



WARDEN

June 30, 2021

A Reflection on Pride Month

As Pride Month draws to a close, on behalf of Richmond County Council I want to encourage everyone to continue to keep inclusivity and love in your hearts all year round. We must learn about and remember the hard journey that members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community have experienced.

It wasn't until 1969 that Canada decriminalized homosexual acts between consenting adults when the Federal Minister of Justice at the time, Pierre Trudeau, tabled an omnibus bill that he famously summed up saying, "There's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation." Following decades of repression, this was an important dismantling of a legal weapon that had been used to jail members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

The work was only just beginning. Since then, it has been a long road towards changing entrenched, intolerant attitudes and systems:

- In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) removed the diagnosis of "homosexuality" from the second edition of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM). That year also saw some of the earliest Pride Week celebrations in several Canadian cities such as Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, and others.
- In 1988, British Columbia MP Svend Robinson came out as Canada's first openly gay member of parliament and on this coast, Halifax had its first official Pride March.
- In 1990, the term Two Spirit (niizh manidoowag) was coined at the third annual Native American/First Nations Gay and Lesbian Conference in Winnipeg.
- In 1999 the Supreme Court ruled that the Ontario Family Law Act's definition of "spouse" as a person of the opposite sex is unconstitutional as was any provincial law that denies equal benefits to same-sex couples.
- Toronto's first ever Trans March was held in Toronto in 2009, and six years later, St. John's followed with organizers declaring that "this march is a demonstration of what Pride Week could and should be" despite the event not being a sanctioned Pride Week event.
- In 2016, for the first time in Canadian history, a pride flag is raised on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. This is something we plan to do in the coming year here in Richmond County, with a flag raising policy that enshrines the raising of a Pride Flag as a practice going forward in our municipality.



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These and many other milestones have been progressively achieved over the last 50 years, but there have been bitter setbacks as well. I encourage everyone to review the timeline at <https://www.queerevents.ca/canada/pride/history> to see the high price of some of that progress; from brutal raids on gay and lesbian bars in the 1970s, to attempts to roll back legislation enabling same sex marriage.

Reflecting on the timeline shows that we need to be diligent in protecting all of the hard-won gains of those who have come before us. This is a long journey that we're still on today, over 50 years following the initial decriminalization.

It's fitting that both Multiculturalism Day and Indigenous Peoples Day fall within Pride Month. This year in particular, as we mourn with the First Peoples of Mi'kma'ki and other traditional territories coast to coast to coast, it's more important than ever for us to stand together and be allies for each other when we see discrimination at work.

On behalf of Richmond County Council, I'd like to extend our thanks to all those who are committed to building understanding and bridges between people, regardless of gender identity, culture, skin colour, or any of the other reasons that have divided people. We really are stronger together.

Additional resources:

St. Peter's Pride - Richmond Rainbow Alliance: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/376351369655388>

The Youth Project: <https://youthproject.ns.ca/>

PFLAG Canada: <https://pflagcanada.ca/>

Trans Lifeline: <https://translifeline.org/>

FLY: <https://www.facebook.com/transsupportns>