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NEWSLETTER - VOLUME VII - No. IV - June 2006

Mama, you're a Daddy!

By Karine Igartua, LMA member

It was a Saturday morning like every other. At the crack of dawn, both our children had stumbled into our bed and had snuggled in very cosy ... inserted right in between Mommy and Mama. The conversation about what we were going to do when we got out of bed was interrupted by our daughter's contemplation of her future: "When I grow up, will I be a Mommy or a Mama?"

A loaded question which begs another: What is the difference? But the curiosity was not that of an anthropologist or psychoanalyst, it was that of a 4-year-old. So we answered at a four-year-old level, totally bypassing the underpinning sociological uncertainty: "You can be which ever you want". "Cuz I can speak English and French" Mia added. "Um hum" we responded sheepishly. It seemed the difference between Mommy and Mama could be reduced down to one's mother tongue. But she paused, thought for a moment and continued with: "I think I am going to be a Mommy". When Donna (Mommy) inquired as to why, Mia explained: "Cuz I want to have long hair." (The irony is that there is no more than an inch difference in hair length between Mommy & Mama).

After another deep moment of reflection she added: "Ben is going to be a Mama". Our 3-year-old son, already solidly entrenched in his masculine gender identity screeched "NOOO!" Donna reassured him with an explanation: "No, Ben is going to be a Daddy." "Ou un Papa" I added (complicating the situation further). "Un Grand Papa" he asserted. Then, wanting to be playful, Ben looked me straight in the eyes and teased me with: "Mama, you're a Daddy!"

There we had the whole issue somehow understood and summed up by our 2 preschoolers: Is a Mama the Daddy? How is being the Mama different than being the Mommy? What are our roles in the family and how do the absence of a male parent and the presence of 2 female parents influence family dynamics and our individual perceptions of ourselves? Questions of importance to lesbian moms that we are only beginning to discuss and for which the literature has no clear data at present. In the absence of cogent answers, here are some of my random thoughts on the subject.

First lets look at language. It may be because we are in Quebec and have many bilingual families that there are so many Mama-Mommy couples out there. Yet in Anglo parts of the world, this dyad exists as well. My favourite children's book (Le Petit Prince notwithstanding) is titled "Mama eat ant, yuck!" (This is totally an aside but the book is great because it is a funny story that happens to take place in a lesbian family- it is not about being a lesbian family). It was published in Oregon (not many French speaking dykes down there!) and begins: "My children call me Mama and my sweetheart is called Mommy- Together we have 3 children: Emma, Sue & Tommy" (It even rhymes!)

So Mama and Mommy are indeed popular names we use to identify ourselves. One of the psychologists I work with firmly believes that names shape our identity, our view of ourselves, and the way we interact with others. What is in these names? Webster's dictionary recognizes the word 'Mommy' as a familiar designation of the word 'Mother'. 'Mama' however can either mean 'Mother' or be slang for 'wife/woman'. Think about it. Few would cringe at the expression 'Sexy Mama' but somehow, 'Sexy Mommy' sounds too incestuous for comfort. So the word 'Mommy' conjures up images of sweetness, comfort, kisses, minivans, hot milk & cookies. But

what about 'Mama'? Could it be that our choice to become Mama or Mommy pushes us into different roles? It would be interesting to test out, in our association, whether the parental roles are divided up along Mama/Mommy lines. In families with one stay at home parent, is it the Mommy who stays home? Is Mama the one to teach you to ride a bike? Is Mommy the one to go to when you scrap your knee?

It may be that our names shape us, but I wonder how we go about choosing them. Certainly mother tongue plays a role (mama = maman) but beyond that, there must be unconscious factors at play in individual and couple dynamics that push us to one rather than the other. These same factors could influence not only our names but also our roles.

Researchers are only beginning to look at how parental roles are divided in 2 mother households. Certain behaviours seem to cluster together: the 'maternal' roles seem to be feeding, hugging and consoling; the 'paternal' roles seem to be playing, entertaining, pushing towards autonomy and disciplining. The literature does see some of this division of childcare in lesbian families (based on who is home more often) but admittedly less clearly divided than in heterosexual families.

To me the most interesting point is one not yet addressed in the literature: how do lesbian moms come to the division of roles and how do they feel about it? With both parents being women, they will both have been socialised to become caregivers and grown up with the expectation that they would one day become the mother i.e. the primary caregiver for their children. Though they both have a claim to it, one will have to give-up the role of primary caregiver or 'primary' parent. How that gets negotiated is not understood and may be unique to each couple.

