



A newsletter for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, and its supporters, of the Ontario Public Service

## Diversity group shows its OPS Pride

Over 200 members and supporters of the OPS Pride Network (the Ontario Public Service's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) employee network) gathered June 20 in Toronto for its one-year anniversary celebration.

OPS Pride is a voluntary association of staff in the OPS of all sexual orientations, with a mission to create a more inclusive public service environment with respect to LGBT issues in the workplace.

The Macdonald Block event was hosted by network member Selma D'Souza, Community Safety and Correctional Services, and Steini Brown, an assistant deputy minister with Health and Long-Term Care. Brown serves as one of the network's executive sponsors along with Deputy Minister of Training Colleges and Universities Philip Steenkamp, and Accessibility Directorate Assistant Deputy Minister Ellen Waxman.

Highlighting the event were remarks by three high-profile supporters of the network – Minister of Education Kathleen Wynne, Secretary of the Cabinet Shelly Jamieson, and Chief Ontario Human Rights Commissioner Barbara Hall.

Wynne not only spoke to the importance of promoting diversity in the public service and in the province, but related the issue to her personal experiences – as a lesbian coming out at a later age and as a parent observing her children as they learned about sexual diversity and homophobia.

Jamieson noted that taking action on diversity issues is a key business priority for senior leadership in the OPS, and is supported by the appointment of a special adviser on diversity.

*For more photos of the event, see page 2.*



Barbara Hall (left), chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC), helps network member Selma D'Souza to unveil the restored and framed poster of the OPS Pride Network at its one-year anniversary. As reported in our February newsletter, the poster had been vandalized late-2007, but the commission arranged for the restoration in time for the celebration.

Story and pictures from Topical Online at [intra.myops.gov.on.ca](http://intra.myops.gov.on.ca)

### Also in this issue ...

- Ontario Government Appoints Chief Diversity Officer, page 3
- Meet One of Our Executive Sponsors, pages 4 – 5
- Baggage: A Play Review, page 6
- Heterosexual Group Speaks Out for Same-Sex Equality, page 7
- Introducing Our Regional Contacts, page 7
- Learn the History Behind the Rainbow Flag, pages 8 – 9
- Relisting of Sex Reassignment Surgery under OHIP, page 10
- Credits, Contacts and Disclaimer, page 11

