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NEWSLETTER - VOLUME VII - No. III - March 2006

Are We Really Inclusive?

By Mona Greenbaum – Coordinator, Lesbian Mothers Association of Quebec

What does it mean to be a truly inclusive organisation? Is it enough to say that all queer people (and their families) are welcome regardless of their racial or ethnic affiliation? By claiming that our services and activities are open to all, are we truly serving the diversity of people that we claim to support?

In my years as coordinator of the LMA many issues of inclusion and exclusion have been brought to my attention. When we planned the association we had focused on linguistic accessibility. This was an obvious one in a city like Montreal. How easy to solve...

From our very first activity we have been confronted with other issues of inclusion. Usually these come in the form of requests and suggestions but sometimes they are lodged as frustrated complaints. In the beginning, our meetings were held in our own living room and two handicapped women found that the 8 stairs leading up to our home were a difficult barrier. Because they were able to walk somewhat independently, with help assured in advance from some strong-armed women, they were able to make it up our stairs...We did our best considering that we had no real space to call our own.

There are issues of transportation, child-care and financial accessibility. We plan our activities with these issues always in mind.

Then there are issues of relevance. Can we find the perfect activity that is simultaneously interesting to someone who is thinking of starting a family and someone else who is just coming out of a heterosexual relationship after years of family life with husband and kids? What about parents with an adopted child who is 4 years old, or the parent of teenagers? How can we fit in the needs of singles with those that have been in relationships for 10 years or more? Queer parents are such a diversified community. We try to plan our activities knowing that at least if we can't interest everyone with a specific theme, hopefully something will come up later in the year that will grab their fancy.

From the outset a significant percentage of the group's members have been women from different racial and ethnic minorities. Although these women have always been welcome, I did notice that they came less frequently to our activities and in discussion groups were less apt to share their experiences, ideas or concerns.

I also heard, through my own friends in different ethnic communities that the group was perceived as being primarily white and francophone. Looking at my databank of members I knew that this was not the case, but judging from the meagre participation of these members we were certainly doing something wrong. For some reason even though we were looking at parenting issues we were somehow missing the mark...

The question of what was missing is something that I have been thinking about and studying over the years. By talking to people from ethnic minorities, organising and participating in conferences around ethnocultural themes and in helping to found the Multimundo Coalition (Montreal's first coalition for LGBT people from ethnocultural communities), I have learned enough to admit that it isn't adequate to just say "we welcome everyone with open arms". Though well meaning, it is useless.

LGBT people who are also part of ethnic communities face a whole series of issues that are often vastly different from the “majority” population.

Let me give you an example: Many of our discussion groups have revolved around identity politics. In this part of the world, at this point in time, if you have not “come out” to your friends, family, co-workers, neighbours and especially your children you are considered to be “in the closet” – this is deemed an inferior state to that of someone who “lives openly”. We talk about pride, political activism, self-esteem, and not interiorising the homophobia that is unfortunately still a part of our culture. The discourse around being “out” is often both psychologising and medical: if you don’t tell your family about your sexual identity it is dysfunctional. If you haven’t “come out” you are probably at an earlier point in your developmental journey. Internalising homophobia can lead to stress disorders; coming out can solve this because you really come into yourself (bien dans sa peau....)

What if, however, coming out means breaking with one’s cultural community and severing ties with the extended family because of strongly entrenched religious beliefs/ cultural mores? In some people’s families coming out can even mean risking losing one’s children as extended family steps in, allegedly in the best interest of the child. When looked at this way perhaps coming out is not necessarily the goal to strive toward.

I have since met a number of extremely balanced, dynamic lesbian mothers, with a strong sense of self-esteem and not an ounce of internalised hatred who downright laugh to think of the impossible situation they would be in if their families knew...These women from a variety of ethnic communities have formed strong identities as women who love women, but terms like “coming out”, “gay pride” and “gay rights” are simply beside the point.

