday, showing off part of his costume. Wells has been busy creating costumes for the entire staff at his hair salon. The rhinestones and feathers overwhelm his workroom.

"It's on a huge 50-foot trailer and it's going to be a runway, basically. So, all of my creations will be highlighted and shown on the runway," he said. The 21 people on the float will be performing a dance routine. "I wanted to kinda go big, you know. When I set my mind to something, what's the saying? Go big or go home. Well, tomorrow, I won't be home," Wells said.

Pride co-chairman Ed Savage is still trying to fit in some last-minute entries. "I think that it's a lot more floats this year than we've ever had before. Everybody seems to be excited about building a float, putting in a bigger entry," Savage said.

Another first time entry is a butterfly garden by Pride Health, a joint IWK-Capital Health service for people of all sexual orientations. "I guess we had three butterfly making sessions of about two hours each. So, I think that's an amazing commitment that people made to volunteer their time," Cybelle Reiber, Pride Health co-ordinator said Friday.



Kevin Kindred, of the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project, a group that lobbies for equality, said Pride is a time for fun and activism. Their float will mimic an old time political rally. "NSRAP is doing this to remind people that sexual liberation is still a really important part of the struggle for gay rights," he said. "So all of our signs relate to that, and we hope it starts people thinking about it."

Organizers are expecting up to 75,000 people will come out to watch the parade that starts at 1:30 p.m. Saturday.

It begins on Lower Water Street, runs along Barrington Street, up Spring Garden Road and along South Park Street ending at the Garrison Grounds.

Transgender health care 'medically necessary'

Chronicle-Herald, 2011-07-22
By LAURA FRASER Staff Reporter

Transgendered people who undergo a sex-change operation sometimes call it a rebirth, growing into a body that finally feels like their own. But not everyone can afford the surgical procedure or hormone therapy, neither of which is covered by public insurance in Nova Scotia.

The province does cover mastectomies as a form of cancer treatment and certain hormones are covered by the Pharmacare program for those with hormone deficiencies. The patchwork health-care coverage in Nova Scotia is similar to other areas in North America and it marginalizes transgendered people, especially those living in lower-income brackets, Pooja Gehi, a lawyer based in New York City, said Thursday.

Gehi spoke to The Chronicle Herald before addressing the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society. She works for the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, which primarily represents lower-income transgendered people. She argues that transgender health care is medically necessary, citing a litany of social and medical evidence to back up her position.

Not having access can increase risky behaviour, including injections of "street hormones," Gehi said. "People could be more likely to get HIV-AIDS because they are sharing needles, because they can't access the health care that is medically necessary through the system. "Those are . . . arguments that we make (often) in trying to get health care covered but it can also be pretty hard to prove how all of these things are connected."

While Gehi's legal expertise focuses on the mostly private health-care system in the United States, Canada's coverage for transgendered health care varies widely from province to province. British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec now pay for the sex-change surgery following human rights rulings in those provinces. Patients may have to meet certain criteria to qualify for public coverage.



In Nova Scotia, there are some transgender health services, such as counselling and assessment for hormone therapy, that are covered by the public purse, but many others are not. Those who opt to pay for operations themselves can expect to pay about \$10,000 to \$15,000 depending upon the procedure.

Dr. Sue Zinck is part of the IWK Health Centre's transgender health team, which helps children and families deal with being transgendered. She says finances can play a large part in seeking surgical treatment. "People are working additional hours, some people decide to allocate money that they might otherwise spend for education," she said. "I have never in my practice seen anyone decide against it (for financial reasons). . . But I do believe that several are deferring the decision, not because they don't feel ready, but because they don't have the money."

Zinck said the team has seen 32 youth since its inception five years ago. Two patients made the decision to undergo sexual reassignment surgery. She said the youth she meets often say they need to work for several years in order to save for surgery. That, too, can present problems, the psychiatrist said, as people may choose to dress according to the gender they identify with and not all employers accept that.

Despite some controversy, the last version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders — the so-called Bible of the psychiatry profession — classifies gender identity disorder as a medical condition. It's something that affects a very small percentage of the population and treatment is available, says a clinical nurse with Pride Health, a service with Capital Health.

"When you think about it, it's a condition that if people were able to get the hormones and the surgeries that they needed and were ready to accept, then this condition could effectively be cured," Anita Keeping said.

The Nova Scotia Young Liberals brought the issue forward at the party's convention in 2008. The party passed a resolution that would call on the province to pay for sex-change operations, CBC.ca reported at the time. The website reported that the issue did not seem very high on party leader Stephen McNeil's agenda.



August 2011

I'm all for gay pride — but make sure it's kid-friendly

Chronicle-Herald, 2011-08-01

By BRENDA MacDONALD | TWO CENTS' WORTH

PARENTS, please read this column before the kids do.

If you choose to consider it less than kid-friendly and decide to keep it from them, then all the more power to you.

You see, in all honesty, I believe that all of today's children would be much better off if we parents took the time — or maybe I should say if we had the time and capability — to filter out the majority of the wacky written material, visual junk and audio rubbish they're exposed to every day.

It is this very belief that had me taking the ferry over to Halifax recently to watch the 24th annual Halifax Pride Parade.

I wanted to watch the parade myself this year, without the kids in tow. I wanted to feel the emotion the event evoked, to experience the atmosphere. In particular, I wanted to see whether or not I agree that the parade is, as the Halifax Pride website www.halifax-pride.com claims, "family friendly" and "community strong."

I'll agree with claims that the parade is "community strong."

From what I saw, it was certainly well attended. The parade route was solidly lined with supporters of all ages. The parade was dynamic, vibrantly colourful, positively noisy, boisterous and undeniably energetic. The music was great.

I had the strong and pleasing sense that support for Halifax Regional Municipality's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered communities was pretty much all encompassing and awesome.

There were moments during the parade, however, when things hushed just a little, when certain people — others like me, I guess — began to look around hesitantly, to shrug and raise their eyebrows, to make that little "oh, my goodness" look that people tend to make when they are just a wee bit overwhelmed and unsure.

I noticed a few parents trying to distract their children — I assume they were of reading age — when individuals bearing placards stating Legalize anal sex and 2's company, 3's a crime? Legalize 3somes! paraded by.



I heard one woman yelp, "OK, that's enough" as she hurriedly herded a brood of three youngsters out of sight of one of the floats. It was an entry consisting of a leather-clad participant tied to a wooden-cage-like contraption being flogged by a laughing, leering, what I assumed to be, dominatrix type.

And me?

Well, here I am, two days after the parade, still trying to figure out how to delete, from my own mind, the visual image — oh, please, make it go away! — of a rather aged, bare bottom (the lime-green, neon thong, unfortunately, covered far too little) being whipped along Barrington Street.

To be fair, I have to say that I feel there were far more positives in the parade than there were negatives. And to put things into perspective, I'll add that from all of the entries and floats in the parade, there were only four that violently bounced off of my own personal parental smut firewall. Isn't it sad, however, that there had to be any at all?

Why were those few floats and entries depicting and promoting explicit sex acts even allowed in the parade?

It's not as though lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered individuals have a collective monopoly on the alternative and adventurous forms of sex that were on display and promoted at the parade. It's also not as though all those in that community care to be defined by or associated with such practices.

And so, Halifax Pride Parade people and organizers, next year, can you make sure those types of entries are not in the parade? Can you refuse them entry? Can you, in other words, please take the time to separate the distracting and graphic sex acts from the much more important sexuality and gender rights issues?

If you can do those things, you see, I think you will then have a Halifax Pride Parade to be proud of, one that is not only "community strong" but one that is truly "family."

Brenda MacDonald is a freelance writer living in Cole Harbour.

Parade About Awareness

Chronicle-Herald, 2011-08-08
Reader Feedback

I was glad to read that your columnist Brenda MacDonald took notice of the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project's "Sexually Activist" signs in the Halifax Pride Parade. She particularly noted the ones reading "Legalize Anal Sex" and "Legalize Threesomes".

I'm sure she visited NSRAP's website to read more about the signs (www.nsraps.ca/signs). There she likely discovered some things that most people don't know about government intervention in our sex



lives--for example, that the criminal code really does have a provision against anal sex. (Most people thought our sign was a joke!)

NSRAP thinks Pride is a great time to raise awareness about issues of sex and sexual liberation. After a little research, people might find themselves more offended by the kind of repression LGBT people can face, than by a few stray buttocks in a parade.

