



New Brunswick LGBTQ Inclusive Education Resource

LGBTQ ROLE MODELS & SYMBOLS



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LGBTQ ROLE MODELS



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trey anthony
b. 1974

trey is the first Black Canadian woman to write and produce a television show on a major prime time Canadian network. She is a former television producer for the Women's Television Network (now W) and a writer for the Comedy Network and CTV. She was also the executive producer of the Urban Women's Comedy Festival, *dat girl, sho is funny!* She co-wrote, *I Am Not a Dinner Mint*, *The Crap Women Swallow to Stay in a Relationship!*, which debuted in 2006 to sold-out audiences. Following in the line of successful theatre plays came, *Secrets of a Black Boy*, (the male response to *'da Kink in my Hair*) in 2009 at the prestigious Music Hall, written by her brother Darren Anthony and was produced by Trey Anthony Studios.

trey is a writer for the *Huffington Post* and contributing writer for the *Toronto Star*.

A mentor and role model, trey, regularly visits schools in Toronto and Brampton, to inspire youth, including her alma mater Notre Dame Secondary School. She volunteers with the Black Queer Youth Group, speaks to students about sexuality, body image and other issues facing female adolescents, and donates tickets to her shows to youth and women in shelters.

Trey is a much sought after speaker and delivers seventy to ninety keynote speeches a year. It was one reason among many why she was selected to give an address at TEDX

Toronto 2010. She has spoken at Canada Revenue, Stats Canada, GE Canada, and numerous universities and schools in the U.S and Canada.

Trey has recently been named a Bell Media fellow, which recognizes emerging television producers and their contribution to Canadian media. She was chosen as one of the participants to the highly competitive Bell Media Producer accelerator's lab, over 195 applicants were received and trey was 1 of eight participants chosen in March 2014, which led her to be an invited participant at the World Media Festival 2014.

www.treyanthonystudios.com dakinkinmyhair.com



Ashley Arrowsmith

I can be defined as: 28 years old, from Quispamsis, NB (the boonies), currently living in Riverview, NB, a newlywed, a young professional in the recreation field, owner of one super smart dog and one very fluffy cat (a.k.a. the kids). I do not like labels, BUT if you had to use them, you could use boxes such as queer, lesbian, transgender, female, etc, etc!

I walked the halls of Kennebecasis Valley High School from 2000-2004. I was a well rounded student, and was involved in various extracurricular and leadership activities. I played on the field hockey and ice hockey varsity teams, was elected by my peers on both teams to assistant captain roles, I was tasked with representing all varsity



trey anthony, is known for the groundbreaking television and theatrical production *'da Kink in my Hair*. Critics have referred to trey as The Oprah of the Canadian theatre scene! *'da Kink in my Hair*, theatrical play, was Dora nominated and has received critical acclaim, and broken box office records wherever it has played. The play is also the recipient of four NAACP Theatre awards and was the first Canadian play to be produced at the Princess of Wales Theatre, Canada's largest commercial theatre. It was named as one of the top ten plays in Canada's theatrical history! *'da Kink* has been seen in California, in London, England, and Atlanta.

athletes on the Student Council and I founded/organized a project which stirred up the masses- a peer driven education program designed to enlighten students, teachers and the general public about the LGBTQ community.

From 2004-2009, I lived in Toronto, ON, completing a Bachelor of Arts specializing in Kinesiology and Health Sciences, a Certificate in Sports Administration and an internship with the Toronto Maple Leafs. Obviously after spending so much time in the big city, I am a huge Leafs fan- and am hoping they will win a cup in this lifetime. Over my post secondary years, I also played high performance field hockey, representing York University (Assistant Captain, 2007) and New Brunswick at various national championships, including the 2005 Regina Canada Summer Games.

I am currently employed as a Community Recreation Worker with the Town of Riverview. I also volunteer with the Terry Fox Run, the Fundy Hiking Association, Riverview Community Garden, and I umpire high school field hockey. I am a certified coach through the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP), an in motion wellness community champion, and a certified High Five trainer. On the weekends, I enjoy reading, instagramming, eating pizza, geocaching (huge geek),

wilderness backpacking, hanging out with senior citizens and watching Netflix (guilty pleasure: Dawson's Creek).

If you took a closer look in between the lines of the successes above, you would find obstacles, barriers, threats, fights, depression and many broken rules. As a 14 year old kid who came out of the closet, to a university student and even as a young professional, I have always attributed my life wins to an amazing, supportive network of friends, family and colleagues and keeping this principal close at heart: "Treat others as you want to be treated- with utmost respect and kindness. Even if people treat you unfairly and unjustly- simply kill them with kindness."

Bio provided by role model



Sébastien Bezeau

I am from Miscou Island, New Brunswick. I came out at the age of 17 before finishing my studies at École Marie-Esther in Shippagan. My family and people around me were very receptive to my coming out. I told everyone face-to-face except my parents, because I was worried about their reaction. One day, I wrote them a letter explaining my sexual orientation. However, before I could give it to them, my mother found it while doing laundry. My parents then confronted me, but everything went well. My mother asked if I was afraid of HIV and I responded that it affects everyone, not just "gays." My father, on the other hand, asked me if it was just a phase. I burst out laughing and I said, "No."

Then it was a very positive experience, even though I was the first resident of Miscou Island to come out.

I must admit that my personal journey hasn't always been easy. As a teenager, I cried myself to sleep for many nights and asked God why he made me this way. I'm not a religious person at all, but at that age, who could I blame? I also thought about suicide. Thankfully, I came into contact with a program called "Sain et sauf" (Safe Spaces) and corresponded by e-mail with a woman who comforted me and showed me that I was normal and could ultimately be happy.

I pursued my post-secondary studies in political science at the Université de Moncton, on the Moncton campus, and have been involved with the New Democratic Party since then. I even founded the NDP-UdeM group during my second year of university. Politics is something I take to heart because I can directly see the positive impact of activism. I've always participated in Pride parades, but in 2013, I played a lead role with Greater Moncton River of Pride and helped to change the organization's mission to advocate for the GLBT population. I was interviewed by many media outlets regarding the Crandall University scandal, the Sochi Olympics, the Pope's declaration regarding the LGBT community, and much more.

Currently, I live in Halifax and work as a Political Communications Officer for the Public Service Alliance of Canada, a union representing the majority of federal public service employees.

In 2013, I received the Volunteer of the Year award from the City of Dieppe and was also featured in the Top 30 Under 30 to watch out for by Acadie Nouvelle.

Bio provided by role model



My name is Alexandre Coholan and I was born in Moncton, New Brunswick, where I graduated from École L'Odysée and where I am currently a fourth-year biochemistry student at the Université de Moncton. Besides my studies, I am co-captain of the university's track and field team, which has enabled me to compete at various levels such as the Jeux de l'Acadie, the Jeux de la francophonie canadienne and the Canada Summer Games. I am also the lead oboist for the New Brunswick Youth Orchestra, which has enabled me to perform throughout New Brunswick and even in Europe.

It is true that my experiences in sport and music have given me the confidence and creativity needed to

affirm my sexual orientation. But despite these experiences, I still had difficulty accepting myself, who I was. During one of my first coming out experiences, I texted a friend of mine that I wanted to tell her a secret, but was afraid she would react badly. She admitted that she already knew I was attracted to men and that this didn't change anything in our relationship. And that's how my coming out journey started.

At first, I met with my friends individually to tell them about my sexual orientation. However, I didn't feel comfortable sitting down with them and having the conversation: "I have something important to tell you, I like guys." In addition, the mood that was set at the beginning of the conversation was too serious and was making me anxious and nervous. That's when I realized that the best way to come out would involve a lot of creativity and humour.

After reflecting on it, I had a good repertoire of strategies to come out. These included a game of hangman, literally coming out of a closet, a puzzle, a treasure hunt, a card trick, a poem, a card, cupcakes, and a coded message using amino acids (original message: Ile Leu-Ile-Lys-Glu Met-Glu-Asn).

No matter the method, people were loving and supportive, which was a relief and a surprise. I say I was surprised not because I doubted

the people close to me, but because I thought I would lose all credibility and respect by sharing this part of me that I found so secret and shameful. Fortunately, that wasn't the case, which helped me realize that people instead appreciate you for the quality of your character and the respect you show to others.

Bio provided by role model



Aaron Cosgrove
b. January 12, 1994

Born in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia to RCMP and Adult Educator parents, I was born into a wonderfully original life. At the age of three, my family was promoted to a quaint arctic town known as Tuktoyaktuk, NWT. Two years later, they were promoted again to the village of Cambridge Bay, NWT. During these four extraordinary years of young arctic life, I was witness to stunning cultural diversity and some of Earth's most amazing gifts, including the Northern Lights, six months of complete darkness, and rare arctic wildlife. I believe these experiences are what fuel my hunger for adventure, world travel, and environmental and wildlife study today. At the age of six, my family uprooted again on another adventure to St. Stephen, New Brunswick where I spent the majority of my young life.

During middle school, I began to realize that my emotions and orientation were not the same as that of my peers, and later I became the first of my friends to openly embrace my true sexuality. In high school, as my confidence and self-awareness blossomed, I became heavily involved in multiple extra-curricular organizations including Bully Blockers, Technical Crew, volleyball, Youth for Youth, Enviro-thon, and much more.

I was one of the few students that launched the St. Stephen High School Gay Straight Alliance, a group that took the school and community by storm in positive change and education in 2008. The group was later responsible for the unanimous passing of policy E-9, a specialized policy ensuring the safety and respect for LGBTQ students in New Brunswick schools. I was whole-heartedly invested in the GSA, and contributed to meetings, awareness-raising, and conferences until my graduation in 2012. I graduated from St. Stephen High School with honors and the generous W. Garfield Weston Award to completely fund my post-secondary education. The tuition waiver, bi-annual stipend, and volunteer fund were awarded for my tireless work as an equal-rights activist in making St. Stephen a better home for LGBTQ individuals.

I applied the scholarship to attend Nova Scotia Community College in

Dartmouth, NS for the Radio and Television Arts program. I graduated in June of 2014 as a Radio Performance and Studio Production Major, with a future as an on-air radio host. I also contributed the award's volunteer fund to work with Edge of Africa, an award-winning volunteer organization based in Knysna, South Africa, where I studied and cared for rescued African elephants and operated sustainable community and conservation projects. I continue to volunteer as Edge of Africa's Canadian Ambassador, performing presentations and recruiting Canadian participants.

I remain active within the LGBTQ community as an alumni-member of the St. Stephen High School GSA, and devote my time to radio, volunteering, music, and wildlife. I recently have taken a full-time position as a radio show host in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, and hope to travel the world making this planet a better place for both people and creatures.