Although these women form strong interpersonal relationships there is still the need, perhaps even stronger than those of the “majority” culture, to network with other parents who are living similar realities. The need is there for their children as well. The potential for isolation is high and yet many of the issues that we address in our mainstream organisations just don’t fly for them.

Women from visible minorities confront racism on a regular basis. They also confront sexism to a greater extent than women from the dominant culture. In the struggle against oppression homophobia becomes a side issue. When gay rights come up...well...there are simply other worries. But of course homophobia touches us all. It just may seem an impossible feat to integrate this issue with other more pressing priorities. Things can get to the point where people feel torn in their allegiances.

Gay marriage and gay rights are a double-edged sword. They can have both positive and negative impacts on acceptance into cultural communities as values of equality and acceptance clash with religious values and can sometimes create backlash.

And if queer people of colour think that they will find a safe haven within the gay community once they come over they might be surprised. There are just as many bigots in the gay community as there are in the population at large. It doesn’t follow *a priori* that being part of a sexual minority means having empathy for other minorities. This is a tough lesson that unfortunately many have endured. The concept of multiple layers of identity seems a particularly hard one for mainstream LGBT organisations to grasp.

Meanwhile the community of origin may provide a strong sense of identity and belonging. Although many ethnic communities have very rigid prohibitions against same-sex behaviour and even see it as an “evil” of the dominant culture, still, breaking away from the ethnic community is usually not a positive solution.

This is true for LGBTs of colour, but even more so for those with children where grandparents and extended family, traditions and cultural identity are important elements of family life...

Queer parents from ethnic communities walk a delicate tightrope. Many cultural groups put a strong emphasis on family ties, traditional gender roles, expectations about marriage and children. Religion often plays a central role. The extended family can be excellent providers of moral, psychological and sometimes even financial

support. Parents want to be honest and forthright with their own children, but can't always control who their kids talk to or what they say. If they are in a couple or dating, their partners may or may not be from the same ethnic background. There is prejudice and racism in society at large. And finally the pressures of the gay community...

Ethnic parents, like all parents, want the best for their children. Part of the equation is finding a balanced life. If we are to truly call ourselves a community, then LGBT people have the responsibility of making our activities, services, publications, and events inclusive in such a way that looks to the interests of all our members.

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 - December 2005 - March 2006

Montreal and Quebec News

February 1, 2006 (Montreal) The 1st World Outgames Montréal 2006 have announced that Ms. Martina Navratilova has joined their "Circle of Champions". Ms. Navratilova will actively participate in the International Conference on LGBT Human Rights, which will be held for three days before the Opening Ceremony of the Outgames. The world-renowned tennis champion and sports legend will present the Declaration of Montréal with Olympic medalist and Outgames Co-President Mark Tewksbury at the Opening Ceremony on 29 July 2006.

The International Conference on LGBT Human rights focuses on affirming LGBT rights as an international standard, in every country of the world. To this end, a final resolution entitled the Declaration of Montréal, will be adopted at the close of the Conference and presented at the Opening Ceremony of the 1st World Outgames. The Declaration of Montréal will then be introduced to the United Nations and other international forums.

"I am thrilled to be involved with the Outgames. Over the past three years, the Montréal organisation has built a new model for LGBT sport and cultural events, one that honours the past, speaks to the present, and stands ready to embrace the future," said Ms. Navratilova, internationally respected sportswoman and eighteen-time Grand Slam champion. "This model will result in the largest LGBT sport and cultural event ever held. This is why I am so proud to be part of this important development in the history of the international LGBT community."

Canadian News

November 18, 2005 - *quillandquiere.com* - A Vancouver gay and lesbian bookstore's stalled court battle with Canada Customs was given new life with a Supreme Court of Canada ruling.

Little Sister's Book and Art Emporium is suing Canada Customs over seizure of material bound for the bookstore, but has argued in court that it lacks the financial means to pursue the case. The Vancouver bookstore has been fighting for two decades against the seizure of imported books by customs authorities who deem the material obscene.

In 2004 the B.C. Supreme Court ruled that the government should cover the bookstore's legal costs, but that decision was overturned by the B.C. Court of Appeal early in 2005.

