

BUILDING BRIDGES

Queer Families in Early Childhood Education



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Ryan Campbell

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Acknowledgements

The first edition of *Building Bridges: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual and Queer families in Early Childhood Education* was published just over two years ago. The idea for this resource grew from a discussion with family friends who had their daughter enrolled in a childcare program where they faced challenging situations working with some of the staff as a result of being queer identified. Their daughter is now attending grade one in a public school and her parents' stories are now more about how she understands sexual and gender diversity and all the different possibilities they offer. Since the first edition, *Building Bridges* has evolved into a resource and training handbook for early childhood educators, but more importantly as a public education tool for early childhood professionals and students. It has been presented at multiple conferences and professional development workshops across Canada and has been added in teacher and graduate training course material. The presentations offered an excellent opportunity to evaluate the need for such a resource. Despite the significant growth of queer identified families having children, resources that are developed with a Canadian lens are limited and *Building Bridges* is one attempt to fill that gap.

In the second edition of *Building Bridges: Queer Families in Early Childhood Education*, the title was deliberately changed for two reasons. First, for simplicity and secondly, because often "queer" is a term used to include those individuals who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirited, transgender, transsexual, intersex or questioning and acts as an inclusive term which will be used in this resource to designate people who fall into the preceding categories. Changing the landscape in early childhood development has included pushing the boundaries on what is considered to be acceptable language. At one point in history, the term "queer" was deemed offensive. However, it now holds significant meaning to many and is sometimes used by "straight" people to identify their solidarity with queer identity.

The project will be housed at the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development at OISE as it fits into their mandate of access, equity and public education. In the development of the second edition, I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Ryan Campbell at the University of Toronto Early Learning Centre for encouraging the inclusion of a theoretical framework to support practical ideas for program practice. With the support of the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development at OISE, University of Toronto, I have been able to ensure that *Building Bridges* is part of the work related to Access and Equity in early childhood training and development. Partners and supporters of this project have also included the Atkinson Charitable Foundation and George Brown College, School of Early Childhood.

I want to thank the parents who brought their original stories forward and also extend my gratitude to all the people who have shared their difficult and encouraging stories since. The new stories from parents, teachers, students and administrators continue to highlight a significant gap in teacher training programs with respect to sexual diversity. Programs continue to raise the salience of cultural and linguistic diversity, but many have been silent on the changing face of the Canadian family that also includes parents who identify as queer. I hope *Building Bridges* will continue to shrink the gap between educators and the growing queer parenting community.

Finally, I want to thank my family for their ongoing support of my work. In particular, I would like to acknowledge my daughter, Shari, who has helped me to revise this edition. In the past year, she has participated in a number of panels related to growing up in a queer family. She pushes me to think beyond my imaginary box of what educators are responsible for and what families can do to educate educators. Ultimately, the responsibility of creating environments that are respectful of diversity and difference is a shared responsibility of all involved.

Zeenat Janmohamed
March 2009

Introduction

“Enrolling your child in a child care centre is a vulnerable moment – separation anxiety combined with worry about their safety and the quality of care are common. Your total privacy as a family is lost as new eyes are looking at you and your parenting is being scrutinized. As lesbian parents, your vulnerability is heightened and you worry more because of the lack of understanding.”

Building Bridges has been developed in order to begin the discussion and understanding of what queer families need in early childhood environments. Utilizing this resource means engaging in a process of social change on behalf of children and making a commitment to understanding the scope and complexity that exists within queer families. Babies enter families in many different ways and the families they enter have different forms. Queer individuals must go out of their way to have children - something that most heterosexuals do not have to do (Casper, 2003). Children usually enter queer families in a planned and conscious way. There are few “accidents” and planned parenting within any family is a particularly meaningful experience. Children enter these families in a myriad of ways including birth with known and unknown donors, surrogacy, co-parenting adoption, and through previous heterosexual experiences. This resource will address questions that commonly arise when educators meet a queer parent family for the first time. It aims to provide concrete suggestions for policy and program practices that will enhance equity and respect in early learning environments.

Queer parents still face unique challenges despite an increasing range of acceptance within some segments of Canadian society. Although the human rights of queer individuals have been included in both provincial and federal laws within Canada, when queer individuals make a decision to become parents, new barriers must be overcome. The basic right to exist as a family is a political issue and a lightning rod for controversy.

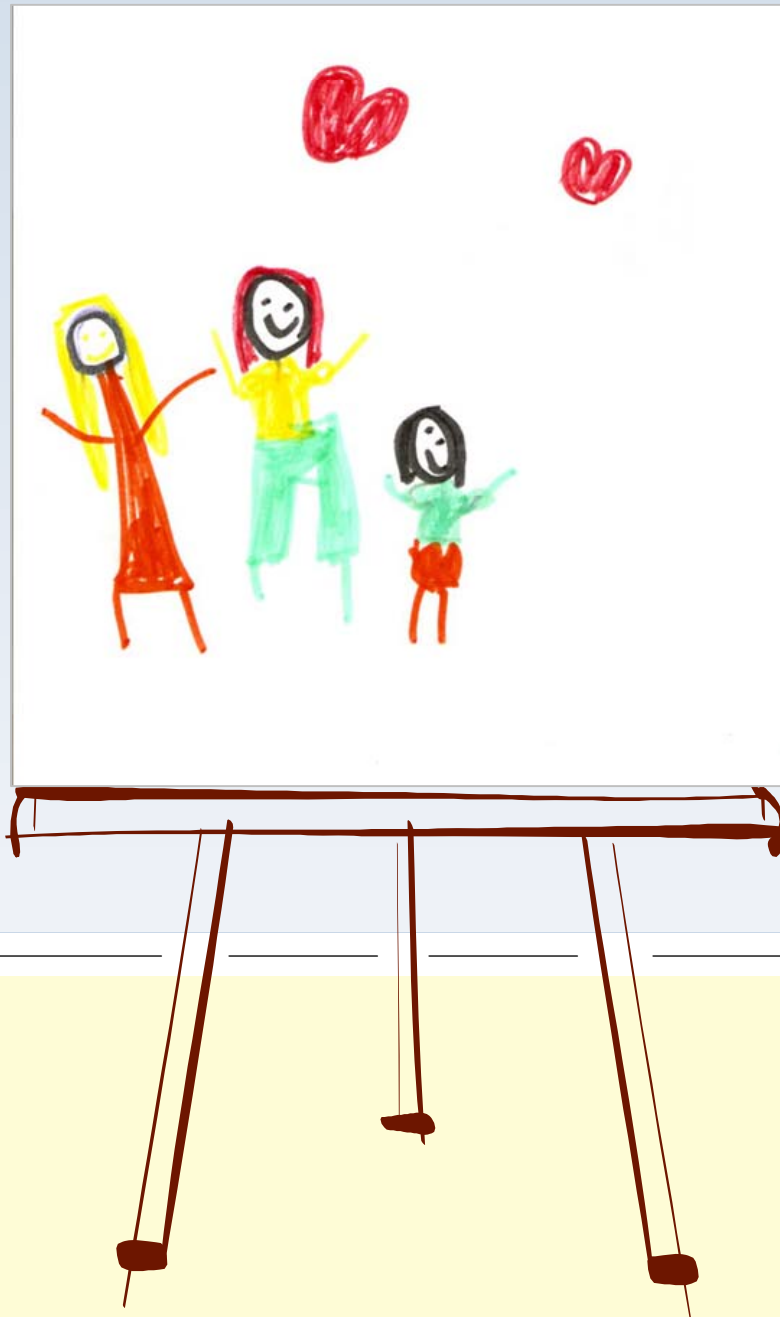


When queer parents “come out,” they face many risks to the safety of their children and their families. For complex reasons, some queer parents may choose not to come out, and educators may not even realize they are working with queer families (Lesser, Burt, Gelnaw 2005). The fear of coming out is tied to the history of homophobia throughout time. Despite the growing recognition of the ability of queer people to parent, many people do not perceive queer families as a legitimate family form. Queer people are often perceived as unfit to be parents (Berger, 2000). These kinds of negative perceptions, fear mongering and common homophobia often prevents parents from coming out even though discrimination based on sexual orientation is illegal in Canada. Although queer parents have fought hard to win the right to be recognized as parents legally through the birth and adoption process, queer families continue to face isolation and homophobia in their day to day experiences of parenting and social interaction. *Building Bridges* was developed as a resource to increase the understanding of educators and professionals working with queer families and their young children.



SECTION A

Understanding the Language



A Glossary of Terms

Queer:

Historically, the term “queer” was a derogatory term used to describe lesbians and gay men. In the 1980’s, within the lesbian and gay civil rights struggle, a movement emerged to reclaim the word and use it in a positive way. Today, “queer” is frequently used as an umbrella term to refer to an array of identities that challenge heterosexist constructions of sexuality and gender. It is argued that the use of “queer” as a unifying

category remedies the failure of the widely-known “LGBTQ” acronym to acknowledge the myriad of sexual and gender identities found in Western societies including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex, two spirited and “questioning” people. With this in mind, we have chosen to use the term “queer” in place of “LGBTQ” in an effort to recognize all expressions of gender and sexuality.

Androgynous: Having both male and female characteristics. Another term used is transgender and pan gendered.

Bisexual: A man or woman who can be attracted to or have a romantic/sexual relationship with members of either sex.

Coming Out: A lifelong process where queer people become aware of, acknowledge, accept, appreciate, and inform others of their sexual or gender identity. Coming out can involve self-knowledge, or sharing this information with friends, family, employers and their children’s teachers and caregivers.

Heteronormativity: Heteronormativity is a term that is used to describe the marginalization of non-heterosexual lifestyles and the view that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation.

Heterosexism: The institutionalized set of beliefs that heterosexuality is normal, natural and superior to homosexuality. Heterosexism confers certain privileges such as legal protection, the rights to marry, and freedom to be publicly affectionate, on people who are heterosexual or appear to be.

Heterosexual: Women or men whose primary romantic and sexual relationships with people of the other sex.

Homophobia: The fear, hatred, or intolerance of queer people. Homophobic acts can range from avoidance, to name calling, to denial of the right to equality, to violence targeting queer people and their families.

Internalized homophobia: The negative beliefs and attitudes about same sex orientation that lesbian, gay and bisexual people inevitably absorb through growing up in a heterosexist culture.

Intersex: General term for a range of physiological conditions in which a person is born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not fit the typical definition of female and male. For example, a person may be born with external female genitalia but internal male reproductive anatomy.

Lesbian/Gay: Preferred, self-chosen terms to describe individuals whose primary romantic and sexual relationships are with members of the same sex. The term gay is sometimes used to refer to both men and women, although many women prefer the term lesbian. Both words describe more than sexual orientation. For many lesbians and gay men, they also reflect a sense of community, shared history, culture and experience.

LGBTQ: An acronym used to describe individuals who may identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual and queer. A more inclusive approach would also add a second “Q” for “questioning” and an “I” for intersex.

A Glossary of Terms

Questioning: A person who is engaged in the process of questioning his or her sexual orientation or gender identity.

Sexual Orientation: Describes our emotional, psychological and sexual relationships with others. Sexual orientation is different from sexual behaviour because it refers to feelings and self-concept and individuals may not express their orientation through sexual behaviour.

Straight Ally: A heterosexually-identified person who supports and advocates for the equal rights of individuals within queer communities.

Transgender: An umbrella term intended to include anyone whose gender identity or expression falls outside the stereotypically expected behaviours of men and women.

Transsexuals: People who strongly desire their bodies to match or modify the gender they feel they truly are. Transsexuals are people who may have made or are making a transition from one gender to the other.

Two Spirited: The term usually implies a masculine spirit and a feminine spirit living in the same body and was coined by contemporary gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Aboriginals to describe themselves and the traditional roles they are reclaiming.

A History of Symbols



Rainbow Flag: The first Rainbow Flag was designed in 1978 by Gilbert Baker, a San Francisco artist. Baker designed a flag with 8 stripes -- hot pink (sexuality), red (life), orange (healing), yellow (sun), green (nature), turquoise (art), indigo (harmony) and violet (spirit). Baker hand-dyed and sewed the material for the first flags himself, which flew at the 1978 San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Freedom Day Parade.

In November 1978, Harvey Milk, San Francisco's first openly gay city council member, was assassinated. To demonstrate the community's strength and solidarity after this tragedy, the 1979 Pride Parade Committee decided to use Baker's flag. Due to mass production constraints, hot pink was dropped, and the indigo stripe eliminated so the colors could be evenly distributed along the parade route - three colors on each side of the street. The six-striped version is now recognized by the International Congress of Flag Makers.



Pink Triangle: The Nazis required known male homosexuals to wear an inverted pink triangle (one tip pointing down) so that they could be quickly targeted for special abuse. In the 1970's, gay activists began using this symbol as a way of identifying themselves & at the same time calling attention to this long-forgotten chapter in gay history. In many instances, the triangle has been turned up (one tip pointing up) as a sign of reversing the fortunes of LGBTQ people. Lesbians were assigned black upside-down triangles.

Symbols and definitions from:
<http://si.unl.edu/lgbtqa/SafeSpaces/symbols.html>

SECTION B

Legal Framework



The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

In December 2008, a statement endorsed by more than 50 countries (including Canada), which called for an end to the violation of queer rights around the world, was heard by the UN General Assembly. The reading of the statement was the first time that the General Assembly formally addressed the abuse of human rights based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Specifically, the draft statement condemns violence, harassment, discrimination, exclusion, stigmatization, and prejudice toward the world's queer population. It also condemns killings, executions, torture, arbitrary arrest, and deprivation of economic, social, and cultural rights based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Although the UDHR was drafted 60 years ago and was intended to ensure the protection of human rights without exception, violence and prejudice against queer individuals endured. In fact, despite this commitment to universality, many countries continued to uphold laws that criminalized consensual homosexual conduct and failed to address the ongoing persecution of queer individuals in many parts of the world. This most recent statement, however, sends a resounding message that the inequitable application of the UDHR will no longer be tolerated. Instead, international support for this statement is a major milestone in protection of human rights for the global queer community.