Bio provided by role model



Gail Costello
b. December 28, 1963

I grew up in Fredericton and graduated from the University of New Brunswick with a Bachelor of Physical Education degree in 1985. Throughout my years at UNB, I was a varsity athlete playing field hockey, basketball and ice hockey. Despite having great friends and teammates, this was a very difficult time in my life as I began to realize that I was gay. Except for the woman I was dating, I didn't know anyone else who was gay or openly gay and we both felt very alone. I also "came out", unexpectedly, to my family during this time making the next couple of years at UNB very difficult for my family and I.

Upon graduating from UNB, I moved to Ontario to be able to live my life freely. For the first time, I met many openly gay men and women

and began the journey of accepting myself and understanding LGBTQ issues. While living in Ontario I met my partner Julie in 1988. Shortly afterwards, we moved to N.B. where I returned to UNB and completed my Bachelor of Education (Dean's List). My first teaching job upon graduating was in northern Canada on an isolated, fly-in First Nations Reservation. It was during this time frame, when I was away for a year teaching, that my family took Julie under their wing and a new, accepting relationship with my family began. Today, my family is very supportive and my partner and I are very close with my parents and siblings.

I have been an educator at Oromocto High School for the past 21 years. I am our school's Gay-Straight Alliance advisor and the GSA Coordinator and Communications Director of PIE – Pride in Education. Working as an LGBTQ advocate is what brings me to work every day. I am very proud of my school's GSA "family" and all of their accomplishments in our school and community. As well, I am also a proud member of the N.B. Pride in Education group who is working diligently to make LGBTQ change in school policy and support our GSA's. In 2013, I completed my graduate work in Educational Technology (Cape Breton University) where I completed my applied research project on *Using Social Media to Develop a Support System and Increase Self-esteem For*

Victims of Homophobic Bullying. My work with PIE and LGBTQ education has allowed me the opportunity to present at different events: CBC Information Morning, Jer's Vision National Service Providers Conference, NB High School GSA Conference, Crandall University, PEI Shout Out and NB Teachers Subject Council PD

When I'm not working, I love to play hockey and golf (I'm the founder of WIHL – Women's Independent Hockey League), garden, create websites, do woodworking, house renovations and ride my motorcycle.

Julie and I were legally married in 2010 at the Vancouver Winter Olympic Games. Today, we continue to live in Fredericton, where we have three wonderful "families:" 1) the two of us and our 3 beautiful dogs, 2) our amazing "family" of friends and 3) my parents/siblings who we get together with regularly to play cards, share dinners and tease my Dad about being a Habs fan.

Bio provided by role model



Danderson
b. February 22, 1991

I grew up in Sussex, New Brunswick and graduated from Sussex Regional High School.

Although my birth name is Daniel, I prefer to be called Danderson. This might seem a bit strange but sometimes the name that's given to you when you're born doesn't reflect who you are later on in life. Sometimes it's hard to decide whether you see yourself as a boy or as a girl or even something else entirely and that's totally okay! It was only a year ago that I discovered that on days that I wasn't sure about who or what I was, I liked using Danderson because it didn't sound like a girl or a boy's name. It could be whatever I wanted it to be and that helped me to not only feel like I had more control over my gender but it also helped me to feel good about myself! :)

Growing up as someone who was unsure of their sexual orientation and gender identity was very difficult, confusing and frustrating. My high school was in a small mostly conservative minded town and I never felt like I fit in with the other kids, the boys especially, and couldn't figure out why. I realize looking back that there was no resource for gender dysphoria at my high school specifically and so I became very isolated and depressed without realizing what was triggering my feelings. It took me a lot of time not only to be comfortable with myself, but to also realize and understand who I am as a queer identified person.

I'm a queer DJ/Musician/Artist working various part time jobs and devoting the rest of my time to introducing and developing queer culture and diversity in Moncton, New Brunswick. I am co-creator as well as co-host of a Queer Dance Party called ****GAY POUTINE**** and would like to work within queer youth and HIV prevention organizations in the future.

Bio provided by role model



Alexi Desjardins
b. November 10, 1984

After my first coming out, I was feeling great. Finally I had found my place and I knew why I was feeling so different. My friends were mostly male and I felt a sense of belonging with them. I was a tomboy and really proud to be part of the “men’s hood” I felt that I was myself when I was around them, but something was still really bothering me and I couldn’t figure out what.

The emptiness that I felt all my life was coming back, and I didn’t know why. I received my answer in February 2012 when a transgender youth was put in my path! That is when I started to put every piece of the puzzle in place.

I am a man stuck in the wrong body! As soon as I said those words I had this inexplicable peace that just surrounded my soul. For the first time in my life I had no doubt about who I was! I knew that finally I would become myself and live the rest of my life as the person that I really am.

I started Hormone Therapy on December 5, 2012. I had my legal name change in January 2013 as Alexi Desjardins. There was no turning back for me! I was ready to finally live my life even though this second coming out was not accepted by my friends, family and people that I knew for a long time. Nothing and no one was going to stop that part of me who wanted and was screaming to finally live!! ME!!

I was born and raised in a small town called Ste-Anne de Madawaska in NB. I graduated from high school in Edmundston NB in 2002. After my graduation I did a year in social work at the University of Moncton. After a year, I thought that I was not ready to be a social worker so I move to Moncton NB where I did a course to become a Paramedic, and I graduated as a paramedic in 2005.

For most of my life I knew I was different! At the age of 18, I thought that I had discovered why. I came out as a lesbian; I had met this wonderful woman and here I was in love!! And the most beautiful part of this is that we are still together after 12 years.

I started to do some education in some schools and at the University on transgender people. I started to be more involved in the LGBTQ community and to help anyone who needed someone with an open mind to rely on.

I am part of the executive of Moncton Pride and myself along with an amazing person are in charge of the UBU trans* support group in Moncton, which is affiliated with the Moncton Salvus Clinic. We have the opportunity to work with some of the greatest open minded professionals who are ready to fight and help us achieve our goal: to keep fighting for our rights and for the resources that we need, and to be treated like human beings! We want to let society know that transgender people exist, and that we have the right to speak up, and we want to help people realize that beyond the label of our gender identity we have the same needs in life as everyone else.

In my free time, I like to read, educate myself, play guitar, be with my friends and my family, and volunteer my help with anything that concerns the LGBTQ community.

If you are reading this remember: don’t be afraid of who you are and be proud of your difference!

Bio provided by role models



Sarah Doiron

My name is Sarah Doiron and I was born in Moncton, New Brunswick, on my dad’s birthday. I graduated from École Mathieu-Martin in 1999 and I have been a self-employed jewelry designer for many years (Sarah Jayne Design). I have also worked in clothing design and I enjoy photography, painting and one of my biggest dreams is to travel the world.

I have played in several bands and as a solo singer/songwriter. I started playing guitar and writing songs around the age of 13 and also discovered percussions a few years later. One of my most memorable moments on stage was when I opened

for the band Tegan and Sara in my early twenties. They are twin sisters from Alberta who play music and who are both openly gay.

I have an amazing job that I love! I coordinate a Safe Spaces program at AIDS Moncton, where I help create safe environments for LGBTQ youth. Educational workshops are offered to schools and in the community about topics like gender identity, sexual orientation & homophobia. I am happy to be a support person to Gay-Straight Alliances in the region and to facilitate a weekly drop-in for teens aged 14-18 years old. I also get to organize special events to celebrate our LGBTQ youth & allies, such as our annual Rainbow Prom. We also promote diversity and equality through awareness campaigns like International Day Against Homophobia & Transphobia and by participating in Moncton's PRIDE parade annually.

Personally, I don't really like labels because I don't like to feel limited but mostly I have been in relationships with women. If I like a person, it's for many reasons. Their heart is what matters, not their parts.

I fell in love with my best friend when I was 17 years old. It was hard to admit at first. I remember my dad asking if I liked boys and I said yes, but secretly I liked girls too. Part of me was scared to be judged by my loved ones but part of me didn't care what people thought.

A few years later I co-hosted and helped develop a 6 part television series called Generation Sex, focused on issues such as: Safer sex, HIV & Hepatitis C prevention, safe body art and sexual orientation. In the sexual orientation episode I talked a bit about my personal experiences so I guess you could say I "came out" on TV.

I realized that it was more important to be authentic because we are all different and that makes us beautiful in our own way. We are each like a facet of a diamond and together we shine brightly. I figured if my friends did not accept me, that they were not true friends anyway. The slogan for my jewelry business is "Embrace your individuality". By doing this, we inspire others to do the same and that is a powerful thing. Being authentic takes courage but it is very rewarding and something to be extremely proud of.

Bio provided by role model



Pierre-André Doucet

I was born and grew up in downtown Moncton, where I attended Champlain and Vanier schools, before going to École Mathieu-Martin for high school, in Dieppe. I also studied piano at Notre-Dame d'Acadie and Université de Moncton before leaving to pursue my studies in Montréal, where I currently live with my boyfriend and our cat, RuPaul. I divide my time between writing, practicing, airports and concert venues.

I first came out when I was 15—fairly young, at the time. (It was a different era: my first coming out was over ICQ). Despite being one of the few LGBT people at school for a long time, I can't remember having experienced a lot of challenges related to my sexuality. That said, I've never been one to hold back, so I wasn't shy about calling out homophobia and heterosexism when

I witnessed it. Once I was out at school and with my friends, I still waited a year to tell my family (more out of laziness than fear). Actually, I should choose a different verb, or describe the situation another way: more than a year passed before my family noticed anything (through friends in common or by reading my journal by mistake), and then, led by my sister and mother, knocked on the closet door to invite me out. I feel very privileged to have grown up in a family that always encouraged me and allowed me to blossom. It's not surprising, then, that they hastened my coming out, and accepted this part of my identity even before I fully did.

To identify as gay is a process of questioning, searching, and eventually accepting one's self. As LGBT persons, we have the opportunity to explore and discover who we are and build our identity well before the majority of our friends. In other words, to come out is to figure out who you are, your existence, your desires and your dreams, and what you want to give and take from life. My journey has led me to explore these concepts even further, and to pursue the construction of my identity on a daily basis, as a gay man, but also as a francophone, brother, son, feminist, pianist, author... Ultimately, my homosexuality may not be the most important part of my identity, but I surely wouldn't be the same person if I hadn't gone through this experience.

Bio provided by role model



Chief Leanne Fitch
b. September 30, 1963

I graduated from Fredericton High School in 1981 and enrolled in University. During my university years I worked with the Fredericton Police Force in 1982 as a summer Park Patrol Officer and by 1984 was a volunteer auxiliary police officer. The 1980's were not easy years growing into adulthood while slowly realizing that "boyfriends" were becoming a part of my past, followed by the sudden and shocking realization that I had actually fallen for a college girl! And while that relationship didn't last long...it was life changing. The 1980s was still a much "closeted era" and I felt some pressure and doubt about

my career decision to enter into policing because it was truly a male dominated and not-so-gay-friendly work environment at that time. After graduating from UNB, I attended the Ontario Police College and later after working a short time for Toronto Police, I returned to policing in Fredericton, where I met my life partner Sara.