Interestingly, the notion of one parent being the 'primary' parent is less true in mainstream culture than it used to be as men are becoming more involved in their children's lives. There is evidence of this change in society even on primetime TV show like Desperate Housewives: Carlos, wanting to get some father-daughter time with their new baby, ends up yelling at Gaby: "Stop hogging the baby!" How many of us have had that same thought? There is something comforting about the idea that we may all, at times, want to be the 'primary' parent, that this is a universal phenomenon no longer dictated by rigid gender roles.

So then how do the parental roles get divvied up? It seems generally that the child's primary attachment has to do mostly with who is most often available. The mother who is home the most ends up being the 'maternal' one i.e. the feeder-consoler. The other mother then takes up the other (equally important yet unexpected for women) 'paternal' role i.e. the autonomy enhancer. Who stays home often has more to do with practical issues of income and availability of maternal leave. So our roles as Mama/Mommy may be dictated by outside circumstances more than anything else.

Yet being a shrink by profession, I cannot discount personality characteristics as also determinant in our becoming Mama/Mommy. If my child would rather Mama take her to the park, it may be because I will push her higher on the swing. She might prefer to paint with Mommy because she's a better artist. Children are very attuned little creatures; they know what we enjoy and what we have less patience for. They interact with each parent differently and get different things from each of them. Though Mamas & Mommies may not fit into stereotypical 'maternal' and 'paternal' roles we probably do have different roles. Lesbians tend to have a very strong ethic of equality. We should not confuse equality and similarity. It may be best for our children that we have equal albeit different roles with them.

Interested in writing for our newsletter? Send your articles at any time to info@aml-lma.org or by post to AML, 2401 Coursol, Montreal, Quebec, H3J 1C8

News Briefs: March - May 2006

Montreal and Quebec News

March 4 - The Quebec Superior Court has rejected the request of a known sperm donor to claim his paternity. In his decision Judge René Hurtubise reminded the court about the role of parents. "In the words of the law, a mother and father have the right and responsibility for the child's care and upbringing. They must nourish and care for their child."

In the judge's opinion the sperm donor did not conform to this definition.

In this particular case 2 lesbians who have been together since 1996 are the parents of 3 children who were conceived through assisted procreation by two different donors. It was one of these two donors who brought the couple before the courts. According to the women, this man, a friend of theirs, offered to help them to form their family. This was done through a sperm donation, not a sexual relationship.

Before going ahead with the project the two women wanted to be sure that the donor agreed that it was they alone who would take the responsibility of parenting any future child. Their friend, they said, only expressed the following wish: "I would just like to see her once, when she has grown up." On July 17, 1999, they signed a document together stating that the sperm donor would cede all parental responsibilities and rights to the two women.

Although the women allowed the donor to see the baby a few times after her birth, they have not let him see the child since January 2003. Given the "tender age" of the girl, the judge doubted that she would consider the donor to be her father.

The judge took into account that the father had renounced all parental responsibility and that he never assumed the role of parent. He suggested that the couple honour the initial promise they had made to their friend.

March 14 (Montreal) A new study shows that despite full equality rights and government funded health care in Canada, LGBT seniors face a serious health threat from discrimination by health care workers and institutions. The report is final part of a four year study on LGBT health in Canada by researchers at the the McGill University School of Social Work.

The study focused on gay and lesbian seniors in three of Canada's largest cities - Vancouver, Montreal and Halifax and followed 90 seniors and their caregivers.

In the report McGill researcher Shari Brotman said aging gays and lesbians who grew up prior to the era of gay liberation face considerable obstacles to proper health care. The report also noted that the partners, children and friends who take care of them are also marginalized and discriminated against. Brotman and her colleagues assessed a broad range of services in Canada to examine the role of health care and social services organizations towards gay and lesbian elders.

"Many gay and lesbian elders who experienced the pervasive social stigma that existed prior to the advent of gay liberation movement maintain a sense of extreme caution with respect to whether or not societal attitudes have really changed," said Brotman.

"In addition, partners, children and friends who provide unpaid support to gay and lesbian seniors are often also exposed to marginalization and discrimination by providers and contemporaries."

"People were once forced into psychiatric institutions," said Bill Ryan, another of the lead researchers in the study. "Going to a doctor was a very fearful experience for many people. Homosexual seniors are still afraid to

reveal their sexual orientation to their doctor or other health care providers."

