

**BUILDING A STRONG,  
EFFECTIVE LGBT COMMUNITY**

**FRIDAY, MARCH 18, 2011**

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**CONFERENCE THEME: Building a strong, effective, LGBTI Community**

**A – OPENING REMARKS – Key words overheard from participants**

***Where are we from?***

- South Shore	- Cumberland
- Halifax	- Pictou
- Valley – Kentville	- Truro
- Cape Breton	- Sydney
- South West Nova (Yarmouth)	

***What we do/what motivates us?***

- Education sector	- Sports
- Policy	- Business
- Youth	- Volunteerism
- Research	- Student unions
- Activism	- Aboriginal community
- Community Development / Community involvement	- Advocates
- Law/legal	- Social justice
- Seniors	- Trans community
- Health	- Arts
- Spirituality	- Diversity

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#### ***Who we are?***

- PFLAG	- Northern Aids Connection
- Elderberries	- Cumberland Pride
- South West Nova Pride	- Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project
- AIDS Coalition of Cape Breton	- <i>Wayves</i>
- Valley Youth Project	- Atlantic Rainbow Business Association
- Transaction Society of Nova Scotia	- Out East Film Festival
- AIDS Coalition of Cape Breton	

## **B – THEMES –**

What elements ensure a “Strong, Effective LGBTI Community”?

- Similar/shared values	- Looking forward and/but respecting our past
- Persistence and resilience; fueled by passion across generations	- Taking risks; support will come/follow; power of collaboration when taking risks
- Visibility – i.e. social media	- “Turtle power” – coming out of our shells
- Shared purpose	- Empowerment
- Energy	- Hope and optimism in the future
- Breaking isolation	- Telling our stories; sharing our stories of success
- Determination and dedication	- Valuing differences/diversity; value integration
- Lending our voices/doing what we can	- Intersectionality
- Ideological transfers across boundaries to work together to change society; leadership development; being “trail blazers”	- Volunteering
- Inspire new people/inspire new allies	- Grasping educational opportunities and educating each other
- Opportunities for sexual education	- Support
- Humor	- Optimism/Hope
- Challenging underlying structures/causes of homophobia	- Advocacy
- Recognizing and building upon our strengths	- Respecting different needs of each generation
- Courage of our community leaders (past, present and future)	

## **C – IMAGES OF OUR COMMUNITY**

**What does a strong, effective LGBTI community look like?**

(Theme: Mission Statement)

- Global inclusivity and equality: Bridge the gap
- Coming together: Be fearless
- Education, integration, and understanding: No fear to educate, and no fear to learn.  
“A child shall lead them”
- Compassion and hope: We are united. We are inclusive. We are working together.
- Coming together: Talk. Laugh. Create. Work. Play. Love. Pray. Tweet.
- Cross generational and cross community collaboration:  
Deeper rooted communities shaped by the winds of change through generations.
- Empowerment: ~~Canadian~~ - “Gaynadian”/Queer Heritage Moments: Tell/record our stories
- De-segregation by education: Free to be me: Humanity is a symphony in progress.
- Creating an unbound future: We are free of gender, race, and other life limiting structures
- *Vibrant elder LGBT community (see next page)*

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- Vibrant elder LGBT community:

- Strong outreach to shut-ins and long term care LGBT elders
- Advocacy for elder issues
- How to identify elders (lack of social contacts)
- How to communicate (isolated elders)
- Transportation issues
- Develop budget and fundraising plan to accomplish outreach goals
- Programs and activities for general membership
- Elderberries as volunteers
- Support goals of NSRAP

Vision statement – 5 to 10 years:

- Stable group of elders committees which focus on outreach
- Solvent and increasingly self-supporting
- Recognition of Elderberries as a prominent force advocating for LGBT elders
- 10-15 elderberries groups across the province participating in a province-wide LGBT Elder Cooperative

Provocative statement:

A cooperative network of 10-15 Elderberries groups around the province of Nova Scotia providing a voice for 10,000 LGBT elders with a special focus on isolated LGBT elders. Elderberries programs are the envy of elders' groups nationwide.

Note: Current name of “Elderberries” is, of course, subject to change.

