

International Day Against Homophobia 2009: Homosexuality Knows No Borders

The seventh annual **International Day Against Homophobia** will take place on May 17th, 2009. Fondation Émergence, the driving force behind this event, has themed this year's campaign, Homosexuality Knows No Borders. This campaign focuses on helping the general population, including ethno-cultural communities of all backgrounds, be more aware of gay and lesbian issues, and sexual diversity. Further details on this international campaign can be obtained at www.homophobiaday.org.

In many parts of the world violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation or gender identity is far too common and is sadly condoned by governments. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms ensures equal rights of all Canadians. The Ontario Human Rights Code specifically protects Gender identity and sexual orientation. Here in Peterborough, we are thrilled with Mayor Ayotte's declaration of May 17th, 2009 as Peterborough's Day Against Homophobia.

Locally there are good things happening to reduce hate motivated incidences against the queer community. The Peterborough Lakefield Community Police Service Liaison Committee with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Communities has been working to increase broad community awareness specific to hate crime prevention, incident reporting, and overall safety. In addition to this work, RSO, PARN and other local organizations are doing their part to reduce discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Leslie Woolcott, Equity and Diversity Advisor for Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board states, "Eliminating homophobia and heterosexism is a complex task. These forms of prejudice exist in our society. They can be the result of individual bias or institutional policies or practices that favour or adversely affect groups or individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation. The educational community plays a key role in counteracting the biases and stereotypes that feed such prejudice. Through education, we learn about ourselves and one another by valuing diversity and respecting the dignity of all persons. The United Nations affirms the role of education as a means to empower children and adults alike to become active participants in the transformation of society. One of Kawartha Pine Ridge's core values is to embed equity, diversity and inclusiveness into all of our policies, practices, programs and interactions. Schools engage their communities in educational activities that help students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and community members to understand the effect of bias and how stereotypes and prejudice can feed discrimination, limiting us from achieving our full potential."

Rachel Curofsky, coordinator of Community and Race Relations Committee of Peterborough has declared support of the International Day Against Homophobia. "As an organization committed to promoting positive race relations in Peterborough, we know that issues of equity do not stop at race, but intersect with one's gender, age, ability, and sexual identity. Two-Spirited, LGB, queer, and trans Aboriginal people and people of colour have historically been marginalized in Canadian society through interweaving processes of colonialism, racism, homophobia, and transphobia."

Kim Dolan, executive director at PARN – Your Community AIDS Resource Network recognizes the importance this Day has in the Peterborough community. "Over the past five years, PARN's Rainbow Youth Program has worked with community partners to meet the growing demand for services and supports specific to the challenges faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ) youth in our communities. Opportunities for expanded social networking for LGBTQ youth has dissolved borders both within and outside of the LGBTQ community, and indeed our physical communities. PARN stands in support of this Day and is inspired by Mayor Ayotte's support for International Day Against Homophobia."

"Despite these changes and great work," states Rick Lambert, Chair of the Rainbow Service Organization, "we have to remain vigilant as there is still not a culture of acceptance where we can be confident of our safety and ability to live free from discrimination."

Locally we decided to expand the focus of the May 17th campaign to focus on sexual diversity and all diversity for that matter! Please post or share the attached poster. Have a great weekend – value and celebrate diversity!

SEXUAL DIVERSITY KNOWS NO BORDERS

Sunday May 17th

**International Day
Against Homophobia**

A day-by-day campaign



RESPECT DIVERSITY

EVERYDAY EVERYONE EVERYWHERE

Rainbow Service Organization (www.rainbowservice.org)
PARN - Your Community AIDS Resource Network (www.parn.ca)