



QUEER CANADIAN HISTORY TIMELINE - PRE-COLONIZATION TO PRESENT

Warning: Some of the language used in this timeline is appropriate to the time period in which these events occurred, and do not by any means represent our current views surrounding gender and sexual minorities in Canada.

TW: R*pe, sexual assault, and suicide

Pre-Colonial Canada:

Turtle Island: Prior to the European colonization of Canada, the Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island recognized three to five genders, which included, but was not limited to, men, women, two-spirited men, two-spirited women, and trans people. The words used to describe these individuals were as diverse as the languages spoken across the continent. Even today, Two-Spirit people play an integral role in Indigenous culture, as well-renowned healers, teachers, and visionaries.

17th Century:

1648: A gay military drummer is sentenced to death for sodomy by local priests in New France. After an intervention by Jesuits, his life is spared on the condition that he accept the role of New France's permanent executioner. It is suspected that because he was the only one put on trial, his partner may have been an Indigenous man who was not subject to French religious law.¹

1691: Military officer, Nicolas Daussy de Saint-Michel, and 2 commoners, Dubois and La Rose, are arrested on sodomy charges. Dubois and La Rose are sentenced to additional time in the military, while Saint-Michel is fined 200 livres and exiled back to France.¹

19th Century:

1810: Alexander Wood, a Scottish merchant and magistrate living in Upper Canada, is caught in a sex scandal while investigating a rape in which the victim was able to scratch her assaulter's penis. When Wood begins the investigation by inspecting some suspects' genitals, rumours circulate accusing Wood of being a homosexual and suggesting that the rape victim does not exist; instead, it is said that Wood made it up in order to seduce and fondle men.¹³

1838: George Herchmer Markland, a member of the Legislative Council of Upper Canada, is forced to be removed from his seat after allegedly engaging in sexual relations with other men.³⁴

1841: The Canadian Criminal Code imposes the death penalty for all persons engaging in same-sex sexual relationships.²⁴

1842: Samuel Moore and Patrick Kelley, the first two Canadian men to be historically convicted for engaging in sodomy in what is recorded as having been a consensual encounter, arrive at the Kingston Penitentiary. They are both sentenced to death, but their sentences are both revoked on August 22nd. Moore is released from prison in 1849, and Kelly is released in 1853.³⁴

1869: Buggery is no longer punishable by death in Canada, replaced instead by a maximum punishment of life in prison.¹

1892: Buggery and sodomy laws, which required direct evidence of explicit sexual activity between same-sex individuals, are replaced with “gross indecency” laws in British legislation. The wording is intentionally vague, to humiliate and shame anyone who shows any same-sex affection.²⁵

20th Century:

1918: The first Canadian, and potentially the first North American, LGBTQ+ publication is made in Montreal when writers Elsa Gidlow and Roswell George Mills launch an underground mimeographed magazine called *Les Mouches Fantastiques*. Around five issues are published before the duo heads to New York City in the 1920's.³⁴

1930's-1940's: Along with the hunt for Jews, Poles, and Gypsies in an act of assimilation by the Nazis during the Holocaust, “homosexuals” are captured and placed in concentration camps throughout Europe. Gay men are labelled with pink triangles on their uniforms and lesbians are marked with black triangles.²⁴

1943: In *First Statement*, a Montreal Literary magazine, John Sutherland critiques the poetry of Patrick Anderson in a review where he guesses that there are homoerotic themes in Anderson's writing, and accuses him of having “some sexual experiences of a kind not normal”. Anderson is married to a woman at the time and thus sues Sutherland; eventually the issue is revoked. Anderson comes out as gay later in his life.³⁴

1947: John Herbert, a part-time drag queen and Eaton's employee, is arrested in Toronto for being dressed as a woman in public and is sentenced to four months in a reformatory. He is later arrested several more times, and his experiences of abuse in prison serve as inspiration for some of the plays he writes later in life.³⁶

1948 and 1957: The Kinsey report is released and declares that approximately 10% of men and 2-6% of women are homosexual.²⁴

1949: Jim Egan, Canada's first gay activist who would later become a co-plaintiff in *Egan vs Canada*, begins writing letters to newspapers and magazines protesting the depiction of homosexuality, and lobbying for a legal reform on homosexuality in Canada. He continues to write letters until 1964.³⁴