## One-Year Anniversary

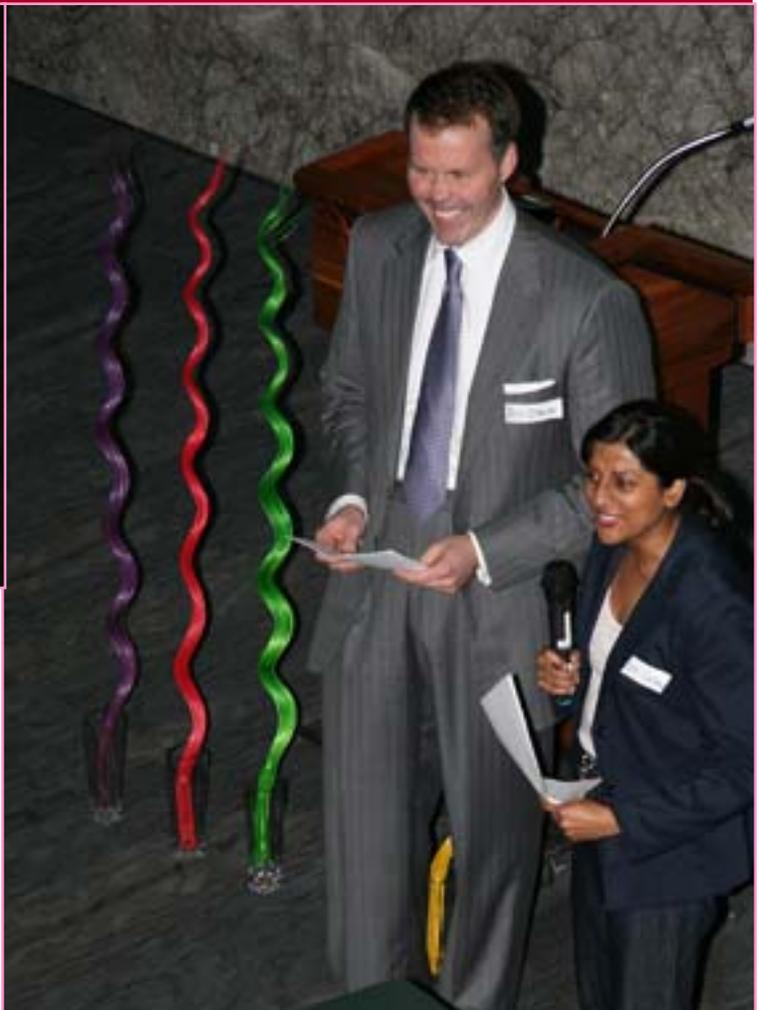


Clockwise from top right: Assistant Deputy Minister Steini Brown and Selma D'Souza welcome guests June 20 to the one-year anniversary of the OPS Pride Network.

Secretary of the Cabinet Shelly Jamieson addresses Pride Network members and supporters.

More than 200 people filled the St. Lawrence Lounge at 900 Bay Street, Toronto.

Minister of Education Kathleen Wynne stresses the importance of diversity within the Ontario Public Service. In the background, Communications Team Lead Richard Belzile signs for the hearing impaired.



## Ontario Government Appoints Chief Diversity Officer

On July 10, 2008, Shelly Jamieson, Secretary of Cabinet and Ron McKerlie, Associate Secretary of Cabinet and DM of MGS, jointly signed a memo to all the DMs within the OPS announcing the appointment of Noëlle Richardson as Chief Diversity Officer within the OPS effective August 18, 2008.

Noëlle was born in Guyana and moved to Canada in her early teens. She attended the University of Windsor where she obtained a BA in Sociology.

For the past ten years, Noëlle Richardson has worked as a Diversity consultant delivering seminars on the advantages of inclusion for individual and organizational success.

Prior to being a diversity consultant, Noëlle worked in broadcasting. In 1983, she hosted a program called “Black World”. In 1987 she joined the CBC and became the anchor of “Midday News”. As well, Ms. Richardson worked as a host for Vision 360 on Vision TV, a multi-faith television network. While at Vision TV, Ms. Richardson hosted a gay man who recounted his story in his struggle to adopt children.

[www.visiontv.ca/Media/Archives/360Adopt.html](http://www.visiontv.ca/Media/Archives/360Adopt.html)

The OPS Pride Network looks forward to collaborating with Ms. Richardson and her staff at the Diversity Office as we strive to make the OPS a more inclusive and diversified employer.



**Noëlle Richardson**

---

## Executive Sponsor Profile: Philip Steenkamp

Deputy Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and OPS Pride Network Executive Sponsor Philip Steenkamp's achievements are impressive.

Not only has his personal background given him insight to GLBT and other diversity issues, but his career has afforded him a number of opportunities to work on them in concrete ways.



Steenkamp was born in Botswana. Compared to nearby South Africa, Botswana was a model of democracy and interracial harmony – an interesting counterpoint to its troubled neighbour.

As a young adult, Steenkamp pursued studies at an English-speaking university in South Africa during the height of the apartheid regime. The experience was a surprisingly radicalizing one. “One of the ironies of oppressive societies is that sometimes they have pockets of incredibly progressive politics and culture. You had to make moral choices every day

about how you were going to act and behave, and who you were going to associate with. These kinds of experiences force you to really examine your internal beliefs and value systems, probably in a more powerful way than you do in a liberal democracy like Canada.”

After completing undergraduate studies, Steenkamp pursued graduate studies in Canada, earning an MA and PhD in African history from Queen's University. Research on refugees in Namibia and subsequent teaching posts at Queen's and the University of Victoria followed.