Now, though, the country's highest court has given *Little Sister's* leave to appeal that decision. "If the Supreme Court of Canada says we're entitled to advance funding, then we'll be able to have our trial, which really never started," says Joseph Arvy the lawyer for *Little Sister's*.

The Supreme Court sets its own schedule and there's no indication yet as to when it will hear the appeal. Arvy hopes to appear before the court by summer 2006, but failing that, it will likely be early fall.

December 7, 2005 - *Egale Canada (Vancouver)* Three judges of the B.C. Court of Appeal dismissed the appeal by Kimberly Nixon in the case of *Nixon v. Vancouver Rape Relief Society*. Ms. Nixon had been excluded from volunteering as a peer counselor at a women's rape crisis centre because she is transsexual. She won her initial human rights complaint but that B.C. Human Rights Tribunal decision was overturned by the B.C. Supreme Court, leading to this appeal. This is the highest level of court in Canada ever to rule on a case of discrimination against a transsexual person.

Although the Court of Appeal held that the behaviour of Rape Relief in excluding transsexual women constituted discrimination under the Human Rights Code, it nevertheless ruled that s.41 of the Code permits a women's service organization to discriminate against a sub-group of women, namely transsexual women, based on its own subjective wishes.

"Today the B.C. Court of Appeal gave its blessing to a clear case of discrimination," said Gilles Marchildon, Executive Director of *Egale*. If women's groups can exclude women based on their trans status, what is to prevent them from excluding other women based on race, religion or sexual orientation? Discrimination based on a person's intrinsic nature or personal circumstances is just plain wrong."

The case now heads to the Supreme Court of Canada.

December 21, 2005 - *Globe and Mail* - Two Montreal "swingers" clubs did not breach Canadian standards of decency when they allowed group sex to take place on their premises, the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled.

In its latest attempt to set guidelines that govern sexual morality in Canada, the top court said two swingers clubs in Montreal were not operating as illegal "bawdy houses," because what went on there did not cause any harm to society. The decision could make it easier for other venues where group sex takes place among consenting adults - such as gay bath houses - to operate without the threat of police intervention.

The ruling dealt with two Quebec Court of Appeal decisions that came down on opposite sides of the issue. In one case, the Coeur à Corps club was acquitted by the appeals court, while in the other the L'Orange club lost an appeal of a conviction on similar charges. The L'Orange clubs owner appealed his conviction to the Supreme Court, while the Crown appealed the acquittal of Coeur à Corps.

The criminal code defines a bawdy house as location that is kept for prostitution or indecent acts. At these clubs there was no direct payment for sexual acts, so there was no issue of prostitution. It was the definition of "indecent act" that became the pivotal issue in the cases.

The case law has generally defined an indecent act as something that is beyond standards of community tolerance, or is capable of causing harm by encouraging people to engage in anti-social conduct. The judged said group sex in a private club doesn't harm society. The court's decision could have an impact on many other swingers' clubs across Canada and on other places where sexual contact between adults takes place.

February 16, 2006 - *CBC radio* - the Institute for Marriage and the Family Canada (IMFC to its friends) has opened in Ottawa, right after St-Valentine's Day! The Executive-Director, Mr David Quist says they will launch their first publication intended for members of Parliament as soon as the session opens.

Funding, again according to Mr Quist, is from Langley, BC, ie. our "old friends" *Focus on the Family*. The role of IMFC is not to lobby but to "inform" members of Parliament about the latest research in "healthy living" on a wide range of issues including abortion, assisted suicide, family values and (you guessed it) same-sex marriage (among others).

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.

November 15 (Jerusalem) The state of **Israel** tells the High Court of Justice that only the Knesset - Israel's parliament - can decide whether to allow same-sex couples to marry. In a brief replying to lawsuits brought by same-sex couples who married in Canada the government calls for the court to reject the petitions.

