

# LESBIAN MOTHERS ASSOCIATION

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VOLUME IV No. II

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2002

## Homophobia in the Schools - ACT UP!

By Sylvia Edgerton

Since 1998 the **Canadian Mental Health Association (Montreal)** has offered a colloquium on a specific theme related to homosexuality. This year, in partnership with the "Centrale des syndicats du Québec" and the "Service aux collectivités de l'UQAM", the topic was homophobia in the schools. The title of the colloquium was "**L'homophobie à l'école: en parler et agir**" (**Homophobia in School: discussion and action**), and it was held at UQAM on **October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2002**. The event was well organized, very stimulating and inspiring. The hall was full and over fifty last-minute inscriptions were turned away due to lack of space. There were speeches, a panel, a theatrical improvisation, workshops, shared experiences from youth, kiosks and a video presentation, not to mention a lot of energy and motivation to create change in the schools, for young people as well as faculty, staff, teachers and parents.

The day opened with three prominent speakers: **Mr. Jacques Duval**, director of the Canadian Mental Health Association, **Dr. Danielle Julien**, professor - researcher, department of psychology, UQAM, and **Mr. André Boulerice**, minister of *Relations avec les Citoyens et l'Immigration*. They introduced the subject of homophobia in the schools and addressed the need for immediate and drastic action for change.

The first presentation to follow was a conference by **Mr. Bill Ryan**, professor at the School of Social Work, McGill, and director and founder of *Projet Sain et Sauf* (Safe Space Project). His conference was entitled: *The development of sexual orientation in youth and the psychosocial impacts of homophobia*. Ryan is also the founder of Project 10 and an excellent speaker and activist in our community. He gave us some numbers to reflect on based on viable research such as: there are approximately 12 million gays and lesbians in the United States. 75% of gays and 85% of lesbians in the USA do not come out of the closet at work. Young

people generally do not confide in adults or peers to discuss questions of sexual orientation, and for those youth who do discuss homosexuality with someone in the school system, 83% choose a teacher, 13% choose a psycho-social worker, and 4% choose a health professional (I think this really touched the teachers in the room). The *American Journal of Public Health* conducted research on 6,500 students. For those who had sexual education classes, 28% (homosexual and heterosexual) had tried to commit suicide or had thought about it. For those who had no sexual education class, 45% had thought about or attempted suicide, 36% of them gay/lesbian, and 9% heterosexual.

Mr. Ryan did not just present numbers, however. He explained how, in our present society, the equality guaranteed by our Charter of Rights is upheld and enforced *the least* within our school grounds. We were given a quick summary of the sexual development of children, starting at the ages of 11 to 13 when they are experiencing their first sexual attractions, be it homosexual, heterosexual, or both. These young people do not feel that they can openly discuss their sexual questioning for fear for their personal security. For those who feel they are different, they rarely have any role models or vision of what their future might be like. Isolation becomes their way of life, and it is not a healthy one. Sometimes just one interaction with one adult, who merely uses the word gay or homosexual with an open, non-judgemental tone, can make all the difference. The problem, which is not always clear to the parties involved, is that homosexuality is not a problem, homophobia is. The isolation hits on three levels: 1) cognitive - lack of information, 2) emotional - lack of support, and 3) social - lack of network. To add to their problems, unlike other, more visible minorities, most gay/lesbian youth do not feel that they can discuss their sexuality with their families. They literally have no one to turn to. In his closing remarks Mr. Ryan made a few simple suggestions: talk to kids very young about human rights, social diversity, and discrimination. Make it part of their vocabulary. Recognise the existence of gay and lesbian youth, they are in every school in every district. Invite groups such as "*Pour Une Nouvelle Vision de L'homosexualité*", Project 10, GRIS, Jeunesse Lambda, H-Muet, etc. into your school.

Mr. Ryan's informative talk was followed by a closer, first hand presentation by two gay/lesbian youth who have survived the school systems and were brave enough to share their stories. **Marie-Noelle LaPan** told her coming out story and there wasn't a dry eye in the room. She started dating a girl at school and the two decided to come out. They suffered terrible treatment from their peers and were even asked by the director of the school to stop causing so much commotion. They stood up to the director and held on to their right to be who they are and were very relieved to be done with school at the end of the year. Ms. LaPan received a standing ovation and I think we all regretted not having been there for her when she really needed us.

The next speaker asked that his name not be published and that the cameras stop rolling during his presentation in order to protect his family from embarrassment. He started discovering his homosexuality around 12 years old. He experienced a lot of internalized homophobia, reinforced by the fact that his favourite professor made homophobic comments regularly. He is from a Muslim family and it was very clear that his homosexual desires would not be welcome at home any better than at school. His father did find out, however, and he was forced to move into an apartment, change schools, and try to keep himself together. Project 10 came to his aid and made a huge difference in his life and he is now living with his parents and is a volunteer with Project 10. His advice was to: Put sexuality back into the school curriculum, have books on homosexuality available at the school library, show films, put up posters, and in general make sexuality and sexual orientation less of a taboo. Once again, standing ovation, tears and a desire to change the system overwhelmed the audience.