Although the staff at senior care homes may be accepting of gay and lesbians, other residents are often openly hostile toward open gay relationships in their midst. Same-sex partners are afraid to visit during family visiting hours or on holidays, and they often shun any shows of affection once in care.

The study calls for increased training within the health-care sector and greater effort to reach out to gay and lesbian seniors.

March 14 (Toronto) A French-language gay coming of age film took home 10 Genie Awards - Canada's version of the Oscars in Toronto.

C.R.A.Z.Y. by Quebec filmmaker Jean-Marc Vallée tells the touching but funny story of a young man growing up gay in Catholic Quebec from the 1960s to the '80s. The film won best picture and the Golden Reel Award given to the Canadian film with the biggest annual box office take. C.R.A.Z.Y. also won Genies for best director, editing (Paul Jutras), actor (Michel Côté), supporting actress (Danielle Proulx), original screenplay (Vallée and François Boulay), art direction/production design, costume design, sound and sound editing.

March 30 (Quebec City) – In launching its new youth action strategy for 2006-2009, the Quebec government has for the first time openly acknowledged the problem of suicide amongst gay and lesbian and native youth and recognized the necessity of providing services for these populations that are particularly at risk.

The government will invest \$3 million dollars over the next 3 years so that each youth centre in Quebec will have a special youth suicide intervention team. These teams will be made up of mental health experts trained in evaluating and dealing with suicidal youth.

In the case of queer youth, the government is anxiously awaiting the Quebec Human Rights Commission's report regarding homophobia. This report will be the product of 2 years of work between LGBT community activists and representatives from many provincial ministries. The report is due out in the fall of 2006 and will be used as a guideline to formulate policy regarding youth suicide interventions.)

Canadian News

February 23 (Surrey, British Columbia) Gay and Lesbian Educators of B.C. are donating booklets aimed at fighting homophobic bullying to every public school library in Surrey. The 44-page booklet called "Dealing with Name Calling" is intended for use as a professional resource for teachers. "We're sending one to each teacher-librarian in Surrey as a teacher resource for teachers and if it's something they want to use they can go ahead and use it," GALE-BC spokesman Steve LeBel said Monday. The booklet includes lesson plans on dealing with bullying aimed at Grade 4-7 students but the lessons can be adapted to include older or younger kids. It also contains a suggested resource list of books that might be helpful in exploring the issue. The gift is a partnership between GALE-BC and the SurreyTeachers' Association, which will distribute them to schools.

March 27-29 (Toronto) The Ontario Superior Court of Justice (Family Division) heard the application of four lesbian families with children who are asking that both parents be able to register as legal parents on the statement of live birth when the baby is born, thus eliminating the need for second parent adoption.

The government has argued basically that the Statement of Live Birth is supposed to be a record of biological origins. Because of this, Ontario lesbians need to go through the extra step of second parent adoption (\$2,000) or getting a declaration of parentage (\$4,000) in order to be legally recognized. The lesbian families have challenged the government's interpretation of the legislation and the constitutionality of the Vital Statistics Act. They say it infringes their right to security of the person and discriminates that both mothers cannot be

immediately shown on their child's Statement of Live Birth. The evidence is overwhelming that straight couples using donor sperm put the non-biological father's name on their child's Statement of Live Birth.

May 4 – *Egale news (Ottawa)* Egale Canada a gay-rights group says it is "dismayed" with Statistics Canada over the way it treats same-sex couples in the May 16 census, saying the federal agency has complicated the way same-sex couples are counted. The census form instructs same-sex couples who are married to check the "Other" category at the bottom of the list of relationships, rather than checking the top box marked "Husband or wife."

Egale urged same-sex married couples to list their relationships as "Husband or wife" rather than "other." Egale assures same-sex couples that Statistics Canada will record either response correctly as a married same-sex couple. Egale also asked that all concerned Canadians add a comment on Page 6 of the questionnaire, such as "same-sex couples deserve equal treatment."

Egale says Statistics Canada claims it didn't have time to update the census since the Civil Marriage Act was amended to include same-sex couples last July.

May 10 - *CBC News (Halifax)* A human rights board has sided with Lindsay Willow, the Halifax teacher who claimed she was falsely accused of having a relationship with a student because she was labelled a lesbian. In the decision, board chair Walter Thompson said Willow was discriminated against by her principal at Halifax West High School, a fellow teacher and, the Halifax Regional School Board.

She filed a complaint with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission in 2001, complaining the allegation of an affair with a female student hurt her career prospects.

In September 2000, Willow was seen with a 17-year-old student in a bathroom in a former boys' locker room. The principal called the police, who subsequently cleared Willow of any wrongdoing.

