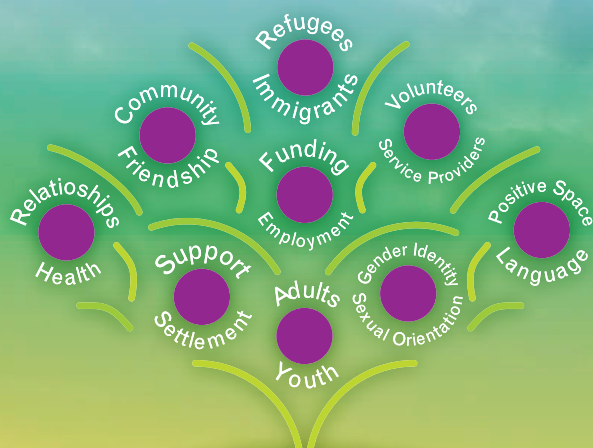
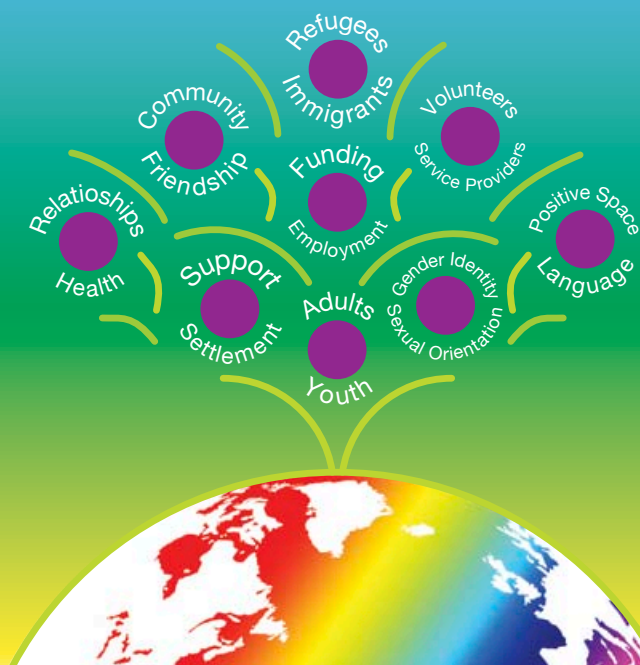


YOU ARE AMONG FRIENDS



A booklet by and for LGBTQ+ newcomers

BEYOND BELONGING: Celebrating LGBTQ+ Newcomers



YOU ARE AMONG FRIENDS

This is a positive space for LGBTQ+* newcomers

The Among Friends Initiative

A collaboration between Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services, CultureLink and The 519 Church Street Community Centre that aims to improve access to services by providing resources, volunteer opportunities and support to service providers and LGBTQ+ newcomer communities.

www.accessalliance.ca/amongfriends



*LGBTQ+ = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Two-Spirited, Allies and more

To receive a free copy of the *You Are Among Friends* positive space poster or for additional copies of this *You Are Among Friends* booklet, please call 416-693-8677 or download a copy at www.accessalliance.ca/amongfriends

You Are Among Friends

A booklet by and for LGBTQ+ newcomers

LGBTQ Settlement Network

A network made of up community organizations and community members in Toronto and surrounding areas that provide services to and/or advocate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ+) newcomers

What we aim to do?

- Support front-line staff in their work with LGBTQ+ newcomers
- Act as a community hub for those interested in this work
- Stimulate dialogue in relation to LGBTQ+ newcomers and their settlement needs in broader forums
- Act as a forum to develop partnerships to do this work
- Increase visibility of the network in the larger community as well as in LGBTQ+ communities
- Coordinate outreach efforts to LGBTQ+ newcomers
- Act as a catalyst for systemic change in the interests of LGBTQ+ newcomers

Interested in joining or want more information?

Check out www.accessalliance.ca/amongfriends/resources

"When I arrived in Canada as a refugee I didn't know anyone."



"I made friends and connections at The 519. I found a home here."

For over 25 years, The 519 has been at the centre of Toronto's LGBT community; providing support, space and opportunities for more than 30,000 people who visit every year. With award-winning programs and over 275 community groups, there's something for everyone at The 519.

The 519 offers programming specific to LGBT newcomers including Among Friends and the BREAKTHROUGH Network. For more information on program times and how to get involved in your communities' centre, visit us in person or online today.