Comments were made from the crowd such as: training should start in pre-natal classes, asking parents to reflect on how they would feel if, in 13 years from now, their future child told them they were gay or lesbian. Others pointed out that at the beginning of the school year, professors should make it clear that no discrimination will be tolerated in their classroom, followed by a list of what is considered discrimination. An increase of education concerning diversity and tolerance at the primary level is needed.

A series of workshops followed the presentations, where participants chose from a list of topics to meet in smaller groups for more informal and in-depth discussion. The workshops available were: 1) *Demystifying Homosexuality in School*, with **Irène Demczuk**; 2) *Homophobia: How to Intervene in a School Setting*, with **Alain Johnson** and **Diane Labelle** (a member of the Lesbian Mothers Association); 3) *Gaining Tools to Take Better Action*, with **Martine Fortier** and **Janik Bastien Charlebois**; 4) *School Commissions Taking Steps*, with **Bill Ryan**; and 5) *To Say It or Not To Say It*, with **Colette Trudel**. I participated in workshops 3 and 4.

Workshop #3: **Martine Fortier**, from the Direction of Public Health, presented an exciting educational program that her team has put together. It is a portable presentation case called *Pour Une Nouvelle Vision de L'homosexualité (For a New Vision of Homosexuality)*. It has been created for youth 12 -18 years of age and will be adapted for regions all over Quebec. The idea is that this case will be available to schools free of charge to assist public and community youth workers (teachers, social workers, health professionals, etc.) to sensitize youth about different sexual orientations. Inside the case you will find a guide for the youth worker and a document demystifying homosexuality and explaining briefly the impact of homophobia on the health and development of GLBT youth. This document also expresses the ethical and legal responsibility that youth workers have to create a safe environment exempt of discrimination. There is a press release, a video, a packet of various tools such as posters, brochures, business cards, etc..There is also a regional and provincial resource list for workers, youth, and parents, plus a parents section aimed at supporting all parents including those of gay or lesbian youth. Three different types of training sessions will come with the case to assure that it will be applied appropriately. The case should be available in January 2003.

**Janik Bastien Charlebois**, coordinator of research, **GRIS-Montreal**, also presented a similar project that GRIS is putting together in conjuncture with the *New Vision of Homosexuality*. Their pedagogical package has 4 sections: 1) describing the present situation for young gays and lesbians, 2) What do we mean when we say "homosexual", 3) activities for the last cycle in primary school and for secondary school, 4) important resources and suggestions.

Workshop #4) **Bill Ryan**, presented *School Commissions Taking Steps*. Having been asked by Health Canada to create something similar to Project 10 across Canada, Mr. Ryan has become familiar with what programs do exist in different parts of the country. It is very motivating to hear about programs that are already working. For U.S. information he recommended the web site [www.GLSEN.org](http://www.GLSEN.org). As for other Canadian provinces:

**British Columbia:** There is a program starting at the kindergarten level all the way through to secondary 5 called *Challenging Homophobia in Our Schools*. There are Gay/Straight alliances, supported by the union. The minister has encouraged disclosing the homosexuality of important historical figures so that youth see that positive role models are sometimes gay or lesbian. The minister also encourages that GLBT teachers serve as models for their students. Check out [www.galebc.org](http://www.galebc.org).

**Manitoba:** In Winnipeg there is a day in each class in the beginning of the school year devoted to social diversity, including sexual diversity, called *Respect for Social Diversity Day*. There is also a program for future teachers, subsidized by Health Canada, called *Breaking Barriers*.

**Ontario:** In Toronto they have a *Rainbow Program*. There is also a school called the Rainbow School for youth who do not "fit in" at the regular school. Gay and lesbian students are welcomed there. There are also two employees who work for the school commission for the sensitization of homosexuality in school, positions which have been in place for 10 years. The Toronto School Board has a great web site as well.

**Nova Scotia:** In Halifax they have a *Safe Spaces (Sain et Sauf)* program for young gays, lesbians and bisexuals in the schools. They also fund Gay/Straight Alliances or Youth Against Discrimination groups in many schools. There is a program called *Ally Project (Project Allié)* where there is at least one teacher who puts a sign on the outside of their door that says Safe Space, Safe Person, Ally. It is the young people who decide which teacher qualifies to have this sticker on their door.

**Quebec:** Here at home it is often the nurses who open the door to the subject of homosexuality. We don't have a

developed program like in the provinces above. Mr. Ryan suggests that the Parents Committee (Conseil d'établissement) is the best place to start for making change. In the Region Chaudière-Appalaches, however, they have installed an excellent program. **GRIS** Chaudière-Appalaches with the "Régie régionale" has a project aimed at developing trainings, support groups, and other methods of improving the situation for GLBT youth and adults. They also have a theatre competition called the **Michel Tremblay Prize**. A good example of how it is not always the big city schools that make all the progress when it comes to discrimination.