In his decision, Thompson said the circumstances of that day were not suspicious. "They were innocent. The construction of them as indicative of a sexual assault demonstrates, in my view, an element of discrimination against Ms. Willow because of her perceived sexual orientation," he wrote.

Thompson ordered the school board to pay Willow \$27,375 in damages. In addition, Thompson ordered the board to issue Willow a full retraction and apology.

GAY MARRIAGE- A TIME LINE

(Skip over this section if you've had enough on marriage)

Please note: In the United States the marriage debate has gone completely out of control!!! There are initiatives for and against marriage in almost every state. Because of this it would be impossible to cover it all in the context of a newsletter. An excellent coverage of the news in the States, however, is available on the web site of the *Human Rights Campaign* in their marriage center: www.hrc.org/marriage/

A well-organized table of the state-by-state progress can be found if you click on "States with Anti-Gay marriage laws" within this site.

We will still continue to cover general American stories related to the debate.

February 26 (Dublin) A new poll finds that a slim majority of Irish voters support marriage rights for gay and lesbian couples. Fifty-one percent say they are in favor of giving legal status to gay couples. On the issue of adoption by same-sex couples the public is equally divided.

February 27 (Montreal) Nineteen priests in Quebec issue a stinging public rebuke of the Vatican position of gays and same-sex marriage. In an open letter published in *La Presse*, the largest circulation newspaper in the province, they call on other Catholic clergy to join them in opposing the Vatican ban on gays in seminaries and same-sex marriage.

February 27 (Ottawa) Marshall Rothstein the first Supreme Court nominee to face questions from a committee of MPs says he agrees that judges should apply the law rather than make it, easing concerns by some - especially Conservatives - about so-called judicial activism.

But Rothstein also says there are times when courts are forced to decide whether a law violates the Charter of Rights - and that's acceptable, provided they do a proper analysis and respect lawmakers.

March 2 (Madrid) Since same-sex marriage became legal in Spain last year more than 1,000 gay and lesbian couples have wed. One out of every ten marriages in Spain involves a same-sex couple.

March 3 A famous **Chinese** sociologist announces that he will submit a proposal for same-sex marriage to the country's top political advisory body as it meets in Beijing.

March 30 Days before **Italy's** national elections, Pope Benedict XVI denounces same-sex marriage and abortion in a speech to European lawmakers.

April 3 (Amsterdam) The Netherlands passes a milestone in the worldwide march toward marriage equality for same-sex couples. Five years ago this month the country became the first in the world where gay and lesbian couples could legally marry. Since then the quest for same-sex marriage has spread around the globe. Belgium became the second country to legalize same-sex marriage in 2003. Spain and Canada followed last year. This December South Africa is expected to become the fifth country following a court ruling last year that gave the government 12 months to amend its marriage law. In the United State only Massachusetts permits gay and lesbian couples to wed.

April 5 (Jerusalem) The Supreme Court of Israel announces that it will hear an appeal by five same-sex couples married in Canada who want those marriages recognized at home.

April 5 (Ottawa) Canada's new Conservative government says that it is preparing legislation to repeal the same-sex marriage law. The move follows a campaign promise to hold a free vote in Parliament on the issue.

The marriage bill had not been mentioned in the Speech from the Throne - the government's outline of its agenda for the session - leading some LGBT advocates to wonder if Prime Minister Stephen Harper was abandoning his threat.

Justice Minister Vic Toews However says the bill is being prepared and a vote would be held "sooner rather than later." Asked about the marriage issue Harper says that the bill would not be introduced this spring but likely in the fall. Two recent Environics polls show that two-thirds of Canadians are against re-opening the marriage debate. As well, a recent survey of Canada's top executives reveals a strong consensus against re-opening the issue.

In January, following the winter election that resulted in a minority Conservative government, a *Canadian Press* study of the new House of Commons suggested a vote on repealing the marriage law would be rejected. It would not be a total loss, however, the *Canadian Press* reported, noting that an honorable defeat on equal marriage would satisfy obligations to Harper's most right-wing supporters while defusing a politically explosive issue.

April 13 (Abuja, Nigeria) A proposed law that would impose a prison sentence on same-sex couples who marry is toughened by the Nigerian Senate to include anyone who attends a gay wedding or is a member of any LGBT organization. The law passes first reading in the Senate.

