

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer (LGBTQ) History

LGBTQ identified people have struggled for acceptance and equality for centuries now. They have been discriminated against, mistreated, misunderstood, oppressed, persecuted, and sometimes killed due to prejudice, intolerance and indifference. The timeline below highlights some of our long struggle for equality in Canada while highlighting some of our victories. The Pride flag, or "freedom flag" was promoted by an artist named Gilbert Baker in 1978, and is now an internationally recognized symbol of strength and unity. The colours exemplify our connectedness.

1841 The Canadian Criminal Code imposes the death penalty or life imprisonment for persons having same-sex sexual relationships.

1930's-1940's Thousands of homosexuals are sent to concentration camps and labelled with an upside down pink triangle, which signified their "sexual deviance". This has since been reclaimed and inverted upright as a symbol of remembrance of this time.

1948 & 1957 The Kinsey Report recognizes that approximately 10% of the male population is homosexual, and 2-6% women are homosexual.

1964 Canada's first Gay positive organization and publication called "ASK" is formed in Vancouver, and "GAY" in Toronto.

1967 Justice Minister Pierre Trudeau proposes amendments to the Criminal Code saying "There's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation."

1969 New York City police raid Stonewall Inn, sparking the gay civil rights movement in the US which trickled down to Canada.

1969 Trudeau's amendments to the Criminal Code pass, decriminalizing homosexuality in Canada. Political groups start forming in Canada.

1971 Canada's first Gay rights march takes place in Ottawa. "The Body Politic" in Toronto, was the first gay liberation magazine. "Coming Out", is a short documentary series was Canada's first LGBT television series.

1973 Homosexuality in Canada is decriminalized under the Canadian Criminal Code.

1973 Homosexuality is removed as a "disorder" from the Diagnostics and Statistics Manual of mental disorders.

1977 Quebec becomes first province to include sexual orientation in its Human Rights Code.

1979 The Canadian Human Rights Commission recommends in its Annual Report that "sexual orientation" be added to the Canadian Human Rights Act.

1980 The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) is the first public sector bargaining unit to negotiate benefits for their lesbian and gay members.

1981 First Annual Toronto Pride.

1982 Equal rights in the Canadian Charter of Rights comes into effect. Section 15 of the Charter guarantees equality "before and under the law" and "the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination."

1986 Ontario adds sexual orientation as prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Human Rights Code.

1989 The Canadian Human Rights Commission ruled that same-sex couples and their children should be considered a "family".

1989 The Canadian Human Rights Commission recommends that "sexual orientation" be added to the Canadian Human Rights Act.

1992 Canada allows lesbians and gays to serve in the military.

1994 Canada grants refugee status to homosexuals.

1995 Ontario becomes the first province to make it legal for same-sex couples to adopt.

1995 The phrase 'sexual orientation' is added to hate sentencing law.

1996 The federal government passes Bill C-33 which added "sexual orientation" to the Canadian Human Rights Act.

1996 The Supreme Court of Canada rules that same-sex couples should have the same rights and access as opposite-sex common-law couples.

1997 The Canadian Labour Congress holds its first Lesbian and Gay National Conference.