In between the workshop sessions we had a chance to see the **video Silence SVP**, made by Mario Munger, produced by Centrale des syndicats du Québec, 2002. It is a very moving documentary on homophobia and how it infringes on youth and professionals in the school system. Some of our members star in it as well, for which we are very proud. A panel discussion followed entitled: *Curb homophobia: a collective strategy*. **Ms. Diane de Courcy**, president of the Montreal School Commission, **Mr. Youri Chassin**, representative of the "Conseil permanent de la jeunesse", and **Ms. Monique Richard**, president of the "Centrale des syndicats du Québec" discussed the role and responsibility of everyone in the school system to take advantage of every occasion to create a respectful environment for sexual diversity.

**M. Sylvain Simard, minister of Education**, arrived after great anticipation from the crowd, to give the final speech of the day. He presented a history of the progress of rights for homosexuals in Quebec since the 1960's, when homosexuality was still considered criminal. He supported groups such as Gai Écoute in their actions for change. He mentioned that he had written a letter to a school commissioner about his worries. He mentioned that parents also need to be involved because young people have a significant home life as well as school life. He spoke of the reform and the ingredients of respect for differences and equality that are found within it. It was a politician speaking and he gave no promises or concrete plans of action, but his presence was all the same appreciated and, though it was the end of a long day, the crowd had stuck it out to hear what he had to say. His speech can be found on the web at:  
<http://www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/MINISTRE/minis2002/a021018.htm>.

The kiosks lining the corridors on the way in and out of the lecture hall were hopping with interest and energy throughout the day. There was that buzz of "we can make a difference, we have to make a difference" everywhere in the vicinity. I left the conference discouraged by the state of emergency we got a glimpse of during the conference, and motivated to see an end to it. Discrimination of GLBT students, staff, teachers and administrators is going on every day, in every school, across the province. The teasing and bullying in the schoolyard is almost exclusively gay bashing, as other discriminating terms are no longer tolerated. School is where our society raises its children, teaches them how our society functions and how to participate in it successfully. School is where our kids live their most important social interactions, where they develop their self-esteem, where they learn who and what they want to be in relationship to their society. School is also one of the only places where our Charter of Rights is not respected. This is a state of emergency, let's discuss it and ACT!

We would like to hear from you! Interested in writing for our newsletter? Send your articles at any time to [info@aml-lma.org](mailto:info@aml-lma.org) or by post to AML, 2401 Coursol, Montreal, Quebec, H3J 1C8

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## **News Briefs - September 2002 - November 2002**

### **MONTREAL**

**August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2002** - Federal minister **Allan Rock**, Provincial minister **André Boisclair** and city councilor **Robert Laramée** were very happy to announce that all three levels of government will be helping to **finance** the building of Montreal's **new gay and lesbian community center**. The building will be erected on the corner of Wolfe and Ste-Catherine in the gay village and its estimated cost is 9.7 million dollars. The Mario Racine Foundation, which is in charge of the project, has amassed about 43% of the needed funds for the building of 57,000 square feet, which should be completed by October 2003.

The complex will include space for community services and cultural events, as well as a business and commercial center. There will be an Internet café, a multi-media room, as space for seniors as well as a gay history crossroads.

The interim director general of the foundation, **Richard Brown**, is hoping it will all be ready in time for the 7th international Festival of Gay Choirs, in 2004, and certainly for the Gay Games of 2006.

**September 19<sup>th</sup>- Image+Nation**, the **international gay and lesbian film and video festival** celebrated its **15<sup>th</sup> anniversary** this autumn. In celebration of their 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year's programme included 200 films from 25 countries, 27 of which were in official competition. To show where we've come from since the festival was born, organizers Katharine Setzer and Charlie Boudreau (both women) also decided to include a tour of some of the great moments in gay and lesbian film history. Classics shown included: John Huston's *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, Sidney Lumet's *Dog Day Afternoon*, Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game* and David Cronenberg's *M. Butterfly*. The festival also offered a retrospective of the great filmmaker Rainer W. Fassbinder.

Among the many interesting offerings: Lesbian Porn 101, a ciné-conference animated by Laura Weide, showing a retrospective of the past 20 years of lesbian porn.

**September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2002** - A Montreal woman has been awarded \$6,000 in a **discrimination case involving Dunkin' Donuts**. The woman told a human rights tribunal she was ostracized by co-workers, had her work hours reduced and was ridiculed by customers after they found out she was a lesbian. The tribunal was told that the woman began working in February 1997 at a Montreal franchise of the giant US chain. Two weeks later she invited a co-worker home for a social visit and introduced the woman to her partner. Following the visit the co-worker told customers and other staff about the woman's sexuality. Offensive comments started days later and the co-worker who had told everyone began refusing to work with her. Up until that point, her employer had given her work excellent reviews. The tribunal ordered the franchise to pay the woman \$3,000 for moral damages and another \$2,979 for lost wages.