Kevin Kindred, NSRAP Spokesperson



September 2011

Elderberries reach out

Metro Halifax, 2011-09-22

Jenna Contner

"For some of the younger generation, they don't even remember the things that we fought against," says Lynn Murphy, 64.

"They've grown up under human rights coverage that protects them in terms of employment."

Murphy has seen many changes in terms of gay rights, from the decriminalization of homosexual acts in Canada in 1969 to the 1991 amendment of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act to include protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Nowadays, older members of the rainbow community have a social group where they can connect. The Elderberries is a chapter of the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project for gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people who are 50 and older.

"It's for elders who may be isolated in the community, who don't feel like going to the bars anymore, and some people have had their partners die and they're lonely," Murphy said. "This would be helpful to provide a social outlet for the older group."

Solving the concern of losing touch with fellow members of the community, Murphy and her fellow Elderberries prepare for future issues such as entering a nursing home.

Dal Gazette editor asked by Charles McVety to publish transphobic message

OpenFile Halifax, 2011-09-29

Posted by Bethany Horne on Thursday, September 29, 2011

Update

The National Post apologized for running the transphobic ad, while still not quite getting it, and blaming a chain of command breakdown: their ad people "are sometimes processing so much stuff they don't even look at or read the ads... I'll be honest, no one saw it," ad manager Enzo Loschiavo told OpenFile Toronto.

UPDATE AND CORRECTION:

Halifax journalist Erica Eades followed up with OpenFile to explain that Charles McVety did not in fact ask for advertising space in The Dalhousie Gazette. Eades' tweet this morning to our reporter indicated that The Gazette, where she is an editor, was contacted by McVety to purchase paid advertising. (Eades tweeted, "He emailed the Gazette about advertising and I basically told him to go to hell.")



In fact, Eades says she was only sent a press release, albeit a personalized one, from Charles McVety's email address. This was the only contact Eades had from Charles McVety and his organization, the Institute for Canadian Values.

In a subsequent interview, Eades admitted to "poor word choice" in her tweet this morning. We have struck the text that refers to the request to place an ad, and also updated the headline on this post to reflect this information.

**Updated with statement from the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project at the bottom

An ad campaign that is horrifying gay rights advocates may be on its way to Halifax.

Today, the National Post ran what some are calling a transphobic ad, sponsored by Charles McVety, who is well known for his public opposition to marriage rights for gays and lesbians.

The ad shows the picture of a young schoolgirl with giant brown eyes. The text reads: "I'm a girl. Don't teach me to question if I'm transgendered."

A local journalist, Erica Eades, says that McVety contacted her at her Dalhousie Gazette work address with a personal request to run the ad give attention to his ad campaign in their paper.

"I was kinda confused," she says, because the small print of the ad is related specifically to Ontario schools curricula.

"I was so put off by it. I basically just told him that I found it appalling and that in the future if he could refrain from contacting me ever again."

Update

Kirk Furlotte, with the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project has sent us the following statement:

The Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project has several issues with the transphobic ad released by the Institute for Canadian Values.

It misleads readers into the false belief that a transgender identity can be learned or instilled in a person. It is an innate trait that is not externally created.

Encouraging youth to question their identity does not cause them to be transgender, gay OR straight. It does help them gain a better understanding of themselves and develop self-confidence.

The ad also implies that education is the equivalent of indoctrination whereas the reality is that it was developed by professionals to provide age-appropriate education on gender identity, expression and diversity. Children are taught these skills at a young age as that is the age at which they are developing their ideas around gender identity at that time.



October 2011

LGBTQ News Briefs

Dal Gazette, 2011-10-14

By Misha Noble-Hearle

Happy National Coming Out Day!

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) communities and supporters celebrated National Coming Out Day (NCOD) on Oct. 11.

The day is designed to initiate open discussion regarding LGBTQ people in the community. NCOD is celebrated on an international level encouraging those who identify as queer to be open and confident with their sexuality.

Celebrated on the anniversary of the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, NCOD started in 1988 by Robert Eichberg and gay politician Jean O'Leary.

AIDS Coalition of NS using RENT production to fundraise

DGM Music Inc. opened their production of famed Broadway musical Rent on Oct. 13. The production will be running until Oct. 15 in the Spatz Theatre at Citadel High.

The Aids Coalition of Nova Scotia (ACNS) is playing a major role in fundraising at the event, as well as organizing the awareness of HIV/AIDS at the production. ACNS will also provide opportunities for Haligonians to get involved in the community.

Rent is a rock opera following the lives of young artists living in New York City, with a theme of AIDS. For more information, check out our Arts section.

Takin' It to the Streets at NSRAP's Annual Fundraising Gala

Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project (NSRAP) is hosting their Annual Fundraising Gala called Takin' It to the Streets on Oct. 22.

NSRAP will honour a member of Nova Scotia's LGBTQ community with the Darlene Young Community Hero Award. Following the cocktails, silent auction and three course meals, gay American singer-songwriter Matt Alber will be featured as the night's keynote speaker. A former member of the Grammy award winning classical men's ensemble "Chanticleer," Alber advocates for organizations that support LGBTQ homeless youth.

The gala starts at 6 p.m. and is being held at the Halifax Marriot Harbourfront. Tickets are being sold for \$125.

It's official! Reflections is moving

Pending liquor board approval, Reflections Cabaret will be moving from its current location on Sackville Street to the building that housed the old Marquee Club and the Paragon Theatre on Gottingen Street. They hope to relocate before Christmas.

This move is subject to the possibility of the current building eventually closing down or being renovated.

Halifax discusses HIV nondisclosure prosecutions; 19 years of serving free



Xtra, 2011-10-21

Simon Thibault, Xtra Down East

Why does it always seem like everything happens on the same day? And it's not even the weekend.

Today at Dalhousie, noted speaker and executive director of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, Richard Elliott, will speak on the issue of criminal prosecution in cases of alleged nondisclosure of HIV status in Canada. You can find out more info [here](#). The lecture takes place from noon until 1:30pm at the Weldon Law Building in Halifax, 6061 University Ave in Room 207. This is a topic that Xtra has covered at length, and continues to do so.

Nineteen years ago today, the Supreme Court of Canada made a decision that changed the lives of many closeted service members. It ruled that gays and lesbians have the right to serve openly in the forces, after Michelle Douglas challenged her dismissal from the forces and won. To celebrate, the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic will offer free admission to its Hello Sailor exhibit and will have guest speaker Frank Letourneau on hand. Letourneau was discharged under the same regulations and will talk about his experiences.



November 2011

Elderberries: a social group for queer seniors in Halifax

Xtra, 2011-11-23

Simon Thibault, Xtra Down East

Two years ago, the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project (NSRAP) held a meeting in which they discussed the needs of seniors in the queer community. One of the projects suggested that day was to create a social organization for elders. That's how Elderberries was born.

Lynn Murphy is a former librarian and a founding member of Elderberries. The organization's mandate is to provide a social and educational outlet for queer seniors who are over 50. The group is organized by a managing committee, and meetings are held once a month, usually at Spencer House on Morris St. One of the more popular ideas was to organize all Elderberries events as potlucks, with people bringing all sorts of goodies. "We thought people would enjoy it," says Murphy. "Amazingly enough, lots of people like to cook." That's not surprising, considering this weekend's discussion will host two students from the Applied Human Nutrition Program at Mount Saint Vincent. The students will discuss healthy cooking practices.

The group has hosted all sorts of discussions and round tables on a variety of topics, from diversity in healthcare to dealing with wills and estates. They also have occasional outings, including visits to art galleries and outdoor picnics. During Pride Week, the group created small pennants that they sold during the festivities. They also were invited to speak about queer history as part of a series of lectures presented by the Halifax Regional Library. "I talked about how you [may] have LGBTQ history in your basement," enthuses Murphy. "These things are so interesting for the future understanding." Lynn also notes that many of the members have made themselves available to academics and researchers looking for information about Halifax's queer history.