The law would impose a five-year sentence on any same-couple who marries or goes abroad to marry. It also bans same-sex couples from living together, wed or not, outlaws adoption by gays and goes so far as to make it a criminal offense to be a member of a gay club, social organization or LGBT civil rights group. The ban on membership in gay organizations has raised concerns by human rights groups.

The legislation would also impose a prison term on anyone who attends a same-sex union, witnesses a union or celebrates a ceremony involving gay or lesbian couples.

The bill would include foreigners living in Nigeria - a move that has humanitarian aid organizations concerned.

Gay or lesbian aid workers who go to Nigeria from countries where same-sex marriage is legal would have their passports scrutinized for any indication of their sexuality or marital status.

The bill also says that publicity or any public display of "same-sex amorous relationships" including those depicted in the electronic or print media physically, directly, indirectly or otherwise are prohibited under penalty of imprisonment in Nigeria.

The legislation is regarded as the most repressive gay measure in the world. The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission and Human Rights Watch, say the proposed law contravenes international law, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and undermines Nigeria's struggle to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS.

April 16 Hong Kong, home to hundreds of thousands of British nationals, blocks local residents from entering into same-sex civil unions at the British Consulate. British law allows British nationals to enter civil unions with non-British nationals of the same gender at British diplomatic offices worldwide, so long as the local government does not object. Hong Kong, a British colony until 1997, is home to more than 200,000 British passport holders and 3.5 million more who are eligible for the British National (Overseas) passport. Holders of either document are considered British nationals under the Civil Partnership Act. But the Hong Kong government "does not consider it appropriate to agree to the registration of civil partnerships of same-sex couples at the British Consulate-General Hong Kong at present," the consular office says on its Web site. The Hong Kong government makes the decision because the government is still in the process of consulting on the need for laws against discrimination against gays, and does not want to be perceived as taking sides while the issue is being discussed, says Lily Chen, a Home Affairs Bureau spokeswoman.

International News

February 24 - Reuters (Paris) France's top court ruled that both partners in a homosexual couple can exercise parental authority over a child, rather than just the biological parent. The ruling by the *Cour de Cassation*, which decides how to interpret French law but does not hear trials, could open the way for further debate in France on gay marriage and the adoption of children by same-sex couples, which remains illegal.

"The civil code is not opposed to a mother, as sole holder of the parental authority, delegating all or part of the duties to the woman with whom she lives in a stable and continuous union," the court said in its verdict. The decision also applied to male homosexual couples, where one of the partners was the biological father of a child.

The court said the right for same-sex couples to jointly exercise parental authority depended on the circumstances requiring such an arrangement and that it must be in the child's best interests. Until now, French courts have ruled that the law only allowed parental responsibility to be delegated to a person other than the biological parents in unusual cases. This was not regarded as sufficient to include homosexual couples.

March 15 - 365 gay.com (Boston, Massachusetts) As expected Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney has filed legislation that would exempt *Catholic Charities* from adhering to the state's equal rights law when putting children up for adoption. Massachusetts law bars discrimination against gays and lesbians in providing services.

A week earlier *Catholic Charities* had threatened to stop placing children for adoption rather than adhere to the anti-discrimination law. The state's bishops earlier sought an exemption from the law. Romney said that he hoped the Church would hold off its decision until the legislature considers his "Protecting Religious Freedom" bill. But the measure is unlikely to pass the Democratically controlled State House.

Senate President Robert E. Travaglini said he would oppose the bill. Travaglini said there is no evidence that placing adoptive children with gay parents causes any harm. He also sharply criticized the agency's decision to end its adoption program.

Meanwhile San Francisco's Board of Supervisors has issued a strong rebuke of the Catholic Church over threats by the archdiocese to bar gays and lesbians from adopting while an LGBT legal group says it may sue the Church if it goes ahead with its threat. The Board of Supervisors voted unanimously on a resolution that calls on the archdiocese to ignore a Vatican directive on gay adoptions.

"It is an insult to all San Franciscans when a foreign country, like the Vatican, meddles with and attempts to negatively influence this great city's existing and established customs and traditions, such as the right of same-sex couples to adopt and care for children in need," the resolution states.

The organization that is fighting for equal marriage rights in the courts in California says that if the archdiocese bars gays from becoming adoptive parents it may sue the church. The *National Center for Lesbian Rights* said it is closely monitoring the situation. NCLR attorney Karen Doering said that a ban on gay adoptions would violate two California laws that specifically forbid discrimination on the basis of sexual-orientation.

A gay adoption ban "is unlawful, is against state policy and hurts children," Doering who specializes in adoption law at the NCLR, told KTVU television.

