



Pride festivities continue to be an important symbol, here and around the world



TIM RATTEL
Editorial

With the Pride season and summer at an end, I am reflecting on the question I heard in various forums this year: “with the gains that the GLBT community has made in Canada, are Pride festivities and parades still necessary?”

We are used to hearing this kind of cynicism from the community’s traditional opponents and occasionally we hear it from assimilationists, who are embarrassed by certain flamboyant elements in our community and prefer to take their marbles (those exceptional rights – especially gay marriage – we in Canada have fought for and won) and go home to anonymity in the suburbs.

We don’t celebrate our gains, we don’t celebrate our freedom, we don’t celebrate pride... in a vacuum. Our celebrations are a beacon to the rest of the world to places where there is no respect for human rights. Our celebrations are a line in the sand of progress from which we go forward but will not retreat. This year, in Moscow, fledgling pride activities turned into a governmentally-sanctioned assault on pride marchers. In Jerusalem, pride activities were opposed by various levels of government and religious leaders. In Iran, two gay teens were hanged for their love.

HEU members are not just trade unionists: we are social justice advocates. Hanging teens, repressing free speech, and government-sanctioned discrimination are reprehensible to us. It’s not just about our campaigns for medicare, livable wages, etc. In B.C., it is about social justice and human rights all over our world.

Gretchen Dulmage points out in her article that it is important to remember the struggles of the past: how we got to where we are. In the U.S., where the seminal Stonewall riots took place, gay rights are still hotly debated. Even “The Home of the Free” can look to our example.

In Canada, we have a lot to be proud of. We have a lot to celebrate. We have a lot to lose if we become complacent. Last year, my partner and I rushed a January wedding to preempt Stephen Harper and the Conservatives forming the government. As a middle-class couple, we felt the need to take advantage of gay marriage because even in our “liberal” society we felt no guarantee that the new government would let gay marriage stand.

So remember and honour our past; cherish, foster, and take advantage of our gains, and take pride in and celebrate our community.

So far a memorable year



THOMAS MARSHALL
Co-Chair Report

There have been a lot of events this past year that I had the privilege to attend. The first CUPE National Human Rights Conference, the CUPE BC Pink Triangle Conference but the most memorable events that I went to were the Tommy Douglas Conference and HEU Summer School, and participating in the 2007 AIDS Walk for Life.

The S.O.S. Medicare 2, was such a marvellous conference. There were over 600 people from every walk of life that came to hear expert speakers from all across our nation, the USA and Europe. It was truly overwhelming to hear these speakers over and over again say that Public Medicare is sustainable, that the governments can afford it, and there needs to be even more available to the public from supporting Pharmacare to post-secondary education for all.

What can I say about HEU Summer School? Well, I wish every member of HEU was able to participate. I will always remember this time, as I made connections with sisters and brothers of this great union that I will always have in my life. I also learned so much about our members’ troubles and successes, what works and what doesn’t; that as individuals we are very astute and creative, true artists. But most of all, I will value the education that I received in my workshop, knowledge that I used immediately in my personal life as well as in my activism. I thank everyone there for making it an amazing experience.

The 22nd Annual AIDS Walk for Life which was held September 23 at Stanley Park was yet another rewarding experience for the HEU Team. Not only did we collect close to \$8,500.00 in pledges, but we had the privilege of being one of the top four fundraisers. Many times, we were congratulated by the AIDS Walk organizers on the great job we had done. I would like to extend a great thank you to everyone who contributed to the Team by sponsoring us. I would like to give a big hug to the Team members who were comprised of HEU members and staff, family and friends who made it all possible. The AIDS pandemic is not showing any signs of slowing down and it is the contributions raised by people like you and us that go a long way to helping those who are suffering from HIV/AIDS in our community.

So in closing, I would like to encourage all members of HEU, allies and those from the LGBT community to get involved in HEU and in their communities. If we as individuals each talk to people about keeping Medicare public, telling our personal stories, building coalitions, we will reach many others who have not yet realized what the B.C. Liberal agenda means to them.

Solidarity and Pride.

