

PSAC Pride Conference March 2007

The PSAC's 2nd Pride Conference was held in Vancouver on March 30 – April 1, 2007. The conference was chaired by Kay Sinclair and Ed Cashman and opened and closed by Aboriginal Elder, Phillipa Ryan.

There were 117 delegates, 6 Guests, 11 National Board of Directors, 6 observers for a total of 140 participants. The conference began with a panel of four speakers entitled "Include and Be Included".

The first speaker was Alex Munter, city councillor and teacher at the University of Ottawa. He highlighted the gains that have been made such as the Canadian for Equal Marriage Campaign, Women's right to vote and improvements in anti-discrimination laws. We have spent the past 10 years fighting for LGBT rights at the Federal level and the shift should be to the Provincial and Municipal levels. He sees three priorities. The first is to be part of local efforts and be able to mobilize on the ground. The fight moves from place to place (eg school boards in Lethbridge). Secondly to support those who fight for public services. The Federal budget dismantles federal government services and is the beginning of a shift away from social justice. For example, the Registered Disabilities Savings Plan is a tax shelter to buy services for children with disabilities. Most parents of these children have no money and for those that do, the service is not there for their kids (same for childcare). The third priority is to continue to build alliances with those in the same struggle.

Allison Brewin of Westcoast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund spoke on the history of feminism in Canada. The feminist movement has been somewhat led by lesbians. The future of women's equality is pessimistic with the erosion of services and tools women need to participate in society. There is a religious rise to control women (and other minority groups). There was some discussion about polygamy in areas such as Bountiful where children are controlled and trained from birth that one man will have multiple wives. The LGTB community open up the family structure in a loving relationship with more than two partners.

Alex Mah, a young transperson spoke about his transition and its difficulties. There is no funding and no one in BC will do the surgery. Lower income individuals will not be able to pay for hormones, name change and travel for medical care. There is difficulty with travel and passport. Alex suggests that PSAC members could be trained on sensitivity in our service delivery role on the job.

Fo Niemi, co-founder of the Centre for Research-Action on Race Relations spoke about the political climate in Quebec. The election of the right movement in Quebec will cause a transformation that will affect the rest of Canada. Gay men of colour have been the victims of crime and there has been a delay of cases in front of the Human Rights Commission. Fo spoke about the difficulties of being a gay man of colour and the stereotypes he faces. He would like to see a full time Minister responsible for the GLTB

file. His strategies include alliances with like minded bodies to fight for reasonable accommodation and to continue the traditional family debate.

Delegates to the conference attended the workshop entitled “The Elephant in the Room”, then chose one of the following “We’re Part of Something Bigger”, “Pride Knows No Bounds” or “Taking the Lead”.

John Gordon, PSAC President provided greetings to the conference. He highlighted our fight for discrimination – at the bargaining table, courts and arbitration and our work with Egale and other coalition groups. The PSAC sent over 50 delegates to the Worker’s Out conference.

Regional caucuses provided the following highlights:

BC – Get the “T” in GLTB around Trans members and lobby to incorporate education on trans harassment into Joint Learning Program training. Raise trans issues at UMC and join Human Rights committees.

Prairies – Networking – establish e-mail networks, send posters to attend meetings and get more women and trans members involved

Quebec – Grow participation and create a contact list to increase the network. Celebrate May 17 – Day Against Homophobia

Atlantic – had 25 delegates at the conference and will work on the website for more visible GLTB issues. Obtain more publicity items, get more PSAC members at Pride events and more education.

North – isolation is a big issue. Provide information to all members on GLTB issues, update the web page, more committees, attend more events.

Results of elections for LGTB member to the PSAC Equal Opportunities Committee are:

Women:

Sharleen Patterson – (North) over Karoline Klug (NCR); 70 votes to 39 votes

1st alternate: Carol-Anne Greneir (NCR) over Natasha Coldevin (NCR) 92 to 16 votes

2nd Alt: Carolyn Moffat (NCR) acclaimed

Man:

Dennis Roy (Atlantic – CEIU) over Terry Fanning (NCR); 85 to 24 votes

1st alt: Julian Wilson (NCR) over Toufic El-Dalmer (Que), Daniel Charron (NCR) and Terry Fanning (NCR) – took 3 ballots

2nd alt: Toufic El-Dalmer (Que) – acclaimed

Resolutions were not overly controversial. Issues included GLTB action plan, PSAC self id survey, including GLTB in census data, study to include GLTB in Employment Equity act, PSAC website changes, assignment of AEC officer to GLTB rights, that the PSAC, Feds of Labour & CLC lobby Governments to include GLBT material in school curriculum, more women to attend PSAC conferences – the initial selection of delegates be minimum 50% women and unionize Aboriginal workforce.

The demographics of the conference delegates were as follows: 64 men, 53 women. Of those the following self identified: 5 bisexual, 0 transgender, 9 aboriginal, 5 racially visible, 1 Ab/RV mix, 14 members with disability.

At the Agriculture union caucus, five of the six Agriculture Union members attended. Information on the Ag Union EO committee was provided and reports requested within a month of the conference. Reports will be sent to Sylvia Prowse at the National Office and the member will indicate if they wish their name to be tied to their report (as some members may not be 'out' at work). There was a discussion of information dissemination that members only get some material via the locals. Members don't recall seeing EO members all their AGM, so a reminder needs to go out to RVP's and local Presidents to invite EO reps to their AGMs.

The conference closed with Victor Elkins, CLC Vice President on LGBT sharing his experiences as a parent. He feels it is important to bring our children to rally's, conferences and other events to educate them on why we go to union meetings and need to fight for our rights.

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