**CHURCH STREET
COMMUNITY CENTRE**

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WHERE COMMUNITIES MEET, PARTICIPATE AND CELEBRATE

THE AMONG FRIENDS TEAM

Volunteers have played a key role in supporting and moving the *Among Friends* initiative forward since 2006. We would like to recognize and thank: Luka, Shishir, Ranjith, Tria, Un Jung, Venecia, Richard, Hurly, Jaime, Orel, Asem, Kofi, Fatima, Jodie, Phil, David, Eugenia, Denisse, Shantanu, Pedro and others not named here.

An advisory committee, made up of service providers and community members, helped to guide the initiative. We would like to recognize and thank: Rachna, Carolina, Leo, Jean, Clarence, Natalia, Dimitri, Stacia, Anna, Josephine, Rebecca, Craig and others not named here.

The initiative was coordinated by Aamer (previously coordinated by Rachna and Diego) with support from Cliff, Janet, Francisco and Gareth (Joint Management Team) and other colleagues at Access Alliance, CultureLink and The 519 Church Street Community Centre.

Cover design concept by Meera Sethi. Booklet concept development by Denisse Temin and design by Victor Szeto. Printing by Dragon Snap Design.

This booklet has been made possible by the support and generosity of Community One Foundation's Rainbow Grants and The Ontario Trillium Foundation.

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First Edition.

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WHAT IS AMONG FRIENDS?

Among Friends was a three year initiative to improve access to services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ+)* newcomers in Toronto.

In 2005, The 519 Church Street Community Centre initiated a process to create a resource guide for LGBTQ+ refugees. During that process, Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services, CultureLink and The 519 Church Street Community Centre identified the need for improved service provision to the LGBTQ+ newcomer communities and formed a partnership with this goal in mind.

In 2006, the Ontario Trillium Foundation funded a three year initiative proposed by the new partnership – *Among Friends* – to train and support service providers to deliver programs and services that were inclusive of LGBTQ+ newcomer communities.

To date, the *Among Friends* initiative has reached out to over 450 service providers through trainings, workshops, conferences and activities developed and implemented through the support of over 100 *Among Friends* volunteers.

For more information, go to
www.accessalliance.ca/amongfriends

*Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersex, two-spirited, allies and more

A MESSAGE

When I joined *Among Friends* as an advisory member in 2007, I was excited to volunteer for an initiative that linked LGBTQ+ issues to newcomer issues and provided me, a refugee to Canada, the chance to share my thoughts and concerns.

In 2009, I was offered the opportunity to lead the initiative as its coordinator. *Among Friends* had already reached milestones under the leadership of Rachna and Diego, the previous coordinators for the initiative.

So many things happened from 2009 to 2010 – we provided hundreds of hours of training and workshops, we hosted and presented at conferences, we trained and engaged LGBTQ+ newcomers as volunteers and we continued to advocate for positive and inclusive services. Best of all, a space was created where amazing people came together and contributed as *Among Friends* volunteers, staff and supporters.

Whether you are an LGBTQ+ newcomer, a service provider, a policy maker, an educator, an ally, a community member, a youth, a senior or anyone else, we encourage you to continuously challenge yourself in your practice, your politics, your perceptions and your privilege. We envision a city where 'You are *Among Friends*.'

– Aamer Esmail, *Among Friends* coordinator

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOKLET?

This booklet contains a collection of stories, experiences, resources and information shared by members of the *Among Friends* team.

Our objectives are

- To make the LGBTQ+ newcomer communities more visible
- To help service providers serve our communities better, through the sharing of some of our own experiences
- To reach out to and make connections with many other LGBTQ+ newcomers
- To advocate for more inclusive and positive spaces and services
- To highlight our multiple identities
- To make allies
- To celebrate all aspects of what makes us who we are.

The stories in this booklet have preserved the essence of how we speak, think, write and communicate in English, although for many of us it is not our first language.

We hope that you will find this booklet informative, engaging and useful.

– The *Among Friends* Team



Conflicted Joy”

It has always been tough
To be all parts of me
Different lives, different eyes
Trying to come out and see

Religion says one thing
Friends say another
Family doesn't understand
Neither does my lover

But where do I fit in
And feel happy and safe
And where do I seek truth
In this intersecting maze

If you are like me
Know that you're not alone
Life may have challenges
But we must always go on

And I thank you for reading
For understanding what I feel
For giving me the strength
To cherish and to heal

Now let's celebrate this journey
Celebrate all parts of you and me
Different lives, different eyes
Waiting to connect and just be ●

By an *Among Friends* volunteer

My First Weekend in Toronto

BY KOFI

One fine Friday afternoon in the middle of June, I landed at the Pearson International Airport in Toronto for the first time in my life.