As for the social aspect of the group, Murphy points out that "the clubs are not where most elders want to go." Murphy notes that there is a need for the social outlet that clubs offer and that elders often deal with social isolation due to factors including mobility, health issues and decaying social networks. Accessibility is a big issue for many of the participants, including Murphy, who has some mobility issues. "You have to be pushy to say this, but [accessibility] really matters," she points out. "If you're going to have an event at a location that has stairs, it's an inaccessible space." So it was important to make the events as accessible to as many people as possible. Murphy admits that she wishes the group had the finances for interpreters for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, but it's not always possible. But, she points out, they are working on making the group viable for as many people as possible.

In the meantime, Murphy and the rest of the Elderberries will be meeting this Sunday. Although this weekend's session is about healthy food, Murphy admits that one of the best parts of the meetings are the sweets that are passed around at the potluck. "I have a sweet tooth," she says.

Bringing transgender issues to light



Halifax Commoner, 2011-11-24
Sam Samson

Halifax holds vigil to recognize annual Transgender Day of Remembrance

“I used to be a guy ... but I am feeling much better now,” Josie Harding tells the crowd.

Harding – a transgendered woman – elicits cheers and laughter.

This was one of the lighter moments at the Transgender Day of Remembrance memorial on Sunday, Nov. 20. About 85 people gathered at Veith House, near the Hydrostone, to remember people around the world killed for being transgendered.

This was the 13th Annual International Transgender Day of Remembrance; the day was founded in 1998 after Rita Hester, a transgendered woman, was murdered in Massachusetts.

According to event coordinators Alana Murray and Regina Lohnes, this day of great sadness is also an opportunity for people to come together to remember those killed because of anti-transgender hatred and prejudice.

The day “raises public awareness of hate crimes against transgendered people,” says Murray. It also “provides a space for public mourning and honours the lives of those who might otherwise be forgotten.” She said the event has spread to more than 180 cities, in more than 20 countries.

Guest speakers, audience members and event organizers read the names of 221 transgendered people from across the globe. They were the names of people killed in the past year, according to the Sweden-based Transgender Murder Monitoring Project Report. At the vigil, a candle was snuffed out to signify the loss of every life.

Transgender Europe, an organization that supports the rights of transgender people worldwide, runs the project. They also keep a record of those killed from transgender hate crimes.

Murray, event coordinator, said, “these 221 (transgendered people) are only the reported cases ... in most countries data on murdered transgendered people is not systematically produced and it is impossible to estimate the numbers of unreported cases.

“It is harder to estimate how many murders were truly based upon prejudices and hate alone.”

After the names were read, guest speakers offered encouraging words and support. At the end of the memorial, candles were re-lit as organizers read out the lists of advancements and “hopes” the transgendered community could celebrate.



One noted advancement in the U.S. is that in 15 states and the District of Columbia, policies protect against sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination in the workplace.

The memorial also recognized transgendered elected officials in governments around the world. In 2010, Amanda Simpson became the first openly transgendered person appointed for a role in the U.S.'s federal government by the president. Poland elected Europe's first transgendered MP, Anna Grodzka, in its October 2011 election.

Canadian advancements include a 2009 bill introduced by the NDP into the House of Commons. The bill sought to add protection for transsexual and transgendered Canadians to the Canadian Human Rights Act by adding gender identity and gender expression to the list of prohibited reasons for discrimination. The bill died in the House of Commons earlier this year but has since been reintroduced as private member bill by Liberal MP Hedy Fry and NDP MP Randall Garrison.

At the end of the ceremony, Harding, a transgendered woman, said transphobic people are the weakest amongst us because "for one split second they think that my gender expression ... can affect them in some way.

"They kill us, they maim us, they do whatever ... but the reality is that I spent 30 some years with the wrong genitalia but the gender never left."



December 2011

Out of the Village: The advocate

Xtra, 2011-12-25

Katie Toth / National / Sunday, December 25, 2011

MONTREAL / Kevin Kindred works to foster a queer-positive Nova Scotia

Kevin Kindred arrives at our interview straight from work. With his rectangular glasses and strong jaw line, he looks almost intimidating. Luckily, that dissipates the second he says hello. He's soon shifting his mug on the table, gesticulating gently as he talks about the city he calls home.

"I hate calling Halifax a small town," he says.

The lawyer-by-day, queer-rights-activist by night has clearly built a relationship with this place. After finishing his law degree in St John's, the born New Brunswickan migrated to the Nova Scotia capital because he didn't want to leave the Maritimes.

He seems glad he did. "The community is big enough to get stuff done but not so big to collapse in on itself," he explains. Kindred says it's a dynamic he appreciates. "That's not to say we don't have radical people in Halifax," he says. [But it's] harder just to hide in the echo chamber of LGBT activism, the kind of navel gazing and self-congratulatory attitude when you get 500 activists in a room."

Now, he's a major influence in the legal discussions that affect Nova Scotians through his work with the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project (NSRAP).

In 2007, for example, Kindred acted as counsel to Jamie and Emily O'Neill, lesbian mothers who filed a human rights complaint against Nova Scotia's then-heteronormative birth registration process. That year, Nova Scotia amended its Vital Statistics Act to recognize both members of a same-sex couple as "parents" on their child's birth certificate.

The passion that has led him to break legal boundaries leads NSRAP chair Matthew Numer to describe Kindred as a key player in provincial political battles. "Kevin is extremely well spoken," Numer says. "I've never seen Kevin get mad, lose it, anything like that . . . I can't say I've ever seen Kevin lose his grace, so to speak."

But the same guy who never loses his grace has an almost bubbly energy. Get him talking about political stuff, and he moves sharply but quickly from broader theory to proactive community building to the place of legal battles in the queer movement.

"It's not necessarily the future of activism," he says. He points to social, systemic issues, like homophobia in schools and senior citizens' centres. "We've defined ourselves as a law reform



movement for so long that we have to understand, when we scratch everything off that list, there's still going to be a whole lot of stuff for us to do," he says. "How do we become a movement that does that stuff?"

That's not to say there are no more legal issues to take on in Nova Scotia. Kindred and NSRAP have just begun to focus on lobbying the province – the first ever NDP government in Nova Scotia – to have gender identity included in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act.

"We've had some meetings with the right people in government about it," he says, pointing to Nova Scotia's minister of justice, Ross Landry. "There's a willingness to tackle the question."

Kindred says the issue seems to be not one of support, but of process and timing. "The questions [are] when is the right time to introduce something like that in the legislature, and what kind of background materials we need to get to them," he explains.

The government communications bureaus in Nova Scotia are comically opaque. But there have been positive meetings with NSRAP this year. "The minister looks forward to more dialogue with this group and the broader community on these important issues," says Ross McLaren, communications director for the justice department.

It's a new space for Kindred to work as an activist, one that he's found refreshing.

"I've never been part of the movement at a time when you needed to explain to people that sexual orientation wasn't a disease or gay people aren't all sexual perverts," he explains. "Those kinds of stereotypes . . . they never went away. But people in polite company weren't willing to come up to me in polite company and say, 'Prove to me that you're not a sexual deviant.'"

"Not that I'm not a sexual deviant," he jokes, before becoming more serious.

"The trade-off of [discussions around] gender identity being relatively new is that . . . you can have real conversations about it."

The struggles Kindred identifies for the movement in Nova Scotia might be different from the ones activists from "the centre of the Earth" expect. The first one he points out is city-dweller snobbery.

"I do sometimes encounter, working on issues that have national scope, some lack of understanding of the kind of sophistication of the ability of activists outside of Toronto," he notes. "During the same-sex marriage movement, there was a bit of tension . . . 'Do we trust the activists outside of Ontario to go to court with their cases? Will they competently argue the issue?'"

Kindred also craves more national support so municipalities outside of Toronto can support and learn from one another.



“We still, in Canada, lack a really good nationwide network of activists,” he says. “There aren’t a lot of forums where activists from across the country get together and strategize and talk about each other’s plans.”

Fellow activist Numer says he relies on Kindred’s candour to cut through some of what he calls the “Maritime style of talking about things behind closed doors.

“I think we’ve made a lot of progress in recent years, and I think we still have a lot more challenges to overcome,” Numer says. “And I don’t think it just gets better. It takes the work of dedicated, committed people like Kevin to make these changes . . . so people can feel free to live openly.”



January 2012

prideHealth wants you!