October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2002 - Up until recently **Quebec fertility clinics** refused access to all lesbians and to single heterosexual women as well. In January 2002 a delegation of women from the **Quebec Women's Federation (Alexa Conradi)**, the **Lesbian Mothers Association (Gabriel Pinkstone and Nicole Paquette)**, as well as **Professor Danielle Julien from UQAM's psychology department**, met up with representatives from the fertility clinic Procrea. The goal of the meeting was to present the medical, social and ethical reasons to open access to all women. Alexa Conradi spoke of the evolution of women's rights as well as the evolution of Quebec society with respect to lesbian rights. Dr. Julien explained the results of numerous studies on lesbian-headed families and how our children are shown to have a normal development. Gabriel Pinkstone explained the practical problems encountered by women who want to have children but who are denied access. Finally Nicole Paquette presented the health issues associated with excluding some women from a part of the medical system. The representatives from Procrea listened closely and asked many questions. The Lesbian Mothers Association was then asked to prepare a dossier for the ethics committee with information relevant to the request. On **October 2<sup>nd</sup>** we met once again with Procrea representatives and they announced to us that **they would now provide access to all women regardless of sexual orientation or conjugal status**. Since then their board has changed their mission statement. Currently in all Procrea documents you can read the following:

"PROCREA clinics, amongst the most important in Canada, offer a complete range of professional services in fertility and human genetics. These services are available to anyone wishing to have children through the use of the techniques of medically assisted procreation."

By "anyone" they mean **lesbians as well as single heterosexual women**. For us this is a great victory as access to maternity is as important as our having obtained legal rights. As of today you (and your partner) can make an appointment with Procrea Montreal or Quebec. You will have the same services as any heterosexual couple. If you are a single lesbian or heterosexual woman you are welcome to the same services as well.

**October 22<sup>nd</sup> 2002-** The **gay archives of Quebec** organized a commemorative evening to **celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary** of an event that changed the gay community of Montreal. On the night of Friday October 21<sup>st</sup> to Saturday October 22<sup>nd</sup> 1977, 145 people were arrested at the **gay bars Truux and Mystique** on Stanley Street in downtown Montreal. On Saturday October 22<sup>nd</sup> 1977 starting at midnight **2000 people took to the streets** to protest this violation of their rights. Journalists took up the gay cause and a committee for the defense of rights was formed. The result: On the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 1977 the National Assembly voted in favour of Bill 88: The **Quebec Charter of Human Rights** that went into effect a week later.

## **QUEBEC**

**September 6<sup>th</sup> 2002** - In a case that has been pending for the past four years, a judge of the **Quebec Family Court** has decided to grant a **co-parent adoption to a lesbian mother**. The legal fight for parental rights, which began in 1998 eventually, became associated with the civil union debate in the National Assembly. Although since the inception of Bill 84 lesbian mothers no longer need adopt their partner's biological children, the judgment sets a precedent for those who for various reasons cannot benefit from provisions of the new Quebec law. This can be useful for second parent adoptions subsequent to international adoptions or for parents who became part of the family after the child was conceived.

**September 14 2002** - The leader of the **Action Démocratique party Mario Dumont** is not hot on the legalization of marijuana and is against abortion. He has also had **second thoughts on the positive vote that he gave to Bill 84**, the legislation that finally made gays and lesbians and their families equal under Quebec law. Like the two other parties, the ADQ also voted in favor of the civil union bill but Dumont has now claimed that he had some serious reservations regarding certain aspects of the bill: especially the section that gave us full parental rights.

"I was not very much at ease with this," said Dumont, "It was a bit off the wall...we've studied the consequences of right turns on red lights, a norm in North America, for 2 years now, but when it comes to a question of children in circumstances that never before existed in our society, nobody spoke about it, nobody discussed it. All of a

sudden Bang! the government passes this because they want to get the votes of the community. When you're willing to trade moral issues for electoral ones there's a real problem."

The truth of the matter is that despite being a member of the commission of institutions for the National Assembly, Dumont never took part in any of the numerous debates concerning the civil union bill. Obviously for him, right turns on red lights were much more compelling than the rights of our children. Thanks Mario.

**October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2002 - *The Gazette*- Anglican bishops in Quebec** have told clergy they are **not authorized by the church to bless same-sex "civil unions"** under a new Quebec law.

"I am pretty gay-positive, but at the same time I have a responsibility to the whole diocese (of Montreal)," Archbishop Andrew Hutchison said in a telephone interview this week. The archbishop told the governing synod of his diocese last Friday that a Quebec law adopted last summer provides that anyone who may officiate at marriages in Quebec may also preside at civil unions.

Hutchison added: "We do not wish to do anything to add to the sense of isolation of gay Anglicans, but neither are we prepared to make any precipitous moves in the absence of a thorough consultation and discussion of the issue in the diocese."