After going through immigration and customs I was faced with the arduous task of locating my contact. Due to the fear of reprisal from home I was scared of talking to people, not even the police.

As a result by the time I finally located the address to where I was going, my contact had closed for the weekend.

In order not to fall into inappropriate hands I decided to keep to myself and hang around Union Station and Harbourfront areas.

Since I didn't have much luggage I could move around with ease. Even though I could do oral care and a little grooming, I did not have a bath for the whole weekend.

On Monday, I went to see my contact at COSTI on College Street, who then directed me to the Immigration Canada offices at the Kipling Subway Station.

After securing a shelter for my residence, my contact gave me the address to the 519 community centre where I came into contact with The *Among Friends* group, which then changed everything for me. ●

ON SEXUALITY, LANGUAGE AND SKIN COLOUR

random thoughts of
a gay newcomer

BY RANJITH KULATILAKE

At a restaurant in Toronto a Caucasian Canadian friend was angry with me when I said to him,

“After all, everyone is a person of colour”.

I was responding to his remark,

“There aren’t many people of colour here!”

Such arguments often make me think of the use of language and different contexts in which conversations take place.

How and when does a language become oppressive? What has it got to do with my sexual orientation and my skin colour? I have been wrestling with these questions ever since I landed in Canada a few years ago from a South Asian country. Often I hear terms such as ‘ethnic food’, ‘visible minorities’ and ‘people of colour’ to describe people like me. Is there any food that is not ‘ethnic’? Is there an ‘invisible majority’? Is white a ‘non-colour’? My Caucasian gay doctor once became agitated because I was talking in “half sentences”. I had to remind him that I think in my first language before speaking in English. Especially with the doctor, I struggle to find the right terms to express myself.

While heterosexual norms continue to marginalise the LGBTQ community, I feel further isolated because of my skin colour and my use of English. I am in a minority within a minority. At least in Canada unlike my home country, I am not criminalised because of my sexuality. Yet, it seems as though there is an unbridgeable gap between ‘them’ and me. I am one of ‘the other’. ●

Untitled

By an *Among Friends* volunteer

I am a Korean American Lesbian woman from New York City. I tried to immigrate to Toronto for love. My female partner is from India and we tried to move to Canada because of the legal LGBTQ rights Canada offers.

As a U.S. citizen, I was legally allowed to live in Toronto for 6 months as a visitor. I moved to Toronto to understand Canada and find work as a social worker. To sponsor my partner in Canada I would first need a job offer to apply for a work permit. Lawyers and friends told me finding a job would be easy but they were wrong. Finding a job in my field was very difficult because I did not already have a work permit or permanent residency.

I went to the YMCA and a counsellor told me to start volunteering to gain Canadian experience. I began volunteering with Pathways to Education as a Mentor to high school students in the Lawrence Heights area. I also attended workshops for youth between

the ages of 16 to 29 from the Asian Arts Freedom School. I became a volunteer at the 519 Church Street Community Centre and while I attended a service provider open house for Breakthrough, their LGBTQ Newcomer program, I met the *Among Friends* Coordinator.

Through the *Among Friends* program I was very happy to meet so many LGBTQ newcomers who shared their experience of success, struggles and challenges. While I was not able to find a job as a social worker in Toronto I feel blessed to have met so many wonderful people. I am returning to New York City to be with my partner temporarily. She received a 6 month work visa to be in the U.S. ●

A short
reflection
on trans
and
intersex
refugees

the failed paradise

BY NATALIA PETITE

*L*et's put it straight, why do refugees seek asylum in other countries? Why specifically LGBT refugees escape to countries perceived as safe?

Regardless of the motive, we are all looking for a better and safer life. Yet the Utopian perception of Canada as a heaven, an immaculate paradise for LGBT immigrants and refugees steps into reality when one begins to experience third world oppression and discrimination from the “judges” of that heaven. I will not question the fact that Canada is a relatively safe country for LGB immigrants and refugees, but when it comes to the “T” (and the ignored “I” wrongly placed within) Canada is no better, and it must be said, in some instances, worse than third world countries.

How does it make sense, for example, that we are able to change our name AND gender in Latin American undeveloped transphobic countries, just like that, no hassle, simple, and plain, But here in “human rights leader” Ontario, a trans and/or intersex person needs to undergo “transsexual surgery”(sic) and years long processes in order to obtain such changes?.

