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Halifax Pride to be 'less promiscuous' this year

HALIFAX NEWS / Family-friendly is just another term for 'No sex please, we're British,' Perry

Andrea Houston / Toronto / Thursday, June 02, 2011

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This year, organizers of Halifax Pride say they want to keep it clean.

In the June 2 Halifax *Metro* newspaper, Pride organizers say they're aiming for a "new professionalism" and to host a festival "that has things that will benefit everyone."

"That's what we strive for, to make it less promiscuous than other Prides across the country," Halifax Pride Festival co-chair Ed Savage said. "Our way of life in the Maritimes is different. And we also feel that our allies and our family aspect of Pride are just as important."

Xtra could not reach Savage for comment. Halifax Pride is July 17 to 24.

Randall Perry, editor of *Wayves*, a gay, lesbian and trans magazine in Nova Scotia, has a problem with Pride becoming "less promiscuous. What does that even mean?" He says Pride has always been a celebration of sexuality, "all sexualities."

"I'm not sure where Ed is coming from by saying he wants it to be less promiscuous," he says. "Halifax Pride is fairly tame in terms of having a sexually charged atmosphere."

Perry says any attempt to bring in more people is a good thing, but the festival shouldn't be sanitized.

"Family-friendly is just another term for 'No sex please, we're British,'" he says. "Are we just supposed to be boring fags that fuck in our beds?"

Unlike Ontario, women are not permitted to go topless in Nova Scotia, he says. And nudists?

"We don't have anything like TNTmen in Toronto... Sexuality should not be something to be frightened of."

Savage told *Metro* the goal is to double the amount of people participating in the post-parade party. Held at Garrison Grounds directly after the parade, the event includes a stage show, a market of vendors, artists' displays and cold drinks.

Among the new additions to the festival will be a play area for children. Organizers tell *Metro* they would like at least 20,000 to 30,000 to join the post-parade party.

Mary Burnet, the organizer for the Halifax Dyke & Trans March, who also works at Venus Envy in Halifax, says cleaning Pride up for mass consumption could very well bring more people and revenue to the party, but it comes at the cost of alienating many people in the queer community.

"I don't feel represented by Pride organizers who prioritize the presence of police and corporate floats over members of the queer community," she says, adding that many participants don't want to "assimilate to these professional and less promiscuous norms."



Halifax Pride in 2009. (Xtra file photo)

At Menz Bar in Halifax, bartender Mark Lawton says it's not such a bad idea to cover up some of the skin showing at Pride.

"These days there's more gay couples adopting children, and you're seeing more kids at Pride... It makes sense. These days, children's innocence is taken away at such a young age."

But Perry says he gets his back up when people start talking about making Pride "family-friendly." The term is often attached to religious and social conservative groups.

"It's been trotted out for so many years to put us down, to keep queers as second-class citizens. Often hate groups have the word 'family' in their mission statement. Queers have families too, and often just as dysfunctional."

"If you don't want children to see what celebration is like, by all means keep them at home," he says. "But every Pride I've ever been to in Halifax, there's always been loads of kids."

Like Burnet, Maggie Haywood, owner of Venus Envy in Halifax, says the "new professionalism" could indicate the festival is shifting to a more corporate focus.

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Haywood says she's most confused by the language used by Savage. Words like "professionalism" and "less promiscuous" is worrisome, she says, especially since there's already very little nudity. "I think our parade is already pretty family-friendly."

"I really appreciate diversity in Pride. It's a time when people can express themselves, and I don't think any of that is at odds with being family-friendly."

A similar controversy happened in Winnipeg in 2009. Before the festival, the Pride committee warned participants [to keep it "family-friendly"](#) after an unidentified person lodged a complaint with local police, but participants [simply vowed to ignore the warning](#).

Tags: [family friendly](#), [halifax](#), [nudity](#), [pride](#), [promiscuous](#), [sex](#)

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Unfortunate

I love xtra, but it's unfortunate that this ran without any comment from Halifax Pride. I'm not comfortable with Ed's comments, but I think it would have only been fair to give Pride the chance to clarify before writing something so potentially divisive to Halifax's LGBT community. (You say you couldn't reach him for comment, but the story isn't 12 hours old yet.)

*Kevin Kindred, Halifax NS
06/02/11 9:14 PM EST*

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What's the fuss?

We have always had a more 'family-friendly' Pride celebration in our area, and it's never been all over the news. If folks want to enjoy a wilder party atmosphere they can always go to Toronto. And I appreciate that we have a children's area, facepainting, and a fun, upbeat music festival atmosphere. Last year I spent two hours painting faces, and I got to paint sporty beards, rainbows and sparkles on young and old people of all sorts, superheroes, bunnies, butterflies, yin-yang symbols. Everyone walked away with a smile. There were information booths, community service booths, vendors, artists, a drag show, and musicians. It was a lovely, relaxing afternoon. What's the fuss?

*Melanie, Waterloo Ontario
06/02/11 9:57 PM EST*

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Integrate already!!

Statements like, "Are we just supposed to be boring fags that fuck in our beds?" and "I don't feel represented by Pride organizers who prioritize the presence of police and corporate floats over members of the queer community..." Are despicable...there is absolutely nothing with the police! That woman needs to put down the bong and get job, then maybe the police would leave her alone. As for the guy who thinks that fucking in his bed is "boring" well guess what? that's part of what being a responsible citizen is. These new "Radical queers" do nothing to advance our cause as a community. Now all they do is hold us back. Old school activists who were not that radical when you think about it, fought for the rights we have now, rights like marriage and employment equality but these rights like all rights come with responsibilities. Sex and nudity in a public parade is not something that a responsible citizen would endorse. It's true that there wasn't much to begin with but this is more about the idea and principal of the thing.

