
Northern Connection

Queer Youth in Northern & Northwestern Ontario

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Someone, Somewhere, Someday

Someone I have never met before, I will meet for the first time. Somewhere I have never gone before, I will someday go. Someday is not yet here, but when I find that day, I shall go out and play. Somewhere is not yet found, but when I find that place, I shall rejoice. There is someone out there and I shall find her. I shall find that someone, somewhere, someday.

Jennifer

Pride! Change! Honesty!



After being "out", for a little over a year, things have become better in many respects. At this most recent point, there isn't much I miss about my old life of being dishonest, and acting unproud in hiding. I keep being warned of all the risks of being "out", too open in Redneckville. Yet in my personal experience, the more I force myself to be open, the more respect I get. I've heard of awful things happening to other people, I'm told they will happen to me, but they just don't now. Can we be overly obsessed with the risk? Do we stop driving because we could be in a car accident? Do we stop crossing the street, in case we're hit by a bus? Persons of color, can't as easily hide who they are. It's not as though the topic of sexuality is never raised. It's a very important part of who we are.

Consider the paralyzing shock value, of complete openness and pride, with someone you've recently met, talking about who you are as a heterosexual would. Imagine that you actually expect to be treated exactly the same way a heterosexual would, and you demonstrate this. Might they respect your moxy, and not see you as easy prey? Imagine you're me, a few years ago. You can't admit who you are. However, there is a



witch hunt for gays in Thunder Bay, and the suspecting bullies involved can smell your fear. They feed off it, and grow stronger with it. Are you really safer cowering in a "closet"? I wasn't.

Many of us are so busy hiding, fearing people won't understand, that we don't even give them a chance to understand. Honesty has huge powers. It can break the rules, forcing people to think before they have a knee-jerk reaction. Of course, one can still be bashed, if they're honest. However, I don't think with the very literal witch hunt that goes on here, people are as safe as they think in their closets. If things do get ugly, I wonder if

it would help to ask Jethro, or Bubba, or Boyd, or Preston, or Deborah, if they can read, and if they know what a serious offence a hate crime is?

Perhaps I've just been lucky since I've been "out". But why on earth, should I want to live my life capitulating to what's becoming an ever smaller number of pea-brained bigots

What if we all just capitulated? How would things ever change? It's only been now, that we're demanding equality, through actually saying who we are, that those winds of change are actually finally roaring into our very own backwater. We will catch up with the rest of the world, sooner than many people think.

Those winds are already blowing. In the last few years, there have been support and social groups for gays and lesbians, come into being in Thunder Bay. Early in this year, two people, me included, wrote letters to the editor to Thunder Bay's Chronicle-Journal, expressing our displeasure with the homophobes writing in, as professed gay males. I don't recall the last time "being gay" was up for debate, during either the Ontario NDP's same-sex spousal legislation, or the amendment to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to include anti-discrimination based on sexual orientation, there

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Love Is Love

STRAIGHT, GAY, WHATEVER WAY



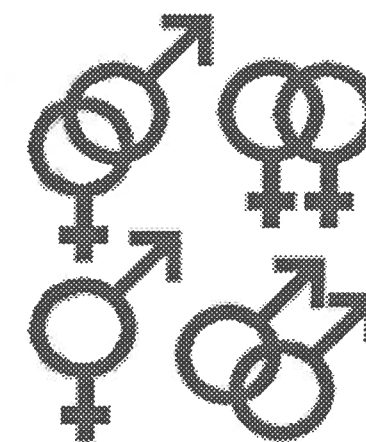
You consider yourself to be a pretty devout child of God and an overall good person. You know what love means: a powerful emotion felt for another person manifesting itself in deep affection and devotion. Therefore, your everlasting love for all of God's creation evolves without bias or prejudice and does not fail for any reason; be it the easy or fashionable way out of God's challenges.

