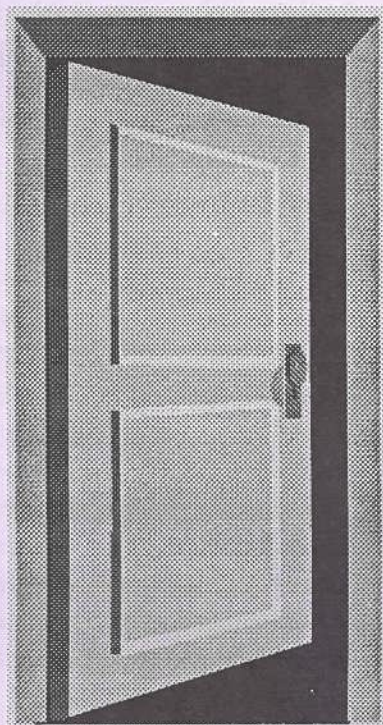

Northern Connection

Queer Youth in Northern & Northwestern Ontario

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INSIDE

- ▼ Coming Out
- ▼ Poem
- ▼ Tyranny
- ▼ Reader Response
- ▼ Homophobia hurts
- ▼ Resource Listings
- ▼ Rainbow Youth Connection

Here
we
are
again!



Northern Pride, Thunder Bay, December 1998

Coming Out

Coming Out

18 years ago I was living a lie. I used to tell my friends that I was straight, but I wasn't. I thought that I should tell them but I always thought they were going to make a big deal out of it. At first, I didn't know what my sexuality was. I was kind of confused because I always had feelings for guys but I was taught that was wrong so I hid my feelings, pretending I was straight. I'm from Central America, and where I'm from, people there don't understand homosexuality. I used to be abused by my aunt and uncle because he and she didn't want any of their relatives to be gay or bisexual and I always used to get the belt for that. Hey, I was just being myself. I really tried to like girls and that wasn't who I was. I tried and tried but it didn't work.

I moved to Thunder Bay 5 years ago. I was 13. Every friend I made thought I was straight. Because I was pretending, I didn't feel comfortable, but I didn't want anyone to know, remember. When I moved here my life changed completely. I was learning English. I was making more friends. There more I grew the more my life started to change. What I mean is that my emotional feelings started to show. Then I met my best friend and I told him because I trusted him and I knew him for so long. I decided to tell him. He was the first to know. I felt so much better

telling him, and what made me feel much better was that he didn't care.

I just graduated from high school this past July of 1998. Because I was showing my feelings to other people I decided to tell my friends. It wasn't that hard to tell them, because they asked me and I told them. They told me my attitude had changed a lot, especially the way I dressed. I'm a person that doesn't follow other people's style. I have my style and I don't do what people do and that's what makes you cool - you don't do what people do. Now that my friends know who I really am I feel much better so they treat me for the way I am and they don't care. That's what makes it so special. All this happened just this past September. I don't know what its like to be out there but I will know in the future.

This is all good news for me telling my friends, but the bad news is that my mom doesn't know yet. In the past she's told me that she knows but she wants to hear it from my mouth first. I could tell her but I just don't feel like telling. It's like I'm not ready yet but I should because she knows but I haven't told her yet but I will. My life has been so much easier for me since I came out to my friends. I get to talk about guys with one of my girl friends. It's so much fun checking out guys.

I know there are some people that don't like homosexuals. If they don't like it they can turn around and look the other way. I've told my friends first now it's time to tell my family. I'm praying that they will accept me for who I am not for someone they want me to be. This is who I am and no one on the planet can change that. So be yourself. Be out and be prepared to come out of the closet.

by Junior H.

UNTITLED

This is the beginning of a new day.

I can waste it or use it for good. What I do today is important because I am exchanging a day of my life for it.

When tomorrow comes, this day will be gone forever leaving in its place something I have traded for it.

I want it to be gain, not loss, good, not evil, success, not failure.