For more information on this initiative, visit The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission's website at <http://www.iglhrc.org>.



The Universal Declaration of
Human Rights

An Overview of Queer Rights in Canada

Canada, as a nation, began to legitimize the rights of its queer citizens nearly one hundred years after Confederation. In particular, much progress has been made in the last 40 years to secure the rights of queer people in this country. The province of Ontario has played an especially pivotal role in the enactment of legislation that protects this particular population. Clearly, Canada's commitment to ensuring the equal and fair treatment of all its citizens is increasingly evident in the formulation of policies that protect queer individuals, as well as within the context of the family. Presently, most queer individuals across the country have secured the same rights as Canada's heterosexual population. This is especially true for same-sex couples living in Ontario.

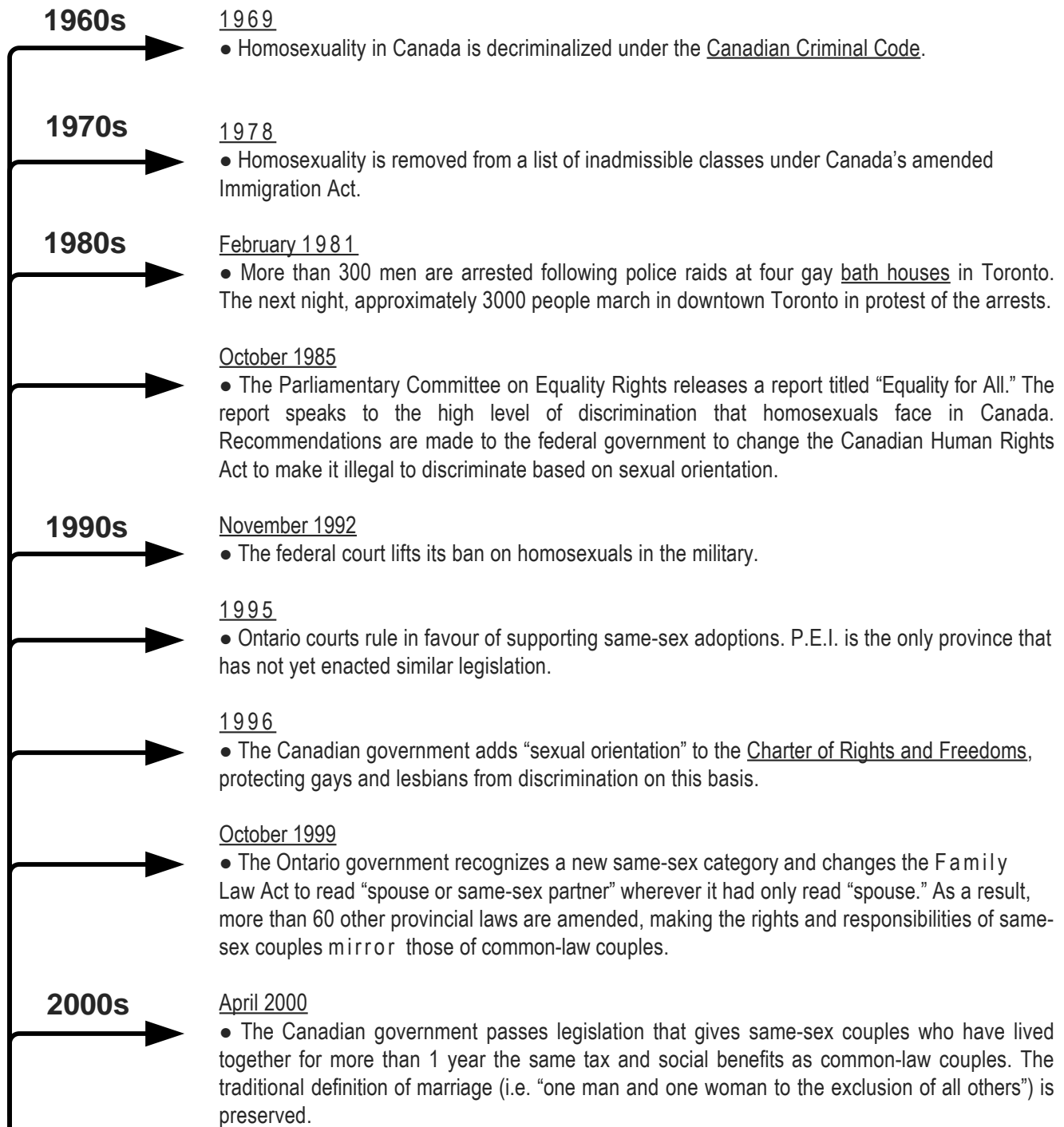
Since governments at all levels have acted to acknowledge the entitlement of queer couples to the very rights that once eluded them (i.e. the right to adopt, the right to tax and social benefits, the right to marriage, etc.), it is imperative that community services and organizations work to ensure that these policies are put into practice. The early childhood profession finds itself in an especially important position in the support of queer families. Since practitioners in this field consistently work with diverse family forms, they share a collective responsibility to ensure that all families are fairly treated, especially those that challenge traditional status quo environments.

In addition, we hope to call attention to the role that educators can play in advocating on behalf of the array of diverse families that are an integral part of the queer community. This is especially important for transgender and intersex parents, who continue to struggle to acquire the recognition and rights bestowed upon their gay, lesbian and bisexual counterparts. Keep in mind, however, that although the queer community has made significant progress in securing many fundamental rights in this country, the struggle for total liberation from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is ongoing. The timeline depicts major events in Canadian history in relation to the progress that the country's queer community has made in its fight to be legally recognized and protected. Particular emphasis has been placed on major national milestones, in addition to those experienced within the province of Ontario.

This resource manual was designed for educators with this particular socio-political reality in mind. It offers practical measures for ensuring that the needs of queer families are sensitively met within early learning environments.



A Timeline of Queer Rights in Canada

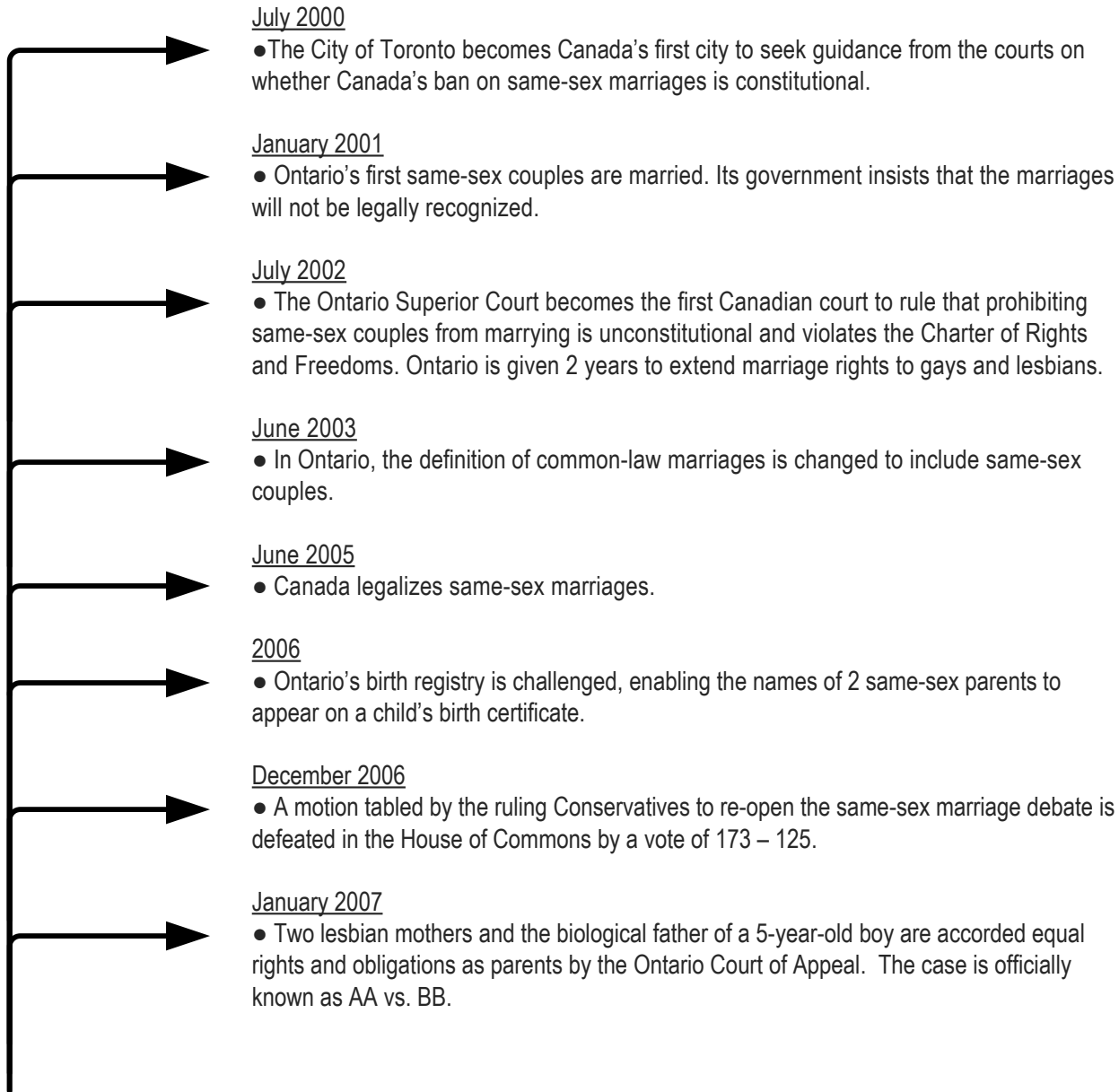


The Canadian Criminal Code is a federal document that specifies most of Canada's criminal offences and procedures to be followed when criminal offences have been committed.

Until homosexuality was decriminalized, bath houses were among the few establishments that gay men, in particular, could meet. Bath houses provided a safe haven in which homosexuals could engage in sexual practices without fear of arrests or public persecution. Bath houses continue to operate today and are frequented by various members of the LGBTQ community, although bath houses for gay men are predominate.

A Timeline of Queer Rights in Canada

2000s



The Charter of Rights and Freedoms is a constitutionally entrenched bill of rights, whose purpose is to protect the rights of Canadian citizens from actions and policies of all levels of government. All people enjoy certain fundamental freedoms (under section 2), namely freedom of religion, freedom of thought, freedom of expression and freedom of the press, peaceful assembly, and freedom of association.

In June 2005, the right to marry by same-sex couples in Canada was legalized recognizing the Charter of Rights includes the protection of all people in Canada by the Government of Canada.

Five countries in the world have currently enacted legislation in support of same-sex marriages. They include: The Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, Spain and South Africa.

What Does the Law Say?

The Constitution Act [1982], which includes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, is the supreme law of Canada. As such, all other laws and applicable workings of governments, including school boards, must be consistent with its provisions. The Charter and Supreme Court of Canada decisions made under the Charter guarantee everyone equality regardless of race, national or ethnic origin, citizenship, colour, religion, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, age or mental or physical disability. The Charter and Supreme Court decisions also promote the development of programs that are designed to redress the conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups.

The following offer examples of a commitment to the support of sexual diversity in early learning settings. Both are a direct reflection of the Charter and call for the protection of individuals against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

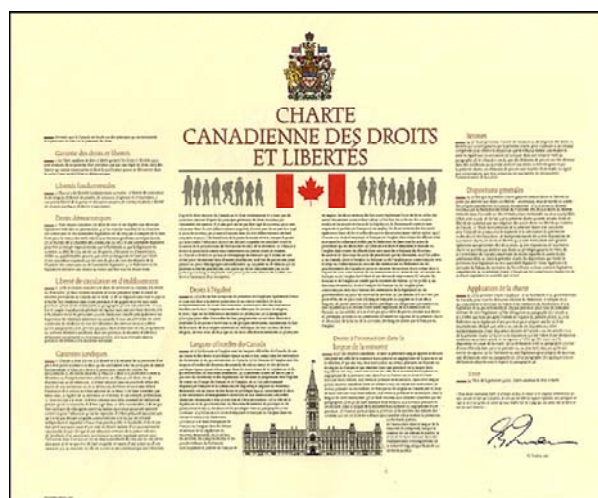
Sample Policy: The Toronto District School Board Equity Policy

The Toronto District School Board is committed to meeting its obligation under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code by providing safe schools and workplaces that respect the rights of every individual. Every student,

employee, trustee, parent and community member has the right to learn and work in an environment free of discrimination and harassment. Discrimination and harassment based on legislated prohibited grounds will not be tolerated. Such behaviour must be addressed not only for its cost in individual, human terms, but also for its cost to our social, economic and civic future.

The purpose of this policy is to prevent discrimination and harassment through greater awareness of and responsiveness to their deleterious effects and to ensure that human rights complaints are dealt with expeditiously and effectively through consistently applied policy and procedures. Nothing in this policy or procedures denies or limits access to other avenues of redress open under the law, such as a complaint to the Ontario Human Rights Commission or a grievance. The Toronto District School Board is committed to ensuring that education on human rights issues is provided for all staff and students.

Once there is a commitment within policy, structures and program practices to ensure a discrimination free environment for all children and families, early learning programs can ensure that all cultures are respected within the context of the Charter of Rights and embedded into curriculum for children to expand their understanding of the world around them.



The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Sample Policy (Childcare centre) University of Toronto Early Learning Centre: Philosophy of Inclusion and Access

The aim of the University of Toronto Early Learning Centre (ELC) is to provide a safe, secure, supportive and stimulating environment where children are free to grow to their potential. ELC endeavours to provide a bias-free learning environment, especially in regard to language, teaching materials, response to specific incidents, and other facets of the program.