Sara is also a police officer and supported my quest for continued education as I studied part-time and worked full-time, graduating again from UNB with a Master's degree in Sociology. I instructed part-time at St. Thomas University in the Department of *Criminology* and have a few published articles on *Community Policing, Organizational Change, and Intimate Partner Violence*. I have presented on these topics locally, nationally and internationally.

In 2013 I was appointed to the position of Chief of the Fredericton Police Force, the first female Chief in Atlantic Canada. I was previously named Officer of the Year for the Atlantic Women in Law Enforcement and the International Association of Women Police. I was awarded a *Police Exemplary Service Medal* from the Federal Government and the *Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal*. In January 2014 I was awarded the *Member of the Order of Merit for the Police Forces* (M.O.M). Not too bad for someone who was originally skeptical

about being accepted in the world of police work! (The lesson here is face your fears and have the courage to chase your dreams!)

I am proud and happy to say that Sara and I were officially married on our 20th anniversary in 2008. While life and police work hasn't been without struggles, heartache and pressure, Sara and I have always had a close and supportive circle of friends, amazing parents and loving families! I love to snow shoe, hike, bike, fish, read, write, horseback ride and paint. Sara and I live on a small hobby farm with three horses, two dogs and three cats! We love life, we love our journey together and we give thanks for our blessings every day.

Bio provided by the role model.



John Fletcher CD, AFC

I was born in Kings County, and raised in Charlotte County, New Brunswick. I attended Milltown Elementary School, and St. Stephen Junior and Senior High Schools. I was active in my parish church, and in scouting, student government and drama. I graduated with honours in 1980, and enrolled in the Canadian Armed Forces, with the initial intent to study engineering and to train to become a pilot.

I graduated from the Royal Military College (RMC) in June 1984, with a Bachelor of Science degree, and was commissioned as a Canadian Forces officer. During my years at RMC, I discerned a call to pursue ordained ministry, and was accepted for study as a student chaplain. I graduated with a

Master of Divinity degree from Trinity College, University of Toronto, in 1987, and was ordained and began a two-year internship in the Anglican Parish of Hammond River, New Brunswick.

In 1989, I began my full-time service as a military chaplain. For more than twenty-five years I have served in various posting assignments throughout Canada - primarily in the Canadian Army and the Royal Canadian Navy, as well as at the National Defence Headquarters. I have also served on several international operations. Following my promotion to Brigadier-General in 2013, I was installed as Chaplain General to the Canadian Armed Forces, and was appointed as Honourary Chaplain to Her Majesty the Queen.

Growing up, I often felt confused and alone. I did not understand my same-sex attractions, and had no visible role models, or identified resources, to help me figure them out. I longed to be like everyone else, hated being different, and prayed my same-sex attractions and feelings were just a passing phase. For a very long time, I was in denial, both to myself and to others. I did not “come out” until quite late in life, and I am deeply grateful for the love and support I have received from my family and friends, and from my colleagues, both in the military and in the church.

It was scary coming out, but it is even scarier to live a lie. I regret very

much all of the wasted time I spent pretending to be someone I am not, and hating the me that I am. The world can be cruel; it sometimes seeks to label and limit us. But until we learn to love and accept ourselves, we remain victims of our own self-cruelty and self-limiting. We all deserve so much more than that.

My spouse and I have been together for nearly 20 years, and I give thanks every day for the ways that we care-for, and complete one another. I know that his love in my life has made me a better, more creative and caring person. In the years ahead, I hope to continue to serve Canada, my community and the church. I also hope to also travel and enjoy life with my spouse; and to seek together to make a positive difference in the lives of those around us.

Bio provided by the role model.



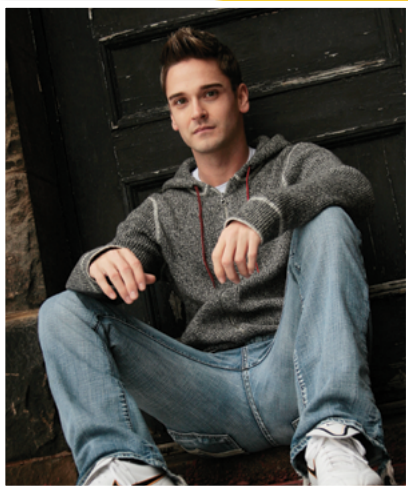
I grew up in Fredericton NB and have lived in Vancouver, Ottawa and now I am a resident of Moncton, NB where I plan to stay. I attended UNB in Fredericton and really enjoyed growing up in a small town. As a child I was very actively involved in athletics, mostly ringette and through my involvement was able to play in 5 National Tournaments. I still play recreationally and in April of 2013 travelled to Las Vegas, Nevada with some local girls to play in a ringette tournament. We had an amazing time and I can't wait to go again.

I started working for TD Canada Trust in Ottawa in 2001 as a teller and have since worked my way up to a

branch manager in Amherst, NS. I am very lucky to work for a company that has such an amazing diversity strategy and have been able to bring my whole self to work since I started there over 13 years ago. I currently sit on the LGBT committee for TD Canada Trust as well as sit as Regional Lead for Atlantic Canada where I attended an Employee Summit in Toronto from June 26th-28th during World Pride.

I came out at the age of 21 and I'm sure I had some obstacles at that time however I have lived my life very openly and have no regrets. I was married in September 2013 to the most amazing woman I have ever known and I couldn't be happier. We have a home together in Moncton and she has a 7 year old boy from a previous relationship so our lives are full of adventure and lots of travel. Our favorite vacation spot is Provincetown, MA. We have lots of plans for travel in the future and enjoy the planning process as much as the travel itself. Our newest hobby as a family is geocaching so I'm sure that will become a part of our travels as well.

Bio provided by the role model.



Derek Hannon

I'm from a small city, Moncton New Brunswick and attended Mathieu-Martin High School in Dieppe New Brunswick. I enjoy being physically active. I work with at-risk youth and aspire to empower youth and people of all ages to achieve their goals in life and become who they want to be.

When I was growing up I was often asked what I thought about girls and got to a point where I did not want to lie and agree with what my friends were saying. It didn't feel right to me. I wanted to be myself, Although it was a scary feeling to think I had to tell someone I was gay or be open to people about it, I wanted to say "Ya, she looks good but I'm into guys" - and so that is what I did, I did not want to live a lie.

When I came out to my parents at the age of fourteen, they were accepting and said they already knew, still loved me the same and that nothing had changed. My boyfriends were always welcome at family events and in my parents' home. I realize that for some, this is not always the case.

Looking back now, I don't feel I should have told everyone the way I did. I went up to all my friends at school and just told them I was gay. It shouldn't have been important to let everyone know. I was the only "out" kid in my community (that I knew of) at that time. I was talked about and harassed for it amongst peers in my school and community. I was constantly teased and threatened. I did have it rough for several years. I had to deal with constant rejection and was scared to go anywhere by myself, I never felt safe. I experimented with my sexuality, my image and at times, I felt very confused about my orientation. I also had a wide range of support from people around me.

When I was 19 years old, a friend of mine introduced me to someone who went to a different school than I did. He said "Oh, that's who you are! I've heard about you and I want to thank you for being our voice at that time." That made every single moment of what I endured worth it.

Bio provided by the role model.



Rev. Dr. Brent Hawkes, C.M.
b. June 2, 1950

The Rev. Dr. Brent Hawkes, C.M. has been the Senior Pastor at the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) of Toronto for 30 years. Rev. Hawkes is a native of Bath, New Brunswick and a graduate of Mount Allison University (B.Sc. & B.Ed.). As the pastor of the Toronto MCC, Rev. Hawkes has been at the forefront of the city's ministry to the LGBTQ community. He serves as spiritual leader to a faith community of some 575 congregants at regular Sunday worship. As well, he has served the community at large with distinction, championing several human rights initiatives.

In 2007, Rev. Hawkes was appointed as a Member of the Order of Canada. Rev.

Hawkes is the first LGBTQ activist to be received into the order.

Rev. Hawkes has tirelessly served the cause of justice for gays and lesbians. He has helped thousands of LGBTQ individuals and their families come back into spiritual relationship with God. This is demonstrated through the popularity of the MCC of Toronto's Christmas Eve Service held at Roy Thompson Hall, Toronto's premier cultural venue. It is one of the largest Christmas Eve services in Canada with an average of 2500 people in attendance.

He has constantly challenged the church to examine important issues, such as prejudice against LGBTQ individuals and communities, inclusive language, and the ordination of women. He has played a significant role in promoting the inclusion of sexual orientation in the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. He was a past co-chair for the Campaign for Equal Families. Rev. Hawkes is a champion for equal rights for LGBTQ individuals and continually challenges the status quo with regards to racism, poverty, and housing.

In 2006, Rev. Hawkes was appointed to the Ontario Citizens Panel for Increasing Organ Donation.

Adapted from http://www.mccutoronto.com/WhoWeAre/brent_hawkes.htm



El-Farouk Khaki
b. October 26, 1963

‘Other’ sometimes because of my skin colour, other times because I am Muslim, or because I was different from the other boys even before I knew I was gay.

I was raised in an open minded religious Muslim home for whom Islam was an inclusive and diverse tradition and spiritual path. However, when in my teens I realized I was attracted to other guys, I thought I was going to go to hell. Many nights, I prayed I would wake up straight. It never happened. I was traumatized until I embraced the belief that God (Allah) had created me intending me to be gay, and that Allah as ‘the Tenderly Compassionate, Infinitely Merciful’ (al-Rahman and al-Raheem) loved me just the way I was made.

Despite my own inner reconciliation of faith and sexuality, there were no safe, non-judgmental spaces for LGBTI Muslims. My need for such a community led me in 1991 to start Salaam: A Support group for Lesbian and Gay Muslims. In later years, Salaam – now ‘Salaam: Queer Muslim Community’, became the inspiration for the formation of LGBTI Muslim groups around the world.

Professionally, I am a refugee and immigration lawyer, primarily representing women fleeing gender violence, LGBTQI People fleeing persecution because of their sexual

orientation and/or gender identity, as well as people fleeing persecution because of their HIV status.

I have sat on the boards of many organizations including the Toronto Mayor’s Committee on Community and Race Relations, the 519 Church Street Community Centre and APAA (Africans in Partnership against AIDS). I am a public speaker on Islam, the Immigration and Refugee system, human rights, racism, politics and HIV/AIDS, and have had regular TV, radio and print appearances. My activism has been recognized through Awards including the 2006 “Excellence in Spirituality” Award from Pride Toronto, the 2007 SOGIC Hero Award from the Canadian Bar Association; as well as the prestigious Steinert & Ferreiro Award in 2007. In 2008, I ran for Canadian Federal Parliament in two elections for the New Democratic Party of Canada.

In May 2009, I co-founded the el-Tawhid Juma Circle, a gender equal, LGBTI affirming Mosque space with my spouse Troy Jackson and friend Dr. Laury Silvers. Functioning in Toronto as the Toronto Unity Mosque, we now have 3 sister communities in Canada, and have resourced and inspired similar mosques in the UK, US and other countries.