Difference cannot be overcome by hate or discrimination. Rather, it has to be ministered to with love. Difference in our society is often not accepted, mainly because of a lack of education. Education will only occur if a person wants it to. A difference is a test; a test to see if you will stand up to pressure. It is a test for both parties: to see if *the person confronting the different person* can withstand change and pressure against him for the wrong reasons and to see if *the different person* can stand strong against an uneducated and an unaccepting society, which is the biggest test. *People who are not different* and who cannot cope with the difference are subject to collapse and turn on you. Then you have to ask yourself: "Did they really love me in the first place?"

Homosexuality is more than just SEX - gays have just as much of a need for love and comfort as heterosexuals...maybe even more because of the severe neglect they face. If a 'straight' person remains a virgin all their life, they are still labeled as straight. The same applies to gays - a gay who is a virgin is still gay. Many people are gay;

according to statistics: 10% of the population is gay. But, that doesn't mean that this many are out (can accept their homosexuality). Some people stay in the closet (hide their homosexuality) for all of their life, trying to suppress their feelings which may lead to emotional insecurity or depression. Therefore, one doesn't have to admit one's sexuality to someone or oneself in order to be labeled correctly.

God does not hate homosexuals. For a woman or man whose natural desire is towards the same sex, acting in homosexual physical expression is in fact a way of glorifying God and opening the self to use their LOVE in human associations.



Leviticus 18:22 ("Thou shalt not lie with a man as thou would with a woman") refers to condemning unnatural activity. For example, a straight man shall not try to be gay because it is unnatural to them. The same goes for a gay man: a gay man shall not try to be straight because it is unnatural to them. These rules also apply for women. Therefore, it

is not a possibility for a gay to *turn around* and become straight.

The Bible also accepts slavery, and nowhere charges it as unjust; no one can argue that slavery is acceptable today. Throughout the entire Bible, women are said to be inferior to men; there is no way that we would be able to argue this status. There is also a law to kill all divorced people who remarry (divorce was explicitly forbidden under any case by Jesus). These are not likely or even logical possibilities for today's society. Know the truth: God has no prejudice. In a little-remembered statement, Jesus said, "Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?" (Luke 12:57) To Jesus, the LIVING God was always greater than even the words of the Bible. If one *insists* that homosexuality is not accepted by God, then there is a passage for you: "revilers- those who lie and falsely defame others - **CANNOT** see the kingdom of God." (I Corinthians 6:10)

The fact is that there is, behind all of the legal Scripture, an even deeper rule. It is that God sides with the powerless, God liberates the oppressed, God suffers with the suffering and groans toward the reconciliation of all things. Taking into consideration these images, whatever our position on homosexuals, the gospel's duty to love, care for, and be identified with their sufferings is unmistakably obvious.

The opponents of gays refuse to learn the truth about them and about sexual orientation. They insist that sexual orientation is chosen

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MY WORK IN PROGRESS

I was asked to write this article in order to share "my story" as one might call it. But in actual fact, this is not just my story because I am not the only one that affects change. The interaction that we have with other people is what brings about life's little occurrences. Some of these occurrences turn out to be bad and ever so often something good and great happens. For a very long time I felt the bad times far outweighed the good. To counteract that I began to make choices and that is really what life is all about. The choices we make about our lives affect ourselves and all those around us.

It was July 15 of 1996 when I made what might be called the most profound choice of my life. I chose to come out of the closet by telling one of my older brothers (I have three older brothers) that I was gay. I then told my father and two oldest brothers at Christmas and then saved the hardest for last...my mother. It has been a challenge with my family. They feel the need to remind me on a daily basis of all the hardships that I will face as a gay individual yet they are the ones that perpetuate most of the issues. I must admit though, compared to many, my family is quite supportive of who I am. My mother, contrary to what everyone would think, has had the most difficult time. My family is not completely intolerable of me by any means but they have little to no concept of heterosexism. I spend most days arguing with them that they do not notice how the majority of things in society are geared more to the heterosexual population. One can merely watch

any television advertisement to see this.