Meanwhile the Montreal presbytery of the United Church of Canada (the counterpart of the Montreal diocese) gave its ministers the go-ahead last month to perform civil-union ceremonies.

**October 31<sup>st</sup> 2002-** The provincial government is finally working on a concrete plan for **surviving partners of same-sex couples**. Although in 1999, Bill 32 allowed surviving spouses to claim benefits from the government, those whose spouses died before 1999 were not covered. Last spring, a positive decision was rendered in the cases of 4 men whose spouses had died prior to the enactment of the bill. If the slated legislation is approved, then **spousal benefits will be retroactively applied to all partners in same-sex couples whose spouses died between 1999 and 1985**. About a thousand gays and lesbians stand to benefit from this law

as about 80 people each year have filed and been refused requests for pensions.

## **CANADA**

**September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2002 - A Quebec Superior Court justice has ruled that denying gays and lesbians the right to marry is a violation of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.** The landmark decision echoes a decision by the Ontario Superior Court earlier this year. And, like the Ontario ruling, the court gave the federal government two years to amend the law or it would be declared invalid.

"We're overjoyed," declared Michael Hendricks, who with his partner Rene LeBoeuf took the government to court. Leboeuf and Hendricks have been together for 30 years. In 1998 they were denied a marriage license and began their court action.

The ruling said that the creation of civil unions in Quebec, the most complete legal unions for same-sex couples to date in Canada, "does not replace the right of access to marriage."

Quebec's justice minister said at the time the legislation was introduced that he would have preferred to give gays full marriage rights, but marriage is a federal responsibility.

Under Canadian law marriage is defined as "a union between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others."

"The Court has once again affirmed that the ban on same-sex marriage is discriminatory and unconstitutional," said John Fisher, executive director of national gay rights organization Egale.

"The court has also sent the message loud and clear to Parliament: Stop discriminating against same-sex couples and respect the Constitution. The time to act is now. We call upon Parliament to act now in accordance with the court's decision and allow same-sex couples to marry. How long must Canadians in same-sex relationships wait for equality?"

**The federal government had already decided to appeal the Ontario court decision and on September 10<sup>th</sup> did the same in**

**Quebec.** In B.C. where the judge rejected the notion of same-sex marriage, the couples' appeal of the decision will be launched in February 2003.

In pursuing the appeals, the federal government has revealed in court documents that its core argument is that **heterosexual procreation is the 'fundamental objective' of marriage.** Egale Canada, the national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered equality rights group, has denounced these arguments as "insulting to Canadians".

"The government's attempt to portray marriage as nothing more than a breeding program for heterosexuals is completely offensive," said John Fisher, Executive Director of Egale. "It's offensive to married heterosexuals, many of whom do not, or cannot, have children, and it's offensive to same-sex couples, many of whom are raising children."

In the recent Ontario decision, Justice Laforme described the procreation argument as "a mere pretext used to rationalize discrimination against lesbians and gays", and in the Quebec case, Justice Lemelin pointed out "We don't deny marriage to elderly women!"

The cabinet and liberal caucus are apparently very much divided on the definition of marriage. In the meantime, the Ministry of Justice has referred the issue of gay and lesbian marriage to an all-party **justice and human rights committee**, which will hold **hearings across the country.**

In the **discussion paper** preparatory to these hearings, the government has outlined **4 different options:** 1) removing the federal government from any administrative role in marriage thereby transferring responsibility to religious institutions. Such a move could dovetail with the establishment of a civil registry system which may or may not be open to gays and lesbians depending on the province, 2) creating a federal civil union which would be like marriage in all but its name, 3) modifying the definition of marriage to include gays and lesbians or 4) maintaining the status quo.

The **Lesbian Mothers Association** will be submitting and presenting a brief to the committee on justice, in the weeks to come.

Ultimately, if the government does not make a decision the issue will be decided by the **Supreme Court of Canada**, a process that could take up to five years.

**October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2002** *PlanetOut.com* - **Canadian customs authorities** have seized copies of "*Cherry*," a lesbian sex novel by British writer Charlotte Cooper, that were headed for a gay and lesbian bookstore in Victoria, British Columbia.

The graphic novel includes a description of fisting, which officials suspected put the book in violation of national obscenity laws. Customs will have 30 days to determine if "*Cherry*" lacks artistic merit and, if so, the books may be permanently detained.

This seizure puts Canadian Customs back in the international spotlight, where it has been off and on for nearly two decades. A country that is liberal in many respects, Canada does not have the equivalent of the U.S. First Amendment, and the nation's customs department has a history of using the national obscenity laws as a tool for gay-biased censorship.

**October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2002** - *365Gay.com* - **New statistics give a glimpse of Canada's gay and lesbian community.** The numbers, from Statistics Canada's **2001 census**, were released as part of a broader picture of households across the country. It is the first time that Canadian gays have been included in the census.