Xtra, 2011-03-31
Simon Thibault, Xtra Down East

Yes, they do.

prideHealth is holding a round table discussion this Thursday, Feb 2 at Veith House. The event starts at 7pm and runs until 9. According to Cybelle Rieber, prideHealth coordinator, the event is a way to learn how to better serve the rainbow community. “prideHealth is a program that is designed to increase access to healthcare, the broad spectrum of healthcare, to the GLBTIQ communities here in Halifax,” she said in an email to Xtra. “The program exists because of a recognition that the GLBTIQ populations are underserved in healthcare and Capital Health and the IWK want to change that. prideHealth cannot do this alone, and this program needs the input and the ideas from the community.” Many people in the queer community face obstacles when accessing healthcare, so this is a way for individuals to talk about their own needs and wants within the healthcare system.

Currently, prideHealth has outreach programs in effect at various sites within the HRM, including an open clinic held every two weeks at Menz Bar. For more information, check out prideHealth’s website, or email them.



February 2012

Transgendered Halifax man upset by new travel ID rule

CBC, 2012-02-04

A recent regulation introduced by Transport Canada has some people in the transgendered community worried. The regulation states that a passenger can be denied entry to board a plane if they don't appear to be the gender indicated on the piece of identification they present.

Tucker Bottomley, of Halifax, has had some pretty awkward moments at the airport. "I was going through the metal detector and I beeped and they pulled me aside and they thought that I was a boy," he said Friday. "So, the guy body guard started to pat me down a little bit and then he sort of stopped for a second and asked me if I was a girl."

Before changing his first name to Tucker, Bottomley used to go by the name Anna. That's still the name on his passport. He's concerned about Transport Canada's new rule.

"It's kind of worrisome because no one wants to be judged in a public place on, you know, what their identification card says as opposed to what they look like in person," Bottomley said.

Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project spokesman Kevin Kindred said transgendered people often have to travel with medical documents explaining their situation.

Kindred said the new rule isn't fair.

"I think it's clearly evidence of the government overshooting the mark for security purposes without thinking about the impact it has on minorities, and we've seen that in any number of ways since 2001," he said. "But here's the most recent example and it's impacting the transgendered community."

Transport Canada insists the new rule will not prevent transgendered people from flying.

It said it isn't aware of any situation where a transgender person with a medical document was barred from boarding a plane since the rule was introduced last July.

Meet prideHealth

Xtra, 2012-02-09

Simon Thibault / National / Thursday, February 09, 2012

NOVA SCOTIA / Halifax program aims to bridge queer healthcare gap



Cybelle Rieber tells the story of a conversation she once had with a physician:

“The doctor told me, ‘I’ve been doing this work for a long time, and no one has ever told me they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered. I wonder: should I be doing more to make this a safe space?’” Rieber pauses a moment: “I thought that was a great question.”

Rieber is the coordinator of prideHealth, a program mandated to create access to healthcare and safe spaces for people in Nova Scotia’s queer communities. Funded by the Capital District Health Authority (CDHA) and the Izaak Walton Killam Health Centre (IWK), it is the only queer health resource of its kind funded by a health authority in eastern Canada. Two part-time staff – Rieber and nurse specialist Anita Keeping – run the program.

“We heard from the community that a lot of people just don’t feel comfortable going into healthcare institutions and settings,” she says.

Rieber’s work is not confined entirely to hospitals. During a recent syphilis outbreak in Halifax, for example, she took a small group of individuals from the health authority to a local bathhouse.

“They wanted to understand the culture,” she points out. “They wanted to see where men are hooking up here in the city. They wanted to understand it.”

Understanding how and where men hook up for sex is only one of the things Rieber wants her colleagues to know. Transgender individuals, for example, face special issues in terms of names and pronoun usage. Rieber aims to educate medical professionals about cis-sexism and gender identity.

“Sure, on documentation, there has to be a legal name, but people use chosen names as well,” she says. “I tell professionals to ask people, ‘How would you like me to address you, how do you identify yourself?’ I ask people to imagine, ‘How would you want someone to treat you?’”

Keeping does most of her work in the community. She keeps regular monthly hours at four locations across the city: Menz Bar, the AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia, The Youth Project and an organization that works with street-involved sex workers called Stepping Stone. She provides counselling, administration of hormone injections, testing for certain sexually transmitted infections and anonymous HIV testing.

She also arranges special meetings with those who can’t or don’t wish to meet at regular locations during regular hours. It’s a commitment to privacy that makes prideHealth a good fit for organizations like Stepping Stone. Rene Ross, Stepping Stone’s executive director, says it’s part of what helps prideHealth foster trust.

“The great thing about programs like this is that it really brings the services to the patients or to potential patients,” says Ross. “Many individuals have experienced discrimination in one way or another from the healthcare system.”



Rieber and Keeping have been working to raise prideHealth's profile. They recently created an It Gets Better video, featuring staff from all over Capital Health.

They also held a community meeting for those they represent.

"We want to know from the communities how you want prideHealth to show up and continue to do this work," Reiber says.

Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project administrative co-coordinator Kirk Furlotte says the meetings are a step in the right direction.

"Community consultations like this are a good sign that prideHealth itself is trying to figure out how to best serve the community by directly asking members of the community what prideHealth should be in the future."

It's a future for which Reiber remains hopeful.

"We all have a right to equitable health, and we have a right to show up and be treated fairly and be treated with respect," she says. "If people don't even know the ways in which they are not being respectful, or don't even know the ways in which they are not creating space, for us, for people like me and for people like you, then how are they going to make a change?"



March 2012

Halifax looks to create queer business group; Chic-fil-A meets Willam and friends

Xtra, 2011-03-20

Simon Thibault, Xtra Down East

A bunch of queer and business-minded individuals in Halifax are looking to create an LGBTQ business network and possibly a chamber of commerce.

This Thursday, the Canadian Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce will be hosting a meet-and-greet at Pipa Restaurant on Argyle St. Darrell Schuurman, the president of the CGLCC, spoke with Xtra via email about the upcoming event. "The event on the 22nd is the first meeting, and is really meant to gauge the interest level for the formation of a Halifax/Atlantic LGBT Chamber of Commerce," he explains. "The goal is to provide an opportunity for the LGBT business community to get together, network, learn and do business." Schuurman goes on to note that he hopes to host monthly events to help foster opportunities for LGBT business. You can find out more information about how to RSVP at their website.

Speaking of queers and business, it's been reported for a while now that American fast-food chain Chic-fil-A has been backing conservative politicians and groups, leaving many queers upset, not only over their politics, but also about feeling they have to forgo the restaurant's famed snacks and goodies. But RuPaul's Drag Race alum Willam and his friends have decided to say, Fuck it, even if they "make the baby Jesus cry."

This is the trio that should have sung at the end of Bridesmaids.

ISCANS Award Winners

Wayves, 2011-03

On January 20, ISCANS celebrated those in our community who continued to do memorable and awesome work. The winners were: Youth Award: Sheena Jamieson; Pride Award: Ed Savage; Entertainer of the Year - Male: Ewan Love; Entertainer of the Year - Female: Cadence MacMichael; Citizen of the Year: Patrick Daigle; Lifetime Achievement: Dan MacKay; Most Heart in the Community: Liz McQuaid; Rising Star: Fashionista Jones; Best LGBTQ Community Owned Business: My Mother's Bloomers; Most Friendly Organization: NSRAP - Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project; Best Gay Ad: Gaze Magazine; Trans Award: Michelle Mallette; Best Fundraiser: Youth Project Auction; Candle Award: Elderberries; Mentor Award: BullyingCanada.ca ; Making a Difference: Auburn High GSA; The Bitch Award: Deva Station; Best Makeup: Deva Station; Best in Costuming: Heckella Jekyl; Glamour Award: Jenny Blake; Best Comedy: Mrs Stewart; Best Lip Sync: Kristi Davidson.



April 17 - 20, 2012

There was extensive coverage of the murder of Raymond Taavel and the ensuing vigil. Given vast number of articles, only a few select ones are presented here, as best possible, in chronological order. For articles from the 17th, approximate times are indicated after the date.

Homophobic slurs heard during "violent beating death" on Gottingen Street

OpenFile, Halifax, 2011-04-17 (9:30 a.m.)
Posted by Bethany Horne

Halifax Regional Police are investigating a "violent beating death" on Gottingen Street near Menz, a gay bar. CBC's Phonse Jessome reported on CBC Radio this morning that a call came in to police just before 3 a.m.: "a male had been driving by and observed an injured male on the street." The CBC reporter spoke to a witness who also spoke to police: the witness heard an argument, and say they heard a man yelling "faggot" at the other.