The learning environment reflects the diversity of the children in the ELC and the world in which they live. The environment reflects cultural sensitivity and incorporates each child's cultural heritage into the centre's day-to-day activities. It is an environment that does not exclude or stereotype people on the basis of age, gender, colour, ethnicity, economic status, sexuality, culture, or physical ability/mental ability, and appearance. We prohibit behaviour that is sexist or racist as well as violent play including the use of toy weapons.

The children are taught to respect the religious and ethnic heritage of the different groups that make up Canadian society. The teachers demonstrate and discuss with the children the celebrations and traditions of different communities. Care is taken to avoid

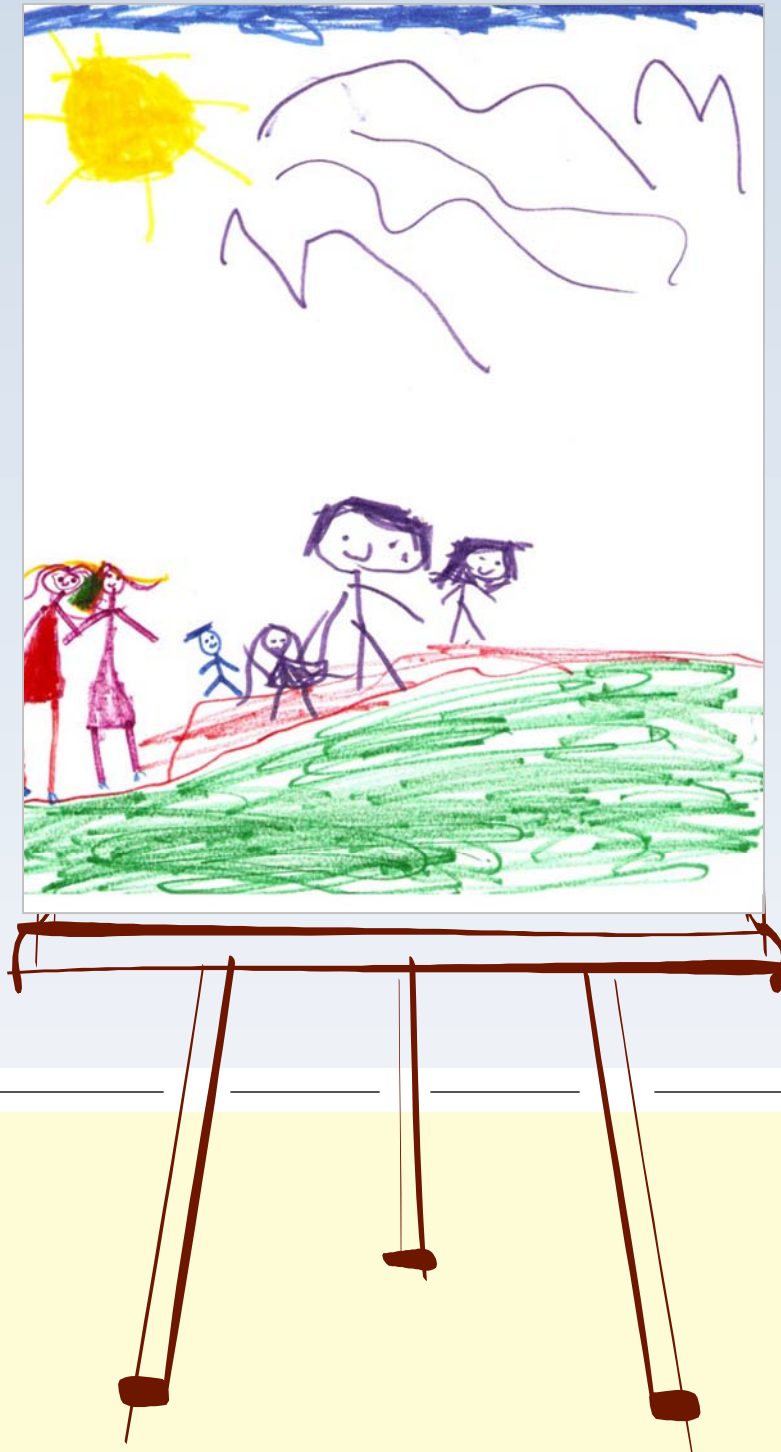
not only ethnic and racial stereotypes but gender type-casting as well.

In keeping with this philosophy and in accordance with the collective agreements between the ELC and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), which represents the staff, the ELC identifies itself as an equal opportunity work place. Employment practices which discriminate on the grounds of race, creed, colour, national origin, political or religious affiliation, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family relationship, and disability is prohibited by or within the ELC. (Ref: CUPE Collective Agreement, Article 4: No Discrimination)

ELC is committed to service to children and families, and to the protection of children, families, staff, volunteers and students from discriminatory behaviour. The ELC also strongly supports the Human Rights Code Section 4 (s), which "provides that every person has a right to freedom from discrimination..." The Code applies to the actions of people in the workplace itself (employment practices) and to the provision of service (child care) to the public. The staff at the ELC is responsible for ensuring that this requirement of the Human Rights Code is carried out.

SECTION C

Theoretical Framework



The Heteronormative Construction of Early Childhood Education

One of the biggest barriers to the inclusion of queer issues in classroom spaces for young children is due, in part, to the systemic operation of heteronormativity at all levels of education. “Heteronormativity” refers to the “normal” and “natural” status accorded to heterosexuality in Western society, routinely reinforced through a societal preference for “all things straight” (Robinson, 2005, p. 20). Although this tendency is reflected in various institutions of socialization, heteronormativity is a social phenomenon that is especially evident in early childhood education. In fact, heteronormativity persists as a consequence of hegemonic (dominant expressions) policies and practices that “relegate those who identify as other than heterosexual to the margins while simultaneously silencing their experiences of discrimination and inequality” (Robinson, 2002, p. 421).

Examples of heteronormativity in early childhood education abound. At the administrative level, this phenomenon is reflected in the language used on written methods of communication, such as intake forms, which often assume that all children are reared in heterosexual households

(Fox, 2007) and thereby require registration information from a mother and father. Heteronormativity at the administrative level might also materialize through the failure to convey an explicit commitment to sexual diversity in a centre’s program philosophy or through the absence of a non-discrimination clause in operating policies that endeavour to protect children, parents and staff from harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender expression.

Research also argues that heteronormativity is replicated at this level by the failure of childcare centres to adopt and explicitly communicate an inclusive definition of the family that might, for instance, be expressed in a parent handbook (Fox, 2007). Heteronormativity can also be played out in human resource policies and practice, through the reluctance by some childcare centres to hire men, as well as through policies and practices that prevent male staff from attending to the diapering needs of younger children (Murray, 1996).



The Heteronormative Construction of Early Childhood Education

This particular situation may not be explicitly defined; however, it can be implicitly practiced through the preferential hiring of female staff. In addition to examples of heteronormativity that exist at the organizational level of early learning institutions, the persistence of this phenomenon at the program level is particularly problematic. Some researchers argue that heteronormativity is routinely demonstrated in widely accepted approaches to instruction and care within early childhood environments that serve to reiterate and legitimize normative expressions of gender and sexuality (Cahill & Theillheimber, 1999; Robinson & Diaz, 2006). This includes the unchallenged reproduction of mock weddings and mother/father play in the dramatic centre, as well as through the allowance of children's participation in kissing games and girlfriend/boyfriend activities (Fox, 2007). According to the literature surveyed, some early childhood educators have a tendency to assume that these activities (and many others like them) are a natural part of growing up and are rarely (if ever) questioned (Robinson, 2005).

Consequently, they become a "part of the normalization and construction of heterosexual desire and the inscription of heteronormative gender in young children's lives" (Fox, 2007, p. 155). Other examples of heteronormativity in the early childhood classroom include the consistent use of children's literature that reinforces a heterosexual narrative (Cahill & Theillheimer, 1999; Theillheimer & Cahill, 2001), the discouraging of non-normative expressions of gender (Robinson, 2005), and the failure of some early childhood educators to challenge the use of heterosexist and/or homophobic language in the classroom. Even more serious is the fact that heteronormativity in early education persists as a direct result of a general failure to address incidents of harassment, exclusion or teasing that originate among children in response to observed behaviours that stand in contrast to heterosexualized norms (Clarke et al. 2004; Renold 2006).

Clearly, the need to employ teaching practices that challenge the heteronormative construction of the early childhood classroom is an important challenge for educators to undertake. This is especially true in light of

the field's stated commitment to the support of diversity in its fullest form. In order for this support to realize its fullest potential, however, efforts to represent queer issues in classroom spaces for young children must materialize. Given current ideological assumptions that have served to ensure the omission of queer issues from early childhood curriculum, however, even advocates of queer rights recognize that this is no easy feat. The next section explores some of these ideological assumptions in greater detail. Canada is arguably one of the most diverse countries in the world. For this reason, it is frequently positioned on the international stage as the epitome of pluralism: a nation that ensures the cohesive, simultaneous existence of countless groups identified through differences in race, religion and cultural practices. Discussions regarding the need to reflect this current reality in various areas of professional practice has dominated academic and political discourse and is inevitably reflected in the various institutions of socialization to which children, in particular, are exposed. This is particularly true of early childhood education. What is often omitted from discussions that take place within this profession, however, is the recognition that a significant number of sexual minorities continue to contribute to the changing face of contemporary Canadian society.



The Inclusion of Queer Representation in Early Childhood Curriculum

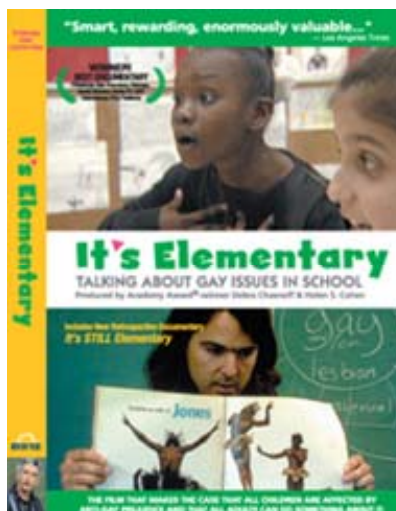
Census Canada data (2006) indicates that a growing number of same sex parents are rearing young children, an increase of 33.9% since 2001. Despite this significant increase in queer parents rearing children, Ambert (2005) suggests that same-sex families have been excluded from representative surveys on family life, and by extension early childhood programs fail to be supportive of queer identities.

It is often argued that homophobia hurts everyone (Adams et al., 2000) and the potential for negative outcomes on heterosexual individuals who are exposed to similar behaviour is just as troublesome. For these reasons, the responsibility that early childhood professionals have for ensuring equitable attention to queer representation in early childhood curriculum can no longer be denied. Despite building research that addresses the importance of expanding traditional understandings of anti-bias instruction to include all forms of diversity, attention to sexuality/gender differences in classroom spaces for young children continues to be met with resistance (Campbell, 2007, p. 27). The reasons for this vary. As literature attests, the exclusion of queer issues from early childhood curriculum may be due, in part, to dominant ideologies that position sex and sexuality as irrelevant to young children (Robinson, 2002).

Underpinning this discourse is the Western tendency to construct and reinforce binary identity categories. Sullivan (2003) suggests that binary oppositions are always hierarchical in nature, creating an “us” and “them” dichotomy that inevitably positions one as superior to the other (p. 43). In this case, the heterosexual-homosexual binary constructs all non-heterosexual identities as the deviant and threatening, thereby ensuring a largely heterosexist early childhood curriculum.

This way of thinking yields implications for the practice of early childhood educators as it operates to exclude children from the ‘adult’s world.’ In addition, it gives adults full power and authority over the content to which children are exposed.

Despite the ideological obstacles that deter educators in their attempt to deliver anti-bias programming that ensures queer representation in classroom spaces for young children, the profession’s duty to support diversity in its fullest form endures. In light of this responsibility, Campbell (2007) offers a list of recommendations that will help early childhood educators implement curriculum that reflects a framework for respecting queer individuals and families without positioning them as exceptional. As literature attests, the exclusion of queer issues from early childhood curriculum may be due, in part, to dominant ideologies that position sex and sexuality as irrelevant to young children (Robinson 2002).



SECTION D

Practical Considerations



The Role of the Early Childhood Educator

The role of an educator is infused with the responsibility of providing a holistic emotionally supportive environment for young children. Often, educators take on a “parenting role” giving children a foundation in morals and values through discussions with children or through modelling appropriate behaviour. Educators have the capacity to play an influential role in the development of young children, yet public policy makers and governments undermine the significance of the early educator’s position in young children’s lives.

In the process of establishing relationships with children, early educators can boost or crush a child’s self-esteem depending on their ability to encourage, interact and support a child’s development. The role of an educator involves a complexity of responsibilities. They need to ensure that children are safe and have their primary needs cared for. They are also responsible for providing an environment that is intellectually stimulating and emotionally nurturing.

Educators are expected to build positive relationships with children, integrating a respectful approach based on the child’s ability without shaming or demeaning children. Educators should promote learning by creating learning opportunities within a cultural context. Although early childhood education work is challenging, the desire to make a difference in the lives of children and families is cited as a primary motivator for early educators (Beach, 1998).

The relationship between educator, child and parent is encouraged and rewarded. The success of developing their relationship is dependent on the educator’s ability to effectively integrate the family and cultural background in the program curriculum, while maintaining an integrated approach to anti discriminatory education practices (Janmohamed, 2005).

The next section of *Building Bridges* offers suggestions on how to embed queer representation into early childhood environments and curriculum. It also provides an overview of what queer parents experience in early learning environments.

Early Childhood Educators are expected to demonstrate skills established by the Program Outcomes for Early Childhood Education established by the government of Ontario. Within the context of understanding and integrating different perspectives on diversity, early childhood educators need to develop a better understanding of what parents would like to see as part of the early childhood program and making an effort to include all the families you work with that will improve program quality, the foundation of the children’s development and the early childhood educators capacity to demonstrate professional skills.