March 27 - PlanetOutnews - A new international group with members ranging from Namibia to Brazil will share experiences and solutions for homophobia in education.

Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2006/03/27/3>

April 3 - ILGA news (Geneva) Participants at the XXIII World Conference of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) welcomed a message of support from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The statement expresses the Dalai Lama's concern at "reports of violence and discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people" and "urges respect, tolerance and the full recognition of human rights for all." The statement was greeted by a standing ovation from participants at the Conference.

"We are deeply grateful for the support expressed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama for human rights based on sexual orientation and gender identity", said Rosanna Flamer-Caldera and Philip Braun, Co-Secretaries-General of ILGA. "In a world where the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are regularly violated, His Holiness' message of support is a beacon of hope and respect".

April 21 - IGLHRC News (Cameroon) The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) has received word that nine men detained for homosexuality in Cameroon have been acquitted of all charges. The men had been unfairly detained in Kondegui prison for nearly a year. The verdict was seen by all involved as a major victory for human rights in Cameroon.

"While nothing can return to these men the year of their lives spent locked in a cell, we are hopeful that rule of law and respect for human dignity are re-emerging as basic principles of human rights in Cameroon," said Cary Alan Johnson, IGLHRC's Senior Coordinator for Africa. "I'm told that the trial lasted less than ten minutes, with no witnesses being called by the prosecution. Judge Tonye, the magistrate overseeing the trial, stated that since there was no proof offered he declared the men innocent of all charges. After hearing the verdict, several of the men began to cry, knowing their ordeal was about to end."

International and local advocacy efforts on behalf of the men were key to their survival and release. IGLHRC, alerted to the arrest of the men within days of its occurrence, arranged for a local attorney, Alice Nkom, to take the case, repeatedly demanded their unconditional release to both Cameroonian and United Nations officials, and provided emergency assistance to help the men survive the harsh conditions of their detention.

The West African nation has become famous this past year for detention of its citizens on "sodomy charges," sanctioning the expelling of young women from secondary schools for their stated sexual orientation, and for "gay baiting" high level officials and public personalities with charges of homosexuality in local papers. IGLHRC believes that in the past year at least 30 young people, mainly girls, have been thrown out of their academic institutions on suspicion of same-sex behavior and identity. Two men were recently arrested in an Internet dating sting, but then released, and four lesbian women are reportedly in police custody.

In a communication to IGLHRC, the Minister of Justice in Cameroon, Mr. Amadou Ali, had justified the detention of the men in Yaounde as ensuring "that positive African cultural values are preserved." According to Mr. Ali, "homosexuality is not a value accepted in the Cameroonian society."

April 21 - 365Gay.com (Brussels) The Belgian Senate passed legislation recognizing the rights of same-sex couples to be parents. The measure passed the lower house in December. The law will recognize both partners where one is the biological parent and allow couples to jointly adopt children. The bill passed by only one vote in the Senate. In the case of adoption, the law will cover children from Belgium or who were adopted abroad.

"This bill means children can enjoy a genuine statute, which is essential for their development. Their situation is not a shameful one," Justice Minister Laurette Onkelinx told the Senate.

LGBT rights groups had been fighting for the change in the law ever since Belgium became the second country in the world to permit same-sex marriage, arguing that many gay and lesbian couples are already raising children but that those children are not protected by law.

The new law will provide for custody, visitation and child support when a same-sex couple breaks up and provides rights for non biological parents if the other parent should die. Belgium legalized same-sex marriage in 2003 but the law did not permit co-parenting.

Miscellaneous

- **The Gay and Lesbian Medical Association, the Human Rights Campaign and the Mautner Project** have released a new tool and online videos designed to help GLBT people be more open and improve communications with their health care providers. There are also tools for health care providers visit:

http://www.hrc.org/Template.cfm?Section=Coming_Out3&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentFileID=1381.

View the video at:

http://anon.newmediamill.speedera.net/anon.newmediamill/comingout/patients_100k.wmv.

To watch the second video, visit:

http://www.hrc.org/Template.cfm?Section=Coming_Out3&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentFileID=1381.

- New from the **Canadian Teachers' Federation**: The **Gay-Straight Student Alliance Handbook**: A Comprehensive Resource for Canadian K-12 Teachers, Administrators and School Counsellors, authored by Kristopher Wells, and published by the Canadian Teachers' Federation was peer reviewed by over twenty teachers, counsellors, school administrators, and academics from across North America.