Sure enough most trans people can afford any six thousand dollar surgery, after all we are rich, we gays have all those fabulous pink dollars and us, trans refugees, have divine work permits and SIN (social insurance numbers) that don't reflect our gender or names – identification that are far from identifying us in the slightest. But hey, we have pride, don't we? We have 10 people covered for Sex

Reassignment Surgery (SRS) in Ontario a year, don't we? We have drag queens all over Fab and Xtra magazines, don't we? Yes, we have trans “acceptance” that we didn't see back home, and hence why should we complain about the negatives when we have so much positives?

We as refugees are forced to believe that we are much better here than in our home countries and we are – to some extent. It's safer and it's better. But better doesn't mean being good, or fine, nor even ok. We believe that because of those very few “privileges” we have here, we then should be thankful and shut up. So we put our heads down and indeed shut up, living in a comfortable status quo.

Trans refugees are still discriminated, abused and systematically oppressed, and the most disheartening thing is that they don't fight. They rather take it so they are allowed to remain in a “safer” place. And by us not fighting, we are selling our integrity, our right to speak up, our right to exist, our universal right to live our lives the only way we can live them! All in exchange of a piece of paper stating our incorrect gender and name but granting us immigration status.

We are then giving the system official authorization to treat us like shit. And after all, didn't we escape our countries, in essence, because we were being treated like shit? ●

my

by an *Among Friends* volunteer

I am a woman who came to Toronto in June 2009. As a queer person it has not been easy to adapt to a new country. Luckily I have been able to get involved in my new community, thanks to my brother's support and my new friends. The most important tip I received was to VOLUNTEER as much as I can.

story

I began to understand how meaningful volunteering could be since I started to study and working in Hospitality Industry nine years ago back home. I learned that volunteering here in Toronto would lead me to meet people from all around the world, share with them our different traditions, and build connections for the near future. As a newcomer trying to balance a career as a chef, a budding photographer and human rights advocate, I started volunteering with *Among Friends* since September 2009, where many people were working together to create positive and safe spaces to new LGBTQ immigrants. I contributed as a workshop

facilitator and event planner for the *Among Friends Conference* celebrated in July 2010.

Among Friends empowered me in many ways: how to deal with the barriers of language, joblessness, homesickness, health and sexual issues, and to better understand Canadian culture.

Today as an Agent of Change I volunteer in different places, encouraging people to develop healthier nutritional habits. My dream in life is to spread the message of the urgent need of re-structuring our “Food Systems” through responsible consumption. ●

Untitled

By an *Among Friends* volunteer

Growing up, my family looked perfect from the outside, but there were many problems on the inside. I still love my family very much but I now believe that these issues led to a lot of problems for me, though I did not realize this at that time.

low self-esteem

isolated in my home

I thought that it was all my fault that I had very low self-esteem, that I felt that I couldn't do anything, that I felt that no one would like/love me. I was often depressed and had anxiety, sometimes even feeling scared to go outside the house.

Coming to Canada offered me a chance to deal with some of my issues and build myself up – but it was not an easy or quick task. For a whole year after I came here, I was totally isolated in my home. I worked from home and I did not have any friends in the country and I didn't know how to make new friends.

Then, I saw information on the Internet about the 519 Centre. I met a number of people there and started to make friends. I also found out about the *Among Friends* project there – which has brought many good changes in my life.

One day when I was feeling very desperate, I called the Mental Health Service Information Ontario to find out about mental health services. Other things which have helped me is writing my thoughts in a journal, sharing my feelings with others, yoga, spirituality, and volunteering. ●

feeling very desperate

started to make friends



This page: booklet development meetings, 2010

SNAPSHOTS



Some Words of Wisdom

BY ASEM A.

*As an immigrant keeping a good
health is part of the package of success
and to keep ongoing to achieve goals.*

Maintaining good health could be achieved by:

GOOD FOOD

1 Eating healthy food saves lot of money. Shopping at reasonably priced grocery stores, and cooking at home. Also it is great to keep in mind that food banks are available in cases of emergency.

3

GOING TO CLINICS

At times I visited clinics that are free of charge and they are available in Toronto. Doing regular check ups helped me maintain good health. Also there are places that provided me with free eye testing and free eyeglasses.

2

GOING TO A GYM

Working out and swimming regularly helped me maintain a healthy body and mind. There are days that I feel down and weak so physical exercise helped me get over that. There are gyms that are free of cost and gyms that have low registration fees.

4

SAFE SEX

It is mandatory in order to keep good health by using condoms, and this not only protected me but also the community of not spreading diseases such as HIV, herpes and gonorrhea. Free condoms are provided everywhere.