From CBC's radio report:

An eyewitness describes a large man (about 260lbs) who attacked two smaller men (around 150 lbs). The attacker pounded the head of one of the smaller men into a window. One of the smaller men managed to run away. The bigger man pounded the second man's head repeatedly into the pavement.

One man was then seen running away. The victim, who police say was assaulted, was seriously injured and died at the scene according to Metro, and was in his 40s according to News 95.7. Jessome reported "it's difficult to say whether we're looking at a hate crime, but the witness did hear the big man using homophobic slurs." With help from the canine unit, police tracked and arrested a 32 year old man who had been hiding in an alley nearby. He is now being questioned.

Here is CBC's online story, which doesn't yet include all these details mentioned on the radio.

Update

The Chronicle-Herald confirms the victim was in his 40s. They report police say "officers found the victim in the street, along with a passerby who had stopped to help him. The witness described seeing someone run away from the area."

Upstate #2

During an 8:30 a.m. news update, back in CBC studio, Phonse Jessome reported that the man police have in custody "is expected to face charges," but that "those charges may not come today." They also played a clip from James, whose last name they are not using, a witness who was "clearly shaken up by what he saw." James said: "There were two friends and one big guy." The attack started on both men, but one ran away. " (The attacker) ran after the first guy but couldn't get to him ... He went after the other and focused on him too much."



Violent Gottingen Street beating victim identified

OpenFile Halifax, 2011-04-17 (10:24 a.m.)
Posted by Bethany Horne

UPDATE #3 (10 a.m.)(Headline changed from "Homophobic slurs heard during "violent beating death" on Gottingen Street" to "Violent Gottingen street beating victim identified."

Sources have confirmed that the victim of the Gottingen Street fatal beating was Raymond Taavel, of Halifax. Taavel was a longtime Menz Bar regular, quoted in this 2006 article about a Menz Bar beer.

Raymond Taavel was currently working as Assistant Circulation Manager at the Shambhala Sun, the best-selling Buddhist magazine published in Nova Scotia.

He was an activist: he worked with Fair Vote Nova Scotia, to promote electoral reform. And he promoted marriage equality through his work for Halifax Pride.

This isn't the first time Taavel was attacked for being gay. In May 2010 he wrote in Wayves Magazine about a "chilling assault at Pizza Corner."

According to GayHalifax:

Raymond got involved with Pride Week organizing in 2001. In 2003 he took over the highest profile job, that of co-chair.

In 2004 after several years of writing articles and press releases, Raymond joined the production team of Wayves Magazine until January 2011, when he had plans to change the world in new ways.

Above all other things Raymond was an idealist; he believed that a perfect world was attainable—with just a little more work. In his words, "It's a big world out there; on so many levels there's much that needs to be done."

The Chronicle-Herald of the victim who described Raymond as "probably the most harmless person I have ever met."

Raymond Taavel killed on Gottingen Street

The Coast, 2011-04-17 (12 p.m.)
Tim Bousquet

Developing story



Raymond Taavel, a long-time and respected fixture in Halifax's gay community, was killed last night outside Menz Bar on Gottingen Street.

As of this writing (noon on Tuesday), Halifax police have only issued one statement, saying that a 32-year-old man is in custody. A CBC news report, however, describes circumstances that suggest Taavel and another man were attacked by someone using homophobic slurs.

Taavel was a gay activist who wrote for Wayves Magazine, a local gay publication, and held a day job at Buddhist magazine Shambhala Sun magazine as the assistant circulation manager, says his boss, editor Barry Boyce.

"I heard the news of a horrible gay bashing on Gottingen Street, and the first thing I thought is, 'what was Raymond doing about it?' And then a constable showed up at office this morning to tell the news," says Boyce, who is clearly traumatized by Taavel's death.

Boyce describes Taavel as a deeply reflective Christian, and the two often worked late together, discussing their respective religions "He'd often talk about the contemplative aspects of Christianity and what real Christianity was all about, explains Boyce. "One of his interests was that the love aspect of Christianity had been given the back seat. He thought Christianity wasn't about ideology or doctrine, but about your heart. He thought the Dalai Lama was a good Christian."

Taavel was "a fierce activist, but I was proud that he was not an in your face activist He had a turn-the-cheek-attitude," says Boyce. "I never detected him as going on the aggressive defence.

"Raymond was the life of the party," continues Boyce. "He was the kind of guy you always planned to see. He cheered you up. He was a loose, gangly, handsome joyful guy.

"I'm going to miss him terribly."

In 2010, Taavel wrote about being punched one night, after leaving Menz Bar and while having a slice at Pizza Corner:

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.

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

[...] 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.

Halifax murder victim Raymond Taavel had a 'lovely, joyous presence'

National Post, 2011-04-17 (3 p.m.)

By Allison Cross

To the man who worked beside him for 13 years, Halifax murder victim Raymond Taavel was a passionate “activist without anger.”

“He had a lovely, joyous presence,” said Barry Boyce, a senior editor who worked alongside Mr. Taavel at Shambhala Sun magazine in Halifax for 13 years.

Mr. Boyce paused to clear his throat. “You couldn’t stay mad at him for more than 35 seconds” he told the National Post, his voice shaking. “He was a real sweet guy.”

Mr. Taavel died early Tuesday morning after he was beaten outside a gay bar in downtown Halifax. Police were called to Gottingen Street at about 2:40 a.m., where they found Mr. Taavel lying bloody in the street.

Police have made an arrest over the death, but Const. Brian Palmeter of the Halifax Regional Police said it was too early to speculate on whether the homicide was a hate crime. The suspect will likely face charges in provincial court on Wednesday.

The victim tried to break up a fight between the suspect and a different man, Const. Palmeter said. The suspect then turned on the victim.

“The person we have in custody was reported missing from the East Coast Forensic Unit,” Const. Palmeter said.

“He was on an unescorted short leave and failed to return. We were contacted approximately 15 minutes after he was scheduled to return and we had been out looking for him earlier in the evening.”

A witness saw the suspect run away from the scene. Police dogs were able to track down the 32-year-old man, who was hiding in a nearby alley.

The assault, according to the Halifax Chronicle-Herald, happened outside the Menz & Mollyz Bar, a gay bar. Police did not name the victim but friends and co-workers identified him as Mr. Taavel, a 49-year-old activist, writer and the former editor of Wayves, a gay and lesbian magazine.

Until his death, he was also the assistant circulation manager for Shambhala Sun and Buddhadharma magazines. As Mr. Boyce arrived at work on Tuesday morning, he knew about the attack, but did not



know the name of the victim. “My first thought was, ‘what would Raymond do about this?’” Mr. Boyce said.

“But I got into the office and a constable had already been here. We’re in shock. The staff haven’t left but we’re not getting any work done today.”

Originally from Sault St. Marie, Mr. Taavel was a Christian who “really lived those values,” Mr. Boyce said. “He was a big proponent of the values of love and compassion,” he said. “We spent a lot of time talking.”

News of Mr. Taavel’s death spread quickly across Halifax, as friends and acquaintances tweeted about his death and organized a vigil on Facebook. Friends called him an “inspiring” and “vibrant” person.

In a 2010 story published in *Wayves*, Mr. Taavel described how he was the victim of an assault because of his sexual orientation. While waiting in line to buy some pizza, a man asked Mr. Taavel if he was gay. When he said he was, the man hit him in the head. Mr. Taavel wrote about how he followed the assailant as he called 9-1-1. “It reminded me first-hand about how vulnerable we are, even when we don’t think so,” he wrote.

“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.”

An autopsy on Mr. Taavel was to be performed on Tuesday morning. Investigators from the Halifax police and the RCMP are asking anyone with information about the incident to call 902-490-5016. Anonymous tips can also be sent to Crime Stoppers at www.crimestoppers.ns.ca.

A vigil for Mr. Taavel has been planned for Tuesday night at Menz Bar from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Friends remember Taavel with vigils, tributes

Chronicle-Herald, 2011-04-17 (11 p.m.)
By Selena Ross

Within hours of Raymond Taavel’s beating death early Tuesday, hundreds of people grieving over the news had found ways to remember him publicly, taking part in a series of vigils and other memorials across the Maritimes.