An Action Plan: 'Queering' Classroom Spaces for Young Children

Building Bridges was designed to call attention to the need for educators to support queer individuals in early childhood settings across the country. Drawing from feedback elicited since the first publication of this manual, even staff committed to ensuring queer representation in their place of work have expressed that they do not always know how

to begin this process. This appears to be particularly true of early childhood educators working with a less diverse population of children and families. Consequently, the following list was devised as a means to inspire the emergence of queer representation in classroom spaces for young children.



- Take advantage of daily teachable moments. This includes (but is not limited to) addressing children's spontaneous inquiries related to queer issues and challenging observed instances of teasing/bullying related to diversity in sexual or gender identity.
- Examine materials available to children for stereotypes/biases. Disney fairytales, for example, are popular with young children but are laden with gender stereotypes.
- Where possible, create materials that ensure non-stereotypical queer representation in the early childhood classroom.
- Maintain open communication with staff, parents and children to ensure the sharing of multiple perspectives as they pertain to queer issues. This helps to promote mutual understanding and encourages the resolution of differences in opinion.
- Recognize and address personal prejudices and fears. This may include engagement in routine reflective practice, aided by tools like those included in *Building Bridges*.
- Use children's literature in the early childhood classroom as a vehicle for discussion. *Building Bridges* offers suggestions of queer-positive stories that may incite discussion with children of all ages.
- Avoid tokenism or the tourist approach in exploring queer issues with young children. For example, don't limit your exploration of queer issues exclusively in recognition of Gay Pride month in June. Instead, educators should plan ongoing opportunities for queer representation in all facets of their program.

Supporting Diversity: How do you integrate queer families into the program curriculum

When developing a framework for including diversity in early learning programs it is often easier to address difference of race and gender. According to Bernhard et al (1998), under the present global migration pattern, we can expect the racial, cultural and linguistic diversity of the North American population to continue to increase. In fact, the changes in population patterns in the urban communities of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver are particularly prone to new immigrants. In the city of Toronto for example, almost 50% of the total population is comprised of individuals born outside Canada.

However, unlike differences based on race, children growing up with queer parents are often considered to be “invisible” minorities, although statistics indicate that their numbers are growing and they warrant care, consideration and sensitivity. According to Census Canada, the rate of same sex couples having children has increased significantly. The census results only report same-sex couples living together that are raising children and doesn't include queer individuals who are not cohabitating with a partner but could be raising children alone. Nor does the census contain any information on transgender or transsexual parented

families. According to Caspar (2003), in early childhood settings, as in other educational contexts, dealing with queer social justice issues often finds resistance from educators and parents who are located in homophobic and heterosexist discourses, which can be strongly linked to religious, moral and cultural beliefs about same-sex relationships. Further, sexuality is largely considered to be a private matter that should remain within the privacy of the family, or within adults' private lives, and not the responsibility of early childhood educators (Robinson, 2002). But in fact, if early childhood educators believe they have a critical role to play in the education of young children, this role needs to be integrated within a social justice context that enables children not only to accept difference but also integrate their knowledge in the way they live and play. During focus group discussions with lesbian and gay parents in Toronto, Collison (2005) found that the parents had experienced both positive and negative situations in their child's centre but many of their concerns were linked to the lack of capacity amongst educators to support difference and diversity.

In the 21st century, practitioners work with very young children who are growing up in single- as well as dual-parent families, or with extended families. They are growing up in families in which parents are of different races, different religions, or in which one parent may be transgender or bisexual. Children are also growing up in foster care and institutional environments, such as prisons, nurseries or residential treatment programs. Many of these care giving environments do not fit past stereotypes of “family,” and lesbian and gay parents can be found in any of these family forms.

Queer Parents Speak Up

"Daddy daddy daddy" gushes my two-year-old at me when I walk in the room. While some parents might rejoice at hearing this, I'm a little perplexed. Our daughter has two moms – no dad.

As I was describing this interchange with a friend of mine who is also a lesbian parent, she recalled a similar experience with her son when he was about two, of his asking why he did not have a daddy. As a single parent, her son has one mother and grandmother as central family figures. The feeling of déjà vu went full circle as I remembered that my first daughter also went through a period at about two of calling me daddy. In our respective circles of family and friends, our children are surrounded by diverse family forms with many queer parents. So where does this heterosexual framing of family come from?

Our children were in childcare centres with kids that live in diverse families – single parents, divorced parents, queer parents and heterosexual two-parent families. Despite having open queer-positive staff at child care centres, the heterosexual family normative framework is pervasive, especially at the younger ages in centres. As such, children of queer families and non-two parent families are left at a very early age to try and understand their family within the heterosexual normative framework that shapes social spaces, such as childcare centres.

Through much discussion at home and in our community of friends and families, our children are able to understand their families

in relation to two-parent heterosexual families. But to build an inclusive system of early childhood development, it would be important to critically examine how family is communicated starting in the youngest age groups and to develop strategies of inclusive family forms.

Generally speaking, the parents felt they were accepted and valued within the child care centres but that view also conflicts with the feeling that queer parents are more closely scrutinized. Parents indicated they had experienced parental pressure to justify what seemed to be "normal" behaviour in their child's development. The parents also agreed that many of the challenges began during the preschool and kindergarten years when there was an increased focus on gender and identity amongst the children. Common to children in preschool programs is a growing interest in how families operate often played out during dramatic play experiences.

Parents overheard children discussing family composition engaged in play where the conversation centred on which child can be a parent based on gender. Yet, the staff made no effort to challenge the children's heterosexist assumptions. The parents felt somewhat uncomfortable raising these issues due to perceived homophobia. Examples include limited dialogue with parents regarding their family composition, while more attention was given to the birth parent and a consistent pattern of encouraging gendered play (Collison, 2005).

The Isolation Queer Parents May Experience

According to Ochner (2000), by locating the gender discourses (discussion) and practices in kindergarten classrooms, the gendering process begins to reveal how femininity and masculinity are socially constructed and how heterosexuality regulate the gendered social order of the classroom. For example, ECE staff sometimes engage in a process where children are “coupled” based on the cuteness factor. If opposite sex children play together often, they may be labeled as “boyfriend” and “girlfriend”; this is not done to create harm, but it does demonstrate the practice of encouraging gendered approaches to play and relationships based on heterosexist assumptions. When was the last time anyone in ECE said of two boys playing together, “Oh, don’t they make a cute couple together?” Supporting heterosexist assumptions in early childhood education fails to recognize how children’s identities are constructed and how their gendered and sexualized identities play a significant role in social justice (Blaise, 2005). It takes time to realize how heterosexism plays out in relationships with children and discomfort is common before early childhood educators can gain enough confidence to establish new ways of interacting with children.



Coming out was an isolating process for me, particularly since my kids were in a childcare program that did not recognize diverse families in any way. I had been an active single parent on the board of the centre, volunteering for field trips and special events and helping out in the different rooms.

However, I had not seen any evidence of celebrating diverse families through the program or children’s literature and despite my attempts to raise the issue about racial diversity in a largely mainstream program, I was convinced that my kids would be targeted in a negative way due to my sexual orientation. I had many conversations with my children about what it meant to be a lesbian and that families came in different shapes and sizes, but it would have been so much more validating for the kids to have their childcare teachers whom they liked reinforce these messages in their daily activities. Instead, they learned to be silent and struggled to come to terms with their new family identity.

The only reinforcement my children had was through pride parenting groups or with other children of lesbian and gay friends although even though these groups were geared to children born in lesbian and gay relationships. There seemed to be a subtle barrier between children born in a lesbian or gay relationship and the children who had previously been in a single parent family or were born out of a heterosexual relationship. The daycare centre was happily unaware of the changes in my kids’ lives and missed the opportunity to support them through a difficult time. Simple things became difficult, like explaining the relationship of my partner who would pick up the kids from day care occasionally if I was late at work, or talking about what the kids and I did over the week-end without acknowledging the presence of my partner at these events. In some ways I had a real fear of coming out and its impact on my children’s care. Being able to acknowledge these realities to the Centre staff would have made a huge difference to helping my family feel safe and accepted.

Suggestions from parents on how to make queer families more comfortable

- Display rainbow stickers and/or triangles to symbolize a welcoming environment for families using visual cues.
- Display a bulletin board with all the children's families – introduce the queer parents to other families.
- Ask about the family's life – if a parent is uncomfortable sharing, they will let you know.
- Ask family friendly questions during the program. For example, instead of mom and dad, refer to families or parents.
- Integrate books with queer families in regular reading – have them displayed on the bookshelf for other children - use other non queer stories to discuss all types of families (refer to appendix for suggestions).
- Staff should ask for help from their supervisor or community resources (see appendix) when they don't know how to answer a question. For example if other children ask, "Who is the real mom?" or, "Why doesn't Michael have a mommy?" staff should be ready with an accurate response that explains Michael may have two moms and both his parents are real or that Michael has two dads. ECE teachers can explain families exist in all kinds of ways and every family is based on loving and caring children and adults.
- If you celebrate Chinese New Year etc., centres could be open to celebrating Pride Day.
- Although all families may not be "out," it is important to offer children a silent validation of their family make up even if the parents are not out; acknowledging that individual members of queer families may be in varying stages of acceptance, coming out, experiencing internalized homophobia and fear ensuring a basis of support within the early childhood environment.

Queer Parenting Scenarios

For the scenarios below, consider the following questions:

What ideas and/or issues about parents/ families/sexual orientation/gender are at play?

How would you handle this?

What supports would need to be in place to most effectively handle this situation?

Scenario # 1

You are a staff member at a child care centre. There is a man who regularly drops off and picks up his 5 year old son. One day the boy shows up wearing a dress. This causes a stir among the other children and you notice a few parents talking in whispers about it. The next day you receive a phone call from a distraught parent who finds the wearing of a dress inappropriate.

Scenario # 2

You are a staff member at a child care centre. You make a point of ensuring there are a variety of books dealing with "equity" issues on the shelf. One day, one of the parents finds a children's book on the shelf called "Asha's Moms," a book about a girl with lesbian moms. She becomes very upset and comes to speak to you as a staff person. She tells you that in her culture homosexuality is not accepted and that it is against her religion. She asks that the book be taken away.

Scenario # 3

You are an ECE student at a child care centre. There is a child who is usually brought to the centre by one of her moms. One day, the other mom brings the child in. Another child when told that this is the second mom says, "That's weird, you can't have two moms." You notice the other parents overhearing and exchanging looks.

Developed by Rachel Epstein: LGBTQ Parenting Network (FSA Toronto/Sherbourne Health Centre)

Overcoming Judgment and Homophobia

According to Casper (2003), “although the phenomenon of lesbian- and gay-headed families appears to have come to pass over the last decade, there is evidence that adults whom we would call gay or bisexual have been raising children since at least the early Middle Ages (Boswell, 1980), if not earlier. Nevertheless, the gay baby boom has to be seen in the context of the Gay Rights Movement of the past 30 years, which resulted in a combination of increased visibility and increased numbers of gay- and lesbian-headed families. During this period, through television, film, and fashion, gay culture has become increasingly assimilated (in fits and starts) into American culture.” In the last couple of decades, more lesbians and gay men have been having children and as a result are entering early childhood and education settings. Although in Canada basic human rights are extended to queer people, there is still resistance to the idea that gay families exist and their interests and needs may be somewhat different than other “marginalized groups”.

In trying to understand the needs of queer parented families, ECE staff have to understand the multiplicity of identities connected to individual children and families. Whether queer or straight, individuals can identify themselves based on gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, family creation, urban and rural. The cross section of various points of identity individualize people within a cultural group. Similarly, children in queer families also have a cross section of identity. Children may be adopted, may have been created with a known or unknown donor, have more than two parents, surrogacy, may have been part of a previous heterosexual relationship and may be living with parents who are not publicly “out” for a variety of reasons. There are a number of queer community members active in various faith communities, including the Metropolitan United Church and Salaam, a group for queer identified Muslims.

Early Childhood educators play a central role in providing resources to families. Some families may appreciate ECE efforts and seeking community groups on their behalf. In addition, they may have more than two parents, surrogacy, may have been part of a previous heterosexual relationship and may be living with parents who are not publicly “out” for a variety of reasons. In addition, they may be from English speaking families, may be working class or upper class. Like all children, their family units are distinctive and have differing needs. For example, lesbian and gay men in low income or working class situations may be at higher risk of harassment in the workplace if their sexual orientation is made public (G.A., Toronto). A college professor is unlikely to experience overt homophobia compared to someone who may be employed in a factory, where employment policies and practices do not include human rights legislation; although prejudice and discrimination do exist in all settings, including community colleges.

Similarly, someone who is a practicing Muslim may find it more challenging to live openly as a queer individual if their family background is more conservative. Therefore, the responsibility of educating oneself and maintaining confidentiality remains critical in the ECE profession. Similar to learning more about other forms of diversity, ECE staff need to learn more about queer families and should be integrating knowledge into the program whether or not there are queer families enrolled in the centre.

Overcoming Judgment and Homophobia

We don't limit ourselves to raising children's consciousness about racial discrimination if everyone is of the same race. We still talk about poverty with children even if none of the children live in apparent poverty. In the same manner, it is incumbent to include depictions of queer families within program policies and practices in order to provide a more inclusive approach for all families. The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) has an equity policy in place that is built upon the tenets of the Canadian Constitution within the Canadian Charter of Rights. Although there are challenges within the TDSB, the Board does make an attempt to ensure that all students have the right to be educated in a safe environment that respects each child's background whilst adhering to the Charter of Rights. Research on and media depictions of gay-headed families have focused almost exclusively on the white middle class (Casper & Schultz, 2000) individuals, which often leads to presumptions about queer people with children being limited to the

dominant group when in fact, like all families, queer families also come from a variety of socio economic, racial and cultural backgrounds. This is not a phenomena limited to a few privileged people. Queer families cross all boundaries and come in all shapes and forms, some of which are active in their faith communities.

According to one gay Dad in Toronto, going to Church every Sunday with his children was central to their approach in raising two young sons. There are a number of queer community members active in various faith communities including the United Church of Canada, Salaam Canada which is an organization dedicated to the Muslim queer community and the Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto. Early Childhood educators play a central role in providing resources to families. Some families may appreciate ECE efforts and seeking community groups on their behalf.