The Gay–Straight Alliance Handbook is another tool designed to assist students, teachers and administrators in confronting and breaking down the barriers to a free, open and inclusive society where it is accepted and understood that our majority is a compilation of our diverse minorities. The Handbook is published in French and English and is available at a cost of \$10.00. Copies of the GSA Handbook can be ordered from the CTF website (<http://www.ctf-fce.ca>) or by calling (613) 232-1886. It also can be borrowed from the LMA library.

Question of the Month:

Can families with same-sex parents travel with kids in foreign countries that are not extremely favorable to gays and lesbians? Now that our papers legally connect us all, is it impossible to go to South America, Asia or the Middle East, etc? If you've done it please let us know how it went...

Send your answers either via e-mail or regular mail and I will try to publish them in the next newsletter.

News from the Lesbian Mothers Association

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

June 2006 :

- **THURSDAY JUNE 8TH at 7:30 p.m.**
ADOPTION ISSUES GROUP

A get-together to discuss issues, let off some steam and exchange news concerning adoption (both international and domestic) and to see if we can meet up on a more regular basis (perhaps monthly).

Location : CCGLM (2075 rue Plessis) (Metro Papineau)

- **SATURDAY JUNE 10TH from 10:00a.m. – 3p.m. (Rain date: June 11th)**
GARAGE SALE

See enclosed flier!

- **SUNDAY JUNE 18TH 2 - 4 p.m.**
ETHNOCULTURAL FAMILIES GROUP

Get-together/ Drop in: For queer parents of colour and first nations and their children.

Many of the concerns that affect LGBT people from various ethnocultural communities are amplified when they become parents. This discussion will be another opportunity to share our experiences as LGBT parents of colour, immigrants and first nations people living between different worlds: our culture, our extended families and the dominant white culture. This will also be an opportunity to plan some activities for the year to come. Please feel free to bring your kids along to this event. A play area and activities will be available to keep them busy.

Location: Centre Greene, 1090 Greene Ave (Metro Atwater, Greene Avenue is a few blocks west of Atwater. The centre is south of Dorchester (René Levesque)

July 2006:

- **Wednesday JULY 12TH at 9 :45 a.m.**
VISIT TO GRANBY ZOO

We'll meet up with « Les Petits Makis » daycare for a visit to the Zoo

Meeting place : At the entrance of the zoo

Cost : \$10,00 (children older than 3 years and adults) (for children 0-3 years, it's free!)

To sign up : Fill in the enclosed sheet and send it in before June 22

For more info please call H  l  ne at (514) 273-7441 (Monday-Friday, 5-7 p.m.)

- **Sunday July 30th**

OUTGAMES / LMA/ Papadaddies/ Multimundo Coalition FAMILY PICNIC AT MONT ROYAL

More information to follow....

August 2006:

- **Saturday August 5th and Sunday August 6th from 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.**

Divers-Cit  / Pride Celebrations - Community Days/ Journ  es Communautaires

Along with many other community organizations, we will have our own **information kiosk especially for lesbian mamas and future-mamas**. We encourage you to join us there both to support our group and to find out about other community groups that may be of interest to you. Kiosks will be grouped on **Berri between Ste. Catherine and Ren  -Levesque and on Ste-Catherine between St-Denis and St-Hubert**. Food will be available on the site.

Divers-Cit   has graciously donated a **Tiger Trampoline** for our kids to enjoy on this day. There will also be an **electric choo-choo train**, like we've had in the parade on previous years to do mini-tours (our own parade) around the site. We will also have a number of great activities, like **face painting, a kids' t-dance, crafts, balloons and games for your kids to participate in**. Hand-painted **T-shirts** will be for sale at our kiosk.

BULLETIN BOARD:

◆ Hi, my name is **Zoyla Batres-Garcia** and I am a 29-year-old single Guatemalan mom with 2 kids: a 6-year-old daughter and a 1-year-old son. I'm looking for friendship and love and someone to share the pleasures of life. If you are interested please give me a call at **514-252-9605**.

◆ **Single Moms** everywhere: Come out, come out wherever you are. Let's get together and just discuss baby issues, single mom issues, and anything and everything else. Something light and informal. Of course, with our babies... If interested, please email shariann@sympatico.ca or call **Shari Ann at (514) 482-6533**. Perhaps a few of us can get together at my house or anyone else's home... Hoping to hear from at least one mom.