Several hundred people held candles and sang on Gottingen Street in Halifax, outside Menz & Mollyz bar, on the spot where Taavel was fatally assaulted early Tuesday morning. They listened as the activist’s friends, mostly leaders in the gay community, recounted memories of him, often crying into the microphone.



Taavel would have wanted people to come together, but not in anger, they said. "He made you happy every God damned time you saw him," said Taavel's boss, Barry Boyce, at Shambhala Sun magazine. "He was a passionate activist without anger."

The crowds shut down the street with no warning to the city. After the event, hundreds stood around, quietly talking. "I love this sort of spilling into the street," said Allison Brewer, a local resident who said she came to honour Taavel's accomplishments. "This is a community, and we're all in the street tonight. Usually we're all behind closed doors. We've claimed the street as our own."

Sources who knew Taavel said they believe his assailant uttered a gay slur during the attack. But suspect Andre Noel Denny, 32, has a history of psychiatric problems and violence. As details unfolded through Tuesday, uncertainty over the attacker's motivations didn't put a damper on many requests to honour Taavel, said Kirk Furlotte of the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project, the group that organized the Gottingen Street vigil.

Many attendees also wanted to make a statement about homophobic violence in the wake of Taavel's death, he said. "There's an underlying current of homophobia in it, regardless of whether that was the motivation or not."

The group considered holding the vigil in the Grand Parade but decided that it belonged on Gottingen Street, where marchers could "reclaim" the street after the violent death. "We want to be in that space and let other people know that we are here," he said. "That we can use that space, that it is safe for us, you know — that hopefully this was an isolated incident."

A small group of students from the University of King's College marched from their campus to the vigil.

Another vigil took place in Antigonish, and a third is set for Sydney on Friday.

People in Fredericton and in Scots Bay, near Cape Split, said on Facebook they were trying to organize their own vigils.

The website GayHalifax also posted a special page in tribute to Taavel, and Wayves magazine, where Taavel was a former longtime editor, announced it would dedicate its May issue to him. A special show will be held Sunday night at Menz & Mollyz to raise funds for a donation to charity in Taavel's name, speakers said at the vigil.

Throughout Halifax, businesses and residents hung rainbow flags in their windows, an idea encouraged on Facebook by a Haligonian who didn't know Taavel but was shaken by the "senseless" violence of his death. The flags are meant "to demonstrate that our community stands beside the LGBTQ community in this difficult time and that we condemn all violence, homophobic or otherwise," the person, who wished to remain anonymous, wrote in a message.

Venus Envy on Barrington Street had sold out of flagpole-sized rainbow flags by Tuesday afternoon, said owner Maggie Haywood. She said the health clinic on Gottingen Street bought "quite a few" for



neighbouring businesses. Their windows created a colourful corridor on the block where Taavel was killed.

More flags flew on Barrington, said Haywood, who knew Taavel. "He was just such a lovely man, so friendly," she said. "He, more than anyone, would have loved to see Halifax blanketed in rainbows." The store has now restocked its flags and will sell them as close to cost as possible at about \$10 each, Haywood said.

On Gottingen, between the huge rainbows, a shrine grew all day near Cornwallis Street, with home-made art, flowers and a wreath. By the end of the day, it was several metres long and people were still leaving bouquets. "This is a really painful loss for the community I'm part of," said a 21-year-old King's College student, crying. "Even though I didn't know him, it could have been anyone."

Haligonians gather to remember Raymond Taavel

Xtra, 2011-04-17 (11 p.m.)

HALIFAX / Hundreds hold vigil at scene of gruesome murder

Hundreds of people gathered in Halifax April 17 to hold vigil for Raymond Taavel, the gay activist who was murdered early that morning after leaving a Halifax gay bar.

An account of the vigil

By Simon Thibault

Walking down Gottingen St, you can see people getting ready.

They're getting ready to tell stories, shed tears and pay homage to a friend who passed away this morning.

There are rainbow flags along this block of Gottingen. It's not unusual to see them here, as there are two gay bars on this street, as well as a bathhouse. But it would be difficult to remember a time when there were as many. They vary in size and shape, from flags that are a few feet across to small pennants. They are put up in windows and draped in front of storefronts. They're even hanging off small shrubs, flapping in the warm wind.

Across the street from the two gay bars, and just a few steps away from the bathhouse, is a chainlink fence. For years, there was an abandoned building here, derelict and deserted. It was a blight on this block. You could smell the mould inside of it when you walked past. The neighbours and business owners complained and it was finally torn down. The chainlink fence is there to keep people out.



Today, the fence serves a nobler purpose. It is there to hang wreaths, to hold candles and artwork. It is there where people leave notes for Raymond Taavel. It is here where he was murdered.

Not long before 3am on April 17, Raymond Taavel passed away. He had been beaten to death. Police have a man in custody and according to reports, will be charged with second-degree murder.

The memorial is set to begin at 7. By 6:30, there is already a crowd of about 100 people lining up on the sidewalks of Gottingen St. Some of them are by the makeshift memorial by the fence; others stand by the doors of Menz Bar, where a set of speakers, a microphone and a two-stepped riser is set up. Kevin Kindred, of NSRAP, arrives in front of the bar. He will be the emcee for the evening.

There are red and misted eyes everywhere. People are shaking their heads. Chins and jaws shake as people try not to cry. The vigil hasn't even begun. People are passing out small candles to light.

People continue to arrive. Conversations are struck and memories are shared. Many people take note of the growing number of mourners who are arriving. Just as many stay silent, nodding to one another; they know why they are there but choose not to discuss it. Not yet. It only happened this morning.

By 7, the crowd is near three hundred people. Journalists are setting up cameras; microphones and portable recorders can be spotted throughout the growing mass of people. Someone asks people to please move. They want to unfurl a large pride flag in the middle of Gottingen St. It is more than 15 feet long and is held aloft by a dozen people. Someone asks for a song. One person, then two, then three begin to sing "Amazing Grace." The crowd picks up the slack and sings along.

Kevin Kindred takes to the microphone and thanks everyone for coming. He introduces Doug Melanson, the owner of Menz and Mollyz Bar. Taavel had closed the bar the previous evening. Melanson tells a story about how Taavel had been playing songs from the jukebox that night. At five in the morning, after Melanson and his staff had told the police their stories, the jukebox turned itself on. It started to play the last songs requested on it. Among them were "Solsbury Hill" by Peter Gabriel, and "To Be Real" by Cheryl Lynn. Doug and his staff stood there, no one moving or saying a word. They just let the songs play.

More people come up to speak, friends and colleagues. Performer Jason Rose-Spurrell, better known as Rouge Fatale, goes up to the mic, saying that he would rather sing than speak. "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" comes out loud through the speakers. No one sings along; they just listen intently.

The crowd is more than five hundred strong now. People are crying, quietly. Heads are down.

More speakers come. They tell stories of Raymond. How he loves to dance. How he makes people smile. How he pisses them off and how they can never be mad at him for very long. How compassionate he is. How kind he is. None of the speakers use the past tense in talking about him. Not one.



A group of local singers is invited to come and sing. They perform “(As I Went) Down to the River to Pray.” Cameras click and roll, taking in images. People in the crowd begin to sing, ignoring the media. The song ends and a lone voice says, “Thank you.” The crowd applauds.

More stories are told. A local councillor, Dawn Sloane, takes the stage and jokes that she is a mess. People laugh a little. She begins to cry, turning away from the mic. She tells the story of how Raymond and she used to dance to Cheryl Lynn’s “Got To Be Real.” She begins to cry again. And then she tells the crowd how much Raymond is loved. She jokes, wondering who else could close down Gottingen St on such short notice without city permission.

Tanya Davis, Halifax’s poet laureate, is invited to speak. She reads a poem about the events unfolding. The crowd is quiet and reverent. She recites, “And now a being of this tribe of love is gone, and we are one less strong in a battle we are tired of fighting in the first place. Lay down your arms, peace is your birthright.”

Peace.

Throughout the event, people speak of Raymond’s love of peace and hope. How he had hope for everything and everyone. How he would be pleased to see so many people, here for him. It’s eight o’clock. The vigil is over. The crowd begins to disperse. People leave, hugging one another.

Accused in gay man's death returned to hospital

CBC News, 2011-04-18 (12:30 p.m.)

Andre Denny charged with 2nd-degree murder of Raymond Taavel

The Nova Scotia man charged with murdering a gay rights activist has been sent back to the hospital where he was supposed to be the night of the brutal beating.