Help Eliminate Homophobia and Heterosexism

- *When you hear children using names like "gay", "lesbian", "fag", "dyke" or "queer" as putdowns, challenge their use of inappropriate language.*
- As in any other situation involving putdowns be clear and firm that name-calling is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. Start with an exploration of their understanding of the words being used. Teach what the words mean if they don't know. Use the incident as an opportunity to teach children how hurtful words can be.
- *When you hear adults making offensive or malicious comments or jokes about bisexual, gay, lesbian, or transgender people, let them know their comments are offensive and discriminatory.*
- It is important to respond. Depending on the situation, privately or publicly tell the person how such comments or jokes make you or others feel. Be clear that such language unacceptable, particularly in an educational context. Suggest that you might talk about this sometime if the other person is open to dialogue.
- *Never laugh along with people making homophobic or heterosexist comments or jokes.*
- We know what it feels like to be the brunt of someone's joke. When we laugh along with the crowd, we reinforce homophobic and heterosexist attitudes and discrimination.
- *Don't assume that everyone is heterosexual.*
- The constant assumption of heterosexuality renders bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender people invisible. Use inclusive language, such as partner instead of wife or husband. Be inclusive in the curriculum. Make sure same-sex couples and bisexual, gay, lesbian, or transgender people are represented.

Source: www.etfo.org

How Do I Feel About LGBTQ People?

HOW DO I FEEL ABOUT LGBTQ PEOPLE?

Clarifying our attitudes helps us to become more conscious of how we feel. The purpose in responding to the following statements is not to try to change your attitudes, but to bring them forward for examination. There are no right or wrong answers. The important thing is to understand what you actually feel; not how you think you should feel.

Read each statement below and circle the number that best represents your opinion with

1 – strongly agree **5** – strongly disagree.

I would feel comfortable if an LGBTQ person with a young child participated in a FRP/daycare where I work

1 2 3 4 5

I am comfortable around LGBTQ people unless they flaunt their lifestyle.

1 2 3 4 5

I am comfortable around transsexual or transgendered people as long as they pass as either male or female.

1 2 3 4 5

I can accept gays or lesbians, but bisexuals just can't make their minds up. I can't understand that.

1 2 3 4 5

Rebecca Gower 2005 Adapted from material in *Opening Doors to Understanding and Acceptance*, published in 1990 by the Campaign to End Homophobia.

LGBTQ folks are freaks and will probably go to hell.

1 2 3 4 5

I would feel uncomfortable if my boss were LGBTQ.

1 2 3 4 5

I would feel comfortable if I learned that my child's teacher was LGBTQ.

1 2 3 4 5

I would feel uncomfortable if LGBTQ issues were being taught to my child as part of the school curriculum.

1 2 3 4 5

LGBTQ people who have "come out" should not be teachers.

1 2 3 4 5

If my child were LGBTQ, I would feel I had failed as a parent.

1 2 3 4 5

I'm uncomfortable around people who don't conform to stereotypical masculine/feminine gender roles (in dress, appearance, etc).

1 2 3 4 5

All LGBTQ people are white, of European background and are from the middle or upper socio-economic class.

1 2 3 4 5

Coming to Terms with Your Own Biases

(Excerpt from *Around the Rainbow* 2006)

As an educator, we face the challenge of coming to terms with both our personal stereotypes about LGBTQ individuals and our assumptions about the definition of the family. We may also face the need to review new resources and curriculum to ensure that we understand how to be open and inclusive.

An honest personal assessment of our views regarding LGBTQ issues and LGBTQ parents may be our first step. The following will help identify some of the subtle ways in which we may unintentionally express anti-LGBTQ bias:

1. Do I believe that LGBTQ people can influence others to change their sexual orientation or gender identity? Do I think someone could influence me to change my sexual and affectional preference [orientation]?
2. As a parent, how would I feel about having a LGBTQ child?
3. How do I think I would feel if I discovered that one of my parents, or a brother or sister, were LGBTQ?
4. How would I feel if they chose to create and/or raise a family?
5. What are my stereotypes about LGBTQ people? Where did these come from?
6. Are there any jobs, positions or professions that I think should be barred to LGBTQ people? If yes, why?
7. Would I go to a physician whom I knew or believed to be LGBTQ? What if they were of the same gender as me? Would that bother me? Why or why not?
8. If someone I care about were to say, "I think I am gay," would I suggest that the person see a therapist? What if they said, "I think I am trans?"
9. Have I ever been to a LGBTQ-organized social event, march, or worship service? If not, why?
10. Can I think of three positive aspects about being LGBTQ?
11. Have I ever laughed at a "queer" joke? Have I ever said, "That's so gay!"
12. Have I ever changed my own behavior out of fear that someone might think or comment that I am LGBTQ?
13. Have I ever discouraged a particular behavior in a child by saying, "That's not ladylike" or "Boys don't wear that" or something similar?
- 14.. Would I ever consider wearing a button that says, "How dare you presume I'm heterosexual"? Why or why not?

The Learning Process in Young Children

It is often assumed that children do not begin to learn until the formal school years. Parents are fascinated by their babies' ability to say "mama" or "ball", easily "communicating" with their babbling young toddlers. However, they are often resistant to accept the tremendous amount of learning that takes place in the first three years of life. Although in these early years, children learn thousands of words, understand the difference between trusted adults and strangers, learn how to self regulate and demonstrate long attention spans if interested in their surroundings and interactions, there is general resistance by the public to acknowledge the importance of the childhood years. The early years are critical in the development of intelligence, personality and social behaviour, and the effects of early neglect can be cumulative. There are critical points in children's development where it is important to ensure that children have experiences that support their growth and development. New research in brain development shows that "much of the brain is already formed at birth and during the first two years of life most of the growth of brain cells occurs. In the preschool years, most of the structuring of neural connections are made and have the most significant impact on the child's learning ability. Clearly research supports the assertion it is also important to ensure that the caregivers are supportive of healthy emotional and physical development" (Evans, 2000).

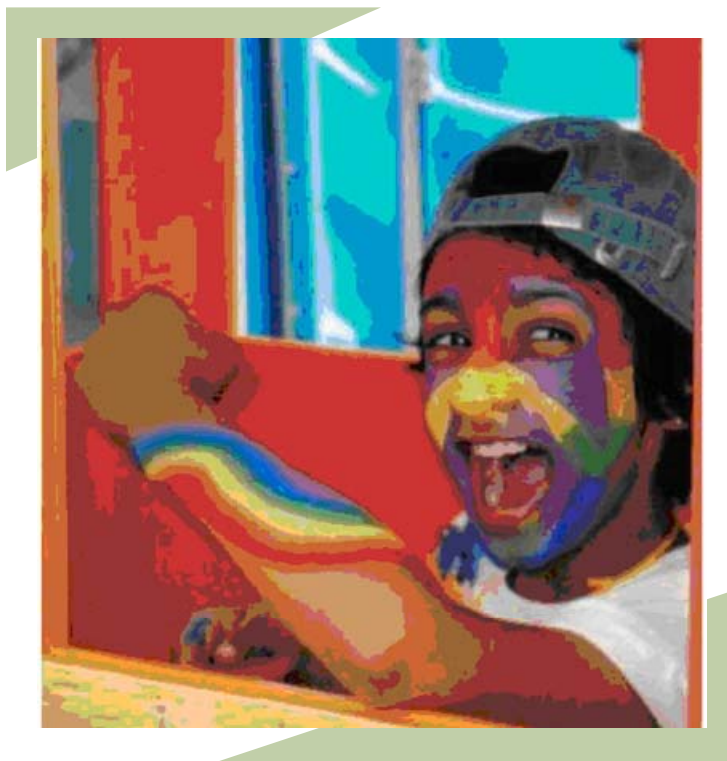
There are common characteristics in how children develop although children vary in when they reach developmental milestones. There is also significant research that demonstrates the value of play in learning although the definition of play varies depending on the perspective of the researcher, theorist or participant (Gestwicki, 1999). The very idea of children learning through play is a foreign concept to many parents as they recall their own experiences of schooling as being formal with children sitting behind rows of desks. The provision of care is an interactive relationship between parent and caregiver, yet this fundamental principle is rarely explained to parents in the introductory orientation sessions organized for families considering group based child care. Taking the time to talk more with parents about the value of play in the process in learning can strengthen relationships with families and broaden their understanding of early child development. Interestingly, the parents who attended the focus groups wanted to be more involved in the curriculum development of the program. Toddlers of course do not learn about lesbian and gay headed families from research literature. They learn about families from their daily lives. For toddlers in lesbian and gay headed families, it is the "traditional" families who are "different" (Casper, 2003). After the paediatrician, the next professional a lesbian or gay-headed family is likely to meet will be a child care provider, an educator, or an early interventionist.



What does “gay” mean to Children

As Ashley skipped passed her friends in the Kindergarten room, she pointed her finger at each one of them and joyfully said, “You’re gay! You’re gay! You’re gay!” Her peers looked up, watched her skipped away and continued to play. Ashley skipped through a second time pointed to two different children and again said, “You’re gay! You’re gay!” There was no reaction from any of the children she pointed to, but from the other side of the room at the sink, I could see Danny’s brow furrow and he watched her intensely as she moved away. Danny turned and looked at me when I met his eyes questioningly, he returned to washing his paint pot in the sink. Ashley came around again, this time stopping to point her finger at Danny. “You’re gay!” she sang. Danny immediately threw his pot into the sink turned towards her and screamed back, “No I’m not! I am not gay”. Surprised, Ashley took a few steps back, and they studied each other. As I was moving towards them, Ashley whispered, “You’re gay”. Danny shouted after her, “I am not!” I placed my hand on Danny’s shoulder and asked, “Why are you so angry that

Ashley said you are gay?” Danny, sighed deeply but did not respond. I then asked, “Do you know what gay means?” Danny responded, “No but it’s a bad word. When my brother says it, he doesn’t say it in a nice way.” I reiterated his statement then added, I wondered what gay meant to Ashley. Danny shrugged his shoulders. I turned to her and said, “Ashley I watched you skipping to your friends, and calling them gay. What does gay mean? Ashley looked up with a huge smile, and said, “It means happy. All my friends are happy.” I said, “I see. It means happy for you, but for Danny it meant something completely different.” I remember thinking to myself, what I should say next, I was afraid of making a mistake. After what seemed to be minutes of deliberation, I finally said, “Danny, sometimes, people use the word gay in a hurtful way, but it is not a bad word. It means when a boy loves a boy or a girl loves a girl in the same way your mom and dad love each other”. In the next few days, I added books and puzzles that included same sex families (L.H., Toronto).



What does “gay” mean to Children

Although it can be challenging to create curriculum ideas about how to integrate queer- related situations into an ECE curriculum, the following activity idea is adapted from the Toronto District School Board’s Equity Department Plan to celebrate International Day of the Family. Early Childhood Educators should adapt the activity further to meet

the needs and interests of children in their program. ECE teachers should be thoughtful not to identify particular children if their parents are queer. They should create an environment where children can feel comfortable to discuss each of their family units without fear of teasing or recrimination.

For Kindergarten Age Children...

1. List with the group the important components of a family. Consider the following questions:

Who is in a family?

What does a family do together?

What do family members give or share with each other?

What responsibilities do family members have?

2. Record and display this list on chart paper for future reference.

3. Ask the students how the families in the story compare to the class list of what a family is. Discuss with students points to add to the recorded list. Depending on the students’ past experiences discussing same-sex families, adoptive families, and other family structures, there may be discomfort and confusion.

4. Spend time clarifying ideas and answering questions. For example, ask the students what kinds of things children need in order to be cared for (e.g., food, shelter, love). Can these things be given to them by different adults or just a mom and dad? It is

important to reiterate that families can be made up of different adults and children, but what is most significant is the ways they take care of each other, and work and play together.

5. Briefly discuss with the class their observations of activities the family members do in the picture book.

What do they do together?

Who does what chores in the house?

Who works out of the house?

Who takes care of the children?

For Preschool Age Children...

When setting up an area where children may recreate their family structures, make available more than 1 toy that represents males and females. This will enable the child to recreate a family structure that may have 2 dads or 2 moms.

Follow the same principles with dolls, puppets and felt pieces.

Gender Identity in Young Children

In early childhood programs, a common practice involves setting up dramatic centres which encourage children to explore imaginary play that involve critical forms of cognitive development including language acquisition, role exploration and higher levels of reasoning. Children are known to explore gender roles and often imitate adults in their lives. For example, if a male child has never been exposed to a male figure being nurturing, the child may respond to another male child playing with dolls with the cry, "You can't be the mommy!" creating confusion for the boy who has been exposed to men in nurturing roles. Problematizing why preschool children are so attuned to gender specific roles is not central to early childhood practice ensuring silence around children's exploration of gender roles.

This silence around gender reinforces the normative performance of gender common to children's learning experiences. The silence that early educators engage in when faced with children who do not fit gender norms is exacerbated by a lack of education around variations in gender development and by their own anxieties about what it means to be male and female. The early childhood years are undoubtedly the most important time of life to expose children to a variety of life options that are not limited to dominant ways of knowing. Educators that have the capacity to challenge the dominant forms of child development can develop curriculum and practice that provides opportunities to safely explore the fluidity of gender roles.



Key Principles that help promote anti-discriminatory policies & practice in ECE

Early Childhood Educators have the capacity to be agents of social change, but the scope of diversity or anti-bias strategies still seem limited to ethno cultural and racial differences. Similar to other “caring” professions, the ECE workforce is comprised predominantly of women and a growing number of individuals who identify as immigrants or from a variety of racial groups. Like any profession, early childhood education also attracts a diversity of students and staff that identify as straight or queer. The dominant difference is that there remains an ongoing discomfort around “being out” unless you work in a progressive early childhood program that is open and supportive with queer friendly policies and practices.