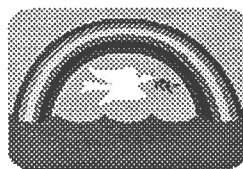
I always thought that after I came out, which I have come to the understanding is not an "event" but an on-going "process", that I would just fit and that all other gay people would be just like me. I was very naive. Each person, gay or straight, is their own person and people do not fit into categories. Just because I am gay and "he" is gay does not mean that we will get along. Some of my best friends are straight and some of my "worst enemies" are gay and vice-versa.

I am only 22 and know that I have no concept of what life's true meaning is but I do have an understanding of where I am now with what little resources I have. I feel like I have finally been born into life. I can finally talk about who I am where I want to be and who I want to be with. Some people tell me that I have come full swing in one year. I am a Youth Outreach Worker at an AIDS Committee, I run a support group for University students coming out, and I am President of my academic program. Even with the stresses that I faced last year I was still able to make the Dean's list and receive a thousand dollar bursary for academic achievement. I share this with you as a reader not to brag, although I am proud, but to merely share that yes we face oppression but at the same time we can be strong. I am doing what I always wanted to do, being myself at work, at home, and out in the community in which I live and I am helping others to do the same.

As I once read, I am not asking people to brand me "good", I am

asking them to stop branding me "evil". Being gay is not a loss but not getting to know me because I am gay is. No shame can ever come to anyone who chooses to live life according to who they are. My father always told me to simply be who I am and that is exactly what I am doing.

Steve
Sudbury



Eat me up
then spit me out
of the forbidden closet
of ecstasy

Touch me calmly
know the centre of my being
then try to lose the integrity
of the Hetero assumption

Feel the heat
and the pressure of knowing
the stigma and losing
a hidden love

Hold me tightly
and in a moment of lost tranquility
allow me to believe in the security
of my familiar home.

ME ☺
Thunder Bay, 1997

Love Is Love (continued)

(Continued from page 3)

and can be changed. Yet it is known that sexual orientation is determined within the earliest years of life by factors no one understands. The ignorant claim that they can "cure" gays, making them heterosexual. These movements have been proven to be cruel hoaxes. They insist that gay people are famous for corrupting the conservative family and way of life. But then, they aren't interested in the truth about gay and lesbian people; they never were. It's a shame that anyone should use to their advantage an imperfect set of morals that were written for their times above the holy gift of love. It's just as bad to sit and watch someone ridicule, and not do something about it.

Jesus had nothing negative to say about homosexuality. Jesus' lifestyle was not one which was based on the way almost all people, especially religious people, were expected to live. Instead of marrying he associated intimately with 12 men. One loved him so much he was called "The Beloved Disciple," or "The disciple whom Jesus loved." One of the last times Jesus was seen alive by the twelve, this disciple was lying with his head on Jesus. He wrote a deep, emotional book about Jesus, called "John."

The love of the Bible reaches out to the minority cliques of the ever-exclusive society full of hate and prejudice. This Love is the powerful force that draws all of God's creation together into one whole. Jesus preached and practiced an inclusive, universal Gospel that set aside cheap morals in favour of Love. As Christians, our law is from Christ. The New Law is the Law of Love.

(Genesis 19:1-28) The story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is an Old Testament passage often used to show that God is displeased with homosexuals. According to many

people, these cities were destroyed because people in these cities committed the "sin of homosexuality." The Bible says God destroyed Sodom because ten righteous people could not be found (Gen 18:32). The men that executed the rape were heterosexual; they sinned for doing something unnatural to themselves, not because it was a homosexual act. The men of the city of Sodom broke the law of hospitality to strangers. If homosexual behaviour was involved in the destruction of Sodom, why didn't the writer use the Hebrew word *ahakabh*, which actually means homosexuality or bestiality? Even if the men of Sodom did make a "homosexual" attack upon the angels, the passage could only serve as a condemnation of rape; rape is a sin under any condition, whether it is heterosexual or homosexual.

A quote that says it all is: "LOVE IS LOVE." It doesn't matter who the love is for or who the love is from or for whichever reason it exists...love is love. Understand and see the truth in the matter. Next time you sing the lyrics: "I've got the love of Jesus, love of Jesus down in my heart, down in my heart, down in my heart!" I've got the love of Jesus, love of Jesus down in my heart, down in my heart to stay..." ...remember the exploration of life as seen here.