In 1994, Steenkamp began his public service career at British Columbia's Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. He went on to become Chief Negotiator for treaties on Vancouver Island and in northern British Columbia, Deputy Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, and then Deputy Minister of the Treaty Negotiations Office.

“The treaty process in B.C. gave me wide exposure to First Nations communities,” Steenkamp recalls. “You could see that while this country is one of great prosperity and opportunity, a large proportion of the population still languishes in third world conditions. The causes of that are very complex and the solutions are incredibly challenging but there are some interesting affinities between things I saw in Africa and things I saw in our First Nations communities.”

Beyond witnessing social justice and diversity issues at play in African and Canadian societies, Steenkamp has experienced them personally as a gay man who has lived in places contrasting levels of tolerance toward GLBT people – Africa, where homosexuality is not, for the most part, tolerated, and Canada where he has witnessed unprecedented gains in rights for gays and lesbians culminating in legalization of same-sex marriage.

Steenkamp's point of view on diversity and social justice is, therefore, unique. “These experiences – witnessing a minority white population brutally oppress and exploit a majority black population, coming to Canada and seeing the persistence of poverty in First Nations communities, yet witnessing progress being made on GLBT issues here – I think all that suggests that these issues that seem entrenched and intractable can all be worked on, but they take a huge amount of energy and we have to be vigilant.”

Steenkamp has brought that perspective to his subsequent Ontario Public Service appointments as Deputy Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and Acting Deputy Minister of Education, where he has applied his grasp of the issues to work on a variety of initiatives, including school curricula on diversity, equity of outcome in academic performance,

**Philip Steenkamp (Continued)**

and the Pathways to Education initiative which has provided academic and social supports to improve academic performance of at-risk youth.

TCU's Deputy is also serving as a mentor in an OPS Framework for Action program which allows him to share his experience with high-potential individuals who are members of a variety of designated diversity groups.

As an Executive Sponsor of the OPS Pride Network, Steenkamp is quite versed in arguing the business case for the organization – that a welcoming environment leads to engagement and increased productivity, that the OPS needs to compete with the private sector as an employer of choice and affinity groups are a recruitment draw, and that as a model employer the OPS should set an example around diversity.

Steenkamp marvels at the potential of the OPS Pride Network's membership – perhaps the most diverse of our affinity groups with representation that crosses race, gender and socio-economic class. We have a certain diversity within diversity. He also speculates on the outreach beyond the OPS and Ontario that the network might undertake as the organization matures.

When asked why he felt it was important to lend his support to the Pride Network, Steenkamp's response is more personal. "It's almost a cliché to say it, but recently I've become convinced of the importance of role models. Having role models within the OPS from groups that may not always feel comfortable expressing their identity can make a real difference – and this idea extends beyond the GLBT community, beyond the OPS. We need role models of every kind."

"It's important to have role models for young women in science and technology, for black kids in schools to see black school teachers, for young boys in kindergarten to see male kindergarten teachers."

"It's almost the most powerful message you can send – to say its ok to be who you are, wherever you are."

Please see future issues of our newsletter for profiles of our other executive sponsors.

## Baggage: A Play Review

By Richard Belzile

Kudos to one of our own!

On July 9, 2008, I attended a showing of *Baggage* with a few other members of the OPS Pride collective. You may recall that we advertised Reese's play in our May newsletter. The evening was a compilation of plays in 8 parts that were written by the Pulang Maleta Collective (PMC). Pulang Maleta means "red luggage" in Filipino and references to the bright red suitcases denotes references of shame similar to the red stiletto heels in North America.



The red luggage figured predominantly in the first play where two Filipinos now working at a Toronto airport security checkpoint converse in English/Tagalog. The newly arrived "Cherry Pie" vs. the long-term landed Maria "Lilly" Liliioso. Interestingly enough, the play still flowed with an understanding of human nature, the general topic of conversation between co-workers and strangers and the nature of shame versus pride vis-à-vis cultural baggage. Kudos to the writing and acting.