The figures show that 34,200 same-sex common-law couples were counted in Canada in 2001, but most gay rights advocates and statisticians believe the number to be **lower than the true number** of gay and lesbian couples.

Sociologists believe the discrepancy is caused by many gay families, especially those in rural areas, who are unwilling to trust the government with details of their lives.

Despite the apparent flaws in the numbers, gay rights advocates praised the inclusion of gay families in the polling.

Female same-sex couples were five times as likely to have children living with them as their male counterparts.

About 15 percent of the 15,200 female same-sex couples were living with children, compared with only 3 percent of male same-sex couples.

The numbers also showed that about 81 percent of same-sex couples live in Canada's 27 major metropolitan areas. The cities of Vancouver (1.98 percent), Montreal (1.47 percent) and Victoria (1.26 per cent) had the highest proportion of same-sex couples among all families.

**October 23<sup>rd</sup>** - *Equal Marriage Newsletter* - **Ottawa** - Any lingering doubt about whether a new leader of the **Alliance Party** would take the disreputable party in a new direction was removed today, when party leader **Stephen Harper** rose to make yet another **offensive remark** from this party that has built a solid reputation as a bog of bigots.

Harper was commenting on the ethics of some members of the house of parliament, when he referred to how their "mug shots" might be found in police stations across the country. **MP Svend Robinson** rose to object to the implication of criminality in Harper's remarks. Harper responded by implying that photographs of Robinson (who is gay) would be found in far more "wonderful" places than a police station.

Robinson was outraged. "It's insulting ... I'm tired, as a gay man, of this kind of innuendo and insult," he said. Former Prime Minister Joe Clark, leader of the Conservative party rose to object to Harper's comment too. The slur was even too much for some members of the Alliance party, who later communicated their regrets to Robinson.

This is a continued pattern of oration from the Alliance party based on bigotry, prejudice, and homophobia. The party is associated with bigotry, due, in part, to past remarks of its members, including one Reform member (the party subsequently changed its name to Alliance, in an attempt of a make-over) who said that he would move gay or black employees to the back of the shop if they were bad for business. The party has consistently voted as a block against rights for gays and lesbians.

**November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2002** - *CP* - **Yellowknife** -The Northwest Territories has become the **first region in Canada to prohibit discrimination against transgendered people**. As part of the territory's new Human Rights Act, a person

cannot be discriminated against on the basis of their gender identity. The Canadian Human Rights Commission and the British Columbia Human Rights Commission have both recommended that discrimination on the grounds of gender identity be prohibited, but laws have not yet been enacted.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

**August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2002** - *365Gay.com* - The government of **India** has until Nov. 27 to provide the country's **Supreme Court** with legal grounds for maintaining criminal laws against gay sex. The court is hearing a **human rights challenge to the law**, brought by the gay group **Naz Foundation**.

Appearing Monday before three justices of the court, Solicitor General K K Sud said: "We have to take into consideration the morality in society as a whole, and such a relationship is not accepted in our country".

But the justices said the issue could not be dealt with solely on the grounds of social morality. "As far as society is concerned, before 1956 polygamy was an accepted practice, but it had been stopped after the Hindu Marriage Act was passed to ban it," the court observed.

The court ordered the government to file a brief within four weeks outlining the legal basis for criminalizing homosexual sex and ordered a hearing for Nov. 27.

People convicted of having sex with a person of the same gender can be jailed for up to five years under current Indian law.

**September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2002** - *Gay.com U.K.* - **South American bishops** have attacked international organizations, including the European Union and the United Nations, for lobbying governments to legislate against Roman Catholic teachings.

At the end of a global conference, Catholic bishops from 25 countries said **governments are being pushed to approve laws in favor of gay rights**, as well as divorce and adoption.

"Latin American governments have been pressured to legislate against Christian family unity by strong groups like the United Nations and the European Union who want to impose their experiences here," **Monsignor Carlos Aguiar** of

Mexico, president of the **Catholic council for Latin America** told CNN.

Aguiar said a declaration had been put together against such lobbying. Details were not disclosed, but it is expected to reiterate the Catholic Church's stance on such issues as homosexuality.

The declaration will be released by the Vatican. No date has yet been given. It is, however, likely to be presented to regional governments, parliaments and civil rights groups.

**September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2002 (AFP) Johannesburg** - The constitutional court of **South Africa has granted same-sex couples the right to adopt children.** The judgment was hailed as a **first on the African continent.** It follows a series of recent advances for gay rights in South Africa.

The Gay and Lesbian Alliance, that counts 112,000 members saluted this judgment as an example that would serve as a severe blow to homophobes on the continent like **Robert Mugabe** and **Sam Nujoma.** The presidents of **Zimbabwe** and **Namibia** respectively have frequently attacked gays and lesbians, illustrating the variable conditions for the GLBT community in Africa.