## **D – CLUSTERING POTENTIAL INITIATIVES**

See Appendix A

## **E- PROJECT GROUP REPORTS – 5 projects in total**

### ***Project 1 – GLBT History Month***

Name of this session/project	- GLBT History Month
What are the main (two or three) outcomes of your work together – in terms of learning support or action?	- “Recognize GLBT Community as official community” - \$\$, posters. policy bias by omission - Original research and documents - Archiving materials, ask for stories  - \$\$ to write a book – 1 <sup>st</sup> decade in Queer Nova Scotia - documentation
Next steps/follow-up	- Gathering history now - Establish working group - Request NSRAP to coordinate - Develop proposals for existing funding cycles regarding history (cross-divisional); collecting/dissemination
What CD Principles will be engaged through this work? How?	- Social inclusion - Focus on history as community asset - Funding/acknowledgment from government - Local leadership (documenting their stories) - Collaborative approach - Community Building

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***Project 2 – Breaking Down Intergenerational Barriers***

Name of this session/project	- Breaking Down Intergenerational Barriers
What are the main (two or three) outcomes of your work together – in terms of learning support or action?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creating and fostering conversation, collaboration, and learning between the generations</li> <li>- Creating accessible space in terms of physical space, age (no alcohol), time (no late nights or school days), gender neutral washrooms, etc.</li> <li>- Creating safe spaces in terms of respect for identities, in language, with pronouns, as well as avoiding hyper-sexualization and assumptions, age appreciation</li> </ul>
Next steps/follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Include conversations about barriers in networking opportunities</li> <li>- Engage trained facilitators in the process to help adhere to guidelines and mutual respect</li> <li>- Keep the conversation going (Needs change, groups change, time changes, etc.)</li> <li>- Go to where youth and elders are</li> </ul>
What CD Principles will be engaged through this work? How?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Common vision</li> <li>- Respect for local values</li> <li>- Collaborative approach</li> <li>- Social inclusion</li> </ul>

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***Project 3 – Skype Network/Virtual Group***

Name of this session/project	Skype Network/Virtual Group (Discussion group/educational sessions)
What are the main (two or three) outcomes of your work together – in terms of learning support or action?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 3-4 people across the province to spearhead initiative, rotating (but may repeat), plus 1 expert, e.g.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- younger (late teens; connect with teens)</li> <li>- middle</li> <li>- trans</li> </ul> </li> <li>- 1-2 hours weekly</li> <li>- Discuss “though stuff/subjects”, but positive subjects too, e.g.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- university students of today connected with elders who fought during their own university years (sharing stories)</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Email questions – If many people have question(s) on one particular subject</li> <li>- On night/weekly mention – advocacy and events that will start</li> </ul>
Next steps/follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Timeline – communications plan for spearheading group</li> <li>- Commit hours</li> <li>- Voices of the province – voices from different regions (e.g. YouTube video)</li> <li>- Skype weekly (1-2 hours per session) – facilitators – rotating (3 different people each week); special guests e.g.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Health care workers (psychologist, social worker, etc.)</li> <li>- Social aspect, questioning</li> <li>- Professors</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Advertise</li> </ul>
What CD Principles will be engaged through this work? How?	

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***Project 4 – LGBTQ Education Public Service Announcement***

Name of this session/project	LGBTQ Education Public Service Announcement – “The Love Bus”
What are the main (two or three) outcomes of your work together – in terms of learning support or action?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A vehicle to challenge perceptions about relationships and assumptions, and its utilization to affect change</li> <li>- This is a message in/used/issued by the Department of Health and Wellness (former Health Promotion and Protection) and the Department of Education</li> <li>- Visibility of diversity in our communities and public facilities</li> </ul>
Next steps/follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Produce the public service announcement (PSA) and introduce it into public consciousness</li> <li>- Children/teen/adult books of inclusion</li> <li>- Accessibility to all – read and shared</li> <li>- Adults reading to children, and children reading to children</li> <li>- Visibility and celebration of difference</li> </ul>
What CD Principles will be engaged through this work? How?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The production will involve representatives of each generation.</li> <li>- We would be liaising with government and community agencies to partner with our completed PSA.</li> <li>- Local leadership</li> <li>- Government support</li> <li>- Collaborative approach</li> <li>- Balance</li> <li>- Respect for local values</li> <li>- Social inclusion</li> <li>- Transparency and accountability</li> <li>- Partnerships/shared interests</li> <li>- Common vision</li> <li>- Volunteerism</li> <li>- Focus on community assets</li> </ul>

PSA content notes:

Learning outcome: The PSA will be a vehicle to challenge perceptions about relationships and assumptions.

Support outcome: This is a message in/from the Department of Health Promotion and Protection and the Department of Education

Connecting with government and community agencies

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**LGBTQ Education Public Service Announcement (continued)**  
**PSA content notes (continued)**

Action outcome: Visibility of diversity in our communities and public facilities. The utilization of the vehicle to affect change.

