



Newsletter: Volume 3 | Issue 2  
June 2018

With the approach of the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Pride Parade, the Peel Institute on Violence Prevention is dedicating this issue of our newsletter to the "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two-Spirited (LGBTQ2) community. In Canada, we like to believe that as a society, we are progressive and tolerant of diversity. Our Canadian identity is formed around core values that embrace equality, tolerance and respect for others. From welcoming immigrants and refugees, to being one of the first nations to legalize gay marriage, Canada is known globally as a tolerant society. Canada was the first country in the Americas to legalize same-sex marriage. Wedlock between two partners of the same gender became legal on July 20, 2005; just one day after the law was passed by Parliament. By that time, eight provinces and one territory already had legislation recognizing same sex marriage.

Our current Prime Minister has vocally advocated for the rights of LGBTQ2 Canadians. Justin Trudeau released a statement on May 17, 2018, the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. In his message, he thanked advocates and allies for their efforts in fighting for equality of rights and opportunities for the LGBTQ2 community. Legislation was passed in June that provides explicit protection from discrimination and hate crimes based on gender identity or expression. A \$101-million federal strategy was launched to prevent and address gender-based violence.

With all the recent legislation in favour of equality for LGBTQ2 Canadians and the government advocating for acceptance and respect of the rights of LGBTQ2 people, one might imagine that in Canada, They enjoy a life free from discrimination, harassment and violence. Nothing is further from the truth. In the March issue of the Learning Network, a newsletter of the Center for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children (at the University of Western Ontario), stated that homelessness among LGBTQ2 youth is very high. Reportedly, 40% of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ2S. A recent Canadian study on discrimination against LGBTQ2 youth in schools found that 64% of LGBTQ2 students feel unsafe at school.

While it is true that overall, Canadian society tends to accept equality of rights for the LGBTQ2 community, there is still a lot to do to ensure that the rights of LGBTQ2 people in Canada are guaranteed. As our Prime Minister stated on May 17, "Today, we recommit ourselves to a future where every single one of us – regardless of our gender expression, gender identity, or sexual orientation – is free to be true to who we are and achieve our fullest potential."

### Homophobia as a Global Issue

People around the world face inequality, violence, sometimes torture and even execution because of who they are, how they look, or whom they love. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ2) people are more likely to experience intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and the threat of violence due to their sexual orientation than those who identify themselves as heterosexual. Prejudice against LGBTQ2 people is commonly known as homophobia. According to the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN), homophobia is a psychological term originally developed by George Weinberg (1973) to define an irrational hatred, anxiety, and/or fear of homosexuality. In general, homophobia is a by-product of heteronormativity, which is the belief or assumption that all people are heterosexual, or that heterosexuality is the default "normal" state of human sexuality.



In some countries, homosexuality is illegal and punishable by fines, imprisonment, life imprisonment and even the death penalty. Although many societies have made significant strides in human rights advocacy, LGBTQ rights struggle to find universal acceptance. There are still more than 75 countries where homosexuality is criminalized. Some of the countries identified globally for the worst infractions are Iran, Russia, India and Brazil. A very brief account is shown

below, giving examples of extreme persecution that LGBTQ2 people have experienced. In Iran, homosexuality is punishable by death. Some Iranian leaders have described homosexuality as "an illness that should be cured". In Russia, gay teenagers are tortured and forcibly outed on the internet against a backdrop of laws that are completely out of step with the rest of Europe. President Putin has passed anti-gay laws, including legislation that punishes people and groups that distribute information considered "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations".

In Brazil, nearly 1,600 people have died in hate-motivated attacks in the past four and half years, according to Bay's Gay Group, which tracks the deaths through news articles. Its tally reveals that a gay or transgender person is killed almost every day in this nation of 200 million. Brazilian police often omit anti-gay animus when compiling homicide reports. In India, homophobia is prevalent. Public discussion of homosexuality in India has been inhibited by the fact that sexuality in any form is rarely discussed openly. In recent years, however, attitudes towards homosexuality have shifted slightly. In particular, there have been more depictions and discussions of homosexuality in the Indian news media and in Bollywood.



Despite discouraging realities, more and more people are openly expressing their sexual orientation and demanding their rights. Because of the work of many groups and their allies, acceptance of LGBTQ2 rights around the world is growing, and more governments are beginning to legislate in favour of LGBTQ2 rights and anti-discrimination laws. In the coming years, the major issues for LGBTQ2 rights on a global scale will be: eradicating persecution based on sexual orientation; protection in the law from hate crimes and hate propaganda; equal rights and privileges (marriage, common law partnerships, medical-decision making, wills and estates, parenting and adoption); and working to educate people about homophobia and heterosexism

### **Transforming Lives in Peel: The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer (LGBTQ2) Program at Family Services of Peel (FSP)**

Family Services of Peel has been a pioneer and leader in developing services and programs for the LGBTQ community in Peel. The organization established the LGBTQ2S program over 11 years ago with the intention of catering services to meet the specific needs of this section of the population in Peel. It currently offers individual counselling and weekly support groups to people of all ages in the LGBTQ2 community, including parents and families who are looking for support. While the program was created as a response to a community need, it was established on the principles of human rights, equity and justice. The initial outreach was conducted through presentations, workshops and word of mouth. LGBTQ2 clients currently accessing services are provided with a safe and respectful place where they can be supported. The weekly groups offer a forum where clients can discuss topics and current events that are relevant to them. The Clients that require services from Family Services of Peel, regardless of the specific program, are dealing with various emotional/psychological issue and are at a vulnerable time in their lives.



Employees of Family Services of Peel maintain a heightened awareness of the sensitive nature of issues clients deal with harassment, discrimination, stigmatization and threats of violence. As Professionals' employees are non-judgemental in their approach, they respect the intrinsic worth of each person, the relationship with client is a mutual endeavour between active participants the client and the counsellor. The foundation of this relationship is the belief that clients have the right and capacity to determine and achieve their goals and objectives.

The following are some of the issues that LGBTQ2 clients are faced with: (1) coming out and disclosure - It is a life changing growth that has the potential to affect their physical and mental wellbeing, setting a precedent for the rest of their lives. (2) Risk of mental health disparities, one of the most prominent mental health problems being depression and suicidal ideation (3) Increased risk of developing heavy substance abuse problems due to being subjected to harassment. (4) Harassment and violence are considered along with discrimination, direct and overt oppression toward LGBTQ2. They suffer verbal abuse from peers and family members. While they appear to be independent, all problems faced by LGBTQ2 are interdependent, interconnected, and mutually conditional on each other. To finalize, the importance of our need to self-examination of our beliefs, values and attitudes toward LGBTQ2 clients. This will ensure that we can understand the clients' needs and are able to provide them with supports that are more meaningful and effective.



Peel Institute on Violence Prevention | Family Services of Peel  
Monica Riutort, BSc. B.A. M.A. **Manager**, Peel Institute on Violence Prevention  
**Tel:** 905.270.2250 Ext 227 | **Email:** mriutort@fspeel.org | **Web:** [www.fspeel.org](http://www.fspeel.org)