Andre Noel Denny, 32, is charged with second-degree murder in the death of Raymond Taavel.

He was remanded to the East Coast Forensic Hospital for an assessment after a brief court appearance today.

Many of Taavel's friends showed up at the Halifax courthouse for the latest development in a case that has shocked the city. Taavel, 49, was killed outside Menz Bar, a popular gay club on Gottingen Street in Halifax, early Tuesday. Police said it appears Taavel tried to break up a fight between two men after leaving the bar.

Two witnesses told police the attacker used a homophobic slur. One witness told CBC News that Taavel's head was repeatedly slammed into the street. Denny was arrested in a nearby alley shortly after the



attack. He is a patient who failed to return to the East Coast Forensic Hospital in Dartmouth after a one-hour leave.

Denny was sent to the facility after being found not criminally responsible on a charge of assault causing bodily harm in Sydney. Lawyer Pavel Boubnov, who represented Denny in that case, told CBC News that Denny should not have been on the streets.

Boubnov spoke with Denny on Tuesday after his arrest. "I'm not a psychiatrist, I'm a lawyer. But I base this conclusion on his past history, especially his past history of mixing alcohol and anti-psychotic medication," Boubnov said.

Boubnov said Denny was diagnosed with schizophrenia when he was 15. He said his former client only becomes violent if he drinks alcohol, which he was doing Monday night. "When his illness is under control he is not a violent person," Boubnov said. He said Denny is a "very, very sick man."

"His version, to my understanding, is that he was being attacked, he was under attack and he fought to protect himself," Boubnov said.

Police investigate possible hate crime

Capital Health, the health authority that runs the hospital, has launched an internal review into the matter.

In court documents, Denny is described as suffering from paranoid schizophrenia. He is also described as being grossly psychotic with a history of aggressive impulsivity and unpredictability. Police said they were still investigating the motive, but they haven't ruled out a possible hate crime. Boubnov said Denny didn't express any homophobic sentiments while they were working together.

Hundreds of mourners took part in a vigil Tuesday night to remember Taavel, a former chairman of Gay Pride week events and a well-known editor for Wayves magazine.

Candles burned at the site near Menz Bar overnight.

Halifax gay bar owner launches fund for slain activist's family

Toronto sun, 2011-04-20
By Sheena Goodyear

The owner of a Halifax gay bar has set up a fund for the family of slain activist Raymond Taavel and two more vigils will be held in his honour.

Taavel, 49, was beaten to death early Tuesday morning, allegedly at the hands of a man who was supposed to be in a mental-health corrections facility at the time. The news has sent shockwaves



throughout the city's gay community and sparked a provincial review of the circumstances under which his alleged killer, 23-year-old Andre Denny, was given an unescorted pass from the East Coast Forensic Hospital in Burnside, N.S. The pass, issued Monday night, was supposed to be for one hour, but Denny didn't return.

Doug Melanson, the owner of Menz & Mollyz, where Taavel was a regular and spent his last night playing songs on the jukebox, has set up a fund to help Taavel's mother and brother in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., deal with funeral and other final expenses. Taavel grew up in Sault Ste. Marie, but moved to Halifax in the early '90s.

Donations to the Raymond Taavel Trust Fund can be made at any TD Canada Trust branch to the account number 0036 - 6399950.

Denny, who has a history of mental illness and was found not criminally responsible for aggravated assault last fall, is charged with second-degree murder in Taavel's slaying, but is claiming self-defence. He's currently undergoing a 30-day psychiatric assessment to determine whether he is fit to stand trial. Witnesses to the killing are calling it a hate crime, claiming to have seen a large man yelling homophobic slurs at Taavel and another man before attacking. Police say they are investigating all possible motives. Taavel was a former chair of Halifax Gay Pride and was a longtime editor of the LGBT magazine Wayves. He was also a community activist who fought for electoral reform.

About a 1,000 people turned up at a vigil Tuesday night outside Menz & Mollyz. A vigil is scheduled for Friday in Sydney, N.S., and another Tuesday in St. John's, N.L.



April, 2012

Transgender man fights hysterectomy bill

CBC, 2012-06-23

Jessiah MacDonald says surgery should be covered by provincial medical plan

A transgender man in Nova Scotia has filed a human rights complaint after he was handed a \$3,400 bill for a hysterectomy that he claims was medically necessary.

In an exclusive interview with the CBC, Jessiah MacDonald said the province's Medical Services Insurance is charging him for sexual reassignment surgery because it doesn't cover that operation.

MacDonald, 24, had the surgery in 2010. He insists in the time leading up to the operation that he was never told he would have to pay. "I felt it was wrong because despite my gender, I still have pieces of my body and if a piece of my body gets sick, I expect it to be treated as any other piece."

Handed \$3,400 surgery bill

Born Jessica MacDonald, Jessiah always felt different growing up. At 18, he told his family he wanted to be a man and started taking testosterone pills. Medical problems began. MacDonald went to a gynecologist after experiencing abdominal pain.

"The gynecologist had mentioned during the consult that I had a small uterus and she could feel multiple polyps during the internal exam, and that was sufficient enough for her to suggest a hysterectomy. But there was no mention then that it was only if I was female. There was no mention in the nine months between that and the surgery date."

Several other women in his family, including his mother, had hysterectomies before they turned 30, MacDonald said. "The gynecologist said I had two options to deal with the symptoms I was having. The first would be to take birth control to raise my estrogen levels but she ruled that out as an option because I take testosterone. I'm a man. And the second option was the abdominal hysterectomy, which was her suggestion."

In October 2010, MacDonald went to the IWK Health Centre in Halifax and had the operation. He said after he woke up, his doctor gave him a bill for \$3,400. He said he was stunned. "I was fairly angry and I'm sure that was apparent as it was on my face. I'm fairly certain I started crying before they left the room and they couldn't have been in my room for more than 10 minutes tops. It was more like, 'Here's your bill, we'll help you pack your stuff ... please get out.'"

A week later, MacDonald said he discovered that MSI considered his operation sexual reassignment surgery. "Once I got back home, I ended up having to take the staples out myself because no one could guarantee that the follow-up care would be covered as well," he said.



Files human rights complaint

MacDonald said it was never his intention to have a hysterectomy for sexual reassignment. Full reassignment involves a series of reconstructive surgeries. MacDonald hired lawyer Kathryn Dumpke, who is transgender herself, and filed a human rights complaint against MSI.

"I have never heard and I don't think anybody has ever heard of a case where a condition needed treatment and the treatment was denied because MSI questioned that it wasn't medically necessary," Dumpke said.

MacDonald and Dumpke want MSI to cover the surgery and change its policy so transgender people can have a hysterectomy if medically necessary. "Someone's got to talk about it because if I don't stand up and say this is what happened to me and this is why it was wrong, then what if it happens to somebody else?" MacDonald said.

The case could be heard by a human rights tribunal if no agreement is reached. The two sides have communicated, Dumpke said, but at this point it looks like the case will go to a hearing.

The Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness would not comment because the case is before the commission. However, the department confirmed that this is the first time that a transgender person has complained about not being covered for a hysterectomy.

MacDonald's doctor is out of the country and was unavailable to comment.



May 2012

Memorial service held in Halifax for slain activist

CTV, 2011-05-07

CTVNews.ca Staff

Friends and colleagues gathered in Halifax Sunday for a public memorial service for Raymond Taavel, a well-known gay rights activist who died last month after being beaten outside a bar. About 200 mourners walked from Grand Parade to St. Matthew's United Church, where the memorial service was held.

During the memorial, Rev. Jennifer Paty hailed Taavel's friends for speaking out in the wake of his death with compassion and forgiveness. "The healing power of this community ... and the togetherness of this community has always kept me in awe," she told the packed church.

NDP MP Megan Leslie told mourners that her first instinct after learning of her friend's death was to blame someone. But she said her thoughts turned to other, more important concerns and questions, such as what factors led to Taavel's death. "Was it a failure of us, as a community, as a society?"

"This story has many victims. But we have done Raymond proud. We have risen to the challenge. ...We have been informed and we have been compassionate." In a public letter written in April, Taavel's family thanked Halifax residents for their support and compassion in the days following his death.