An ECE coming out story

Although I had been out for six years with my friends and siblings, I was very apprehensive about coming out at my workplace. Having been with this organization for the past five years, I was subjected to silly gay jokes and many heterosexist comments. I remember a discussion I had with one colleague, who after viewing a biased program on same sex families, felt the two moms were completely culpable in creating a “disturbed teenager”. I left this site, entrusting only two people with my lesbianism. One was my room partner, the other

another gay colleague. Starting my new site, I found myself being even more cautious, as I recognized there were two individuals with strong religious beliefs. Initially I isolated myself, taking lunches away from the centre, or spending my time on the telephone. Eventually I spent more time in the staff room and when I was asked about my weekend; I was vague never detailing who I spent my time with, and often referring to my nameless friend as “they”.

After a few sessions of this, one colleague pointed out that I was just like another teacher, who had worked there previously. When I asked her to elaborate she stated neither of us identified our friends, or places that we would frequent. I remember thinking that’s because we’re both gay. After a year, and much deliberation, I came out to my room partner. We had many heartfelt discussions and I knew I could trust her implicitly. I realized it was my issues with Catholicism that assumed my room partner would judge me. After I met my new partner, I knew I was at a different place in my life and in my relationship with my colleagues. Although I had grown to trust most of my colleagues, there continued to be difficult moments like the continual disappearing rainbow stickers from the front door but I had grown to trust most of them.

What the ECE Staff and Students said...

- Symbols like the rainbow flag are important messages to make lesbian and gay people feel welcome.
- Teacher training programs have to talk about gender identity in children's development. I was about five years old when I started to feel different from other kids.
- It makes a difference if employment policies are reflective of same sex relationships. I want to feel safe in my workplace, if I need to take time out to care for my partner.
- Just like racism is not okay, neither should homophobia amongst teachers.
- ECE training programs have to be the first place to discuss the presence of queer families and staff.
- Queer issues related to court challenges, same sex marriage rights was not encouraged in training programs – more of a superficial reference to accepting diversity including a focus on cultural diversity.
- Although homophobia is not always overt, assuming everyone is being treated equally is not recognizing challenges queer staff experience.
- Trans identified child care staff person was terminated during the transition process.
- Before we can normalize queer families, staff and parents need to become more comfortable.
- Program directors and supervisors have to become accustomed to having queer staff and show leadership to create centre safety and policy that is anti-oppressive.
- Encourage the integration of queer stories into curriculum.
- Personal life is often silenced due to fear of homophobia – remaining closeted creates a sense of low morale and stress.
- Managers need to create a more welcoming environment by establishing progressive anti-harassment policies and practice – for example, we don't make fun of Black people yet we continue to make fun of gay people.

An ECE Reflection

Child 1: "Why are those two men holding hands?"

Child 2: "They're probably gay."

Child 1: "What does gay mean?"

Child 2: "I don't know how to explain it. Let's ask the teacher."

The above scenario occurred on a neighbourhood walk at a time when Toronto was celebrating its Lesbian and Gay Pride Week.. Men and women from all over the world were descending upon one of Canada's most diverse cities to partake in an array of festivities planned to commemorate the occasion. Our childcare centre happens to be situated in close proximity to one of Toronto's most densely populated queer neighbourhoods. Consequently, displays of affection between same sex couples were commonplace. Still, the children's curiosity surprised me, as they had never before made this kind of inquiry. I knew, however, that I was obligated to take advantage of this prime teachable moment. As a queer early childhood educator it was a challenge in which I had personal investment to undertake.

During this time, I worked as a preschool teacher in a program with children four- and five-years-of-age. Admittedly, I had long wondered how to introduce queer-themed experiences into the curriculum. Our centre, after all, operated according to the guiding principles of emergent curriculum, which requires that an educator programs in response to observed individual and classroom interests. Clearly, the children's

questions surrounding the meaning of the term "gay" met this criterion and served as a catalyst in which a more concerted effort was made to delve into the topic in greater depth.

Fortunately, as a queer early childhood educator, I had collected a wealth of resources (images, picture books, pamphlets, etc.) that encouraged queer representation in terms that children and their families could relate to. Our classroom's book shelf, for instance, was well-stocked with stories about diverse family forms or tales whose primary characters were gay or lesbian themselves. Of these titles, I used a classroom favourite ("Daddy's Roommate") to offer an age-appropriate definition of 'gay.' According to one of the story's main characters, "Gay is another kind of love. And love is the best kind of happiness." To elaborate further on this definition, it was explained to the children that gay is when a man loves a man or a woman loves a woman. Opportunities for further questions were offered but this experience ultimately seemed to resolve the initial curiosity expressed on the neighbourhood walk.

How Can You be Supportive of Transgender/Transsexual People

There are many ways to support the transsexual or transgender friends, family and community members. Use the new name and pronouns they ask us to use. If you make a mistake with the name or pronoun, just say you're sorry. Treat them like they're just a regular person, just like they were before. Don't tell anyone else about this person's transsexual or transgender identity unless he or she has asked you to do it. If you hear someone making fun of a transsexual or transgender person, tell them to stop and let them know it's not funny. Respect their right to be in gender-specific spaces, like women's washrooms and women's shelters.

Be respectful of that person in all the ways you would want respect shown to you. Do the homework, or in other words begin researching the subject so that the person you are supposed to be supporting doesn't have to do all the work educating you. At the same time, when unsure, ask. No one likes people to just assume something, and you won't know until you actually ask it. Asking allows that person to know you care. Remember that the person may be in the process of coming out or may not be as familiar with the terms, phrases and resources used by the larger queer community. As an early childhood professional, you may be able to access more queer resources on behalf of the parent than they may be aware of, much like other parents who may seek your help with accessing community services.

Remember, this is not about you. As in any situation where hate speech is being spoken, don't be a silent witness to the event. Inform the person that their comments are unwelcome. You can't change others, but if you remain quiet you are silently agreeing with their comments or jokes. Let people know that trans people are protected in Canada under each Human Rights Commission, provincially and federally, under the heading of "sex" (R.F., Toronto).

Although the civil rights struggle regarding the rights of transsexual/transgender (ts/tg) people are being waged worldwide, there is still a lot of discomfort with ts/tg people generally and particularly as parents. Canadian courts have ruled in favour of transsexual parental rights recently. Transsexual/transgender parents, like most parents, love and want the best for their children. They struggle with the same issues all parents struggle with. Early childhood educators can be supportive of transsexual and transgender families by creating an environment that is accepting and respectful.

Adapted from Transsexual/Transgender (ts/tg) Parenting: Queer Parenting Info Brochure by Family Service Association/Sherbourne Health Centre.

A Trans ECE Student Reflection

Life as a transsexual male ECE student has been interesting to say the least. Just getting into college was a complicated process. All my transcripts were in a female name and a different last name and my high school transcript came from an all girls' school. I had to provide proof of name change and medical/surgical certificates to prove who I really am. After being accepted into college, the complications continued. In order to apply for a course exemption I had to again provide transcripts and course descriptions but this time directly to my department's office (think small where everybody knows everybody). I decided that it was too risky and seriously considered just taking the course. After much deliberation I chose to risk telling my section advisor. Much to my relief she was very understanding and amazing. She took all the documents and provided the office with only the pertinent information and I wasn't "outed" but I realized the college registration process is not very confidential and I was worried about how the administrative staff would react.

*In my classes, no time has been devoted to transsexual families although they do exist (especially here in Toronto). In my sociology class another student did a presentation about a local women's shelter that provides services to both biological and trans women. When I put up my hand and asked what a trans woman is she couldn't provide an explanation but she had used the term in her presentation. Another student put up his hand and gave a fairly accurate definition. In my course related to working with families, we were asked to name different family compositions. One student mentioned transsexual/transgender families because he had read *Building Bridges*.*

This surprised me but I was obviously pleased that he discussed it even though the teacher didn't say anything more about it.

There have been a few instances of homophobia in my classes that I have spoken out against. I have been upset to discover that some teachers (though not all) let these kinds of incidents pass by. I have also faced homophobia in placement and at work where I have felt I was being scrutinized more carefully. In fact, I have been terminated from my job as a childcare provider when I let my employer know, I was planning on undergoing a transition. Similarly, in my college classes I have spoken up and been disappointed with teachers' reactions. I have had discussions regarding sexual orientation and gender identity with school-aged children. It's a conversation that is neither easy nor comfortable and I have noticed that the early childhood teachers don't really know how to talk about this, especially when the children are making homophobic comments like "that's so gay". Last year I chose to remove a poster from the college bulletin board that had a homophobic comment written across it and again I was disappointed that it was there in the first place and no one had noticed or chosen to do anything about it.

Every day I face some kind of challenge to do with being trans. Mainly I worry about how I would be treated or would I be fired if other students, co-workers or parents found out. I feel that I am respected for my skills both at school and at work but there is always a major part of me that is hiding.



Is There a Difference Between Urban & Rural Values?

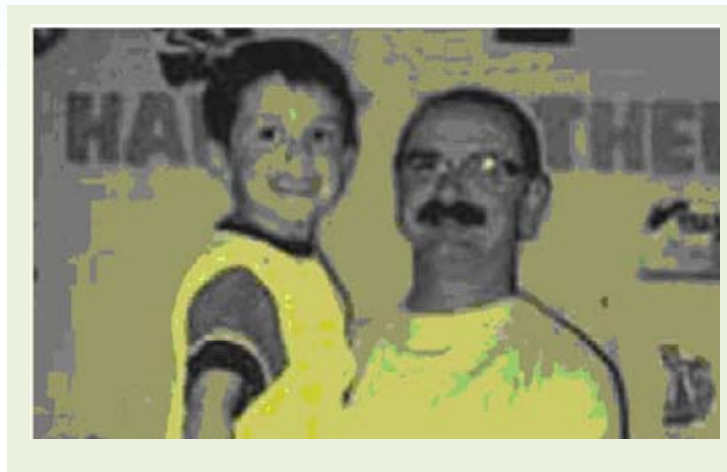


I am a 45 year old male educator that "came out" in May of 2000, shortly after turning 40 years old. Living in a very small community and working in a child care facility "scared" me from coming out years before. I have to tell you, it was the best thing that I ever did. I also must tell you that my co-workers (over 40 of them) not to mention the parents and families (we currently have over 300 children in our care) have been nothing but very supportive.

Since coming out, I met my "partner" on-line. Alexander (Sandy) is 48 years old, and hails from Nova Scotia. We met in September of 2000 ... he left Nova Scotia in 2001 to move here. We were "legally married" ... the first

couple to be legally married in the City of Greater Sudbury ... on June 18, 2003. Not only that, but Sandy started his own catering business shortly after moving here, (he is a chef), and he now caters to our day care, and 12 other day cares in the City of Greater Sudbury. He provides a hot lunch and snack to these centres, and they are delivered in special containers to keep them hot/cold. So now we both work in the child care field, and we both have had nothing but wonderful, supportive experiences with the families and centres we deal with on a regular basis.

(TDM, Lively, Ontario)



Sample – Enrollment Form (Ontario Coalition for better Child Care: Child Care Management Guide)

Name of centre	
Name of Child	_____
Date of Birth	_____ Gender _____
Address	_____
Home Phone	_____
Parent/Guardian	_____ Home Phone _____
	Cell Phone _____ Work Phone _____
Parent/Guardian	_____ Home Phone _____
	Cell Phone _____ Work Phone _____
Parent/Guardian	_____ Home Phone _____
	Cell Phone _____ Work Phone _____
Emergency Contact	_____ Phone _____
Child's first language	_____ Child's 2nd language _____
Person(s) authorized to pick up child (include parent(s)/guardian(s))	
Name	_____ Relationship to child _____
Home phone	_____ Work phone _____
Name	_____ Relationship to child _____
Home phone	_____ Work phone _____
Name	_____ Relationship to child _____
Home phone	_____ Work phone _____
If there is a custody agreement, please provide details & attach copy	

Date of enrollment	_____ / _____ / _____
Signature of Parent/Guardian	_____
Signature of Supervisor or Designate	_____
Date	_____ / _____ / _____

Source: Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care: Child Care Management Guide

Recommendations for ECE Training Programs

In early childhood programs, there is ongoing debate on whether to utilize an integrated approach to teaching anti-bias education principles or to develop specific courses on anti-racist education. While there is an emphasis on integrating anti-bias principles into education, in practice, it proves to be an effective approach to addressing these issues because it is left up to the interpretation of the instructors. A key problem to making a shift toward anti-racist or anti-discrimination education is the general evidence testifies convincingly that no real change happens unless teachers at a deep level internalize it. Changes do not happen without teachers, and teachers do not institute changes unless they understand them and believe in them (Gaine, 2000).

Corson (1998) has suggested a model that includes several courses on self-discovery, cross-cultural competence, critical thinking skills and a general anti-bias framework. Introducing a specific course would give students a foundation for integrating anti racism and anti bias education principles and practices throughout the program. A key recommendation of the queer parents was to institute a course specifically to address oppression and diversity similar to the ones offered at Ryerson University.

Sample Course Description # 1: Anti - Oppression & Human Diversity

This course focuses on oppression and anti-oppression work as they relate to social inequality and life circumstances. The course is comprised of five dimensions: theoretical, exploration of personal values, strategies that model positive community responses, focus on particular populations according to student interest, and an integrative component. Racism, ableism, ageism, colonialism, homophobia, anti-semitism, sexism and other forms of institutionalized oppression are considered in relation to the experiences, needs, and responses of populations who have been historically excluded, disadvantaged, and oppressed.

Student Placements: All early childhood training programs have a placement component as part of the program requirements. Community colleges and universities could establish stronger working relationships with queer friendly early childhood programs including family resource programs for placement utilization enabling students to gain a broader range of experiences working with a diverse family population. For example, the 519 Church St. Community Centre in Toronto offers a variety of Queer Parenting Programs that would be excellent learning opportunities for ECE students.