November 26 (Dubai) More than two dozen people described by the government as gay are arrested at what police called "a mass homosexual wedding" and could face Sharia court imposed male hormone treatments, five years in jail and a lashing, authorities in the **United Arab Emirates** tell the *Associated Press*.

November 28 (Ottawa) **Canada's** three opposition parties topple the 17-month-old government of Prime Minister Paul Martin, throwing the country into a January election. The campaign is expected to be the nastiest and possibly most expensive election in Canadian history with same-sex marriage once more being an issue.

Conservative leader Stephen Harper vows to bring in legislation to repeal the marriage act if his party forms the next government. Although he says he would not use the notwithstanding clause most legal experts say that would be the only way to overturn the law. The procedure has never been used by a federal government.

An *Environics* poll released by *CBC* states that 66 per cent of Canadians say the issue of same-sex marriage is settled and should not be addressed again.

November 29 (Ottawa) On this first day of the election campaign, Stephen Harper tells reporters that he intends to re-open the issue of equal marriage for same-sex couples. He says that if elected Prime Minister he will introduce legislation to exclude same-sex couples from civil marriage. He adds he will put it to a free vote and will not annul the marriages of the thousands of same-sex couples who've gotten legally married in the last 2 1/2 years.

November 30 (Ottawa) Constitutional experts reiterate that for Parliament to follow Stephen Harper's plan to eliminate the right of same sex couples to marry would require the use the Charter's notwithstanding clause.

December 1 (Cape Town) South Africa becomes the fifth country to legalize same-sex marriage. The Constitutional Court, the highest court in South Africa, rules that it is unconstitutional to deny gay and lesbian couples the right to marry. The court orders Parliament to amend marriage laws within 12 months.

December 11 (Taipei) A same-sex couple is married in a public ceremony in a Taipei hotel to draw attention to the lack of rights for gay and lesbian couples in the island nation.

Chen Chin-hsueh and his partner Ah Wei are wed in a ceremony at one of Taipei's most expensive hotels under the spotlights of TV cameras and press reporters. Chen, 33, tells reporters that he and his lover would rather call

their wedding ceremony an "engagement ceremony" because the **Taiwanese** government offers no recognition of same-sex partnerships.

December 12 (Toronto) Prime Minister Paul Martin lashes out at threats by Conservative leader Stephen Harper to hold a vote on repealing the country's same-sex marriage law. Speaking at a campaign stop west of Toronto, Martin demands to know how Harper would repeal the law when courts in the majority of provinces have already ruled it is unconstitutional to deny marriage to gay and lesbian couples.

December 13 (Princeton, New Jersey) Students at Princeton University - considered the most conservative of Ivy League schools - give a thumbs up to same-sex marriage. Questions concerning gay marriage are put to students on the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) winter ballot. Referenda are highly unusual. Most years the ballot is confined to selecting representatives for the USG.

December 15 (Madrid) Spain's highest court, for the time being, upholds the constitutionality of a law allowing same-sex couples to marry. Two regional judges had challenged the validity of the law, arguing in separate cases that it violated the country's constitution. In a split decision by the Constitutional Court the two cases are rejected, but only on procedural grounds. However, another challenge to the law, by the opposition Popular Party, has not been considered by the High Court yet. The court says it will hear arguments in the case at a later date.

December 15 (Riga) Latvia becomes the first European country to amend its constitution to ban same-sex marriage, a move that could pit it against EU human rights laws. The controversial amendment passes final reading in the Latvian Parliament and defines marriage as a union of a man and a woman.

December 16 (Vancouver) Conservative leader Stephen Harper tries to shed his reputation for intolerance by insisting he would love his children even if they were gay, adding - for the first time - that he wouldn't use the Constitution to outlaw same-sex marriage. He refuses to be pinned down, however, on how he could void the law when the courts have ruled it unconstitutional to bar same-sex couples from marrying.

December 21 (London) Hundreds of gay and lesbian couples exchange vows in cities and towns across **England and Wales** but their big day is overshadowed by the civil partnership of Elton John and David Furnish in Windsor. In the same room where Charles and Camilla were married, Elton and David settle for a civil partnership.