5

PROTECTION FROM WEATHER

Getting ready for the bad weather helped me stay healthy and away from sicknesses by wearing warm clothes. It is not only that one can find cheap clothes, there are agencies that provide free clothes. ●

Searching for Racism and Homophobia

BY HURLY

I nspired by the workshops that *Among Friends* is doing to service providers in Toronto and my own passion for adventure and travelling, I decided to hitch hike across Canada from Toronto to BC to Newfoundland, bringing awareness on LGBTQ newcomer issues.

I was excited to bring awareness to the rest of the country about LGBTQ newcomer issues. When I was doing my outreach, I got in contact with many agencies and organizations that work with immigrants, newcomers and LGBTQ communities.

I told them about my plan to hitchhike across Canada creating awareness on LGBTQ newcomer issues and giving free workshops. I had a few positive responses from people who thought that this was a great idea to bring the issue of racism, homophobia and heterosexism to service providers. Not all agencies and organizations though are very excited about it and in fact, I have received a response that is more or less saying “we do not have LGBTQ clients” or “we do not serve the LGBTQ community specifically” and that the best contacts would be this and that gay organization.

This was very disappointing and discouraging for me because there is always a denial and a lack of recognition about the existence of racism and homophobia.

My travels across the country proved this. During my journey, I heard comments such as “We prairie people don’t like foreigners,” or “Aboriginal people don’t do anything but make babies” or “Native people abuse the government” and a few stories about people’s friends killed because of homophobic violence.

I started my trip hoping to raise awareness for LGBTQ newcomer issues but more and more, it’s becoming an anti-racism and anti-homophobia workshop. I think it is important to first address the issue of homophobia and racism.

In fact, most of this trip was me becoming aware of the realities of racism and homophobia and how our society’s complacency and apathy is not helping the problem. There is a need for further education and awareness to our society about these issues.

I titled this article “Searching for Racism and Homophobia” because of our denial that racism and homophobia exist. In fact, our culture is so systematically racist, heterosexist and homophobic that it’s easy to say that it doesn’t really exist. Why? Because Canada is a free, democratic, multicultural and diverse society! Racism and homophobia could not possibly be present here.

One of the steps, if not the first step, to combat these issues is acknowledgment and recognition that these realities exist because if we don’t, then what is it that we are trying to solve?

If you are interested to know more about my journeys please check-out www.thumbsupcanada.blogspot.com ●

BY JAIME

Untitl

ed

WHEN I CAME TO CANADA

I was excited about meeting new people, making new friends and continue with my life, as there was no change at all. Unfortunately it wasn't easy for me. I was in a new country and learning a new language, so asking information about places to join and start my new circle of friends was a difficult task.

The first group I joined in Toronto was "EXPRESS," a youth group for LGBTQ newcomers in Toronto, but it wasn't easy to know about this group or others similar to this one. It took me over a year to finally know and join an LGBTQ group for newcomers.

All my friends in my new country (Canada) were straight. I was looking to connect with gay men and start new friendships, to learn more about the gay lifestyle in Toronto and more exciting stuff. At the same time I was looking for a place where I could feel inclusive and express my feelings or just show who I was.

There are many places that have support groups or provide information for LGBTQ newcomers, the problem here is, how to reach them. ●

the collector

By an
Among
Friends
volunteer

I collect identities: newcomer, non-white, Latino, young (ish), queer, trans, and gender queer. Oh, yeah, I don't hear well a dis/ability, I guess.

Even though I have been in Canada for 10 years, I still call myself a newcomer. "Foreigner" and "Immigrant" sound too harsh – almost an open door to harassment. Language (and accent), navigating Canadian society, building relationships – are all things I still struggle with.

People often assume I can't understand them because English is my second language, when in reality I just can't hear them. I also have difficulties distinguishing sounds, and that impacts how I talk.

I'm still coming out – to myself and to people around me. First, I came out as a 'lesbian', then I identified as a 'dyke', and then finally just 'queer'. Now, I identify as a trans(male) who is attracted to all genders.

Yup, I believe there are more than 2 genders. "Male" and "Female" are not well defined categories anymore, maybe they have never been. I present as 'male' – and that's how I am most comfortable being seen as, that's how I want to live my everyday life. However, I also acknowledge I have other genders, and I'm proud of that.

I'm a collector of identities, histories and so much more. But above all, I just want to collect and make sense of my own journey and myself. ●

My volunteer work experience:

I came to Canada since 2004 and have been a life journey full of challenges that if I could have the opportunity I would love to go through it all over again.

