

I Enjoy Being a Dyke

THE BRUNSWICK FOUR & CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE





Please follow the steps to complete the zone:

- 1) Watch the video
- 2) Read through the booklet contents
- 3) Answer the discussion questions as a group

Content warning

Sexual and gender-based discrimination, police violence, physical and verbal harassment, homophobia

On January 5th in 1974, four women went to the Brunswick Tavern in Toronto and performed a song at the open-mic night called "I enjoy being a dyke." When the owners asked them to leave, they refused. The management called the police who came and forcefully removed the women from the bar.

The women were taken into custody and denied legal defense; at the police station, they were verbally and physically harassed. They were charged by the police for causing a disturbance. The claim was that the four women had instigated a "lesbian riot."

The women charged the police officers with assault, but they could not identify the officers because they had swapped name tags and badges during the arrest. Angry that the trial was unfair, the women refused to stand in protest when the judge entered the court room, which resulted in them being charged with **contempt of court**. The women later apologized, but Pat Murphy refused to, leading to 30 days in jail.



Pat Murphy, Sue Well, Heather Beyer and Adrienne Potts would go on to be known as the Brunswick Four.

"I have heard that I was courageous. In retrospect, and in the present, it has always been an issue of basic survival - physical, emotional and spiritual. Maintaining one's own integrity and a desire to positively influence the present societal circumstances in which I find myself and others."

- Pat Murphy

Making waves

The arrest and trial of these women was significant for several reasons.

It is one of the first stories of resistance to homophobic treatment in Canada. The Bathouse Raids in 1981 are known as Canada's **Stonewall**, but they would not take place for another 6 years.

Did you know?

The Bath House Raids, or "Operation Soap," was a police-led raid of several popular **bathhouses** in Toronto on February 5th in 1981. Over 200 people were arrested, and the next day thousands of people took to the streets to protest. It is remembered as the first pride protest in Canada.



The events at the Brunswick Tavern also marked a change in how LGBT people were portrayed in the news. It was one of the first times that the reporting from mainstream newspapers was either neutral or even supportive.

This event also marks a coming-together of the LGBT rights movement. Historically, there were divisions between the lesbian and gay movements, and even within each group. After the women's arrest, a **legal defense fund** was created and support came from many different people. There were also people, men and women, who packed the courthouse each day during the trial. In addition, the lawyer representing the women did it pro bono (for free).

The officers responsible for arresting the women were acquitted (no legal charges were brought against them), and the final report stated that the police did not use excessive force against them.

The Brunswick Tavern is now a Rexall pharmacy and there is no remembrance of what took place there over 40 years ago.

Glossary of terms

Contempt of court is the offense of being disobedient to or disrespectful toward a court of law and its officers.

The Stonewall Riots was a protest that took place in 1969 after police raided a popular gay bar in New York City, the Stonewall Inn. The police entered the bar and forcefully arrested management and patrons. Fed-up by the constant harassment, people stood their ground and fought back; the riots were instigated by trans and queer women of colour. Today, Stonewall is considered as a catalyst for 2SLGBTQ+ rights in the USA and around the world.

Bathhouses were typically safe places for LGBT people because they were welcoming and private, and offered a sense of community. Bathhouses were also places where LGBT people would go to have sex with people of the same gender. Although homosexuality was partially legalized in 1969, running a bathouse was still illegal, and police often ran operations to arrest patrons, management, and close down establishments.

Legal defense fund is a monetary fund to help cover costs related to a legal trial. These expenses could include fees for a lawyer, court fees, litigation fees, and other legal costs. The fund can be public or private, depending on who has organized it and who it is for.



Discussion Questions

- 1) How might an event like this have impacted the relationship between the 2SLGBTQ+ community and the police?
- 2) Why do you think we see a division between the fight for lesbian rights and the fight for gay rights throughout history?



The Brunswick House officially closed its doors in 2016.

Sources for this booklet:

- Mann, A. (2016, January 13). "Toronto Should Honour the Brunswick Four." *Xtra*.
- Thibodeau, B. (2010, January 27). "1974 - The Brunswick Four - Forging a Movement." *Canadian History Comes Out*.



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