Both marriage and partnerships have the same rights and responsibilities but gays and lesbians cannot call themselves married. The difference is critical for gay leaders who point out the inequity in the law, but for non-gays, especially the media, both are the same. The media has seldom used the phrase 'civil partnership', opting instead to call the unions 'marriage'.

December 26 (Vilnius) Lithuania could become the second member of the European Union to ban same-sex marriage. Irena Degutiene, a member of the conservative Homeland Union Party announces she will begin collecting signatures in January to force the issue to a vote. Lithuanian law already defines marriage as union between a man and woman but Degutiene says that isn't enough. She says that Latvia did the right thing when it amended its constitution to bar gay marriage.

January 5 (Caracas) Legislation is to be presented in **Venezuela's** national assembly to legalize same-sex marriage. The assembly is preparing to meet for the first time since the opposition boycotted elections a month earlier. The marriage bill has been signed onto by a handful of party members and it is so far unclear how much support the measure will receive.

January 10 (Ottawa) At the 1st leaders' debate, Paul Martin promises his government would amend the Constitution to prevent the federal government from using the notwithstanding clause.

January 11 - A young woman in northern **India's Uttar Pradesh state** tries to commit suicide by swallowing insecticide after family members reject her same-sex union and beat her, according to international news reports.

January 18 (Canberra) Australia tries to stop gays marrying abroad by barring its embassies from issuing gay Australians the paperwork needed to marry in nations that allow it (e.g. paperwork saying that they are not married).

January 18 - Gay couples across **Canada** rush to the altar, worried that a possible Conservative government will reverse the legalization of same sex marriages.

January 19 (Waterdown, Ontario) Stephen Harper says outlawing gay marriage won't be one of his top priorities if elected, and that efforts by the Senate to block such a bill would amount to an "abuse of power." Two days after saying that a Liberal-dominated Senate would be a check on Tory power, the Conservative leader signals that he expects the high chamber to defer to Parliament on such contentious issues.

January 24 (Washington) The 2004 **American** election campaigns that ultimately banned same-sex marriages in 13 states were funded by a mix of national groups, churches and individuals, with ban supporters narrowly out-raising opponents and total contributions breaking \$13 million, according to a new analysis of state-level fundraising.

January 24 - Canada's Conservative Party wins the country's election, raising fears that the country's gay marriage laws could be repealed.

January 27 (Ottawa) Stephen Harper says he wants to move quickly as leader of a fractious new Parliament to reopen the same-sex marriage debate. The makeup of the new House of Commons suggests the prime minister-designate knows there's a good chance such a motion will be rejected. It would not be a total loss, however. In fact, an honorable defeat on equal marriage would satisfy obligations to Harper's most right-wing supporters while defusing a politically explosive issue.

February 2 (Lisbon) As expected a **Portuguese** lesbian couple is turned down for a marriage license. Helena Paixao, 35, and Teresa Pires, 28, are told that Portuguese law bars same-couples from marrying. The women submitted their application for a license the day before under the glare of television news cameras, becoming the first same-sex couple in the country to try to marry. Paixao and Pires were expecting to be rejected and are already planning legal action.

February 8 (Ottawa) Archconservative and same-sex marriage foe Vic Toews is appointed federal Minister of Justice. The conservative party's most well-known social and religious conservative now has control over **Canada's** Criminal Code and hence, most of the key moral issues in society from gun control to abortion and from same-sex marriage to capital punishment. Harper is exposing his Achilles heel with voters - the fear a Conservative government will move sharply to the right and away from Canadian values.

International News

November 29th, 2005 - Human Rights Campaign and 365Gay.com (Rome) After weeks of speculation, the Vatican formally released a document calling on the restriction of gays in the priesthood.

Of gays, the document says, "those people find themselves, in fact, in a situation that presents a grave obstacle to a correct relationship with men and women. One cannot ignore the negative consequences that can stem from the ordination of people with deeply rooted homosexual tendencies."