I received some advice from people about how to make easier my adaptation and integration process in Canada; and the most important one: Volunteering! And I am glad I did follow this advice because made a huge positive impact in my life and I would not be able to achieve many successes without doing it.

A *long term investment...*

By an *Among Friends* volunteer

Why volunteering has been the most important thing for me?
For several reasons; just to mention some:

1. To learn and/or to improve my English
2. To make new friends, whom eventually became my chosen family
3. To network with people
4. To understand Canadian system and culture
5. To earn the famous Canadian job experience
6. To improve my interpersonal and personal skills, among other benefits but the most important one
7. To give back to my community and to lend a hand to someone in a greater need than I

Why volunteering is an investment?

Because in the long run will pay you back with many opportunities to benefit yourself and your new home. Today I'm proud to call myself a Mexican-Canadian who embrace my new culture and values mixed with the culture where I was born and this all for one reason: To build a stronger Canada. ●

- *Your human fellow* -

Untitled

BY AN *AMONG FRIENDS* VOLUNTEER

It was a cold winter when I arrived in Toronto. I did not know many people and I was so excited to know what Toronto was all about. Already on my second day in the city, someone offered to give me a tour of “Church Street.” I had no idea what they were talking about. I soon realized Church Street referred to the area in Toronto that has many bars, discos, stores, restaurants, bathhouses, shops and things to do for people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans and queer. The area is also known by other names such as the ‘gay village,’ ‘gaybourhood’ or ‘Church and Wellesley.’

If I was looking to find a place to dance, make some new friends or find a lover, Church Street seemed to have it all. However, at first it was a lonely place for me as a newcomer and it was difficult to communicate to others in English. I would just walk around by myself and sometimes I felt I was the only non-white person there. It also felt like a place where not too many women or trans people hung out.

Over the years, Church Street has become more diverse. It was new for me to go to gay bar or disco and I had never seen so many queer people in one room before. It felt good to be who I am and to not have to worry about how I was dancing or who I was with. But I also had to be careful not to have too much alcohol to drink or do drugs because it could be easy for someone to take advantage of me.

Sometimes I feel that as newcomers we are trying so hard to fit in, that we may do anything to make friends, find love or feel connected. Even if I was to hook up with a guy, I would make sure to have safe sex and let a friend know where I was going. I later found out that there are many other places that are LGBTQ friendly that are located outside of Church Street. I would pick up an Xtra magazine and find listings of all those places.

My hope that is all newcomers feel happy and free to be who they are, to love who they want and to dance like no one is watching. ●

Untitled

BY FATIMA

Not all of us come to Canada, in their twenties. Some people – like me! – comes at the end of their 30s, or even at the first steps of their 40s, and this completely changes our experiences.

Very quickly, you find out that you are absolutely alone and lost. In a time that society expects you to be fully integrated, practically on the peak of your career; with a circle of queer friends to support you, you are lost, alone and broke :) Yep, I kind of knew this would happen. I understood the risks. But, my dear friends, nothing prepares you for the size of the fall. And I say this though I love being here!

What I would do different if I had the chance of starting everything all over again? I would try to not bother if people couldn't fully understand my English and just talk with anyone anywhere. Instead of wasting my time in silly volunteering positions that let you just put stamps on letters, I would give my soul to find meaningful volunteering experiences within the LGBTQ community, because, as far as I see, community is the key word for your well-being in your Canadian life.

Go for it! •

Untitled

By Jean

The chances of creating a family with a same-sex partner in my home country are next to nothing. I grew up being taught that same-sex relationships never last, and the concept of raising children within such a relationship is unheard of. Challenging these assumptions by coming out as a queer couple would be a very difficult option due to the fact that same-sex relationships are not recognized and homophobia in the community is widespread.

I came to Canada 3 years ago to be with my partner. Before I met her, the idea of marriage and children never even occurred to me as I thought that queer people were not entitled to these things. Coming to Canada opened up a whole new world of possibilities for me as suddenly I realized that I can claim more space here to express who I am, and I have options available to pursue basic things such as marriage and children if I so choose. This realization was profound, and for the first time in my life, I considered raising a family – something I had never been able to do before.

After my partner and I got married we started talking about having kids. We took a course called “Dykes Planning Tykes” run by The 519 Community Centre and Sherbourne Health Centre, which gave us a wealth of information around same-sex parenting. On our journey towards parenthood we learned that there are many options out there for same-sex couples who are interested in becoming parents, but we also discovered that the system is not perfect and there are still many barriers for queer prospective parents. There are so many things that are very disappointing as we struggle to be given the same right to be parents as heterosexuals. An important part of navigating the journey is to surround yourselves with a supportive network.