In addition, I am one of the owners of the Glad Day Bookshop, the World’s oldest surviving LGBT

bookshop. I am now enrolled in the Muslim Chaplaincy/ Pastoral Studies Master’s program at the University of Toronto as part of my on-going commitment to societal change and social justice through the creation of inclusive spaces that enable spiritual transformation and celebrate human dignity.

Bio provided by role model

I call myself the accidental activist because much of my work for justice, human dignity and inclusive communities has arisen from my own need and search for spaces where I can be authentically whole. I identify as a queer African Muslim man of colour, a feminist and an immigrant.

I was born in Tanzania. My families, of mixed South Asian and Middle Eastern descent, are many generations African, and my father was active in the independence movement. Political persecution forced us to flee in 1970. We went first to England and after three years, came to Canada. I grew up always being the



Michelle Leard
b. April 3, 1972

I was born in Moncton, New Brunswick in 1972; and with the exception of a short stint living in Halifax, I've lived in Moncton all of my life.

I graduated from Moncton High School in 1990, and then Holland College - Charlottetown, where I studied graphic design, in 1993.

I work in advertising as a freelance Creative Director, which means I build company brands, make TV commercials, and design print and online ads for a number of advertising agencies.

I spent many years not understanding why I felt so different from everyone else. Then when I was 28 things changed. When noticing a

beautiful woman, I thought not only am I attracted to her, but I also wished I looked like her. I began noticing that I wished I had been born female, and lamented that I wasn't. But this was out of my control, wasn't it? Depressed and afraid I turned to alcohol to cope and I became dependent on it. This led to me becoming very ill, and the loss of the career I worked so hard to build.

As years passed my feminine personality became stronger and more obvious, and I became even more frightened and confused.

Self-examination and many sessions with doctors helped me realize I was in fact a transgender female who was attracted to other females. I didn't even know that was possible. It explained a lot.

Once I realized who I was, so many stresses melted away. So many questions about myself were answered. And I knew what had to be done if I wanted to find happiness - I had to become who I was meant to be.

After a period of time I was able to start with hormone therapy, and little by little I started to feel happier and happier with myself - with how I felt about who I was and who I was becoming. Determined to have no secrets I announced on Facebook that I was transitioning and welcomed questions. No one could gossip about what I was so open to share and discuss.

Now, having been on hormone therapy for almost 17 months, I feel more complete - like I'm where I'm supposed to be. No longer frightened. No longer dependent on alcohol, I'm able to cope with and enthusiastically deal with whatever life throws at me.

I now see being transgender as a gift. So many people will live their lives and never truly know themselves; never look deep inside themselves to learn who they really are. As transgender individuals we have to really know ourselves; we *have* to be sure. This gives us clarity of self that some will never experience. I'm grateful to know who I am and proud to be transgender.

Now, as well as continuing my career as a freelance creative director, I'm working with the transgender community to make the process of recognizing oneself and the process of transitioning less difficult, lonely and scary.

Our Group, UBU Moncton, which we run in conjunction with the Moncton Salvus Clinic, is working hard to have a happier more supported Trans community.

As a result I'm building a life with purpose, courage, and meaning. A life I'm as proud of as I am of the person I'm becoming.

Bio provided by role model



Beth Lyons
b. October 31, 1983

I live in Moncton, New Brunswick where I work as the Associate Director of the local YWCA. I originally hail from a neighbouring town, Riverview, and spent part of my early adulthood living in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, where I attended Acadia University and earned a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in English and Theatre Studies (I am also a proud grad-school dropout).

I identify as a queer woman. Given my specific sexual orientation, I could identify as bisexual, but I've never taken to that label as I found it very clinical and focused, in a really limiting way, on a gender binary. Even before I discovered the word queer worked for me, I avoided identifying as bisexual,

instead insisting on saying that I was interested in men and women. It took more time and space to explain it this way (and people would often still respond with “So you’re bi then?” anyway), but it felt more authentic. I’m not throwing shade on anyone who *does* embrace the term bisexual, just sharing that the word doesn’t work for me despite the fact that it technically describes my orientation.

Once I tried out the term queer, which I initially heard through studying feminist theory in university, I knew it was who I am. I feel that queer poses more questions than it answers, that it evokes radical possibilities and nuances. It also indicates my fem(me)inist values. To me, the word queer is like a feminist dog whistle, a political code word that communicates quickly that not only am I not straight, but I’m thinking about gender and related issues in a critical way. To me, saying I’m queer tells you that I’m not down with the status quo, that I’m interested in questioning what we have now and building a more equitable future.

The YWCA movement (which exists not just in Canada, but around the world) has been incredibly supportive of these efforts to question and build. I’ve had some amazing opportunities through the YWCA, including attending the annual Commission on the Status of Women in New York in 2013, being

part of a young women’s leadership conference hosted by YWCA Barbados, and witnessing an Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission national event in Vancouver.

In addition to my YWCA work, I also write biweekly columns in Moncton’s daily English newspaper and occasionally blog for Shameless magazine. All of my writing focuses on social justice, often specifically on gender issues in politics, events, and pop culture.

In my down time, I enjoy reading social justice blogs, karaoke, binge watching Netflix, and theorizing about witches and friendships between women. I’m enjoying discovering that, despite being an expressive and outgoing person, I’m just as introverted as I am extroverted and that I need a lot of quiet time to take care of myself so I can keep doing the work I am privileged to do in my community.

Bio provided by role model



Michael Lyons
b. September 8, 1988

In lots of ways I’m lucky. I was never bullied because people thought I was queer, although I did get picked on for other things. However, growing up in St. Stephen I dealt with something just as difficult, which was silence. I don’t think I remember hearing a single mention of anything related to LGBTQ people or identity until my later years at St. Stephen High School, and even then, much of what I learned was what I sought out on my own, mostly on the Internet.

Then, when I started to figure out my own identity, first as bi in grade 11 before later coming out as gay in grade 12, and started being able to come

out to close friends, I became curious about this silence. Somehow I managed to pull together a survey about sex and sexuality in my grade 12 sociology class. I would go to classrooms and bother teachers to let their students fill out a form anonymously, asking questions about sexual activity and how they identified. I was amazed to learn that, in a town with seemingly no LGBTQ presence, almost ten percent of the students I surveyed from grades 9 to 12, identified as something other than straight!

That ended my silence. When I went to York University in Toronto for theatre, I immediately got involved with the campus’ LGBTQ organization and eventually became the activism chair, which meant I got to organize events like the Trans* Day of Remembrance. While I was home for the summer after second year, I snuck off for my first ever Pride Parade in Saint John, New Brunswick. It was absolutely incredible to realize there was such an LGBTQ presence just an hour away from my hometown.

Back in Toronto, I got involved with the youth program of Canada’s queer theatre, *Buddies In Bad Times*, which helped me learn how to explore identity and community through performance. I volunteered for Planned Parenthood Toronto’s Teens Educating and Confronting Homophobia, a program where we went into schools to give workshops on anti-homophobia

and anti-oppression. I became the coordinator for the campus paper's Queer & Trans Supplement, a section dedicated entirely to LGBTQ writers and subjects. This inspired me to do more work in journalism, and I started contributing to Toronto's gay and lesbian magazines, including starting a column called History Boys where a friend of mine and I write about lesser known LGBTQ history for Xtra Magazine.

Recently I went back to school to do my Masters in Journalism at Ryerson University. I love writing about arts, culture, literature, video games, and nerdy things, especially where all those things overlap with the queer and trans community. Today, I identify as a proud queer person, and someone who stands fiercely in solidarity of the global trans community. I've made incredible friends and relationships through the queer and trans community across the entire country and beyond. Most important to me, though, is that I ended the silence for myself.

Bio provided by role model



Meredith Martell
b. January 4, 1985

I grew up in Moncton, NB and went to school at Hillcrest, Bernice McNaughton, and Mount Allison University.

I met my first girlfriend when I was 15 years old. Only my closest friends knew that we were seeing each other. After about a year together her parents, who were very religious, found out and forced us to break up. I am very lucky to have a supportive and accepting family, so I was able to come out to my mom and being the amazing mother she is, she helped me deal with my first real heart break. It took me another 4 years to consider myself fully out of the closet. Mount Allison University and the friends that I made there made the coming out process much

easier for me. I met a group of friends; some gay, some straight, who were so comfortable with who they were that it was difficult to continue hiding that aspect of myself. When I started to tell people that I was gay I was blown away with how easily they accepted it and me. I started to embrace my sexuality and with that I made some of the best friends I could ever ask for and I couldn't be happier!

A few years ago I read an article about a local flower shop that refused to sell flowers to a lesbian couple for their wedding. I started to read the comments posted online and was really upset to see the comments that the religious community and the gay community were firing back and forth. There was a lot of hate and anger being spread and it occurred to me that this was not the way to teach the community about love and acceptance, so I organized a peaceful protest. We had over 200 members and supporters of the gay community bring flowers to the property of the flower shop. The goal was to spread love and acceptance by extending a courtesy that was not extended to us. The peaceful protest was very successful and is one of the things I am the most proud of!

I am currently working in Dieppe as a Behaviour and Learning Consultant and have recently received my BCaBA certification. In my job I work mainly with youth and young adults who have problematic or

aggressive behaviour. I also coach and do presentations for parents and professionals on how to work with challenging behaviours.

I am very involved in all aspects of the arts. I play guitar, hand drums, sing, paint, draw, write, and like to play around with photography as well. I play in a cover band here in Moncton called Rust Iw wed Flower which has been a ton of fun. I was recently in a play called Deception: A Rock Opera (written and directed by Katey Day) which was an incredible experience that pushed me outside of my comfort zone in the best way possible!

Bio provided by role model



Liz Matheson
b. February 16, 1974

but I didn't come out to anyone until I was 16. The first people I came out to were three of my closest friends. They were very supportive and I immediately felt relieved to have people that I could be open with.

When I finally joined the Gay-Straight Alliance at my school it was in grade eleven, and it was because I was ready to come out to my parents. I became very involved with the Gay-Straight Alliance and enjoyed the support and openness that it provided. After a couple months of work with the GSA my mother asked me if I was gay, and thus I found the opportunity to come out to my family, who were ultimately supportive.

After coming out I piloted a student organization called *Students for Pride in Education*, (*Students for PIE*.) It is a network for students and Gay-Straight Alliances from all over New Brunswick. The organization's aim is to promote inclusive schools and communities for LGBTQ students, staff, parents, families and allies.

I now spend my time playing ukulele, studying, and hanging out with my loving girlfriend and friends. I continue to work with *Students for Pride in Education* in Fredericton, New Brunswick where I am studying at St. Thomas University. I hope to someday be a human rights lawyer and fight for the rights of the LGBTQ community.