Remembering our History



GRETCHEN
DULMAGE

On Saturday, June 30 my friend and I headed down to Grandview Park for the annual Eastside Pride Celebration on Commercial Drive. Billed as the kickoff event of Vancouver Pride Society’s June 30 to Aug. 2 “Pride Season,” it promised to be a laid back sunny day celebrating with a park full of queers, allies and their dogs.

It did not disappoint.

The live entertainment lineup featured 14 diverse local acts: musicians, singers, belly-dancers, drag kings and burlesque. American Sign interpretation was provided for the hearing impaired. Families with children, lovers and friends relaxed on the grassy lawn, or browsed the display and vendor booths behind the stage. All in all: a lovely community day in the park.

This yearly Pride-on-the-Drive event was originally called the Stonewall Festival. In 2006, the Vancouver Pride Society (VPS) changed the name to Eastside Pride. Apparently, the VPS concluded that Stonewall does not invoke any relationship to Vancouver Pride and the younger generation doesn’t really know what Stonewall is. Therefore, the festival was renamed.

This raises a few questions: On the one hand, it’s a fine thing that we Pink Triangle folk can enjoy a lovely community day in the park celebrating Pride with our neighbours: I certainly had a good time. And community events like Eastside Pride may well be a milestone in the movement toward social acceptance.

On the other hand, I am reminded of the old adage “we who do not study history are doomed to repeat it.”

So what happened at Stonewall 38 years ago? Why is this piece of history so important to our community? Why do we have Pride events all over the world every summer?

In the early morning hours of June 28, 1969, the New York Police raided a gay bar called the Stonewall Inn frequented by many female impersonator, African Amer-

ican, transgender, and Hispanic members of the queer community. It is likely that the Stonewall Inn had been targeted not only for being a gay bar, but also because of its ethnic diversity. And the community fought back... perhaps for the first time. People were beaten and people were arrested, and the community continued to resist. The conflict lasted several days. Reading through interviews and statements by people who participated in the rebellion, I learned that many people witnessed others being beaten or arrested, and didn’t just walk on by and get themselves to safety, they stayed to help the victims.

In the wake of the rebellion, the community mobilized. By the end of July 1969, New York LGBT activists formed the Gay Liberation Front. One of the leaders was a bisexual woman activist named Brenda Howard (sometimes called the “Mother of Pride”). Howard coordinated a first month anniversary rally four weeks after the Stonewall Rebellion. A year later, she organized the Christopher Street Liberation Day March, the first of the Pride celebrations that take place every year in many countries around the world to this day. Brenda Howard also came up with the idea of Pride Week.

I hope this article gives you a taste of the Stonewall Rebellion, and how we came to have yearly Pride events in Vancouver and other cities in B.C. If you find yourself hungry for more, go on the web and get started! Let’s talk it up with our friends. And next year when we march in the Pride Parade or head down to Grandview Park for Eastside Pride, let’s take some time to remember the Stonewall Rebellion.

Images from Pride Parade 2007



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Linda Schulz and Karen McVeigh
Gretchen Dulmage and John Yano (bottom right)
Jim Sinclair and Fred Muzin
Thom Marshall, Victor Elkins and Kevin O'Neil
Thom Marshall, Debbie Lawrance and Victor Elkins
Multi Union Pride banner and participants

An inspired first walk in the Pride Parade



The experience of participating in my first ever Pride Parade was exhilarating to say the least. In my 27 years of "living OUT in the gay life", I had never really been inspired or felt a need to be a part of the actual parade. I was content to enjoy the view from the sidelines.

Then along came my exposure to the amazing HEU/LGBT committee with its stellar members. These extraordinary people have sparked a passion in me like no other. So it was only fitting that I join them in the parade march for Multi Union Pride... and PROUD I WAS: proud to be affiliated with the "world of Unions" and their support for LGBT sisters and brothers. I had a fabulous time. It turned out to be a lot of FUN.

The float itself (that so many people worked very hard on) turned out really well. It spoke volumes about our awareness and support for

global issues. Union members are open-minded, caring, passionate individuals who take a stand on many issues including, lucky for me, gay rights!

So it was the right thing to do to "stand proud" and join the parade in support of Multi Union Pride. I loved it!!

Debbie Lawrance