The document outlines that gay men with "deep-seated homosexual tendencies" or those who support gay culture should be barred from entering the seminary. The document was released three years after a sex abuse scandal rocked the Catholic Church.

"This is a scapegoat scheme masquerading as Vatican decree," said Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese. "What is being released today is a decree serving as a diversion that neither keeps children safe nor holds criminals responsible."

Following the release of this document, a Vatican letter obtained by the *Washington Post* (published on December 2, 2005) showed that the Roman Catholic Church is imposing even deeper restrictions on gay priests than those made public by the official document. In a new directive for Catholic seminaries, the letter instructs seminary leaders to remove any gay priests from teaching positions. It is the first indication that the Vatican wants to remove current priests who are gay. The two-page letter affecting current priests was sent to bishops around the world but not made public.

Many Catholic priests agree that it is only a matter of time before the Vatican extends the gay ban to all priests.

December 2, 2005 - 365Gay.com (Brussels) The Belgian government has moved a step closer to allowing same-sex couples to co-parent. The lower house of Parliament has approved legislation to permit gay and lesbian couples to adopt and for both partners to be recognized as the legal parent of each other's children. It not only permits co-parenting but would also ensure the children in same-sex households would have the same rights to inheritance and succession as children of heterosexual couples.

The bill passed 77 to 62. If it gains approval in the upper house it would make Belgium the third member of the European Union to allow co-parenting, after Spain and Sweden. The measure is expected to be voted on in the Senate in March.

December 7, 2005 - Boston Herald (Boston) The Vatican's top man in America has asked Boston Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley to step in and stop allowing *Catholic Charities of Boston* to place adoptive children with same-sex couples. Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo Higuera, the papal nuncio to the United States made the recommendation in a letter to O'Malley, the *Boston Herald* report.

Although he is the ambassador to the US from the Vatican he cannot issue a direct order to O'Malley. However, as a senior diplomat he represents the views of the Vatican.

The archdiocese refused to comment on report, but did say that a review of *Catholic Charities* is underway.

January 18, 2006 365Gay.com and ILGA news (Strasbourg, France) The European Parliament (EP) passed a joint resolution condemning homophobia. The measure passed on a 469 - 149 vote with 41 abstentions. It calls on the European Commission to take a more proactive roll in fighting anti-LGBT moves in several EU states.

The resolution says the Commission should begin proceedings against those countries that fail to implement the directive on equal treatment in employment and occupation, and it says the Commission should consider the use of criminal penalties in cases of violation. The Commission is also asked to put forward proposals that would guarantee the rights of same-sex couples and their children.

This statement and debate was a novelty in the EP. In the past, questions concerning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation have mostly been dealt with as minor issues in more general debates. For the first time, LGBT rights in the 25 EU Member States appear at the Parliament's agenda as a serious political issue.

One of the main complaints of LGBT rights groups throughout Europe is that registered same-sex couples from member states where same-sex marriages or civil partnerships are legal lose all their rights if they move to another EU country where gay and lesbian relationships are not recognized.

During debate on the resolution supporters of the measure accused several former communist countries, now EU members, of rampant homophobia. Poland and Latvia came under the harshest criticism.

Latvia recently revised its constitution to become the first European country to ban same-sex marriage. In July 2005 the capital city of Riga banned gay pride observances following criticism of the event by Latvian Prime Minister Aigars Kalvitis. Pride organizers went to court and won a restraining order against the city, allowing the parade to go ahead. Hundreds of demonstrators lined the parade route and hurled rotten eggs and insults at the marchers. Several of the demonstrators got into scuffles with police and were dragged away.

Polish gays and lesbians demonstrated in several cities in November 2005 demanding that the government abide by European civil rights laws. The marchers denounced the mass arrest of gays in the city of Poznan, where riot police detained 65 gays and lesbians who refused to disband when they attempted to hold a gay pride march.

January 24, 2006 (New York City) *365Gay.com and Human Rights Campaign* - The United States joined with four of the world's most repressive regimes to reject an application by two international LGBT groups seeking to join a UN agency that advises the world body on economic and social issues.