**September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2002 - BioNews** - The **first private fertility centre in Europe that exclusively caters to lesbian couples and single women opened in London.** The Harley Street centre does not yet have a license to carry out treatments or store sperm, but its application is being considered by the UK's Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority.

In July of this year, the centre's founder, John Gonzales, opened the first website - **mannotincluded.com** - offering lesbians and single women help in finding sperm donors. He claims he opened the Women's New Life Centre 'in response to the uncaring and insensitive way in which lesbian and single women are treated by some clinics due to social prejudice and discrimination'.

**September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2002 - PlanetOut.com** - The **Paris City Council,** headed by gay mayor **Bertrand Delanoë,** voted overwhelmingly to fund **France's first archive devoted to the GLBT community.** According to Reuters, the vote allocates 100,000 euros (\$98,000) to the archive, which

will include a collection of books, magazines and academic studies. The archive is also slated to offer panel discussions, host film screenings and operate a Web site.

"It will allow people to better understand something that is often treated with irony, humor and scorn," Deputy Mayor Christophe Girard told *Reuters*.

Although no site has been selected to house the archive, Girard said he hoped the archive would be up and running in the next two years.

**Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>, 2002 - HRC net news- Washington - The American Academy of Family Physicians** has passed a resolution supporting legislation that would protect **children of same-sex parents**.

"We are gratified that the academy has sided with the health, welfare and stability of the children of same-sex parents," said **Lisa Bennett, deputy director for HRC FamilyNet**, the family project of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation. "What this group did was reaffirm that it is the right of these children to have the same psychological and legal security that children of heterosexual parents take for granted."

The American Academy of Family Physicians represents more than **93,500 physicians and medical students nationwide**. The group also voiced support for equal rights for same-sex parents through domestic partner life and health insurance and a certain legal relationship to both parents through second-parent and joint adoption.

The prevailing professional opinion is that a parent's sexual orientation has nothing to do with his or her ability to be a good parent. All major research studies, including a 2001 meta-analysis of two decades of studies on the topic, show that the sexual orientation of a parent is irrelevant to the development of a child's mental health and social development and to the quality of a parent-child relationship.

The **nation's leading child welfare, psychological and children's health organizations** also have issued policy or position statements declaring that a parent's sexual orientation is irrelevant to his or her ability to raise a child. Many also have condemned discrimination based on

sexual orientation in adoption, custody and other parenting situations and called for **equal rights for all parents and children.**

Among the organizations that have done so:

- \* **American Psychological Association** (1976)
- \* **Child Welfare League of America** (1988)
- \* **American Psychiatric Association** (1997)
- \* **North American Council on Adoptable Children** (1998)
- \* **American Academy of Pediatrics** (2002)
- \* **American Psychoanalytic Association** (2002)
- \* **American Academy of Family Physicians** (2002)

To read these organizations' policy statements concerning GLBT parenting:  
<http://www.hrc.org/familynet/chapter.asp?chapter=184>

**October 18, 2002** -365Gay.com - **Paris Mayor Bertrand Delanoë** was released from the hospital on Thursday, nearly two weeks after being **stabbed in the abdomen** during a public event at City Hall. Delanoë, who is openly gay, was attacked by a man claiming to hate gays and politicians. Azedine Berkane, 39, has been placed under formal investigation, one step short of being charged, but his lawyer says he is mentally ill and unable to stand trial.

**October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2002** - *Associated Press* - **Stockholm** - The **Swedish government** has announced that a new law **authorizing gay and lesbian couples to adopt** children will come into effect in February 2003.

**November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2002** - **Tel Aviv- Uzi Even** A 62-year-old chemistry professor and retired army officer, was sworn in as the **first openly gay member of the Israeli parliament.** He enters as a representative of the leftist Meretz Party. It will certainly be a milestone, Mr. Even said, adding that there is no way to predict the reaction of strictly Orthodox lawmakers, who have criticized his entry to parliament. But Mr. Even said the mild response to the news that he would enter Parliament showed how much attitudes had changed. He and his partner, Amit Kama, 42, a media-studies professor, are the foster parents of a teenager who was rejected by his family because he was homosexual. They were the first gay couple in Israel to be recognized as foster parents.

## SPORTS

**November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2002 - AP - New York- Retired National Football League player Esera Tualo has come out as a gay man.** The mammoth former defense linesman wants people to accept him for who he is and to accept his family in the suburbs of Minneapolis - partner Mitchell Wherley and their 23-month-old twins Mitchell and Michele, adopted from Tualo's native Samoa.

Tualo's coming out tour of TV shows, newspapers and magazines, two years after retiring from a nine-year career, is more than a personal liberation. He wants to "put a face on the gay football player, break stereotypes and make people talk."

Although virtually every part of society has accepted homosexuality, **there is not one openly gay player in pro football, basketball, baseball or hockey.** Tualo says, "Most coaches and players still believe that a gay player would jeopardize team unity and undermine the macho image."