Derek, Thunder Bay



Jim, 1998

Pride! Change! Honesty! (cont'd)

(Continued from page 2)

being even one of us writing in. At the time I'm writing this, I'm waiting to see if a second letter of mine is printed. It feels good to do my part to create change. All of us can do our part to ensure honesty, openness, pride, and the change it brings. The fact is, in the western industrialized world today, the vast majority of people support gay rights. The redneck portion of the northwestern Ontario population is getting blown over in those winds of change.

Clint Babula
Thunder Bay

Thunder Bay and Area Advocacy

Over the past number of months, people from Northern Pride have been involved in quite a few workshops and presentations dealing with sexual orientation and discrimination.

The Children's Aid Society, Lakehead Regional Family Centre, and Catholic Family Development Centre have all held workshops for staff on working with lesbian, gay and bisexual youth. Dave and Barb presented a workshop in the fall of 1997 at the national suicide prevention conference titled "Dying In The Closet: Sexual orientation as an often overlooked factor in youth suicide." Fort Frances held a community workshop on sexual orientation called "Homophobia Hurts Us All." Youth have spoken at several regional HIV/AIDS counselling conference held by the AIDS Committee of Thunder Bay. We are prepared to offer workshops to interested groups, schools or agencies on request. Please call Barbara or David for further information.

Rainbow Youth Connection

- Do you want to meet other gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, or transgender youth in Northern Ontario?
- Do you feel isolated, alone or just want to talk to someone else like yourself?
- Are you interested in becoming a penpal?

If you answered Yes to any of these questions, then Rainbow Youth Connection is for you! Follow these steps to become a penpal:

1. Send us your vitals [name (you may use an alias), age, gender (include whether you are Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered), interests/hobbies, and what type of person you would like to meet (age, gender, status (IE: G, L, B, T) to:

**rainbowyc@yahoo.com or
RYC c/o 1438 McGregor Ave.
Thunder Bay, ON P7E 5E6**

Make sure you include your email or snail mail address IN YOUR LETTER. If you have the internet but don't have a personal email address, get one from www.yahoo.com. You may choose to use another address than where you live. (But don't worry, the envelope won't be obvious; it'll say only RYC.)

2. We'll email or snail mail you the list of possible penpals (please specify if you want to use email or snail mail). This list will exclude any sort of address; only RYC will have addresses. All information is confidential.

3. You choose someone to whom you would like to write.

4. Write them a letter.

5. Send it to us (RYC) either by email or snail mail.

6. We will then forward your letter to the person you wrote.

7. Your penpal will then reply to us and we will forward it to you. This is for your security and safety.

Please send an envelope with your return address and a postage stamp (this will help our costs but is not necessary).

8. After you and your penpal have become familiar with each other, you can decide to exchange addresses if you so wish.

For ages up to 25 years old.

Get connected!

Join RYC and meet new people!



Future Issues

Get involved with this newsletter. What is happening or not happening in your community? What would you like to see in future issues?

We will be putting out two more issues, so we need your help to make this a regional newsletter.

After that, the newsletter can only continue if you want it to, AND if you contribute to the contents.

Our planned schedule is:
Issue 3 - Summer 1998
Issue 4 - Autumn 1998

Provincial Services

Efforts continue to expand and provide services for lesbian, gay and bisexual youth throughout Ontario. The Coalition for Services for Lesbian and Gay Youth (CSLGY) has changed its name to Toronto Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Youth (TCLGBY). This will distinguish it from the fledgling Ontario Coalition for Services for Lesbian and Gay Youth (OCSLGY).

If you want to find out about provincial initiatives, check out the TCLGBY website at:

<http://www.interlog.com/~tclgby>
or email at **tclgby@interlog.com**

If you care about services in Northern or Northwestern Ontario, you can become part of the North by Northwest Group of OCSLGY. Simply contact us care of the Northern Connection listings on page 7.