The application by the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) and the Danish Association of Gays and Lesbians was dismissed without a hearing. The groups had sought inclusion on the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) a think tank made up of non-governmental agencies from around the world.

In May 2005, the ILGA, which is based in Brussels, and the Danish gay rights group Landsforeningen for Bosser og Lesbiske (LBL) applied for consultative status with the UN. ECOSOC consultative status is the only official means by which non-governmental organizations (NGOs) around the world can influence and participate in discussions among member states at the United Nations. Nearly 3,000 groups enjoy this status. ECOSOC status allows NGOs to attend UN meetings and speak in their own name.

The United States voted with Iran, Zimbabwe, China, and Cameroon against granting a hearing for the application. The governments of Iran and Zimbabwe are considered to be among the most repressive anti-gay regimes in the world.

"It is an absolute outrage that the United States has chosen to align itself with tyrants - all in a sickening effort to smother the voices of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people around the world," said Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

"Apparently Iran, which President Bush has deemed part of the 'Axis of Evil,' is a suitable partner when it comes to discriminating against gay people," said Foreman.

"It is deeply disturbing that, at the UN, the United States has shifted gears toward an aggressive stance against human rights for LGBT people," said Paula Ettelbrick, executive director of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission. "Unfortunately, denying LGBT groups a voice and a presence within the United Nations - the world's most important human rights institution - is fully in keeping with the U.S.'s assault on basic human rights principles worldwide."

The Bush-Cheney administration has also opposed women's and children's rights treaties, sex education, contraception and family planning in international forums.

Miscellaneous

- **November 1, 2005 (Toronto)** The Queer Parenting Initiative (QPI) held a very successful launch of the "Queering the Family Tree" poster on November 1. Using family tree imagery and symbols, the poster challenges the assumption that all children are part of traditional families. To view the poster on line go to: <http://www.queerparent.ca/>

The posters are free and can be ordered from: getposters@queerparent.ca. They can be put up in schools, daycares and community centres. The QPI is also trying to raise the funds to produce a French version of the poster.

- **November 10, 2005 (Minneapolis)** Rainbow Rumpus is a new on-line magazine for kids with lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender parents. Rainbow Rumpus features children's stories, poetry, drawings, cartoons, songs and videos. The magazine breaks new ground, as it is the first publication by and for young children with LGBT parents. www.rainbowrumpus.org

- **December 14, 2005 365Gay.com (London)** An organization of LGBT historians, educators and art authorities is working with a British government agency to set up a museum of gay history and culture. *Proud Heritage* is contacting museums across the UK asking that they examine their collections - and in many cases reassess them - to help create a gay database.

- **January 16, 2006** - "Brokeback Mountain," the acclaimed film about two cowboys who fall in love, dominated the Golden Globe awards ceremony.

Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2006/01/16/1>

News from the Lesbian Mothers Association

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

MARCH 2006 :

- **THURSDAY March 2nd at 6 p.m.**

CONFERENCE : VISIBILITY THEN AND NOW

A conference organised by Gai Écoute with the Lesbian Mothers Association, the Quebec Lesbian Network, the Quebec Women's Federation and Treize lesbian magazine, in honour of International Women's Day:

With years of experience, older lesbians have much to teach the younger generation. They faced many challenges by living an open life in an era when their identities needed to be invented from scratch. Meanwhile the younger generation has much to say about their experiences, their desires and fears. Let's get together and open a dialogue that is both intergenerational and intercultural on bringing about lesbian visibility.

The conference will be followed by a dance party with DJ.

Where : Sala Rossa, 4848 boul. St-Laurent

- **SATURDAY March 25th at 8 p.m.**

A 'HOT' INVITATION FOR ADULT WOMEN ONLY

How would you like to participate in a fun-filled evening of naughtiness and laughter? Éminé and Nathalie are pleased to invite you to a "Joy Toyz" party in the comfort of their home where you will be able to see... touch... taste... buy... and try (at home!) a large variety of sex toys and sensual body products.