In order that I shall not regret the price I pay for today. Thank you for today.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN



Tyranny

Tyranny

any queers have allowed themselves to become like hostages to the tyranny of the closet in Thunder Bay. The people I hold this against, are the older gay men, who have refused to fight to make things better for themselves, and for those who come after them. They are perfectly content with the status quo, and the false sense of security it gives them, even as their youngers are committing suicide! I've heard about a young man in Thunder Bay who couldn't take it anymore, and did just that. What an example these men who think they are so tough, and brave, and macho, and "straight acting", and "straight appearing", set! Could they be more clueless as they look down their nose at effeminate", gay men, drag queens, and the transgendered, who are worthy of more respect, and are more courageous than they ever will be! They are not even as "straight acting", and "straight appearing", as they believe. If they were, it would not be the great honour they believe.

I am told by these closeted "mature" men, that I must be like them, self-trapped in the dark recesses of the closet, and not walk out in the light, like everyone else, because this is not Toronto, New York, or San Francisco. Of course these places didn't change because people hid away in their closets, but because people

fought for their freedom. They go as far as to say that I am giving queers in Thunder Bay a bad name by being too open, by holding hands with, and kissing a member of the same sex in public. I am apparently inflaming things, by not staying in my place, and encouraging the bashing of others! The belief is, if we just keep quiet, and stay in our place, keep the status quo alive, and not assert our legal rights as first class citizens, everything will be just ducky, and no one will be hurt, the bullies will respect us, and leave us alone, as so obviously is the case in Thunder Bay today. If this is so, then how do the closeted individuals here explain the tragic, sickening murder of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming, where queers stay even more in their place, are even more closeted, than they are in the City of Thunder Bay? Homosexuality has been occurring in nature, even outside of the human species, since the time of the caveman. It is not unnatural. Submitting to tyranny is unnatural.

Living in Thunder Bay should not have to be like living buried under a rock in a nineteenth century time capsule! If anyone thinks I'm being melodramatic, they should look at the fact that Backstreet Dance Klub has no windows, and no outdoor sign! It is simply painted black on the outside! I'm sure the owner has the best of intentions at

heart. However, I believe we lose our pride when we give bullies exactly what they want. We become their direct victims 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Where does the submission end? Making Backstreet a huge "closet", only adds to the invisibility, and underground nature, of the queer community in Thunder Bay. This leads young people in particular to feel completely isolated and trapped, it lowers their self-esteem, and gives them the mistaken perception, that they don't have the legal and moral right to be treated as equals, like any other minority.

Please, all you closeted, self-hating, redneck wannabe, gay men, with your phony machismo, stop telling me the unproven, homophobic theory, that I'm gay because, like so many straights and queers, I had a deadbeat dad. I believe this theory stems from male chauvinism. It is believed that if a man, as the head of society, isn't there at the head of the family, and at the head of the table, all Hell will break loose! Hypocritical Christian fundamentalist morality, and provincial attitudes no doubt keep many older gay men in the closet. As one woman lengthily responded to me in the letters to the editor section of the Chronicle-Journal, sex is to take place between "a husband", and "his" wife. Any freedom from this is, "sodomy", and,

(Continued on page 5)

Reader's Response

DRYDEN, Ontario
August 4, 1998

Dear Editor:

I have recently read the May 1998 edition of Northern Connection, and I feel compelled to write to you regarding the article "Love Is Love", "Straight, Gay, Whatever Way", authored by Derek of Thunder Bay.

First, I believe the intent of your newsletter is to provide public education and I am therefore confused as to why you would not ensure that the information printed is accurate, factual and truthful prior to distributing it. This particular article, referred to above, is full of mis-truths, half-truths and completely deceives readers who know little or nothing of the Bible.

....(Ed. note: several paragraphs of scripture quotes follow, and are not included here)...