Bio provided by role model

I was born in the middle of a snow storm, and was raised in Saint Andrews, New Brunswick. I had a happy childhood by the sea. My father is an Anglican Minister and my mother is a small business owner. I spent my childhood watching Pokémon, playing video games, camping, romping with my 5 siblings, and building fairy houses with my friends. I first dyed my hair blue when I was 11 years old and have been doing so ever since!

I attribute my leadership skills to the Scouting movement which I have been involved with since the age of 7. I spent most of my childhood camping almost every weekend, and my early teens teaching leadership courses to other Scouts.

Around the age of 14 I started identifying with the Queer community,



Kathy McCormack
b. February 16, 1974

The activities I enjoy most involve being outdoors: snowshoeing, hiking, snowmobiling, and of course playing hockey. I also enjoy reading, watching/collecting movies and most of all playing with my kids.

Below is a list of some of my accomplishments (career/personal):

- 1991 Canada Winter Games
- 1995 Esso Women's Nationals-Silver Medal
- 1996 Esso Women's Nationals-Bronze Medal
- 1998 Olympic Winter Games-Silver Medal
- 2000 Four Nations Cup-Gold Medal

For several years I operated an all girls' hockey school in Chatham, New Brunswick. I also worked summer hockey schools for many years with several Team Canada players. As a teacher I volunteer a lot of time coaching various sports teams such as soccer, cricket, and track and field.

My name is Kathy McCormack. I grew up in Blackville, New Brunswick and completed my formal education at the University of New Brunswick: Bachelor of Physical Education and Bachelor of Education.

I currently reside in Bolton Ontario, where I work as a teacher. Becoming a teacher was an easy choice for me. I love many different sports and I enjoy working with children. Originally, I trained to be a high school Physical Education/Science teacher. After completing my practice teaching placement in a Middle School, I knew that was the age group I connected with best. I have been teaching for fifteen years and still enjoy going to work each day.

Being a mom of a five and two year old I anticipate many more coaching days ahead!

I knew when I was very young that I had an attraction to girls. However, I grew up in a big Catholic family in a very small town. I was confused by these feelings for some time, but decided that I was just going to have boyfriends, get married and have children. After all, I played hockey with some really nice guys for years. I found it easy to hang out with them and date them. It wasn't until I was twenty one that I first dated a woman. It opened my eyes to what a complete relationship was supposed to be like. From that point forward I tried to just be myself. I brought my girlfriend home for holidays and celebrations. It felt very normal for me. My family just accepted me for who I was. If they felt differently, they did not let me feel it. After all, we are not a family that is big on talking about our feelings or problems! This seemed to work for me. When I told them that I was going to get married (to a woman), some were a bit hesitant and unsure about this idea. In the end, they all came to our wedding and supported us.

My goal is to continue to make my children the priority in my life. Being a mom is something I have wanted for as long as I can remember. I am excited to watch them grow.

If there is one thing I would encourage the youth of today to do it would be to be true to yourself. When I was a kid, many people thought I shouldn't play hockey because it was a game for boys. Others thought I shouldn't play so many sports; I should focus more on school. Some people thought I would never be happy or never have a family unless I found the right man. However, by being true to myself I have had some amazing opportunities through sport; I have a fulfilling job that I enjoy; and, most importantly, I married my true love and we have two amazing kids together. Be true to you!

Bio provided by role model



I live in Saint John and I am training as a family and emergency medicine doctor. I have known since I was about 13 years old that I was gay and it has played a big part in helping me grow into who I am today.

I was born in Sydney, Nova Scotia, and I lived there until I finished high school. Growing up in a smaller city wasn't always easy. I was on our local swim team and involved with a bunch of different activities at school, but I still felt like I didn't have a lot of people that I could turn to when I was struggling with trying to figure out

who I was. I worried about what people would think about me and how they would treat me when they found out that I was gay. I didn't feel comfortable talking about my sexuality when I was in high school, so I mostly kept it to myself and didn't tell anyone. Sometimes I felt really alone. I came out to my parents just before I finished high school and I was really lucky that they were supportive from the beginning.

It wasn't until I went away to university in Ontario that I really understood that there were a lot of other people out there just like me. While I was going to school at McMaster, I found out there was a LGBT club that had all kinds of events where I could meet people similar to me. I started dating a little bit and gradually started coming out to my friends. (Some of my friends even started coming out to me.) I realized that a lot of my fears about my sexuality were based on my own ideas and what I saw in pop culture and that people were actually really good about it and still treated me as me.

When I moved back to Halifax to go to medical school I ended up with a bunch of awesome straight and gay friends who didn't really care about my sexuality. I still found it hard to find people that I wanted to date, but it wasn't a big deal for me. Moving to Saint John was tough for a while because I went back to not having any gay friends close by. Eventually I realized that if I wanted things to

change, I would have to work hard to make it happen and that things weren't just going to fall into my lap. I finally decided that finding a good partner was important to me and I started trying a lot harder to meet different people.

Last year I met a great guy and I really enjoy being part of a couple. We moved in together in the summer of 2014, and I'm really excited for all the adventures that we have planned for the future!

Bio provided by role model



Marie-Hélène Michaud

I live in Moncton, New-Brunswick and I work as a cake decorator and baker for a grocery chain. I've lived in Moncton all of my life and grew up in a pretty typical family. I have 3 brothers, and unlike what people might think, I got along quite nicely with them.

Growing up I always felt I was a little different than the other girls in my neighbourhood. I always had lots of friends but instead of playing with dolls, dressing up, putting on makeup and having tea parties, I preferred playing G.I. Joe's, biking and playing with bugs!

I graduated from Mathieu-Martin high school in 2003. At the time I decided I wasn't ready to pursue post-graduate studies and found myself a job. I've always had a will to go back to school, but life sometimes gets in the way!

In 2006 I had a baby boy. Life changed dramatically! With having a child came a whole new set of responsibilities. Having a baby not only made me mature a little faster, but also really opened up my eyes to what my life was, who I was, where I wanted to be and who I wanted to be! I was a mother, but I really didn't know who I was as a person.

Three years later I became a single mom. Leaving that relationship was the hardest decision of my life, but coming out was the best decision of my life.

Today I am married to Karla, the love of my life. My friends and family have always been extremely supportive of me and my marriage. We share a home, a few pets and also have my son living with us. In these last few years I feel I have found myself, and love myself for who I really am!

Bio provided by role model



Sarah Nesbitt
b. March 26, 1983

I grew up in the small by-the-sea-town of St Andrews, New Brunswick. As a youth I found myself in the local newspapers on many occasions for my hockey accomplishments. Right from the early age of six years old, I was being recognized for my goal scoring and tough attitude. When I was a young girl, there were no girls' hockey teams, so I played on boys' teams until my first Provincial Under 18 Female Hockey Team (New Brunswick) tryout. They contacted me to try out, and I made the team four years in a row. I continued playing hockey throughout high school on the Provincial team, my local boys' team, and I started the very first local girls' hockey team to contribute to a league. Banners of championships won, with my name and signature on them still hang from the rafters at the W.C. O'Neill Arena

Complex. My high school of Sir James Dunn Academy still knows about “that girl who played hockey”, and I was voted most athletic in the 2001 graduating class yearbook. I was very tomboyish during these years.

My first memory of acknowledging my attraction to girls goes back to early childhood. I was sitting in the back seat of my family’s car, driving down the front street of St Andrews, and I saw a very attractive man and a very attractive woman. I looked at the woman, glanced at the guy, then stared back at the woman until I could no longer see her out of my window. I knew I was attracted to the man, but more so to the woman.

My first love was at age 16. She was visiting my hometown from Connecticut, and I was lucky to be friends with the person she was visiting for the summer. It was an experience I still cherish deeply. She came into my life when I was experiencing a battle with depression, and she seemed to relieve my soul in a way I’d never experienced.

After that summer, she went home, and I met a 22 year old male farm hand working at my grandmother’s farm. We went on to have a 5 year relationship, and a son, Benjamin. I left my son’s father when I was an unhappy and confused 21 year old. Hockey was then just a once-a-year thing at a charity event, since parenting became my number one

priority. Having defined myself for so long with hockey, I didn’t know who I was anymore.

I began working in Sales & Marketing, which I found a strong passion for. Over the years I became very skilled and educated through various positions throughout the province. Upon moving to Moncton, NB in 2008, management also started finding its way on my resume, and in 2009 I molded these skills with my passion for the music industry and started working with musicians.

I am now the Owner & Operator of BRandom Talent, (a two-time award nominated Music Management & Promotions Company), as well as the Founder & Coordinator of Music For A Cure, (a non profit organization that hosts concerts for cancer related charities throughout the province). I have recently been picked up as the weekend host on Today’s Best Music K 94.5FM in Moncton, NB.

My best advice is to discover what you’re passionate about, and go for it. Even if it changes over time, that’s ok. I’ve evolved from a hockey playing youth, to a strong music industry professional. My son sees the world through non judgemental eyes, and I am grateful to send a youth like him into the world. I am proud to be part of the LGTBQ Community, as a strong bi female.

Bio provided by role model



Panagiotis "Peter" Papoulidis

I grew up in Toronto, Ontario, however, I’ve been living in Fredericton since 1995. I grew up during a time when identifying as LGBT was a taboo. I grew up in a family in which traditions and customs were more important than personal choice. In my late teens, I was subjected to several attempts by my family to have me enter into an arranged marriage. I felt trapped, conflicted and distraught. I left home at 18 and had the good fortune to find refuge with a family who shared my values and who encouraged me to focus on my education. I “came out”

a few years later while attending university, and I attended several pride parades in Toronto in the early 80’s - becoming involved in the LGBT rights movement. Ironically, I came out to my own family in an unplanned manner: I was seen walking in a pride parade on television in 1983. The years that followed were difficult. My family needed time to grieve and I gave them that time— without apologizing for my sexual orientation and without apologizing for living openly and without shame. Today, I have a good relationship with family. We have all come a long way.

My formal education includes a B.Sc. in Genetics and Molecular Biology, B.Ed. in High School Science Education, M.Ed. in Education for the Deaf, M.Ed. in School Administration, C.T.D. Certified Teacher of the Deaf, Specialist in Special Education and English as an Additional Language (EAL). My interest in language and language development led me into a teaching career serving children who are deaf and hard-of-hearing in New Brunswick. I work as an itinerant teacher.

I enjoy learning languages and have a particular interest in Mandarin and Classical Chinese script. I also engage in physical fitness including Crossfit and Athletics (100m and 200m sprint).

I've had a life-long interest in Bird Watching and equestrian activities.

Some of my accomplishments include:

- Launched a Human Rights challenge which resulted in allowing LGBTQ and all people in New Brunswick to appoint whomever they chose to make important medical decisions at the hospital.
- Conducted research investigating the relationship between cochlear implant technology and literacy outcomes in school-aged children.
- Founding member of Pride in Education (PIE) in New Brunswick
- Fredericton Legion Track Club board member and athlete
- Former vice-president of the Canadian Horse Breeders Association - Atlantic District
- Gay Games 1990 - Gold in 4x100 relay.
- Outgames 2006 -Gold in 4x100 relay, Silver in 100m, Silver in 200m
- Canadian Masters Track and Field Championship 2006 -Gold in 100m, Silver in 200m, Gold in 4x100 relay
- 2006 gold medalists in the 100m and 4X100m sprint events at the Canadian Masters Championships

The most momentous and life-changing accomplishment for me was my legal marriage to my partner of 25 years in 2005.