*George, Chilliwack BC
06/03/11 12:51 AM EST*

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Halifax just might be on to something

Well said George !

*Jeff Taylor, Vancouver BC
06/03/11 1:38 AM EST*

[Report this comment to moderator.](#)

Define family friendly and I'll define oppression.

I wonder if the photo is representing 'family friendly' or 'promiscuous'? I wonder how strict Pride wants to go with this. Our pride is so tame compared to any of the large prides I've been to in the world. I think offering child services at the Garrison Grounds is a wonderful idea and very needed - but leave the parade alone! It's boring enough as is. I really hope it doesn't become any more corporate or I may as well just turn on the TV and watch infomercials. I also don't want to market myself as more palatable to people that aren't queer. People have bodies and children do too. I'm so tired of publically shaming people for showing their skin. It's natural, it's beautiful, and it's body-positive. I do wonder why Xtra

didn't wait to get a hold of Pride first, before releasing half of the story so soon. Was it to cause an unnecessary stir of controversy to make a story, or was it an honest attempt at a head's up to the public so we can share with Pride what we as a community want?

Owen Johnstone, Halifax Nova Scotia
06/03/11 9:26 AM EST

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An age old conversation...

I marched in Halifax Pride in the late 1980s. Back then the "family friendly" bozos were trying to keep scandalous elements like Drag Queens and leather jackets out of the parade. There will always be members of oppressed minorities trying to conform and kiss the ass of people who hate them. But ultimately it's everyone's Pride Parade, not the "conservative Christian gays with children" Pride Parade. And it's certainly not the "Shame about public displays of sexuality Parade." What is new? For the first time that I know of, this year's Halifax Pride sponsors were asked to sign an agreement not to sponsor other "competing" GLBT non-profit organizations during the week of Pride. And that is a disgusting turn of events.

Thom Fitzgerald, Halifax Nova Scotia
06/03/11 10:57 AM EST

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Xtra's lines are open

Kevin and Owen. Halifax Pride is a volunteer organization, so I realize there are limits to their responsiveness. But it would also be naive to think that someone who had made a gaffe -- if that's what Ed Savage's comment was -- could bury the story by simply not responding to media requests. Andrea Houston gave organizers every opportunity to respond: she both called and emailed, tried to get Savage and, failing that, their communications person. They're free to get back to us today, or at any point in the future. Believe me, I would like for the organization to clarify Savage's statements as much as anyone. Cheers, Marcus McCann, managing editor

Marcus McCann, Toronto ON
06/03/11 11:01 AM EST

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I Think Toronto should Stay out of this

and also the Xtra should stay out of this too since they do not report about Halifax anyway just Toronto, Ottawa and Vancouver. Yes I would have to agree with Halifax Pride and even the sponsors. Most are hotels and have a lot of us Gays employed with them. Also a lot of Gay couples do have families (I'm one of them) so what is the problem? Yes a lot has changed in the 30 years and we are responsible citizens and as responsible citizens we should not have naked people on the streets. Sadly I think this is some thing even Toronto manage to forget

Steve, Halifax Nova Scotia
06/03/11 7:35 PM EST

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Kevin:

Isn't Savage the Co-Chair of Halifax Pride? Do you really think it was unreasonable of Xtra to present his voice as a representative of Halifax Pride?

Amy, Halifax Nova Scotia
06/04/11 1:15 AM EST

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Hmmm...

Gay vs. Queer: Halifax 2011. First: we should recognize that, ultimately, it's a question of survival. Regardless of how people feel comfortable performing their notions of self, they should be respected. I can certainly understand the two sides: happiness in assimilation or in resistance of norms. I guess my take is that I never want to associate myself with such rigid notions of normative behaviour. Just because I'm finally invited into some notion of normativity doesn't mean that I forget what it was like being on the outside. Part of what I understand queer to be involves being and acting un-apologetically non-normal. Queerness is challenging and critiquing. "Age old conversation" is right, Thom.

Amy, Halifax Nova Scotia
06/04/11 1:26 AM EST

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Whose family?

First, I question the term "family-friendly". There are all kinds of families, including many for whom the more "scandalous" elements of Pride parades aren't an issue. Second, if you can't explain the more "adult" elements of Pride parades to your children without embarrassment, then perhaps you shouldn't be taking your children to the Pride parade.

Ian, Ottawa Ontario
06/04/11 11:22 AM EST

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Who's Heterosexual? Halifax Pride Org?

I agree whole-heartedly with Amy here. The use of terms like 'promiscuous' made my blood boil here. Sounds like someone took a page out of the evangelical book of hate itself - we need to realize that we can indeed support hetro-norms and become hetrosexual ourselves if we are not watchful. Gay people, naked or not, are a wonderful part of our society, and children and their parents should be able to learn

about diverse lives. Pride organizers have no business at all dictating to any of us 'how to behave'. And, noone should tell me not to voice my opinion just because I live in Toronto. Let's stop giving fuel to our oppressors.

T n J, Toronto Ontario
06/04/11 4:10 PM EST

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