Recently, we welcomed our little daughter to the world and it is the most wonderful feeling to look at her little face. Now, I am a mother and my daughter has two moms – something I never thought possible before. ●

Untitled

BY AN *AMONG FRIENDS* VOLUNTEER

LIFE doesn't always go as planned and I realized that when I had to leave everything behind and come to Canada by myself.

I knew no one in Toronto but community groups like *Salaam* and *Supporting Our Youth* generously provided me support, information and connections to meet new friends, gain some Canadian volunteer experience and start my life here. It felt like an exciting adventure to be in this new country with so much freedom to live the life I wanted.

I realize that as one migrates from one place to another, parts of that person are left behind that will never be found in the new place. Is Canada really home? Or will I have to leave again? Relationships sometime no longer feel permanent; neither do life goals or aspirations. Years have passed and somehow I am still stuck trying to figure out where I belong. ●

Are you new to Canada?

**Contact us
for more
information!**



Presented by the Newcomer
Youth Centre at CultureLink.

**Do you want to meet other Lesbian,
Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and
Questioning (LGBTQ) newcomers?**

SpeakOUT



**A place to make
friends, learn about
LGBTQ issues, be
creative and get
support.**

**All LGBTQ identified
newcomers and allies
welcome, regardless of
status.**

SpeakOUT is a program to help queer newcomers get connected, make friends, find support, learn new skills and have fun. We run a variety of different events and programs for LGBTQ newcomers and their allies. We also provide free one on one counseling and referrals. Contact us to find out what's happening or make an appointment.

www.welcomingcommunity.ca
www.culturelink.net
416-588-6288

Terms

biphobia: fear, rejection and hatred of bisexual people based on the perceived binary of being either heterosexual or homosexual

bisexual: an attraction to individuals of both same and opposite sex/gender

cisgender: someone who feels their gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth

coming out: telling someone about how you identify your sexual orientation and/or gender identity

FTM: female to male transperson

gay: someone who identifies as a male and has an attraction to someone of the same sex/gender. Also used as an umbrella term to include all LGBTQ+ people

gender: a group of characteristics that can be defined by culture, society, behaviour or ourselves that will determine our own and other people's perception of someone being feminine, masculine, androgynous, or none of the above

gender identity: the gender that someone identifies and sees themselves as regardless of their assigned sex

gender queer: someone who identifies their gender outside the masculine/feminine binary

heterosexism: thinking everyone is heterosexual/believing it to be superior

homophobia: fear, rejection and hatred of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer people

intersex: someone who is born with both female and male genetics and/or physical characteristics

lesbian: someone who identifies as a female and has an attraction to someone of the same sex/gender

LGBTQ+: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersex, two-spirited, allies and more

MSM: men who have sex with men

MTF: male to female transperson

passing: when a trans person is perceived in everyday situations as a member of the gender they identify with

queer: an umbrella term commonly used to define lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two-spirited and other people and institutions that do not conform and are outside mainstream culture

questioning: someone unsure or still exploring their gender identity/sexual orientation

sex: the physiological, genetic and genital aspects of our bodies

sexual orientation: someone's emotional/sexual/physical attraction and behaviour

transgender: someone who feels their gender identity doesn't match their assigned sex at birth. Transgender people may or may not want to undergo sex reassignment treatments

transphobia: fear, rejection and hatred of trans people, as well as cross-gender elements that exist within all people

transsexual: someone who feels their gender identity doesn't match their assigned sex at birth. Many transsexual people want to go through sex reassignment treatments so that their sex and gender identity match

two-spirited: a term used by first nations to describe someone who has both the male and female spirit

WSW: women who have sex with women



bisexual pride flag: designed by Michael Page in 1998 in order to give the bisexual community its own symbol to increase the visibility of bisexuals, both among society as a whole and within the LGBTQ+ community.

ROSE At the top represents the possibility of same sex/gender attraction.

BLUE At the bottom represents the possibility of different sex/gender attraction.

PURPLE

Overlapping in the middle represents the possibility of both same and different sex/gender attraction.



polyamorous pride flag: represents people who are open to or engaging in multiple loving relationships.

BLUE The openness and honesty among all partners.

RED Love and Passion.

BLACK Solidarity with those who must hide their relationships due to social pressure.