◆ **Caf  -Causerie Aux F  min'Elles:** L'Association lesbienne vous invite    ses caf  s causeries le deuxi  me et le quatri  me lundis du mois, de 19h    21h30    la salle d'atelier (au deuxi  me   tage) de chez Loblaw's situ   au **1155 Boul. Talbot    Chicoutimi**. Ces rencontres ont comme but de briser l'isolement et s'adressent aux femmes lesbiennes qui d  siraient socialiser en compagnie d'autres femmes lesbiennes, afin de permettre un   change positif. Au plaisir de vous rencontrer ! Informations: **418-550-2259**

♦ Recherchons femmes en couple avec enfant(s), ou désirant devenir mères, habitant **Joliette** ou ses environs, pour échanger sur nos expériences de parents. Nous venons d'aménager dans la région et cherchons à créer un réseau d'amies, bien précieux que nous n'avons pu transporter avec nous de Montréal... Nous sommes un couple lesbien début trentaine avec 3 enfants. Communiquez avec nous à: neige-vive@hotmail.com

♦ **L'Écho des femmes de la Petite Patrie** est un centre de femmes qui offre des rencontres pour lesbiennes. Ces rencontres ont lieu les lundis soirs aux deux semaines de 19h00 à 21h30, et sont animées par une personne ressource. Ces rencontres, qui se veulent un lieu d'échange, de ressourcement et d'information, s'intéressent aux réalités et aux conditions de vie des lesbiennes. Les rencontres sont en français. Un service de halte-garderie est disponible avec réservation faite une semaine à l'avance. Le centre est situé au **6032 St-Hubert (métro Beaubien). Téléphone (514)277-7445, télécopieur (514)277-1689**

♦ Moi, **Nancy** 31 ans, ma conjointe **Chantal-Cindy**, 26 ans aimerions développer amitié avec des femmes lesbiennes ou couples dans les mêmes âges environs pour activités- discussions- partages d'expériences... Nous avons pas d'ordinateur et habitons loin de Montréal (**Terrebonne**), une 40aine de minutes. C'est difficile pour nous de se faire des amis où d'aller en ville souvent, nous aimerions communiquer par la poste ou par téléphone avec des gens qui sont dans la même situation que nous. **450-477-4505**.

MISCELLANEOUS

♦ **Traductrices, redactrices, etc:** We are looking for volunteers to help translate this newsletter from English to French. Any contribution (even 1-2 pages a month) would be appreciated. If you are available and willing, **please contact us at: info@aml-lma.org**

♦ **Batshaw Youth and Family Centres** is encouraging English speaking and bilingual lesbian couples, and singles, to consider becoming **foster parents**. There are babies, pre-schoolers and older children who are waiting for a foster home. For some the plan will be to help them return to their families. For other children, the plan will be to work toward **adoption**. What a remarkable feeling it is to know you have made a difference in the life of a child by providing a stable, safe and loving environment. For more information, please call, **Rena Rubin, Foster Care Recruiter, at 932-7161, local 416, or send an e-mail to rena_rubin@ssss.gouv.qc.ca**.

♦ The **Open Book Library's** collection includes over 5500 books written by glbt authors or by authors who write about our communities. Some of these books are for children and adolescents. We are very proud that approximately half of our collection is in French. Much more information as well as online consultation of the book collection is available at our Web site www.ccglm.org/en-b. We are located at **2075 Plessis (CCGLM)** in the Village. Come visit us! Open Wednesdays and Fridays from 1-8 p.m. (514) 528-8424.

The bulletin board is a free forum for members to communicate amongst each other. If you want to post an announcement in the next issue please send it to us at any time to info@aml-lma.org or by post to AML, 2401 Coursol, Montreal, Quebec, H3J 1C8. 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.

♦ **THERE IS NO FREEDOM WITHOUT FINANCIAL FREEDOM - LA LIBERTÉ PERSONNELLE PASSE PAR LA LIBERTÉ FINANCIÈRE.** Financial services for individuals and small businesses: budgeting, debt management, investments, future planning, personal taxes, wealth enhancement strategies. 20% of all subsequent fees will be donated to the LMA. **J. Freed, 514-483-5130, www.jfreed.ca**

♦ Personalized books & CDs for all families: The text and illustrations change so that the hero looks like your child, with the same skin tone, eyes, hair colour, etc. Include yourself and your child's family & friends. All

families can be represented. For children 8 & under. 15% of every order goes to AML when AML is mentioned.
Visit www.printakid.com (English) or www.alphakid.com (French) or call 1-888-729-9696.

♦ **Furniture Restoration - Lise Kuhn Studio**

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