**November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2002 - Gay.com-** Almost **13,000 gay athletes** from around the world arrived in **Sydney for the sixth Gay Games sports and cultural festival.** A large opening ceremony featured performances by **k.d. lang and Jimmy Somerville.** The weeklong event is the largest Sydney has hosted since the 2000 Olympics.

Games co-chair Peter Bailey told the *Associated Press* that men and women between the ages of 18 and 80, from **83 different countries**, participated in the event, which closed on November 9<sup>th</sup>. Athletes competed for gold, silver and bronze medals in such standard Olympic sports as swimming, basketball, cycling and figure skating. There were also competitions for bridge, golf and ballroom dancing, among other activities. Bailey estimated that two-thirds of the athletes are men, one-third are women.

Financial problems in October had raised some doubts about whether the games would go on. According to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the event was estimated to have brought \$100 million to the local economy.

Highlights for Montreal athletes: For **dancing** ("la danse sportive"), two couples from Montreal won bronze and silver medals. Our hockey team the **Montreal Dragons**, won gold. And last but far from least: The **women's volleyball team, Montréal Paryse**, with LMA member **Gabriel Pinkstone** won gold!! Yahooo!!

## MISCELLANEOUS

Excellent web article for teachers: how to confront homophobia, how to talk to students, what to do:

<http://www.alterheros.com/francais/dossier/Articles.cfm?ss=t&s=&InfoID=170>

October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2002 - *Gay.com* / *PlanetOut.com* - For this year's **National Coming Out Day**, artists including **k.d. lang, Cyndi Lauper, Rufus Wainwright, Sarah McLachlan and Ani DiFranco** have joined forces. On Oct. 11, which is also the 15th anniversary of the American gay and lesbian equality march on Washington, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) released "**Being Out Rocks**," an album featuring both gay and straight performers showing their support for GLBT people, rights and issues.

**Recommended reading:** "High school is a very sensitive time, a time when your sexuality is coming to the fore, and when you ask students the worst thing that they can be called, right across the board they will say 'queer' or 'faggot'," says world-renowned child expert **Barbara Coloroso**, whose just-published book ***The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander*** (HarperCollins) is already climbing the bestseller lists.

## News from the Lesbian Mothers Association

### UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

#### DECEMBER

For adults and kids: **Holiday Potluck Lunch on Saturday December 7th, from 1-4 pm.** It will be held at the **Unitarian Church** which is located at **5035 de Maisonneuve O., corner**

**Claremont- (metro Vendome).** If you're planning on attending please contact us before December 1st to let us know what you plan to bring. We suggest bringing enough for approximately 8 people. You can bring something in the categories of either **salad, main dish, dessert or beverage** (e.g. juice or soft-drinks). We have signed a contract not to bring anything with peanuts onto the premises because of allergies. We are asking for a donation of **\$5 per family** (if possible) in order to cover the expenses which include the rental of the space, the gate-keeper's salary, paper plates, napkins, etc as well as arts and crafts materials and a magic show that will be provided for the kids. Should there be any extra money at the end it will be reinvested in the group for future activities. **Please call to let us know if you are planning on attending and what you would like to bring at 514-846-1543 before December 1st.**

### JANUARY

**For adults only: Saturday January 14, 2003 at 8 pm: Discussion group. Topic: STARTING FAMILIES.** We will deal with inseminations (both at-home and with fertility clinics), adoptions, fostering and the new Quebec laws. **Guest Speaker: Diane Tkalec, nurse (Montreal Fertility Center).**  
**Where: 6642 A Christophe Colomb (metro Beaubien).**

**For adults and kids: Saturday January 25<sup>th</sup> 2003: Fêtes des neiges.** We will give you more information when it is available.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Le Choeur Ouvert, a LGBT choir, is looking for new voices.** Come out and have some choral fun Wednesday evenings at 7pm. For information, call **514-302-7442.** Experience not needed.

**Women from Sherbrooke or Magog!** I have two places in my car to go to Montreal for AML activities for adults only. If you're interested in car-pooling with me, call me: **Annie (819) 563-2288.**

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

**Winter outing with the lesbian group FEMlib:**

**Date: January 18<sup>th</sup> 2003**

**Rendez-vous: 11h30**

Come discover with **FEMlib** the longest river **skating** in Quebec. 9 kms of ice-skating in the heart of Joliette, with walking and cross-country ski trails all along the way. This activity is free but might require reservations. For more info check: **<http://www.femlib.org>**

The bulletin board is a free forum for members to communicate amongst each other. If you want to post an announcement (birth, adoption, birth day wishes, etc.) or any type of note in the next issue please send it to us at any time to [info@aml-lma.org](mailto:info@aml-lma.org) or by post to AML, 2401 Coursol, Montreal, Quebec, H3J 1C8  
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IF you have something to advertise, sell, rent or buy...anything where money must change hands, you can place an ad in the newsletter. Ads cost 20 cents per word.

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