Featuring: Elderberries, adults, and children

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***Project 5 – Rainbow Center***

Name of this session/project	- Rainbow Center (both a physical space and a virtual component)
What are the main (two or three) outcomes of your work together – in terms of learning support or action?	- Begin with discussion groups between the younger and not so younger members of the community (intergenerational) - Interact in a positive environment working towards developing a center where social events can take place - Supportive atmosphere
Next steps/follow-up	- Make a banner advertising the attempt to close the generation gap in our community; display this banner at Halifax Pride Parade - Begin this center in Halifax area where the funding and participants would be more available - Develop a Skype and Facebook function
What CD Principles will be engaged through this work? How?	- Volunteerism - Focus on community assets - Social inclusion - Common vision - Respect for local values

Challenge/question put to the group for reflection:

- How do you overcome the lack of participation of LGBTQ people to community events? How do you increase the community's participation? How do you expand/better coordinate outreach?

## **F – CLOSING REMARKS**

Hugo (on behalf of NSRAP):

- Thank you to NSRAP Board Members who made this event possible and helped organize it. It is a privilege to work with these individuals.
- This conference will take NSRAP to a new place where we can truly become a Nova Scotian organization – where we can represent the interests of the Rainbow communities throughout the province.
- We are FABULOUS!

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What are you taking out of this day? What can I/we bring forward? Appreciations?

- We must keep communications going between participants from today. We must share our expertise, and knowledge to be able to refer people/questions/issues among each other – particularly in rural areas where resources are not as well known.

**ACTION ITEM:** Create a contact sheet/distribution list of all participants. Name – Organization(s) represented, email (and other contact information (as appropriate))

- Appreciated chance to learn from different people and to ask questions.

**- “I have a renewed sense of community collaboration and a feeling we can go forward together.”**

- “I am walking away with a sense of community. We need to speak to each other. To build on our gifts.”

- “I have a sense of empowerment and of belonging. I feel reconnected. I appreciate the strength people have to actually make change.”

- “I find it so energizing to keep doing what I am doing and to encourage others to persevere.”

- Looking forward to taking the ideas/projects discussed and implementing them in different parts of Nova Scotia

- “I look forward to collecting more stories from “proud people”. I appreciated seeing how many people have mentioned or highlighted how storytelling is important for the LGBTI community.”

**- “I feel less isolated than I did yesterday, before this conference.”**

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- “None of us is alone! We have each other. We must remind ourselves of this during lonely times, specifically in rural communities.”

- Appreciated meeting people from smaller centers/communities, where it may be a greater struggle. I leave with a greater appreciation for the work they do and what they accomplish. I leave with gladness in my heart.

- I am taking back/sharing all the information I received to my community.

- “There is no much difference within our communities after all. We are all working towards the same or similar goals.”

- We represent a very diverse community. There have been changes since the early days. Community advocacy started in kitchens after events such as Stonewall, with only a few people originally. The encouragement of these people and their determination brought us to where we are today.”

- “Today’s event helped me connect the dots. I am looking forward to move ideas forward and to turn them into actions.”

- “It was encouraging to see many ideas but also to see the passion to move things forward.”

**SATURDAY, MARCH 19, 2011**

**G – OPENING REMARKS** – Saturday, March 19, 2011

**What we/I want to see happen today?**

- “We need to let go of certain elements of the past, but keep the memories, battles, successes, and strengths we gained to move forward; to empower our youth.”
- “We are not in isolation. We can accomplish things by working together.”
- “Education sector is the world’s last closet, particularly in rural community schools. Our communities need to stand behind the professionals who support our youth.”
- It is important for us youth to hear the stories of/from LGBTI elders, of those advocates who have come before us. There is strength and wisdom to be gained from these stories.
- We need to continue our efforts to honor what has been done in the past. We need to carry these actions forward.
- We, as community leaders, must constantly keep our ears and eyes open to our communities’ stories.
- “I have been reacquainted with my passion to continue my efforts; to continue moving our stories forward.”
- Pain, hardships, and struggles are still very much present within our communities. A task force should be created to eliminate homophobia in our schools.
- We need to address the homophobia [and inequalities] which exists within our own communities, within our own selves (e.g. transphobia, racism).
- We can all express ourselves and tell our stories, each in our own individual way and style, and express the beauty of our communities. We have to keep communicating, respectfully.
- We need to hear our own stories. They strengthen the ties that bind us all together.
- “I am filled with hope.”
- Where is the diversity within our own community in these types of conferences? The African Nova Scotian community, Asians, Aboriginals, etc.?