There are those who claim LGBT individuals want "special rights";

nothing could be further from the truth. We want equal rights and to live without fear of who we are. LGBT individuals and their allies continue to face oppression, discrimination and harm in many parts of the world. However, we are lucky to live in a country where we can (and must) continue to work towards making all labels, except one, unnecessary and obsolete: that label is "human".

Bio provided by role model



I grew up in a small city in Northern New Brunswick. I graduated from high school in 2006 and worked my first job at our only McDonald's.

Growing up in a small town has its pros and cons when you identify as a member of the LGBTQ community. I came out my high school graduating year, although it was well received from friends, family was a different story. There were some ups and downs with my family coming to terms with me being gay (the summer before university). I had just been accepted at the University of New Brunswick in the Bachelor of Arts program. I was moving into residence with my best friend from high school and was very excited to be living on my own.

At this point in my life, as well as being a first year university student, I felt like I could finally express myself and be who I truly was and date who I actually wanted to date. I spent four years at UNB and finished with a major in Psychology. After my BA, I moved out west to Saskatchewan to live with my long term girlfriend and gain some work experience. Three months in, I decided to come home to Bathurst and apply to go back to school.

In 2011 I started in the Bachelor of Social Work at St. Thomas University in Fredericton. By February, 2013 I was graduated with my BSW and became a registered member of the New Brunswick Social Work Association. I worked for one year in a shelter for abused women in Moncton, NB and today I am still with the same organization working as the Crossroads for Women Outreach Worker.

In addition to my work with abused women and girls, I volunteer at Safe Spaces with AIDS Moncton every other Tuesday night, which is a group that works with teens who are coming to terms with their sexual orientation.

Bio provided by role model



Yves Pelletier
b. 1973

From my earliest memories of childhood, I knew I was different. I couldn't put those feelings into words. On the outside, I wasn't different from the others. My parents loved me. I had two older sisters who looked out for me. I didn't struggle in school. I had friends. I had a good childhood. On the inside, I felt I was different. When I was 13 years old, I finally had the words to describe my feelings. I was gay. I began to realize why I was more comfortable around girls. I didn't want the other guys to know I was gay, so I avoided sports. I was always afraid of being rejected, shunned. Growing up in a religious family, I kept hearing

that being gay was wrong, that it was a choice that I could change, and that it was a disease. I started feeling worse about myself, always trying to fit in, always hoping to be accepted, always hoping to hide my true identity. I didn't know any other gay person around me to help me understand that I was normal.

I promised myself that I would tell people I was gay when I wasn't dependent on my parents and when accepting friends surrounded me. I came out to friends and family at the age of 25, at the beginning of my Masters program at the University of Ottawa, far from home. I was in a big city with new friends. Some of them were openly gay. I met a guy in my very first Masters class. I became quite smitten with him, and within a week or so, we were dating. The weight of the world was off my shoulders. I had shared my secret. My sisters continued to accept me. The news was more difficult on my mom (my dad had passed away before my coming out). She kept hoping that I would find a nice girl, and that we would build a life together. We avoided the topic of my sexual orientation whenever we were together. I didn't bring it up, as I didn't know how she would react.

In 2010, after completing my PhD in History at Queen's University, I moved to Fredericton to accept a new job with the provincial government as assistant deputy minister for post-

secondary education. It was my destiny to come here, to meet a great guy who is originally from outside Perth. We both knew what we wanted out of life. After only 6 months, we knew that fate had brought us together. We were married exactly 14 months after we first met and fell in love. After our wedding, my mom came to the microphone and stated to everyone how much she loves me and how pleased she is that I have found love. She does accept me, and my husband.

We still live in Fredericton and I now own and operate my own consulting company.

When I go back home, everyone is accepting of me. Perhaps they would have been accepting back then. I simply didn't know, and feared that they wouldn't be. Times are changing, and there's less reasons to be afraid of being gay.

Bio provided by role model



Stella Raven
b. April 23, 1984

I was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba. My family moved several times, until the age of 14, when we relocated to Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador - my father's hometown. It was here, during my final year at Goose High School that I "came out of the closet". I went through an initial adjustment period but with support from those around me I soon began to accept and embrace my sexual orientation. I was involved with several queer focused groups while completing my Bachelor of Social Work at St. Thomas University in Fredericton, NB.

I returned to Happy Valley-Goose Bay at the beginning of my career as a social worker in 2007. It soon became very clear to me that, despite Canada's progress in legally recognizing the rights of queer individuals, there continued to be many gaps in the system and many individuals continued to struggle with a sense of isolation. Identifying as a queer person of Aboriginal ancestry, I continued to experience this first hand. Witnessing the impact this was having on my community, I became very motivated to bring others together to help address these gaps and create a sense of unity throughout Labrador. In 2009, I co-founded Labrador's Safe Alliance, a group focused on providing support and resources to the LGBTQ community. I was also instrumental in coordinating Labrador's first Pride celebration in 2010.

In 2007 my partner became pregnant with our first child, River. During the pregnancy, I learned that the Vital Statistics Act of Newfoundland and Labrador was written in such a way that I would not be legally recognized as our child's parent unless I went through an adoption process. After closer examination I realized that this was only an issue because I am female; if I were a male, my partner would have been able to list me as the second legal parent with no questions asked. I filed a Human Rights Complaint, and

was successful in changing the Vital Statistics Act.

In December, 2007, River was the first baby born in Newfoundland and Labrador to have two mothers listed on her birth certificate without having gone through an adoption process. In September, 2010, I gave birth to my family's second child, Rowan.

I currently live in New Brunswick where I have become involved with New Brunswick Gay-Straight Alliances. I am establishing a private practice and continue to be involved in the queer community on a personal and professional level.

Bio provided by role model



Growing up in rural Quebec, I heard about 'fags' and 'lizzies' but it was unthinkable to imagine how to come out. I didn't come out until I was 35 years old, married with 4 kids!! I am so out and proud now and realize that it is SO possible today. It did get better!!

When I graduated from UNB Nursing in 1986 I just wanted to get out and nurse. I didn't think I would ever be back at the University. I worked in Toronto and Fredericton, in general medicine and Intensive Care. I have worked at the Extra Mural Program offering home care nursing, and as the Head Nurse at the Morgentaler Clinic. I worked for the government of NB (where I worked to ensure that healthcare delivered in NB was of the safest and finest) and at the UNB Community Health Clinic. However, it wasn't long before I realized how much I like teaching. This led me back to UNB. I graduated with a Master of

Nursing in 2005, my PhD in 2013, and am now working as a professor at UNB.

Since coming out late in life I have not had a lot of time to create the change I want to see. However, I have worked as a volunteer with the Canadian Abortion Federation, AIDS NB, and the Canadian Nurses in AIDS Care. With the help of three friends, we started the Queer and Other Folks Dance Committee, working with AIDS NB to ensure that there were LGBT dances every 3 months.

I like to read, to cook, to dance, to knit and sew. I love being with my four children and my wife. I like to travel and spend downtime by the water.

My future plans are to continue my teaching and research career. I am interested in LGBT Health, which will be the focus of most of my research. I would like to learn how best to provide care that meets the needs of the LGBT community. And then after a while I would like to retire and enjoy the company of my wife and family.

Coming out as an adult was the hardest thing I have ever done. My family has been my greatest support. I wish I could have had the courage to come out when I was a teenager. There was no talk (except bad talk) about being gay back then. Although, if I had I would not have my four beautiful children, I believe that there is always a reason things happen the way they do. Have faith in your life, it is an amazing thing.

Bio provided by role model



Bill Ryan

I was born in Moncton, NB, and grew up in the Old West End, except for two years during which I lived in Gander, Newfoundland – my father worked for Transport Canada and was transferred to Gander for work. We returned to Moncton after two years and lived in the same house. I was in elementary school. I first went to school at Queen Street School (which doesn't exist anymore), a public school taught by nuns. I completed grades 1, 2, 3 and 4 at that school. Next, I went to Hillcrest school in the Old West End before attending Harrison Trimble for high school. After finishing high school, I started my university studies at UNB.

During all my schooling in Moncton, I never heard a single positive thing about homosexuality. But I heard a lot of negative things. Jokes, pranks, and bullying were commonplace in all the schools I attended and I never saw any adult or teacher intervene to change the situation, or punish the bullies. In addition, sexual education just didn't exist. We're talking about the 60s into the beginning of the 70s. Everyone was ignorant about sexuality and even more so regarding sexual orientation. Homophobia was everywhere and the expression of masculinity and femininity were strictly regulated and policed.

Anyone who dared to go against these norms was quickly targeted. I witnessed a lot of aggression directed toward a few guys even though I wasn't targeted directly. But seeing the dynamics of homophobia around me at school, amongst my friends, and in my family, I quickly learned to be ashamed of the feelings and attractions that I couldn't deny to myself. I stayed silent and paralyzed for over ten years, and never told anyone I was gay.

During my university studies, there was a lot of pressure for me to conform to the expectations of my family and friends. I experienced a serious crisis and turned to religion to find meaning. I decided that, despite the "bad" that I saw in myself, I would find

the good path if I turned to God. As such, I decided to study theology and pursue a religious vocation. I found answers to all my questions in religion, and for a few years, I was a pastoral animator. But at the same time, I saw injustices. I saw people speaking in the name of God without embodying the unconditional love that I learned he, supposedly, had for us. I got involved in a new organization called "Gays and Lesbians of Moncton" and I met dozens of people like me, living in Moncton, experiencing a lot of isolation and discrimination. And then, I decided to leave the Church and become a social worker and affirm my feelings, attractions, and gay identity.

I moved to Halifax and began my social work studies. In Halifax, I met many women and men like me who were LGBT rights activists. It was stimulating and encouraging. I also became an activist. It was a fascinating and energizing period of my life. We had almost no rights and no legal protection against discrimination, the opposite of today's situation in Canada. Everywhere, we organized and fought for laws that would protect us. And we won almost all the fights in the provinces, territories and at the federal level. In a short amount of time, everything changed.

It is during those years in Halifax that I started talking about this to my friends, close relations, and eventually my family. Even though I surprised

some people by coming out, I didn't experience any negative reactions from the people around me. Everyone was supportive and many congratulated me immediately for my courage and openness. My family had to adjust their expectations regarding my life, which happened quickly. Today, my life partner since 1998, and the son we adopted, are totally included in my social and family network.

What do I hope for now? That no young person has to experience homophobia at home or a school.

What gives me the most hope? That today's youth are the least racist, sexist, and homophobic of all time. The world, when it will be led by today's youth, will be more egalitarian and just – for everyone. I truly believe this.