GOLD PI (π) The value placed on the emotional attachment to others.



rainbow flag: in many parts of the world the rainbow flag is a symbol of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ+) pride. It was first designed by San Francisco artist Gilbert Baker in 1978 with eight different coloured stripes. Currently the flag consists of six stripes, with the colours red, orange, yellow, green, blue and purple. The meanings of the colours are:

RED Life

ORANGE Healing

YELLOW Sunlight

GREEN Nature

BLUE Magic/
Art/Healing

PURPLE

Spirit/Soul



trans symbol:

Originating from a drawing by Holly Boswell, it links the internationally accepted symbols for male and female together with a new entity, which is a combination of the two, and which we call transgender. The symbol includes everyone, excluding none. The circle is a symbol of wholeness, and represents the wholeness of a society which includes the transgender.

Resources

Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services:

Primary health care, community and youth programs, and settlement services for newcomers, including LGBTQ+ newcomers.
web: www.accessalliance.ca
tel: 416-693-8677 (east Toronto), 416-760-8677 (west Toronto)

CultureLink: Settlement services and youth programs for newcomers, including LGBTQ+ newcomers.
web: www.culturelink.net
tel: 416-588-6288

The 519 Church Street Community Centre: Programs and services focused specifically for LGBTQ+ communities, including seniors, trans people and newcomers.
web: www.the519.org
tel: 416-392-6874

211 Community Connections:

Information about community, social, health and related government services.
web: www.211toronto.ca
tel: 211

The Centre for Women and Trans People (at University of Toronto): Support, information, resources and referrals for women and trans people.
web: womenscentre.sa.utoronto.ca
tel: 416-978-8201

COSTI: Provides educational, social and employment services to help all immigrants in the Toronto area attain self-sufficiency in Canadian society.
web: www.costi.org
tel: 416-658-1600

Daily Bread Food Bank: Neighbourhood free meal programs for those in need.
web: www.dailybread.ca
tel: 416-203-0050

EXPRESS at Supporting Our Youth: A weekly group for LGBTQ+ newcomer youth to gather, share ideas, ask questions, make friends and have fun.
web: www.soytoronto.org/current/express.html
tel: 416-324-5080

Fred Victor Centre: Support with housing, employment, shelters and more.
web: www.fredvictor.org
tel: 416-364-8228

Hassle Free Clinic: Free medical and counselling services in areas of sexual health, including anonymous STI and HIV testing.
web: www.hasslefreeclinic.org
tel: 416-922-0566

International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA): Advocacy, equality and information for international LGBTQ+ communities.
web: www.ilga.org

LGBTQ Parenting Connection: A network of organizations supporting LGBTQ+ parents, their children and their communities.
web: lgbtqparentingconnection.ca
tel: 416-355-6780

Mental Health Services Information Ontario: Provides free information and referrals about mental health services and supports across Ontario. Service is provided in over 140 languages.
web: www.mhsio.on.ca
tel: 1-866-531-2600

Pride Toronto: Information about annual Toronto Pride week events and activities.
web: www.pridetoronto.com
tel: 416-977-7433

Rainbow Health Ontario (RHO): Ontario-wide program designed to improve and promote access to services around LGBTQ+ health. Also provides resources and information.
web: rainbowhealthontario.ca
tel: 416-324-4100

Sherbourne Health Centre: Primary health care, mental health counselling, trans support and more.
web: www.sherbourne.on.ca
tel: 416-324-4103

Xtra Newspaper: A bi-weekly print and online newspaper highlighting current events, stories and information for LGBTQ+ communities.
web: www.xtra.ca

YMCA: Provides opportunities for personal growth, community involvement, leadership, and has programs and services to help newcomers settle in Canada.
web: www.ymcatoronto.org
tel: 1-800-223-8024

For additional and up to date resources, please go to
www.accessalliance.ca/amongfriends/resources

MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME!



Are you new to Canada?

Access Alliance offers free services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ) immigrants and refugees:

- Our settlement counselors can give you information and support with:

<i>Housing</i>	<i>Filling out forms</i>
<i>School systems</i>	<i>Information on employment</i>
<i>Health</i>	<i>Family stress</i>
<i>Immigration</i>	<i>...and more!</i>

- Services for individuals, couples and families
- Volunteer opportunities
- Art therapy groups
- Group information sessions
- Free services in more than 60 languages



Some of our facilities are wheelchair accessible.
Please call for more information.



Access Alliance
340 College Street, Suite 500
Toronto, ON, M5T 3A9
416-760-8677
www.accessalliance.ca

The 519 Community Centre
519 Church Street
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