Sample Course Description # 2: Queering Education: Identities, Bodies, Culture

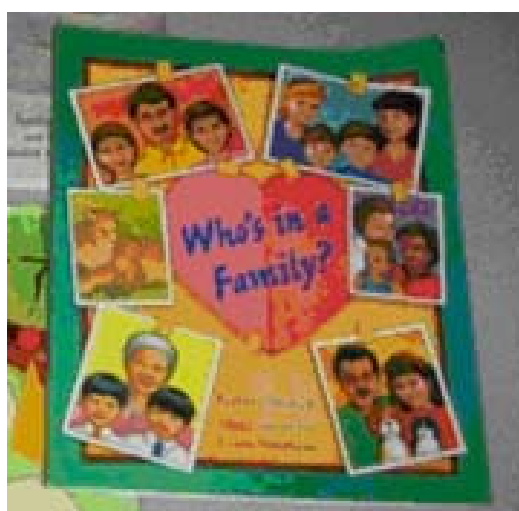
This course uses queer theory to explore how bodies negotiate and articulate their identities in social, cultural, political, and institutional contexts through an intersection of queer theory and education. An equity and social justice lens is used to interrogate how identities (sex, sexuality, gender, race, ability, class) produce bodies as subjects.

Essentialist readings of the body as fixed and stable are disrupted using various queer theories to engage critical discussions of the body as mobile and fluid. The vision of this course is to create new spaces to rethink curriculum, teaching, and learning in early childhood studies. Participants will use the various queer theories explored in the first part of the course to examine current pedagogical practices used by educators of children in order to develop new ways for thinking about early childhood studies.

Appendices



BOOK TITLE	AUTHOR	DESCRIPTION	AGES
<i>123 A Family Counting Book</i>	B. Combs	Fun with moms, dads, pets! Celebrate alternative families and teach numbers to young children. Lovely illustrations and great for young children with same-sex parents.	All Ages
<i>ABC A Family Alphabet Book</i>	B. Combs	Teach children letters too!	All Ages
<i>A Beach Party With Alexis</i>	S. Johnson-Calvo	This coloring book depicts Alexis and her friends during a day at the beach.	All Ages
<i>Best Best Colors/ Lost Mejores Colors (An Anti-Bias Book For Kids)</i>	E. Hoffman (ed.), E. Henriquez	This bilingual children's book, in both English and Spanish, tells the story of how a group of children deal with a hate crime that occurs in their own neighborhood.	All Ages



Who's in a Family

BOOK TITLE	AUTHOR	DESCRIPTION	AGES
<i>Box Girl</i>	S. Withrow	Gwen's father is gay and her mother left years ago. Despite her struggles at school and with friends, her father and his boyfriend Leon provide Sarah with love and hope.	9 - 12
<i>The Boy Who Cried Fabulous</i>	L. Newman	This rhymed book tells the story of a young boy who marvels at everything around him and is constantly late, upsetting his parents until they realize how truly fabulous their son is.	5 - 8
<i>The Case of the Stolen Scarab (Candlestone Inn Mystery # 1)</i>	N. Garden	When the Taylor-Michaelson family - Nikki and Travis and their two moms - buy an old inn in Vermont, they don't expect their first visitor to be the local sheriff with news of a robbery - and their second to be a bedraggled hiker with amnesia! Soon Nikki and Travis find themselves trying to solve a mystery that steadily grows more complicated - and perhaps dangerous as well.	8 - 12
<i>A Clear Spring</i>	B. Wilson	During her stay with Aunt Ceci and her partner, Janie, who is a naturalist, Willa learns about environmentalism, gets to know more about her family, and solves a mystery.	7 - 12
<i>Daddy's Roommate</i>	M. Wilhoite	Meet a boy, his gay dad and his dad's partner in this Lambda Literary Award winning book.	2 - 9

BOOK TITLE	AUTHOR	DESCRIPTION	AGES
<i>The Dragon and the Doctor</i>	B. Danish	This appealing story, with full-color illustrations, tells of a dragon who has a sore tail. When she goes to Dr. Judy and Nurse Benjamin for help, they discover all kinds of treasures zipped into the tail. Cured, the dragon takes Doctor Judy and Nurse Benjamin to meet her friends – an ostrich, a hippopotamus, a turtle, and a little creature who has two mothers.	3 - 7
<i>The Duke Who Outlawed Jelly Beans and Other Stories.</i>	J. Valentine	This is a collection of five original fairy tales: The Frog Prince, The Eagle Rider, The Dragon Sense, The Ogre's Boots and The Duke Who Outlawed Jelly Beans. Embedded within the stories are a cast of gay and lesbian characters.	6 - 10
<i>Else-Marie and her Seven Little Daddies</i>	G. Charbonnet	Else-Marie has seven little daddies instead of one big one, and she worries how the other children will react when her daddies come to pick her up at afternoon playgroup.	4 - 7
<i>Emma and Meesha My Boy: A Two Mom Story</i>	K. Considine	A little girl learns to treat her cat gently.	2 - 7
<i>Families: A Celebration of Diversity, Commitment and Love</i>	A. Jenness	The true stories of seventeen kids and their families, accompanied by photographs. This book rejoices in the endless possibilities of the composition of a "family."	9 -12

BOOK TITLE	AUTHOR	DESCRIPTION	AGES
<i>The Family Book</i>	T. Parr	A book celebrating all kinds of families, including ours: "Some families have two moms or two dads..." His bold, simple drawings of people and animals are just perfect for kids!	4 – 8
<i>Felicia's Favourite Story</i>	L. Newman	This book tells Felicia's favorite bedtime story of how Mama Nessa and Mama Linda adopted her, with a read-along style and charming watercolor illustrations.	4 – 7
<i>Heather Has Two Mommies</i>	L. Newman	This beautifully illustrated book tells the story of three-year-old Heather and her two moms.	4 – 7
<i>How it Feels to Have a Gay or Lesbian Parent: A Book by Kids for Kids of All Ages</i>	J. Snow	First-person accounts by children of gay or lesbian parents, ranging in age from 7 to 31.	All Ages
<i>Holly's Secret</i>	N. Gardner	When Holly's family moves to a new town, she decides to take on a new identity at her new middle school and lies about her two moms, hoping that she'll fit in. She learns that her true friends will stand by her and that love is the most important thing.	7 – 12

BOOK TITLE	AUTHOR	DESCRIPTION	AGES
<i>How My Family Came to Be – Daddy, Papa and Me</i>	A. Aldrich	The story of a young boy's adoption by his Daddy and Papa, with the message that families are made up of people who love each other. Simple sentences and big, bold playful illustrations.	4 – 8
<i>King & King</i>	L. de Haan, S. Nijland	A prince who is reluctant to marry any of the princesses his mother invites to the castle finally finds love with another prince in this charming, colorful and exuberantly collaged story.	7 – 10
<i>King & King & Family</i>	L. de Haan, S. Nijland	In this sequel to King & King, the two kings go on a honeymoon trip to the jungle, where they see lots of animal families and return home with a surprise of their own.	7 – 10
<i>Losing Uncle Tom</i>	M. Jordan	A touching and beautifully illustrated story about a young boy who must deal with the fact that his beloved uncle Tim is dying of AIDS.	6 – 12
<i>Love Makes a Family: Portraits of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Parents and their Families</i>	G. Kaeser, P. Gillespie	A beautiful book filled with photographs and interviews with LGBTQ families.	All Ages

BOOK TITLE	AUTHOR	DESCRIPTION	AGES
<i>Lucy Goes To The Country</i>	J. Kennedy, J. Canemaker (Il)	The story of Lucy the cat and her two "big guys" who travel to the country every weekend, and run into a little bit of trouble. Contains many queer characters, including a lesbian couple with a daughter.	5 – 7
<i>Mama Eat Ant, Yuck</i>	B.L. Edmonds, M. Danielle	This book told in the form of a funny poem is about the family life of one-year-old Emma, her Mama and Mommy, and her siblings. One day Emma is delighted when her mother receives a surprise in her raisins.	4 – 8
<i>Molly's Family</i>	N. Gardner	When Molly draws a picture of her family for kindergarten Open School Night, one of her classmates makes her feel bad because he says "you can't have a mommy and a mama." After talking to her teacher and her parents, she feels better knowing there are all different kinds of families, even in her own class.	4 – 7
<i>Morning Light</i>	M. Merrifield	The story of a family whose mother has AIDS and eventually dies. The story is intended to help children and their families face serious illness and death in a straightforward manner, instead of hiding or denying feelings.	6 +
<i>My Dad Has HIV</i>	E. Alexander, S. Rubin, P. Sejkora	A young girl whose father has HIV learns about the virus and is proud of her dad for trying to stay healthy. This book is very easy to read, with simple, colorful illustrations. A fabulous coloring book depicting a diverse variety of LGBTQ families doing mundane things like going shopping, eating dinner, and playing games together.	5 – 8

BOOK TITLE	AUTHOR	DESCRIPTION	AGES
<i>My Two Uncles</i>	J. Vigna	Elly is upset when her grandfather refuses to invite her uncle and his partner to a family party.	4 – 7
<i>Saturday is Pattyday</i>	L. Newman	Frankie used to live with his two moms, Allie and Patty, but they have separated. Frankie brings Doris Delores Brontausaurus to visit Allie in her new apartment, and learns that Allie will always be part of his life.	4 – 9
<i>The Skull of Truth: A Magic Shop Book</i>	B. Coville	A boy who is forced through magic to tell the truth faces issues of his uncle's homosexuality and friend's cancer. Especially appealing to reluctant readers.	9 – 12
<i>Too Far Away to Touch</i>	L. Newman	This is the story of Zoë and her relationship with her uncle as he grows sick from AIDS. Zoë's uncle explains to her that when he dies he won't be close enough to touch but, like the stars, close enough to see.	6 – 12
<i>"What Does Gay Mean?": How To Talk with Kids about Sexual Orientation and Prejudice</i> <i>Women in Love: Portraits of Lesbian Mothers and their Families</i>	L. Ponton	This booklet provides resources and tips for talking with kids about sexual orientation and homophobia.	6 +

BOOK TITLE	AUTHOR	DESCRIPTION	AGES
<i>Zack's Story</i>	B. Seyda, D. Herrera	A photo-story about an eleven-year-old boy who describes life as part of a family made up of himself, his mother, her lesbian partner, and his younger sister.	All Ages
<i>Amy Asks A Question</i>	K. Greenburg	Amy asks, "Grandma, what's a lesbian?" A beautiful conversation between Amy and her lesbian grandmother ensues.	8 – 13
<i>Anna Day and the O-Ring</i>	J. Arnold	A day in the life of a boy with two moms, told through photographs.	6 +
<i>Belinda's Bouquet</i>	E. Wickens	Belinda and her friend Daniel discover that it's okay to be different.	2 – 7
<i>The Daddy Machine</i>	L. Newman	Two children with lesbian mothers wonder what it would be like to have a father, so they make themselves a daddy machine, turn it on, and a dad pops out. Then comes another, and another, and another.	4 – 8
<i>The Day They Put a Tax on Rainbows and Other Stories</i>	J. Valentine	Three original fairy tales featuring main characters who just happen to have gay parents. These children, along with dragons, mermaids and elves, are depicted in detailed watercolor drawings.	2 – 9

BOOK TITLE	AUTHOR	DESCRIPTION	AGES
<i>The Entertainer</i>	J. Valentine	A story, told only in pictures, about a little boy who loves to juggle, and his adventures.	6 – 10
<i>Generous Jefferson Bartleby Jones</i>	M. Willhoite	A story of a boy with two dads who can always loan out one Dad because he’s got another...until the weekend he loans them both out by mistake.	3 – 8
<i>How Would You Feel If Your Dad Was Gay?</i>	F. Brown	When Jasmine announces in class that her dad is gay, her brother complains that she had no right to reveal a fact that he wanted to keep secret.	3 – 9
<i>Jenny Lives With Eric And Martin</i>	A. Heron & M. Maran	A photo story about the day-to-day life of a young Danish girl living with her two dads. A candid and realistic portrayal of a gay family.	6 – 12
<i>Lots of Mommies</i>	S. Bosche,	Six-year-old Emily lives with her mother and four other women in a commune. When Emily tells her classmates that she has lots of mommies, they laugh disbelievingly. But when she falls and all her mommies come to the rescue, the other children come to respect and admire her family.	4 – 7

BOOK TITLE	AUTHOR	DESCRIPTION	AGES
<i>One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dad</i>	J. Severance	Lou and a friend compare notes on their families in this breezy book about parents who seem different.	4 – 7
<i>When Megan Went Away</i>	J. Valentine	Shannon is upset when her moms break up. One of the earliest stories featuring a LGBTQ family!	2 – 8
<i>And Tango Makes Three</i>	P. Parnell & J. Richardson	This tale is based on a true story about the only baby penguin in a New York City Zoo with 2 daddies!	3 – 6



Tango Makes Three

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Resources

Updated by Iyana Browne:
Infant/toddler Supervisor, University of Toronto Early Learning Centre

The Internet can be incredibly useful in finding information about anything you want. In the past, early childhood educators turning to the web to find information to support queer families likely would have retrieved few documents. Fortunately, this is changing. In fact, search engines like “Google Scholar” are very useful in directing attention to reputable literature that speaks to queer issues from a variety of perspectives. With the use of the internet, early childhood educators interested in supporting sexual diversity in classrooms for young children literally have a wealth of ideas at their fingertips.

ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT QUEER FAMILIES

www.queerparent.ca - The Queer Parenting Initiative is a joint project of the LGBTQ Parenting Network, FSA Toronto; Centre for Addiction and Mental Health; Gay Fathers of Toronto; Chinese Family Services; TGStation.com; and community members.

Contact info@queerparent.ca

www.the519.org – Toronto based community centre that offers a variety of programs for children and LGBTQ families – contact queerparenting@the519.org

www.etfo.org – The elementary teacher’s federation of Ontario has produced a variety of material available on its website and for order on reducing homophobia in schools.

HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

The Canadian Human Rights Commission
Toll Free: 1-888-214-1090
<http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/contact/default-en.asp>

The Ontario Human Rights Commission

Local: (416) 326-9511

Toll Free (outside Toronto Area): 1-800-387-9080

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/english/index.shtml>

Source: University of Toronto Student Affairs

<http://www.sa.utoronto.ca>

GENERAL

519 Church Street Community Centre

519 Church St.; Ph: (416) 392-6874;

Email: info@the519.org; Web: www.the519.org

The 519 is a meeting place and focus for its vital and varied downtown community. Within a supportive environment, it responds to community issues and needs by supplying the resources and opportunities to foster self-determination. It is committed to principles of accessibility, voluntarism, individual dignity and value, participation and celebration.

Resources

Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives
34 Isabella Street; Toronto, ON; Ph: (416) 777-2755; Email: queeries@clga.ca;
Web: www.clga.ca

Founded in 1973, its mandate is to collect and maintain information and materials relating to the gay/lesbian/bi/trans movement in Canada and elsewhere, and to make its holdings available to the public for the purposes of education and research. The archives contain records of groups, photographs, posters, sound recordings, works of art, books, press clippings, banners, buttons, etc.

Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario (CLGRO)
Ph: (416) 405-8253; Email: clgro@web.ca; Web: www.clgro.org

EGALE Canada
Ph: (Ottawa) 1-888-204-7777; Email: egale.canada@egale.ca; Web: www.egale.ca

Egale Canada is a national organization that advances equality and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans-identified people and their families across Canada.

Lesbian & Gay Immigration Task Force (LEGIT) Toronto
Ph: (416) 392-6874; Email: toronto@legit.ca;
Web: www.legit.ca

Volunteers provide information on immigrating to Canada for same-sex partners, or applying for refugee status based on LGBTQQ identity or HIV status.

Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youth Line
Ph: (416) 962-YOUTH / 1-800-268-YOUTH (office) 416-962-9688;
Email: askus@youthline.ca;
Web: www.youthline.ca

Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG) Toronto
115 Simpson Ave, Ste. 105; Ph: (416) 406-6378;
Email: toronto.office@pflag.ca;
Web: www.pflag.ca/Toronto.html

Pride Toronto
65 Wellesley St. E., Ste. 501; Ph: (416) 927-7433; Email: office@pridetoronto.com;
Web: www.pridetoronto.com

Plans Toronto's annual Pride Week celebrations.

Resources

COUNSELLING, HEALTH CARE & SEXUAL HEALTH

AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT)
399 Church Street, 4th fl.; Ph: (416) 340-8844;
Email: ask@actontario.org;
Web: www.actontario.org

The AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT) is a community-based, charitable organization that provides support, HIV prevention and education services for people living with and at risk for HIV/AIDS. ACT provides free, confidential supportive and practical services to men, women and youth living with HIV/AIDS and we provide information and support to friends, partners, and families of people living with HIV/AIDS.

Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention (ASAAP)
20 Carlton St., Ste. 126, Toronto, Ontario M5B 2H5; Ph: (416) 599-2727;
Email: info@asaap.ca; Web: www.asaap.ca

Community-based South Asian agency committed to the prevention of HIV/AIDS and to promoting the health of people infected or affected by HIV or AIDS.

Anishnawbe Health Toronto
225 Queen St. E.; Ph: (416) 360-0486;
Email: info@aht.ca; Web: www.aht.ca

Culture-based, traditional and complementary health care; individual, couple and family counselling; anonymous HIV testing, prenatal program, Community Health Worker Training Program.
Languages: American Sign Language, Cree, English, Inuktitut, Ojibwa

Asian Community AIDS Services (ACAS)
33 Isabella St., Ste. 107; Ph: (416) 963-4300;
Email: info@acas.org; Web: www.acas.org

HIV/AIDS education, prevention, and support services to the East and South East Asian communities.
Languages: Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin), English, Filipino, Vietnamese

Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (Black CAP)
110 Spadina Ave., Ste. 207; Ph: (416) 977-9955;
Email: blackcap@black-cap.com;
Web: www.black-cap.com

Volunteer-driven, charitable, not-for-profit, community-based organization working to enhance the quality of life of Black people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS.
Languages: English, West Indian dialects, French available upon request

Resources

City of Toronto AIDS & Sexual Health InfoLine
1-800-668-2437 or (416) 392-2437;
Web: www.city.toronto.on.ca/health/ai_index.htm

A province-wide, free, anonymous service staffed by professional, multidisciplinary, and multicultural counsellors who offer assistance in different languages.

David Kelley Lesbian and Gay Community
Counselling Program
355 Church St.; Ph: (416) 595-9618;
Email: sau@familyservicetoronto.com;
Web: www.fsatoronto.com/programs/dkslesgay.html

Professional, short-term, individual, couple and family counselling for lesbians, gay men and related communities.

Hassle Free Clinic
66 Gerrard St. E., 2nd floor; Ph: (416) 922-0603 (men);
Ph: 416-922-0566 (women);
Web: www.hasslefreeclinic.org

Provides free medical and counselling services in many areas of sexual health. There are separate hours and phone numbers for women and men; transgender and transsexual clients are welcome at both the women's and the men's clinic.

Rainbow Services, Centre for Addiction and Mental
Health
60 White Squirrel Way – 1st floor; (416) 535-8501 x6781 /
1-800-463-2338

Counselling for lesbian, gay and bisexual people who are concerned about their use of drugs and alcohol.

Sherbourne Health Centre
333 Sherbourne St.; Ph: (416) 324-4180;
Email: info@sherbourne.on.ca;
Web: www.sherbourne.on.ca

Community-based health care organization dedicated to providing comprehensive health services to our diverse and vibrant communities of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirited, intersexed, queer or questioning people. Services include medical, nursing and wellness care, counselling services, information, workshops, groups.

Teen Sex Info Line
Ph: (416) 961 – 3200; Email: askus@spiderbytes.ca;
Web: www.spiderbytes.ca

Telephone information service offering teens a confidential and anonymous way to acquire sexual health information.

Resources

YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

2-Spirited People of the First Nations
43 Elm St., 2nd fl.; Ph: (416) 944-9300;
Email: info@2spirits.com;
Web: www.2spirits.com

Non-profit social services organization whose membership consists of Aboriginal gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people in Toronto. Languages: English interpreters for Cree, French, Mohawk, Odawa, Ojibwa

Avanti
Ph: (416) 925-9872 x2231; Email:
mail@avantitoronto.ca; Web: www.web.net/avanti

Social and support group for Italian lesbians, gays & bisexuals.

Blackness Yes!
908-81 Dalhousie St.;
Email: blacknessyes@hotmail.com;
Web: <http://groups.msn.ca/blockorama>

Celebration of Black lesbian, gay and bisexual members of the community

Black Queer Youth Initiative
365 Bloor St. E., Ste. 301; Ph: (416) 324-5083;
Email: soyprojects@sherbourne.on.ca;
Web: www.soytoronto.org/current/bqy.html

For Black, multiracial, African/Caribbean youth under 29 who are LGBTQQ.

Gays and Lesbians of African Descent (GLAD)
Ph: (416) 925-9872 x2278; Email:
info@gladtoronto.com; Web: www.gladtoronto.com

Supportive community for GTA-based, African self-identified LGBTQTQ people.

HOLA! Latino/Latina Gay Group
Ph: (416) 925-9872 X 2850;
Email: grouplatinogayhola@yahoo.ca

Meeting group for discussion, support, education, activism and cultural events for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community members of Latin American heritage.

Kulanu
Ph: (416) 913-2424; Email: kulanutoronto@yahoo.ca;
Web: www.kulanutoronto.ca

Social group for Toronto's LGBTQT2IQQ Jewish students, young professionals, and allies.

Resources

Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youth Line

Ph: (416) 962-YOUTH / 1-800-268-YOUTH (office)
416-962-2232; \

Email: info@youthline.ca; Web: www.youthline.ca

Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto

115 Simpson Ave.; Ph: (416) 406-6228; Web:
www.mcctoronto.com

Polish Gay & Lesbian Association of Toronto

Ph: (416) 925-9872 x2091 / (416) 920-6249;

Web: www.pgla.org

Queer Asian Youth (QAY)

Ph: (416) 963-4300 x29; Email: youth@acas.org; Web:
www.acas.org/qay

Social events for bisexual/gay/queer/lesbian/
undecided/transsexual/transgendered/straight/
questioning East and Southeast Asian youth and their
friends.

Salaam: Queer Muslim Community

Ph: (416) 925-9872 x2209; Email:

salaam@salaamcanada.com;

Web: www.salaamcanada.com

For LGBTQQ/questioning Muslims and their friends.

Supporting Our Youth (SOY)

365 Bloor St. E., Ste. 301; Email:

soy@sherbourne.on.ca; Web: www.soytoronto.org

Works to create healthy arts, culture and recreational
spaces for young LGBTQT people; to provide
supportive housing and employment opportunities; and
to increase youth access to adult mentoring and
support.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Buddies in Bad Times Theatre

12 Alexander St.; Ph: (416) 975-8555; Email:

info@buddiesinbadtimestheatre.com;

Web: www.buddiesinbadtimestheatre.com

A Canadian, not-for-profit professional theatre
company dedicated to the promotion of gay, lesbian
and queer theatrical expression.

Glad Day Bookshop

598A Yonge St. (416) 961-4161 Email:

service@gladdaybookshop.com;

Web: www.gladdaybookshop.com

Toronto's oldest and largest lesbian and gay
bookstore.

Resources

Inside Out

Web: www.insideout.ca

Toronto's annual Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival

MEDIA

fab Magazine

Web: www.fabmagazine.com

A Toronto-based biweekly gay magazine.

Xtra!

Web: www.xtra.ca

A biweekly LGBTQ newspaper that publishes editions in Toronto, Ottawa and Vancouver.

EDUCATION

Teens Educating And Confronting Homophobia (TEACH) – a project of Planned Parenthood Toronto

36B Prince Arthur Ave.; Ph: (416) 961-0113 x246;

Email: teach@ppt.on.ca;

Web: www.teachtoronto.ca

Uses an anti-oppression approach to deliver high-quality anti-homophobia peer education activities in high schools and community settings across the City of Toronto.

Triangle Program (TDSB)

115 Simpson Avenue; Toronto, ON;

Ph: (416) 393-8443;

Email: jeffrey.white@tel.tdsb.on.ca or

anthony.grandy@tel.tdsb.on.ca;

Web: <http://schools.tdsb.on.ca/triangle/>

This full-time program offers the structure and support needed to work together with other gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students and those affected by homophobia.

Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

Web: www.glsen.org

McGill University Equity Subcommittee on Queer People

Web: www.mcgill.ca/queerequity

Includes information on gender-neutral washrooms

Resources

National Consortium of Directors of LGBTQ
Resources in Higher Education
Web: www.LGBTQcampus.org

SUPPORT GROUPS AVAILABLE

Daddies and Papas 2B
The 519 Church Street Community Centre ;
Ph : (416) 392-6874 x 109 ;
Email: queerparenting@the519.org

A course for Gay, Bisexual and Queer Men
Considering Parenting.

Daddy, Papa and me
The 519 Church Street Community Centre ;
Ph : (416) 392-6874 x 109 ;
Email: queerparenting@the519.org

A monthly queer positive gathering for
dads and their kids (birth to age 6).

Dykes Planning Tykes
The 519 Church Street Community
Centre (416) 392 6874 x 109 ;
Email: queerparenting@the519.org

A course for Lesbian, Bisexual and
Queer women considering parenting.

Mum's the World!
The 519 Church Street Community
Centre ; Ph : (416) 392-6874 x 109 ;
Email: queerparenting@the519.org

A gathering for lesbian, bisexual and
transsexual/transgendered mothers and
their children (birth to age 6).

COLAGE, Toronto
Web : www.colage.org

Social and support group for children (over 7
years) with lesbian, gay, bisexual and
transsexual parents in conjunction with TDSB
Human Sexuality Program

PFLAG, Canada
Web : www.pflagcanada.ca

Parents, Friends of Lesbians and Gays
Canada

Lesbian Mothers Association of Quebec
Web : www.aml-lma.org

Halton Pride
Web : www.haltonpride.org;
Email: info@haltonpride.org

Gay and Lesbian Educators of B.C.
Web : www.galebc.org.

Chatham-Kent Gay Pride Association
109 Stanley Ave W, Chatham, ON; Ph: (519)
351-9248

London Gay Pride Association
186 King Street Unit 30; Ph: 519 673-8625;
Web: <http://www.pridelondon.ca/external.html>

Windsor Gay Pride Association
Web: <http://www.windsorpride.com/cms/>

About the Authors

Zeenat Janmohamed

Zeenat Janmohamed is the Coordinator of the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development at the University of Toronto and a Professor in the School of Early Childhood at George Brown College. Zeenat has been involved in early childhood policy and advocacy and is interested in preservice training in education with a particular focus on how educators are prepared to enter professional practice. Zeenat is a doctoral candidate at OISE, examining the experiences of queer parents in early years settings as part of her research study.

Ryan Campbell

Ryan Campbell has worked in the early childhood profession since 2001 and is currently a Supervisor at the University of Toronto Early Learning Centre. He recently completed a Masters in Early Childhood Studies at Ryerson University with a research interest that examined the general absence of queer issues in classroom spaces for young children. To date, he has written articles and participated in numerous public speaking opportunities to support frontline staff in their efforts to ensure that representation of queer issues in early childhood education materializes. Ryan has plans to pursue his doctorate degree and is interested in exploring the prevalence of homophobic bullying in early educational institutions.

About the Design Team

John Lai

John Lai is a LAMP web applications developer and the founder of the Evermight Framework at <http://evermight.com>. He enjoys working with people who have a passion for building new web technologies that improve society. John is always interested in new web entrepreneurial ventures.

Alwin Tong

Alwin is a multimedia designer and web architect. Alwin is a strong believer in equal rights for all, and is proud to be a contributing member of the team which has produced this literature. His website is <http://alwinian.net>.



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Building Bridges: Queer Families in Early Childhood Education is available on-line at
www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/ and www.childcareontario.org

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