The party will take place on March 25th, 2006 starting at 6:30 pm in N.D.G.

The hostesses invite you to bring along drinks and/or finger foods to share in order to contribute to the theme of "indulgence" for the evening. **Please confirm your presence by e-mail at eps1988@gmail.com or by phone at 514-486-6415.** The confirmation will allow them to prepare their living room according to the number of participants and to provide the address as well as a few additional details about the evening.

APRIL 2006:

- **SATURDAY April 1st at 10:45 a.m.**
SUGAR SHACK PARTY

The Lesbian Mothers Association and Papadaddies will have a SUGARING-OFF PARTY at La Cabane à Sucre Lalande (St-Eustache). This is a good chance for all of us to see each other once again, to catch up on news and to make new friends. For those who don't have kids yet, this activity is for you too. About one third of our members now are future-mamas, so you will not be alone. Also if there are nieces and nephews or children of friends that you would like to bring along, please feel free to do so. Come and celebrate together the coming of spring! **If you are interested in participating and have not already sent in your form please call Mona at 514-846-1543.**

- **THURSDAY April 6th 2006 at 7:30 p.m.**
ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The agenda includes: election of members to the administrative council, the 2005-2006 financial statement, as well as the budget for the year to come. Projects for the year 2006-2007 will be explained. Further information will be sent to you in March.

Where : CCGLM (centre communautaire des gais et lesbiennes du Montréal)- 2075 rue Plessis (metro Papineau)

- **SATURDAY April 22nd 2006**
CONFERENCE AND DISCUSSION ON ETHNICITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION.

The Lebanese organisation for the protection of arab and lebanese LGBTIQ, Helem Montréal, will join with various other ethnocultural groups for a day of exchange around themes of aspects of ethnicity and sexual orientation within the Montreal LGBT community. The Lesbian Mothers Association and the Papadaddies group will be animating a workshop on queer parenting from an ethnocultural perspective.

More info will be e-mailed to you in March but you can also contact mtl@helem.net

- **SATURDAY April 22nd 2006 from 1 p.m. - 2:30p.m.**
For teenagers: "VIDEO PROJECT"

You are between 14 and 18 years old, not too shy and you are interested in the possibility of winning a prize. The prize would be given during the contest "RACONTE-MOI TA DIFFÉRENCE (TELL ME ABOUT YOUR DIFFERENCE)". The contest is organised by the Montreal Youth Coalition Against Homophobia (www.coalitionjeunesse.org).

Interested? Come spend the afternoon with us to make a video based on a discussion on "what it means to be raised by homosexual parents."

Where: 4176, Hampton (Vendôme metro, bus 105, in N.D.G.)

For more information call NATHALIE at 514-486-6415.

MAY 2006:

• **SATURDAY May 27th at 7 p.m.** **DISCUSSION GROUP: KNOWN DONORS**

Have you thought about choosing a known donor to start your family? How will the donor integrate into your family's everyday life? How do the new laws affect this type of family? Here is the perfect workshop for those who would like to discuss the issues of having a known donor in more detail. The agenda of the meeting will be determined by those present.

Where: 4009 St. Dominique at the corner of Duluth. (Metros Sherbrooke or St. Laurent)

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.

♦ Café-Causerie Aux Fémin'Elles: L'Association lesbienne vous invite à ses cafés causeries le deuxième et le quatrième lundis du mois, de 19h à 21h30 à la salle d'atelier (au deuxième étage) de chez Loblaw's situé au 1155 Boul. Talbot à Chicoutimi. Ces rencontres ont comme but de briser l'isolement et s'adresse aux femmes lesbiennes qui désiraient socialiser en compagnie d'autres femmes lesbiennes, afin de permettre un échange positif. Au plaisir de vous rencontrer ! Informations: **418-541-9065**

♦ 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**

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**

Artistic and traditional furniture restoration, hand finishes, gilding, canning
514-807-2277

www.atelierlisekuhn.com

info@atelierlisekuhn.com