It is of particular interest that the writer chose 1 Corinthians 6 as a means of justification for those who "insist that homosexuality is not accepted by God." He states in the newsletter, "then there is a passage for you: revilers-those who lie and falsely defame others-CANNOT see the kingdom of God." Again, the writer was highly selective in what he chose to quote, for the entire passage of 1 Corinthians 6: 9,10 reads "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, will inherit the Kingdom of God."

You, as the producer of the newsletter, have a responsibility to provide the truth to your readers. I have no doubt that you will not likely print this letter as it does not support your belief system, but I do ask that you at least share it with Derek. It is obvious that he needs to learn more biblical facts before sharing his thoughts with others. Please also let him know that I would be pleased to correspond with him regarding this issue.

In Christ's Service,
Debbie Dokuchie

[Editors Note: For reasons of space as well as editorial consideration, the entire letter has not been reprinted. It should be noted that this newsletter is not the work of any one individual and reflects the opinions of those who contribute to it. We do hope that it will contribute to dialogue and discussion. Derek's response to the letter follows.]

Dear Debbie,
I am not concerned to "defend" my opinion because I do not feel threatened by your stand on homosexuality. I stand firm in my belief for this reason: God speaks to me. He tells me that he loves me for being gay and that he wants me to not hide who I am. The Word that comes right from the mouth of God is much more proof to me than the twisted words of the Bible. You see, when a book is translated again and again, it seems to change: Your quote says homosexual, but my Bible reads male prostitute. That is a completely different thing; you must agree. :) Like I said, I need

not defend myself for God is doing that for me. Here is a thought: Why don't you sit down and talk to God about this issue and think about the fact that he says to "love one another as I have loved you." You see, the point is that HE LOVES ME! So...why do you not read the quote? I want to end with a quote from a friend, "Nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity." God bless, Derek

HOMOPHOBIA HURTS

HOW HOMOPHOBIA HURTS EVERYONE: A THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Within the numerous forms of oppression, members of the target group (sometimes called minority) are OPPRESSED, while on some level members of the dominant or agent group are HURT. Although the effects of oppression differ qualitatively for specific target and agent groups, in the end everyone loses.

- 1.Homophobia locks all people into rigid gender-based roles that inhibit creativity and self expression.
- 2.Homophobic conditioning compromises the integrity of heterosexual people by pressuring them to treat others badly, actions contrary to their basic humanity.
- 3.Homophobia inhibits ones ability to form close, intimate relationships with members of ones own sex.

(Continued on page 5)

Tyranny (continued)

(Continued from page 3)

"buggery", and, "fornication", she repeated, using those three ugly words twice, and stating she did not believe she was a "homophobic hatemonger". I remember quite a few years ago, when I hadn't stopped letting everyone assume I was straight, but was beginning to challenge hetero hypocrisy, visiting with a hetero couple who were friends of my family. After they "playfully" put each other down, we walked them to the door. The husband remarked that it was a good thing that God only allowed each man one wife, to which I remarked, "Yeah, one wife per marriage, or whatever!" One closeted gay friend of mine told me that who we are is wrong because we were put on this earth to breed(by God?). Global overpopulation be damned? As if there are no other positive ways childless queers and childless straights can and do contribute to the world! Any higher power transcends, and is high above, such pathetic and ugly human vices, as ignorance, and prejudice, and bigotry. People make a mockery out of the name of God when they teach their children that this higher being, is an ignorant, hateful, barbaric monster, who will stop at nothing to hurt and destroy His children, if they are not born of the heterosexual orientation.

Sex phobia, thanks in a large part to Christian fundamentalism, is so powerful in Thunder Bay, that many queers, are just as repressed, and conservative, and hypocritical, sexually, as their straight counterparts. Both peoples hold up a mask, to make it appear as if they are ob-

sessed with having sex when only commitment and monogamy are involved. However, very seldom do they practise what they preach.