Bio provided by role model



Bruce Ryan

I am the Literacy Subject Coordinator for middle and high school in Anglophone East School District. I am a husband, proud father of two adult children, grandfather of three, and I am gay. It seems surreal that I can say this publically when not so long ago it would have prompted a backlash of ridicule and discrimination. My story is echoed by others and, for many of us, it hasn't always been as welcome as it is today.

I grew up mainly in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. My father was a bank manager so we moved frequently and lived in many

communities. I was enrolled in a different school just about every year. Although I frequently met friends with each move, I felt alone.

I was not the same and I knew it. In 1970 there were no support groups or role models for a kid who was viewed as different. It was never long before I became the target of the typical jokes. I vividly recall feeling betrayed by teachers who ignored the taunting or even joined in. I began to look forward to our family moves in hopes that things would change – a fresh start, an escape.

As long as I can remember I wanted to become either a broadcaster or a teacher. Following high school I attended Mount Allison University in Sackville and received an Arts degree with a major in English. At the time I discovered what would become my passion and quickly sidetrack my career plan in education. I joined the campus radio station and after graduation became a professional broadcaster. The journey placed me behind the microphone for over fifteen years at a number of radio and television stations in cities across Atlantic Canada and beyond.

As a young adult I felt pressured to conform to the social norms of the day. I married my university girlfriend and we had two lovely children. The marriage

eventually collapsed. While difficult, it was an opportunity for genuine personal reflection which led to self-acceptance– a good thing!

In 1994 I resumed my original plan to become a teacher and returned to Mount A to complete an Education degree. From there I taught English courses in middle and high school for thirteen years while working toward a Master degree. I became the vice-principal at Riverview High School. After three years as a school administrator I moved into the leadership role I currently hold.

During this time I deliberately became true to myself, a decision that has had a dramatically positive impact on my life. I met a man and fell in love. I came out to my children, family, and friends, all of whom have given their unconditional support. The experience has been tremendously liberating. I feel alive and free. I am no longer one person pretending to be two.

My husband and I were married on New Year's Eve 2011. I am so grateful to be living at this time in this country. I have experienced professional success and personal happiness. Things do get better!

Bio provided by role model



Allan Sabattis
b. March 10, 1988

I am from Oromocto First Nation and I identify as being Two-Spirited. I am a former student of Oromocto High School and went on to do my BA with a major in Anthropology and a minor in Sociology at the University of New Brunswick. Upon completion of my BA, I pursued my education degree. I always knew that I wanted to be a teacher, so this was the right path for me. I finished my Education Degree in May 2013. I took pride in my education and as a result, I was on the Dean's list and won five scholarships for my academic achievement. I was extremely lucky to land a position at Oromocto High School teaching Native Studies because

it I have the opportunity to work with students from my own community. I absolutely love my job and foresee myself being at Oromocto High School for my teaching career. I also feel it is important for myself and others to always set goals to work towards achieving. I have recently been accepted into the Masters program at UNB and in doing this, I am achieving a goal and lifelong dream. This Masters in Curriculum Development will allow me to share my knowledge with my community and also be a role model for people like me – people who are visible minorities or who have extra struggles because of their background.

As a member of the Oromocto First Nation, I work diligently in my community to promote our language and culture. I am passionate about my culture and hope to learn more as well as pass down knowledge I attain through Elders. At the age of twenty-one, I was elected as a leader for my community. I was Atlantic Canada's youngest candidate to be elected for community leadership. I served as councilor for Oromocto First Nation for two terms (4 years).

I have been “out”, so to speak, since I was 20. I struggled with this process because I was such an active member of my community and didn't want to feel judged. I learned that the people who matter, will love you for who you are. It's a process; I had to

learn that coming out was for myself and my happiness. Living in fear of what others will think is not the way to live because ultimately, it is our mission to walk our own journey of life and being stuck at a crossroad (like fear of what others will think) will only hold us back from walking proudly and being the best we can be.

I currently live with my partner of four years and couldn't be happier. I do have an interest in talking with youth and being there for support in the “coming out” process. The world still has plenty to learn about being accepting of people for who they are; coming out and taking pride in who we are is all a part of this process. In my course I teach respect and acceptance for all people. It is important that we respect one another in order to have that balance in life and to be able to live in harmony.

Bio provided by role model



Chantale Thanh Laplante
b. September 20, 1986

association at Université de Moncton. I offered individual and group support and have also done presentations and workshops on sexual diversity and gender identities in many schools across the province of New Brunswick. I was one of the coordinators of Safe Spaces, which is a weekly drop-in for LGBTQ youth and have helped to organize Rainbow Proms.

Currently, I am the Education representative for Moncton's River of Pride. This organization plans the annual Pride Week and Pride Parade and hosts other social and educational events throughout the year. I continue to offer support and presentations. In my free time, I enjoys dancing, reading and playing with my cat.

Bio provided by role model

I was born and raised in Montreal (QC) and have been living in Moncton (NB) since 2007. I studied “Techniques de travail social” at La Cité collégiale in Ottawa and then graduated with a Social work degree from Université de Moncton. I am very passionate about advocating for LGBTQ and Women's rights.

I came out as bisexual in 2009, and I feel very lucky to have supportive parents and siblings who have accepted me. But after being a victim of homophobic acts and reaching out for help without any success, I decided to become the President of the *Un sur Dix* Association, which is the LGBTQ



Adam Thériault

I am the youngest of 3 children in my family and grew up mostly in Saint John, New Brunswick. I came out to my mother when I was 13. It was a difficult thing for her to accept because I hadn't really had girlfriends at that point, but I knew so I had to tell her. Life continued as usual for me when I came out; many of my friends accepted it and just embraced who I was. Those who chose not to accept it drifted away from me.

I had always been a bit of an introverted and quiet individual up until I came out so I really didn't have many friends to begin with, so losing a few due to coming out didn't make a huge impact on my social circle. Regardless, I struggled with depression for years in middle school and high

school until I started to realize that my friends, albeit few, really did care about me. One of the main sources of depression was trying to figure out why this all was happening to me, why did I have to be different, and would I ever find someone who would want to be with me?

Activities like being in the school band and Air Cadets helped me to open up and become more social after coming out; finding new common interest with my peers was hard because I was the only openly gay person in all of my school years. High school was filled with a variety of characters and most of the people were friendly and understanding. There were some isolated issues with the typical straight males; like they had something to prove in the locker room or just harassing me in the hallways with rude comments. I had a good, small group of friends who looked out for me though, and we mostly kept to ourselves.

After graduating from Saint John High School in 2003 I continued my education at University of New Brunswick in Saint John to get my Bachelor Degree in Health Sciences with a specialization in Radiation Therapy. I now get to spend my days working with cancer patients from across the Maritimes and it is a truly rewarding career.

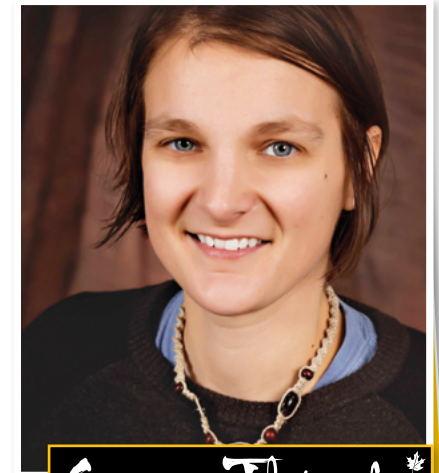
I met my husband while I was attending university which was an exciting time for me because I had not really dated up to that point. My husband and I have been together

almost 10 years and had the wonderful opportunity to get married in 2013. After our wedding we were interviewed by the local newspaper; I recall one of their questions being: "Did you always want to get married?" the typical childhood dream question. I had to respond honestly and say "No, I didn't dream of getting married when I was younger because just a few years ago gay marriage was still illegal in Canada."

Our celebration was about bringing a group of loving people together to show their love and support for our marriage. The whole experience was tremendously humbling. I had never realized until that day just how many people love and respect us and want us to be happy. We furthered this theme to be consistent with the international "It gets better" campaign, and one of our wedding shots is even going to be featured in the Canadian National Museum for Human Rights!

I truly do feel that "It gets better" after having lived through times where I didn't know my own worth, thought I was just existing and didn't matter to anyone. With time, my own hard work and the support and love from my family and friends I have been able to make dreams a reality and truly feel like I matter and make a difference in the world.

Bio provided by role model



Crystine Thériault
b. November 9, 1982

The majority of those who are close to me rather know me as Crys. I am proudly bilingual.

I was born in the small town of Grand Falls in New Brunswick on November 9th, 1982. I attended the école élémentaire Sacré-Coeur from grade 1 to grade 4. From grades 5 to 7, I was a student at école Anna-Malenfant – with a few months at the old school, Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, while waiting for the official opening of the new school, Anna-Malenfant – which is situated in Dieppe, New Brunswick. Following my mother's university studies – which was the principal reason for our move – our family moved back to Grand Falls, where I was a student at John Caldwell

School from grade 8 to grade 12, and where I obtained my high school diploma in 2000.

Because we live in a society that currently generally assumes the heterosexuality of an individual, coming-out is an ongoing process that I began at the age of 16 as a high school student. What was then a very difficult element of myself for me and some others to accept is now merely a piece of the puzzle of the entity of who I am.

I am a person with highly diversified interests who especially nourished my knowledge through living highly enriching life experiences. Growing-up, I played baseball, softball, tennis, soccer, hockey, ball hockey, roller hockey and also participated in swimming, martial arts, theatre arts and snowboarding. Finally, I participated in a few catholic religious groups.

Following high school, I participated in a student exchange program in Bregenz, Austria for ten months. Up to now, my desire to learn through living true life experiences has further influenced me to live in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in Calgary, Alberta, in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut, in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, in Bouctouche, New Brunswick and now in Moncton, New Brunswick.

I obtained my first degree from Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 2006 and my second from the University of Maine at Presque Isle

(Maine, USA), in 2007. I am presently on the point of the mémoire in order to obtain a Maîtrise en Éducation–Enseignement resource at the Université de Moncton in Moncton, New Brunswick. Effectively, my subject pertains to students of sexual and gender minorities – minorities with which I identify.

Since December 2004, I have also been driving transport trucks (yes, those which are known as 18 or 22-wheelers). I adore being on the road – it's a type of meditation for me. On top of driving, I am a substitute teacher – aligning myself for occupying a position as a methods & resource teacher in the near future. I hope to become a leader and a role model as an educator, especially in what pertains to sexual and gender diversity. Furthermore, this summer is the fourth season in which I am one of the instructors of a safety motorcycle driving program. As I have mentioned, I love being on the road.

I am a hyper sensitive, empathetic, highly open-minded individual who hopes to contribute to the advancement of human rights in general. I encourage you to be who you are in order to truly enjoy life, and this, regardless of the barriers that will undeniably present themselves among your unique journey.