1950's and 1960's: the RCMP begins to keep tabs on all of the known homosexual people and patrons of gay bars in Ottawa and a number of other cities. They begin working with the FBI and their own surveillance of homosexuals; the RCMP alerts the FBI if there are homosexuals crossing over the border. They actively keep lists on suspected and confirmed homosexual people, for the purpose of forcing them out of government jobs, and/or denying them security clearance and promotions. This is part of the Red Scare in which gay and lesbian people are suspected of communist acts during the Cold War.²²

1964: Everett George Klippert, a Northwest Territories mechanic, announces to the police that he is gay, has engaged in sexual encounters with a variety of men, and refuses to change.³⁴

1964: Canada sees its first gay-positive organization, called ASK in Vancouver, and GAY in Toronto.³⁴

1965: Everett George Klippert is sent to prison for life as a “dangerous sex offender,” backed up by the Supreme Court of Canada. He is charged with four counts of “gross indecency”. He is the last person to be sentenced with these charges in Canada before the legalization in 1969.³⁴

1967: John Herbert's experience in jail inspires him to publish a play entitled *Fortune and Men's Eyes*, a landmark in the history of both LGBT literature and general theatre in Canada.³⁶

1968: Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau releases a bill to reform the Canadian Criminal Code that loosens the reins on issues such as homosexuality, abortion, and divorce. Trudeau makes a statement that there is “no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation.”³⁴

1969: New York City police raid the Stonewall Inn, which leads to the first pride (a riot), sparking the gay civil rights movement in the United States, which eventually found its way to Canada.²⁴

1969: On May 14th, Canada decriminalizes homosexual acts between consenting adults with the passage of the Criminal Law Amendment.³⁴

1969: The first meeting of the University of Toronto Homophile Association (UTHA). UTHA is the first post-Stonewall gay organization, and the first gay organization formed at a Canadian University. UTHA works to educate the community about homosexuality and combating discrimination to encourage acceptance. It eventually becomes the Community Homophile Association of Toronto.²⁴

1971: Everett George Klippert is released from prison.¹

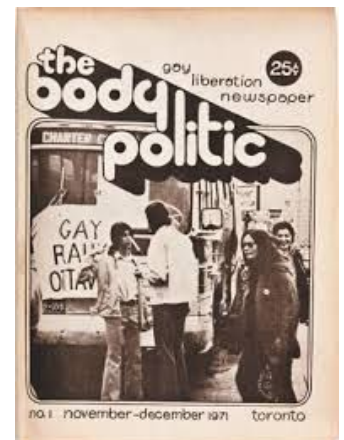
1971 (August): The first gay rights protests take place in Ottawa and Vancouver, advocating for the end of all forms of discrimination against gay and lesbian people.¹⁷

- August 28, 1971: We Demand, Canada's first gay public protest, occurs in Ottawa on Parliament Hill.³⁴

1971: Pink Triangle Press releases *The Body Politic*, one of the most significant LGBTQ+ publications in Canadian History. The magazine runs monthly from 1971 to 1987.²⁴

1972: A cable community channel in Toronto, called Maclean-Hunters airs *Coming Out*, Canada's first television series on LGBTQ+ issues.³⁴

1973: The Canadian Gay Liberation Movement Archives are launched.³⁴



1974: Adrienne Potts, Pat Murphy, Sue Wells and Heather Elizabeth perform a song at the Brunswick Tavern in Toronto. Their rendition, "I Enjoy Being A Dyke" draws the attention of the bar's owner, who asks the four to leave the premises. Upon refusal, they are arrested. It was said that the women were verbally, physically and sexually assaulted by the police, although because of corruption this was never proven in a court of law.²³



1973: Homosexuality is removed from the Diagnostics and Statistics Manual (DSM); it is no longer listed as an illness or a disease by 1974. Gender Identity Disorder is replaced by Gender Dysphoria in the DSM in 2013, which was a shift away from the Zucker approach, to the Meinvale approach, which is more about supporting people, rather than "correcting".²⁴

April 1975: The Aquarius bathhouse in Montreal is firebombed. The perpetrators are never found or arrested. Three customers die in the resulting fire; two of them are buried in anonymous graves because their bodies are never identified or claimed by their families.¹⁴