Queers and straights who do not believe queers have the right to be what they are, or that queers are somehow inferior, or unnatural(something that occurs in nature?), do not have the right to impose their completely nonsensical, small minded, backward, beliefs on everyone else, nor to use such beliefs to discriminate against others who do not share the same beliefs. This writer personally will not have his heart and soul, pushed into and locked away in a closet, into dark blindness by the blind. Queers who think that they are safe, or have some right to the closet are deluding themselves, and disrespecting their people, to whom many in the closet believe themselves superior. Do gay men actually think no one will do the math when they've never had a girlfriend, and show no romantic interest in women? The fact is our people die in the closet. The closet is the bigot's most powerful weapon against us, to keep a tyranny in place. With it, they can rob us of our self-respect, and our sense of community. There can be no doubt they want to use it to destroy us. I hope the queer community, continues to bring more of its heavy artillery, in the form of pride, out of the closets.

Clint Babula
Thunder Bay



HOMOPHOBIA HURTS

(Continued from page 4)

4.Homophobia generally restricts communication with a significant portion of the population and, more specifically, limits family relationships.

5.Societal homophobia prevents some lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people from developing an authentic self identity, and adds to the pressure to marry, which in turn places undue stress and oftentimes trauma on themselves as well as their heterosexual spouses and their children.

6.Homophobia is one cause of premature sexual involvement, which increases the chances of teen pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Young people, of all sexual identities, are often pressured to become heterosexually active to prove to themselves and others that they are normal.

7.Homophobia combined with sexphobia (fear and repulsion of sex) results in the elimination of any discussion of the lives and sexuality of LGBT people as part of school-based sex education, keeping vital information from all students. Such a lack of information can kill people in the age of AIDS.

8.Homophobia can be used to stigmatize, silence, and, on occasion, target people who are perceived or defined by others as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, but who are, in actuality, heterosexual.

9. Homophobia prevents heterosexuals from accepting the benefits and gifts offered by LGBTs: theoretical insights, social and spiritual visions and options, contributions in the arts and culture, to religion, to family life, indeed, to all facets of society.

(Continued on page 7)

Rainbow Youth Connection

- Do you want to meet other gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, or transgender youth in Northern Ontario?
- Do you feel isolated, alone or just want to talk to someone else like yourself?
- Are you interested in becoming a penpal?

If you answered Yes to any of these questions, then Rainbow Youth Connection is for you! Follow these steps to become a penpal:

1. Send us your vitals [name (you may use an alias), age, gender (include whether you are Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered), interests/hobbies, and what type of person you would like to meet (age, gender, status (IE: G, L, B, T) to:

**rainbowyc@yahoo.com or
RYC c/o 1438 McGregor Ave.
Thunder Bay, ON P7E 5E6**

Make sure you include your email or snail mail address IN YOUR LETTER. If you have the internet but don't have a personal email address, get one from www.yahoo.com. You may choose to use another address than where you live. (But don't worry, the envelope won't be obvious; it'll say only RYC.)

2. We'll email or snail mail you the list of possible penpals (please specify if you want to use email or snail mail). This list will exclude any sort of address; only RYC will have addresses. All information is confidential.

3. You choose someone to whom you would like to write.

4. Write them a letter.

5. Send it to us (RYC) either by email or snail mail.

6. We will then forward your letter to the person you wrote.

7. Your penpal will then reply to us and we will forward it to you.

This is for your security and safety.

Please send an envelope with your return address and a postage stamp (this will help our costs but is not necessary).

8. After you and your penpal have become familiar with each other, you can decide to exchange addresses if you so wish.

For ages up to 25 years old.

Get connected!

Join RYC and meet new people!



Youth Line



1-800-268-YOUTH

Northern Connection

This is the third issue of Northern Connection, with plans to publish one final issue in the next year. This issue will be distributed throughout the north and northwest as best we can.

Permission is granted to copy this newsletter, but please let us know how many copies you make, so we can determine distribution.

Send letters and material to:

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Thunder Bay, Ontario P7A 8A9 or

c/o ACCESS, 111 Elm St., Suite 203

Sudbury, ON P3C 1T3

Write and let us know what you think.

Fax: 807-345-2505 or 705-688-0423

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or actb@tbaytel.net