Bio provided by role model



I grew up in Rothesay attending KV High and while there worked on a project to educate students on the effects of homophobia. During this time I did not identify as LGBT, however I wanted to support my fellow students. While in high school I also took part in the musicals, variety of clubs and played sports. Although I was not one of the “popular” students I had a good group of friends and enjoyed high school.

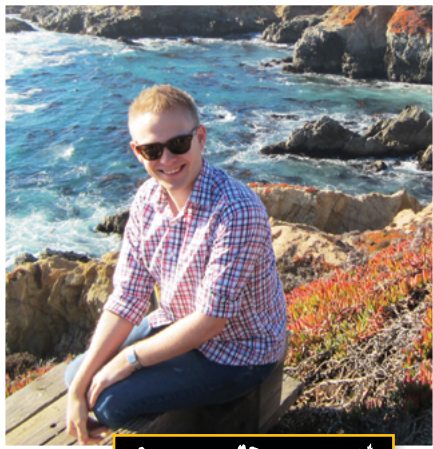
It was not until I was away at St. FX in 2004 that I admitted to myself that I was gay and came out. When I told my friends I had the mindset that if they had a problem with it that was ok because if this were the case I would not want them as friends anyway. This went well and I didn't have any problems which was good. I then had the task of telling my parents. I thought this would be easy as they are pretty open minded and welcoming. Well I

told them and they drove up to see me the next day. We had a long conversation about it and it did not end well. I had already decided that I was only spending 1 semester at St. FX and left in December. Once returning home, I was told that if I was going to be gay I could not do it in my parents' house. I left that night and, with the exception of Christmas, I did not return for almost 6 months. We spent a lot of time talking and yelling back and forth. Finally we moved forward enough for me to return home. I then finished up community college and my business degree at University of New Brunswick, Saint John campus.

I have been fortunate enough to have a variety of jobs since leaving university. I have worked at the Hilton, Irving Oil, Empire Theatres and most recently at J.D. Irving, Limited. I am currently a Talent Acquisition Specialist responsible for recruiting candidates for a variety of positions including trades, labour, accounting and a variety of business services.

On February 9, 2013, after almost 8 years of being together, my partner and I got married. We were fortunate enough to have so much support for us that we had over 300 people in attendance, including my mother. My father passed away a few years before – but was more than accepting of who I was by that point. We enjoy travelling, the arts and anything social. We have also spent time at various sporting events.

Bio provided by role model



Kyle Wedge
b. October 14, 1986

Growing up, “gay” was not a term used to identify an individual’s sexuality, instead it was twisted into a derogatory term that could be used to make fun of somebody who was “not part of the cool crowd”. I heard that word a lot throughout middle school and high school, what those people would never realize, is that it truly made me wonder if there was something wrong with who I was and that being “gay” was not normal.

I identified myself as being gay sometime in my early years at Fredericton High School and struggled with coming out to my friends and family. I finally confided to a close friend this secret I had been keeping so tight to myself for years. Instead of

the conditioned response of rejection that I had come to expect from those who called me “gay”, I received words of love, support and acceptance. This friend unknowingly helped me come out to others. Coming out to my family took several years and happened when my aunt, who I was very close with, passed away after a long battle with cancer. Not being able to come out to her made it imperative for me to be honest about who I am with the people who are in my life.

Born and raised in Fredericton, New Brunswick, I completed all of my schooling here with the exception of 10 months, which I spent living in Austria as part of an exchange program. I attended the University of New Brunswick for a Bachelor of Business Administration and graduated in 2010. UNB opened a lot of doors on my career path to where I am today, I was part of the Co-operative Education program which helped me find my first full-time job with the Government of New Brunswick. After spending two years in various roles, I joined Skillsoft in Fredericton as a Consultant where I have been since 2012. While I do not have a defined career trajectory planned for myself, I am enjoying testing the waters to see what is out there and how I can make a difference.

When I find myself with spare time (which doesn’t happen very often), I enjoy spending time with friends and family and often find myself sitting

down at the piano to unwind. Another very important piece of my life is being able to travel! As a child, my family lived in Scotland for one year and I was hooked on discovering new places and local culture. Since then, I have traveled to 16 different countries and it has only made me want to travel more! I have also been lucky enough to find a supportive partner who I can start my next big adventure in life with.

Looking back on my years in high school, the negative memories are not the first that spring to mind. Rather, I am reminded of the support I received from friends and teachers who helped me become the individual I am today. Finally, I believe high school is hard for every student, it is a turmoil of emotions as we start to become young adults. The experiences I had, both negative and positive, have driven me to work hard at everything I do.

Bio provided by role model



Matt R. Williston
b. May 5, 1980

I was born in Moncton NB and I was a ‘normal’ kid for the most part. My days were filled with wonder and play. I started to hang out with a rough crowd in junior high school, this crowd was not accepting, was not open, was not loving. This is around the same time in life where I was questioning my sexuality. I wasn’t so sure I only liked the opposite sex. I buried these feelings for a few years, becoming increasingly hateful towards my own person and was reflecting it with my hate filled ‘friends’. I was essentially homophobic (I was scared of being gay and/or attracted to guys). I didn’t want to deal with my feelings, so I turned to fighting and punk rock music to bury my pain and confusion. This part of my life



LGBTQ SYMBOLS



allowed me to understand where hate comes from. It comes from fear. Now when I see people filled with hate, expressing it outwardly, I sincerely feel compassion towards them. These haters are not ok with themselves. It's sad.

In high school I was fortunate enough to find a group of friends that where accepting of people as people. This was my nurturing ground to understanding that love is love and that beauty and attraction are to the individual not to the sex of the person. My love no longer had to be in a predetermined box or model. I knew my love is mine to share with *whomever* I want.

I love life and all the magic that it brings. Some of my time these days is spent putting on a monthly queer night with my partner-in-poutine Danderson. ****GAY POUTINE**** happens in different bars and clubs around Moncton, NB and the East Coast. Every time we host an event it's loud and proud. Pride flags are hung inside and out of the venue. Not to be mistaken – it's a safe space!

My number one drive right now is creation. I create mostly with digital arts, producing music, experimental film clips, projection mapping. DJ, VJ, and playing festivals and events around our great land, such as Messtival, Evolve

and Future forest. I'm also trying my hand at other mediums like painting and drawing – not very well, but it's fun. I also love skateboarding, snowboarding, biking and camping.

Bio provided by role model



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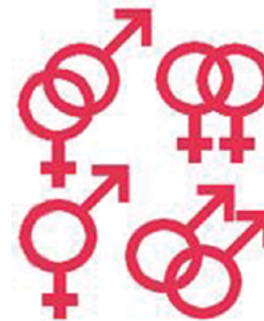
BISEXUAL PRIDE FLAG



The first Bi Pride Flag was unveiled on Dec 5, 1998. The intent and purpose of the flag is to maximize bisexual pride and visibility. The pink color represents sexual attraction to the same sex only (gay and lesbian), the blue represents sexual attraction to the opposite sex only (straight), and the resultant overlap color purple represents sexual attraction to both sexes (bi). The key to understanding the symbolism in the Bi Pride Flag is to know that the purple pixels of color blend unnoticeably into both the pink and blue, just as in the 'real world' where most bi people blend unnoticeably into both the gay/lesbian and straight communities.

<http://www.rainbowresourcecentre.org/symbols.htm>

GENDER



Gender Symbols are common astrological signs handed down from ancient Roman times. The pointed Mars symbol represents the male and the Venus symbol with the cross represents the female. Since the 1970s, gays have used double interlocking male symbols to represent gay men. Double interlocking female symbols have often been used to symbolize lesbianism, but some feminists have instead used the double female symbols to represent sisterhood among women and three interlocking female symbols to denote lesbianism. In the 1970s, some lesbian feminists used three interlocking female symbols to represent their rejection of male standards of monogamy.

<http://www.rainbowresourcecentre.org/symbols.htm>

RAINBOW PRIDE FLAG



The Rainbow Flag as we know it today was developed by San Francisco artist Gilbert Baker in 1978. At the time, there was a need for a gay symbol which could be used year after year for the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade. Baker took inspiration from many sources, from the hippies movement to the black civil rights movement, and came up with a flag with eight stripes. Colour has always played an important part in the gay rights movement—Victorian England symbolized homosexuality with the colour green, lavender became popular in the 1960s, and pink from the pink triangle has caught on as well—and the colours of the gay flag were no different. Baker explained that his colours each stood for a different aspect of gay and lesbian life:

Hot pink for sexuality,
Red for life,
Orange for healing,
Yellow for the sun,
Green for nature,
Blue for art,
Indigo for harmony,
Violet for spirit.

Black—A San Francisco group suggested a modification to the traditional rainbow flag by adding a black stripe to the bottom of it to commemorate everyone lost to the AIDS virus over the years.

<http://www.lambda.org/symbols.htm>



TRANSGENDER/INTERSEX



The Transgender Pride flag was designed by Monica Helms, and was first shown at a pride parade in Phoenix, Arizona, United States in 2000. The flag represents the transgender community and consists of five horizontal stripes, two light blue, two pink, with a white stripe in the center. Monica describes the meaning of the flag as follows:

“The light blue is the traditional colour for baby boys, pink is for girls, and the white in the middle is for those who are transitioning, those who feel they have a neutral gender or no gender, and those who are intersexed. The pattern is such that no matter which way you fly it, it will always be correct. This symbolizes us trying to find correctness in our own lives.”

Other transgender symbols include the butterfly (symbolizing transformation or metamorphosis), and a pink/light blue yin and yang symbol.

Popular transgender symbols, used to identify transvestites, transsexuals, and other transgender people, frequently consist of modified gender symbols combining elements from both the male and female symbols. The most popular version, originating from a drawing by Holly Boswell, depicts a circle with an arrow projecting from the top-right, the male symbol; a cross projecting from the bottom, the female symbol; and with an additional crossed arrow, combining the female cross and male arrow, projecting from the top-left.

Adapted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transgender_symbol#Transgender_symbols



TRIANGLES



The pink triangle was one of the Nazi concentration camp badges, used by the Nazis to identify male prisoners in concentration camps who were sent there because of their homosexuality. Every prisoner had to wear a triangle on his or her jacket, the colour of which was to categorize him or her according "to his kind." Jews had to wear the yellow star (in addition to any other badge representing other reasons for incarceration), and "anti-social individuals" (which included vagrants and "work shy" individuals) had to wear the black triangle. The inverted pink triangle, originally intended as a badge of shame, has become an international symbol of gay pride and the gay rights movement, and is second in popularity only to the rainbow flag.

The black triangle was later adopted as a lesbian or feminist symbol of pride and solidarity, on the assumption that the Nazis included lesbians in the "asocial" category.

Adapted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pink_triangle

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_triangle_%28badge%29



TWO-SPIRITED SYMBOLS



Icon used by 2-Spirited People of the First Nations

Icon used by Two-Spirited People of Manitoba

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