1975: Ottawa Homosexual "Vice Ring" Investigation occurs, leading to the suicide of Warren Zufelt, a 34-year-old Public Servant.²³

1975: John Damien, an Ontario Racing Commission official with 20 years experience, is told to resign because of his sexual orientation. He states: "I won't resign. I've done nothing wrong. Lots of gay people work for the government and sex doesn't interfere with their work, or with mine.... I will never resign." He is later fired, and goes on to fight a highly publicized court battle to regain his job. Unfortunately, he is unsuccessful.²

1976: Police crackdowns against gay bars in Montreal's Stanley Street gay village, widely perceived as mayor Jean Drapeau's attempts to "clean up" the city in advance of the 1976 Summer Olympics, lead to riots.¹⁶

1976 (November): The Lesbian Organization of Toronto (LOOT) is formed by a group of activists. The purpose of LOOT is to provide lesbians and feminists a safe space for community, support, culture, and politics. LOOT opens a community safe house in 1977, but the organization and its community house close on May 1, 1980.¹

1977: Thanks to protests in reaction to the police raiding of two gay establishments in Montréal, Québec becomes the second jurisdiction in the world to pass a law banning discrimination based on sexual orientation, behind only Denmark.¹⁸

1978: Buddies in Bad Times, Canada's oldest theatre company for LGBTQ+ theatre, is launched by Matt Walsh, Jerry Ciccoritti, and Sky Gilbert.³⁴

1979: In the BC provincial election, Robert Douglas Cook becomes the first electoral candidate in Canada that is openly gay.³⁴

1979: Montréal and Vancouver host their first official Pride march, the first cities in Canada to do so.¹⁸

1981: Four bathhouses in Toronto are raided by the Toronto Police Service in Operation Soap. 286 People are arrested. The event is now considered one of the crucial turning points in Canadian LGBT history, as an unprecedented community mobilization — taking place to protest police conduct. One of the protest marches during this mobilization is now generally recognized as the first Toronto Pride event. Similar raids also occur in Montréal and Edmonton throughout the year.³⁴

1981: The US Centers for Disease Control receive reports of unusually high rates of rare diseases in young gay men. It is initially referred to as GRID (Gay-Related Immune Deficiency), but is later renamed AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).¹⁹

1984: Montréal bathhouse Chez Bud's is raided by police. Although homosexuality had been legalized 15 years earlier, many of the 122 people arrested were accused of the vague, still-existing charge of gross indecency.⁶

1985: Activists form the Aids Committee of Ottawa with the goal of advocating and educating for what is seen as a gay men's health crisis, within an indifferent society.⁶

1985: Health Canada introduces a new policy on donor deferral, banning men who have sex with men from donating blood for life.³²

1988 (February): A group of activists hold a public meeting at a Toronto high school, demanding better health care and access to medication for those living with HIV. This activist group becomes known as AIDS Action Now! (AAN), which continues to do street demonstrations and direct political action used by the LGBTQ+ community in the aftermath of the bathhouse raids.¹⁴

1988- February 29: Svend Robinson becomes Canada's first elected Member of Parliament to come out as gay.³⁴

1990: The World Health Organization (WHO) removes homosexuality from the International Classification of Diseases (ICD), no longer classifying it as a mental disorder.²⁵

1990: The term Two Spirit is coined at the third annual intertribal Native American/First Nations Gay and Lesbian Conference in Winnipeg. The term allows Indigenous LGBTQ+ folks to reject other English terms that impose the Western views of gender and sexuality on FNMI people.²⁹

1990: Montréal's Sex Garage loft party is raided and shut down by two dozen police officers. Confrontations escalated to violence and many attendees and workers were seriously beaten.⁶

1991: Delwin Vriend, an employee at a private Christian college in Edmonton, is fired for being gay. He files a complaint with the Alberta Human Rights Commission, but the response is that since sexual orientation is not included in the Charter, Vriend has no case. He takes the case to the Supreme Court of Canada, where it is ruled that sexual orientation should be "read in" to Section 15, or included, in future cases.²

1994: Bill 167, Bob Rae's government proposes legislation extending spousal benefits to same-sex couples, but it was defeated in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.³⁴