"We are overwhelmed by the people of Halifax and Nova Scotia and your explosion of compassion and love for our son and brother," read the letter. "We are so grateful for what you have done and are doing in Raymond's memory. We do not mourn alone when you mourn with us. You will never know what this meant for us."

In the letter, Taavel's family also praised the compassion shown to the accused. "Despite the psychiatric release system failing Raymond, you accented his life's work and not the tragedy. Even the accused has received compassion, and Raymond would have liked that," it read. "It is easy to be angry, but your kind words wipe away the anger."

Taavel died April 17 after being beaten outside Menz Bar on Gottingen Street. Andre Denny, a patient at the East Coast Forensic Hospital, was charged with second-degree murder. On April 17, Denny was overdue from his one hour leave from the psychiatric facility.

Denny was ordered to undergo a psychiatric evaluation and will next appear in court on June 18. Organizers of the memorial event ask that contributions in Taavel's memory be made to The Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project, The Youth Project or Mobile Outreach Street Health.

A private service for Taavel was previously held in Ont., where his family lives.



Wolfville marks day against homophobia

Register-Advertiser, 2011-05-13

The town of Wolfville will be marking the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia May 17.

The rainbow pride flag will be raised at Waterfront Park at the end of a 5:30 p.m.

A number of dignitaries are expected to speak, including Mayor Bob Stead, MLA Ramona Jennex, MP Scott Brison and Kings County Warden Diana Brothers.

Bruce Walker, a national champion for gay rights, will also say a few words.

At 6:30 p.m. two films will be screened at the Al Whittle Theatre: It Gets Better, a video made by Capital Health District employees, and the documentary Edie and Thea.

Halifax Marks Day against Homophobia and Transphobia

Halifax Media Co-op, 2011-05-14

May 17th is the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia, and Haligonians will mark the event with a rally this evening at 6 pm at Grand Parade Square. Speakers will include representatives from the Rainbow Refugees Association of Nova Scotia, Halifax Pride, Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project, and many more.

This rainbow-Canada flag is being flown at Prince Andrew High School in Dartmouth this week as a show of support to the LGBTQ community. Despite some reports of complaints from community members (the flag flies in the usual spot of the Canadian flag), the school has kept the flag flying.

Hundreds of high school students are participating in a day of silence today, in solidarity with those who are silenced in many ways by reaction to their sexuality or gender identity.

Halifax gay rights activists rally for acceptance

Metro Halifax, 2011-05-18

By Jennifer Taplin

Gay rights activists, still mourning the recent loss of one of their own, cried out for change during the annual anti-homophobia and transphobia rally at Grand Parade on Thursday.



Raymond Taavel, a well-known Halifax gay rights activist, was beaten to death outside the Menz Bar last month.

“We were saddened, we were scared, we were angry and then came the vigil,” said Krista Snow, Pride chair, whose voice broke a few times during her speech. “Ray would be here today telling us that in order to fight homophobia and transphobia, we must first start with our community’s acceptance of others, what we want from others.”

Several speakers spoke about the plight of gay people around the world and the discrimination and civil rights infractions that still exist. And there’s still lots of work to do in Canada, said Hugo Dann, a well-known community gay activist, including immigration and same-sex couples.

A little uncomfortable in the spotlight, Jessiah MacDonald talked about his experience of launching a human rights complaint against the province for not covering his hysterectomy.

“I felt it’s important we’re seen as equals. If I have a medical reason, I should be treated just the same as if I was a woman,” he said. “We need to stand up and put our faces out there and it’s a time that we’re not afraid anymore.”

He said there’s not much activism at home in Pictou County and he loves to come to Halifax for the support.

“It’s nice to be welcomed with all that love,” he said.

At the end of the rally, the participants held hands in an attempt to make a human chain around the Grand Parade. A rainbow flag was hoisted inside the Grand Parade to mark the International Day Against Homophobia.



June 2012

Salon owner suggests 'gaybourhood watch' to fight crime

CTV, 2011-06-01

With files from CTV Atlantic's Kayla Hounsell

An attack on a gay man has prompted a Halifax salon owner to think outside the box when it comes to violent crime.

Jay Wells says violence is increasing and something needs to be done about it. He says the solution may be a "Gaybourhood Watch," which would be similar to a neighbourhood watch. "Just being conscious, you know. If you see somebody leaving a car alone drunk, or if you notice somebody walking home, put them in a cab," says Wells. "I've been attacked before...everybody that works in this salon has suffered violence in the past few years."

The incident that spurred Wells to action happened on Brunswick Street when a man's phone was robbed and he was beaten up. Wells says the victim is a client at his salon. "You know, he's got stitches from here to here, apparently, and his teeth are all chipped," says Wells.

The latest incident comes less than two months after gay rights activist Raymond Taavel was beaten to death outside of a gay bar on Gottingen Street. "After Raymond Taavel's death, we keep hearing more and more from the community about their experience of violence," says Kevin Kindred of Nova Scotia Rainbow Action. "So I think it's really worthwhile that we try as a community to put our heads together and think about what strategy we should be using to respond."

Police say the latest victim happens to be gay but there is no indication at this time that the man's sexual orientation was the motivation behind the attack. "At this point we believe this was a random incident and we believe it was a result of him offering somebody to use their phone and they end up taking off running with it," says Const. Brian Palmeter of the Halifax Regional Police.

Either way, Wells says it is time to start looking at the bigger picture and that, he says, starts with discussion.

It Wasn't A Hate Crime

GayGuideHalifax.com, 2011-06-01

By John Williams

ASSAULT :: Laying eyes on Troy Bellefontaine for the first time since he was assaulted in the early morning hours of May 24th, I find myself comforted by the fact his injuries aren't more noticeable.



His full head of dark hair conceals most of the fifteen or so staples medical personnel used to close three separate head wounds sustained during the incident and the sleeve of his royal blue hoodie hides a series of painful bumps, bruises and gashes on his left arm. Mouth and teeth-related injuries that have made eating difficult have left his face a little thinner than usual, but the once-blurry vision in his right eye – believed to be caused by the blows he suffered to the head – has since returned to normal. He still experiences the odd dizzy spell, but in a city where violent assaults, shootings, stabbings and homicides have all but become a dime a dozen, he’s well aware the outcome could have been a lot worse.

“Most people don’t get involved,” the 35-year-old make-up artist admits, referring to the still-unknown Samaritan that called the police.

Officers from the Halifax Regional Police Department responded to the 1900 block of Brunswick Street for “an unknown trouble call” at approximately 2:42 a.m., at which time they found Troy, bleeding from the head, and two adult males fleeing the scene. The cops arrested the two men and took them into custody.

Court records identify the men as 19-year-old Robert Charles Simmonds and 24-year-old Jakio Lamar Williams; each faces a single charge of assault causing bodily harm and is scheduled to appear in Halifax Provincial Court on September 6. According to court documents, Simmonds (sometimes referred to in paperwork as Simmons) had been residing at a Park Victoria address but is now living in Hamilton, New Jersey, while Williams’ address is listed as being on the ninth floor of Brunswick Street’s Scotia Towers.

Although the assault received very little attention from Halifax media outlets (despite the fact it occurred just one street over from the Police Department’s 1975 Gottingen Street headquarters), whispers Troy may have been the victim of a potential hate crime began to circulate throughout the city.

Troy is openly gay.

“A lot of people have been asking if that had anything to do with it,” says the Eastern Shore District High grad, who just prior to the assault had been patronizing Menz Bar on Gottingen with friends. “I don’t think it did.”

Troy says he was walking – alert – along Brunswick when he was approached near the Brunswick Street entrance to the Scotia Square pedway by two young women in their early 20s who asked if they could borrow his cell phone. He obliged, only to have the pair flee, taking his phone with them; he quickly followed them, demanding it be returned. When they failed to do so – one said she’d thrown it on the ground – he began to yell for someone to call the police.

Troy says the next thing he knew he was getting hit in the head from what felt like every direction, but says the police were quick to arrive and arrest his alleged assailants.

Sent to the QEII Health Sciences Centre via ambulance, he was diagnosed with a concussion, patched up and sent home before 8 a.m. the same morning.



Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project
2011-2012 Media Review

51

While more medical and dental appointments loom in the future, Troy remains optimistic about his recovery and is scheduled to head to Toronto later this month for work. "Can't keep this guy down," he told friends on Facebook this week.

Anyone with information relating to the attack is encouraged to call the Halifax Regional Police Department at 490-5016.