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- It is too easy as advocates to burn out. We need to take time to re-energize and re-focus. We need to have an “eagle vision”; to look at the whole and broader picture of our communities and our efforts.

- **“I feel I now have a community, something that I didn’t feel I had before this event. We need more spaces where we can connect, as a community, and push forward.”**

- We must thank our allies who help us communicate to youth that “It does get better.”

- **“I haven’t felt community for a long time. But I feel community today, here at this event. I don’t feel so small anymore.”**

- Suggested follow-ups: Facebook group for conference participants and a contact list of conference participants.

## **H – PROJECTS** – March 19, 2011

### ***Project 1 – Educational Outreach***

We want – Training for educators and students

We plan – To work toward representation in the NSTU and community of educators. We are developing an external taskforce to advise an internal, representing body.

*Elements of educational outreach:*

- Coordination through a taskforce
- Diversity at large
- Training for educators
  - (“Men of Depth”) (peer programming);
  - Active witnessing
  - “Cards listing prejudicial language”
- Gay, Straight Alliances (GSAs)
- Department of Education (Gérard Cormier);
  - Facebook group
  - “Stand up, Stand out”
  - Equitable treatment of students and teachers in Nova Scotia
  - G. L. E. N. S.

***Project 2 – Intergenerational Sharing***

- Children's books (write, buy, read, share, discuss)
- Education
- Collaboration (work together in how to write and share experiences)
- Volunteerism
- Social media – events, stories, connections
- Passion (“free love”)
- Laughter/humor
- Picket signs
- Deliver with confidence
- Justice
- Bring in more people and experiences
- Tapping new ideas
- Documenting activities
- Participate in community events
- As one ages, encourage others to do the same – make ‘old’ not a bad word
- Think out loud...Get the message out!
- Organize events...Get people out.
- Continue educating ourselves
- Intergenerational knowledge sharing

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***Project 3 – LGBTQ History Month***

- Intergenerational stories
  
- Collect the stories
  - Sam
  - Inclusive/cultural stories – Mi’kmaq, Acadian, etc.
  
- History month
  - Through NSRAP (committee); organizations host events together
  - Presentations
  - Public service announcements (PSAs)
  
- Making use of stories/history
  - Publish book/zines
  - Blog – Peter (possible web space @ NSRAP)
  - In school library/presentations
  - GSAs
  
- Creative
  - Art
  - Writings
  - Plays
  - Gayme
  - Lecture series

### ***Project 4 – Intergenerational Stories***

- Get into schools
  - o GSA
    - Get and have elders talk and dialogue
  - o Share experiences
  - o Question and answers – lead into other things
- Listen to youth
  - o Validate youth (mutual benefits)
- Training module for things coming up – for speakers
- Break down intergenerational barriers
- Talk with/about inclusivity of different cultural stories
- Coordinate GSA involvement (so one GSA does not hear same stories twice)
  - o Video of GSA
- Publishing
  - o Include cross generational dialogue stories with history group
- Potluck, meal – foster dialogue/talk
  - o Robert Streets – zines
  - o Casual
  - o Specific group of youth
- Will interrelate – history group, youth stories, education outreach
- Courses – high school and university regarding oral history
- Elders have memory – of coming out, etc.
- Arrange to meet the Youth Project (at their location)
  - o What to they want us to do – priorities?
    - Stories
    - School system
    - Gay, Straight Alliances
    - Elders speakers bureau training for facilitators
    - Our major role may not be to speak, but to listen to their (youth's) stories

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**Project 4 – Intergenerational Stories (continued)**

- Have a social event – meet youth on their own grounds
- Let discussions emerge gradually

## ***Project 5 – Rainbow Community Centre***

Notes:

- Think of NSRAP taking the lead on all programs that we have outlined over the conference
- Maybe NSRAP can hold the responsibility of trying to reach out to rural communities
- Need to create a business model to present to start to figure out how to fund this work
- Need to build the principles and values of this community centre
- Would it be helpful to consider (where?) the centre would be, like other areas of Nova Scotia
- It is hard to create a plan for a centre when we don't know its true "purpose" (What is the "what" that we want to define, how will we get it – identify clear areas while also leaving room for future steps.
- Model of transition houses /long term modes

Location/Building – Bus, online, what city/multi city, schools; old/young building

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**Project 5 – Rainbow Community Centre (continued)**

From flip chart:

Feedback – From NS Members