1995- Egan v. Canada rules that freedom from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation be a protected right and in 1998, Sexual Orientation is added to the Canadian Charter.³⁴

1998: Glen Murray is elected mayor of Winnipeg, thus becoming the first openly gay mayor of Canada, and even North America, in a major city.³⁴

1998: Blockorama is created by Blackness Yes!, an organization formed by a collective who saw a need for Black and Caribbean representation at Pride. Blockorama is a space at Pride Toronto

that showcases Black queer and trans history and creativity through musical performances and dance.⁴

1999: George Smitherman is elected into the Ontario provincial election, thus becoming the first openly gay MPP in Canada.³⁴

21st Century:

2000: Tim Stevenson is appointed into the Legislative Council of BC, thus becoming the first openly gay cabinet minister in Canada.³⁴

2000 (September): Five police officers raid Pussy Palace, a woman's bathhouse event in Toronto. Police record the names of ten women, and two organizers are charged under the bawdy house law.³⁴

2001: Anne and Elaine Vautour become one of the first two gay couples to marry in Ontario, two years before the province officially legalizes it. Their wedding takes place under heavy police guard.²

2002: Police raid the only gay bathhouse in Calgary, and 15 people are charged under bawdy house laws.⁵

2005 (July): The federal Civil Marriage Act, legalizing same-sex marriage across Canada, is given royal assent.³⁴

2005: Bill Siksay tries to pass a bill to introduce gender identity to the Charter and tries again in 2006 (also unsuccessful).²¹

2006: The Declaration of Montreal is created, demanding that the United Nations and all states recognize the International Day Against Homophobia on May 17. The day would later be renamed the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.⁹

2008: Health Canada releases new guidelines for Organ Donating, identifying MSM as a high risk group and banning them from donating.³⁰

2009: The first Trans March in Canada is organized during Toronto Pride. Although not officially endorsed by Toronto Pride, the march attracts nearly 100 participants.¹⁰

2011: Jamie Hubley, son of Ottawa City Councillor Allan Hubley, dies by suicide after suffering severe anti-gay bullying at his high school. His death leads to the passing of the Accepting Schools Act by the Government of Ontario, which mandates clearer and stricter bullying responses in schools, as well as stating that publicly-funded schools must allow students to start a GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance or Gender and Sexual Alliance).¹⁵

2012: Bill 33, also known as Toby's Law, is passed in the Legislative Assembly in Ontario, providing Ontarians with the right to be free from discrimination and harassment because of gender identity or expression.³⁵

2014: WorldPride parade is celebrated in Toronto, Ontario, where over 12,000 marchers take part in the first WorldPride parade in Canada, and the fourth in the world.³⁰

2015: In 1998, researchers and activists call for an official state apology for the purge of LGBTQ2 members of the Canadian Armed Forces, RCMP, and civil service. In 2015, a group of activists, academics, and individuals affected by the purge campaign create the We Demand an Apology Network.³⁷

2015 (June): Cheri DiNovo, and NDP MPP in Ontario proposes new legislation to ban all forms of conversion therapy for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender children, and also preventing medical practitioners from billing OSAP for it.¹¹

2016: The Trans March in Toronto breaks the record for the largest trans march in the world. Black Lives Matter (BLMTO) is asked to be the honoured group that leads the march. In the middle of the street at Yonge and College, BLMTO asks the marchers to sit down and occupy the intersection, giving speeches on the importance of fighting for marginalized communities, and speaking in memory of those killed at the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando. The Trans March then continues to the festival grounds at Allan Gardens.³

2016: Manitoba works to ban any forms of anti-LGBTQ+ conversion therapy throughout the province.²⁸

2016: Ontario begins issuing all health cards without a gender marker, a huge step for non-binary, intersex and transgender people.¹³

2017: Canada introduces alternative gender-neutral "X" marking on passports, for people who do not identify with a male or female marking.⁷

2017: Five years after "gender identity" and "gender expression" were added to the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Federal government of Canada makes the same additions to the Canadian Human Rights Act and Criminal Code. All Canadian provinces now have both gender identity and expression included in their human rights legislation.¹¹

2017: The Justin Trudeau government makes a formal apology sparked by the We Demand an Apology network, after two years of activism.³²

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