Reese Baguio characteristically limped unto the scene as Rachel in her own authored play with the most charming "new" lesbian Alex (Michelle Turingan) who fumbled through words, breaths, awkwardness, witty drag queen advice and hetero strip bars to find the courage to trust her instincts and the ability to breathe before tackling a loving and tender relationship with Reese in the last scene. Bravo! (I cried. Both eyes.)

The acts continued to move and shock us with a married man's encounter with Eden, a fiercely wise and independent sex-trade worker, who later reappears as a generous lap-dancer guide in an hilarious scene with Alex our virgin lesbian. (I cried. I laughed.) Finally the bitter reality of shame within a mob-like family brought tinges of the Sopranos and modern day daughters locked in modern day taboos and rules. This Act interestingly enough involved the audience as "plate-holding" prop-holders during wonderfully choreographed set changes between family dining room and car scenes.

The play, its second run is now over. It was held at Kapisanan Philippine Centre for Arts and Culture at 167 Augusta Avenue in the Kensington Market district and the venue only holds about eighty. Our own Michael Went was turned back at the door for a Wednesday night sold out performance!

Again – Kudos to Reese – and the Pulang Maleta Collective – may your talents blossom in the OPS and through the Pride Network.

Now where did I leave my red bag?

## Heterosexual Group Speaks Out for Same-Sex Equality

By Maria Buscemi

I was asked by the OPS Pride Network's communication team to write about an organization I belong to called the Heterosexuals for Same Sex Equality (HSSE). This group was formed to quash the outdated voices who were and are trying to convince us that LGBT rights threaten the heterosexual way of life.

*Funny, we thought, we don't feel threatened.*

The HSSE believes the right to love is universal and the right to feel at home in one's own skin is fundamental.

When an irate group is so loud and determined, it's easy to stand back and say nothing – who wants to get into an argument with someone who just refuses to understand? The truth though, is that most straight people are compassionate, loving, supportive and hopeful for the future. It's time we stood up and said so.

As the HSSE grows, we hope to provide support to those who live in communities where open minded role models can be hard to come by. Our website, [www.straightnotnarrow.ca](http://www.straightnotnarrow.ca), provides some resources for teachers, students and parents who want to offer support and an inclusive environment to LGBT youth.

The responsibility to stand up for human rights and equality belongs to us all. I hope you will visit the HSSE's website to learn more about us and that you will invite your friends, parents, children and colleagues to do the same.

*Maria Buscemi is the Divisional Issues Coordinator for the French-language Education and Educational Operations Division, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and a member of Heterosexuals for Same Sex Equality (HSSE).*

### Introducing Our Regional Contacts ...

Jamus Dorey in Thunder Bay

Evelyn Perdue in Orillia

Bill Last in Ottawa

Saleha Khan from Ontario Police College in Aylmer

Wendy Truant from the London/Windsor area

## Rainbow Flag History

Many Styles of Rainbow Flags have been designed to represent our gay community, but few know the actual origin.



Use of the rainbow flag by the gay community began in 1978 when it first appeared in the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Freedom Day Parade. Borrowing symbolism from the hippie movement and black civil rights groups, San Francisco artist Gilbert Baker designed the rainbow flag in response to a need for a symbol that could be used year after year. Baker and thirty volunteers hand-stitched and hand-dyed two huge prototype flags for the parade.

The flags had eight stripes, each color representing a component of the community:

Hot Pink for Sex
Red for Life
Orange for Healing
Yellow for Sun
Green for Nature
Turquoise for Art
Indigo for Harmony
Violet for Spirit

The next year Baker approached San Francisco Paramount Flag Company to mass-produce rainbow flags for the 1979 parade. Due to production constraints the hot pink and turquoise were removed and blue replaced the indigo.

This six-color version spread from San Francisco to other cities, and soon became the widely-known symbol of gay pride and diversity it is today. The rainbow flag has inspired a wide variety of related symbols such as the freedom rings, the RainbowCoin, Rainbow Triangles and Color Bars.

The Victory Over AIDS Flag modifies the rainbow flag by adding a black stripe at the bottom. Suggested by a San Francisco group, the black stripe commemorates those we have lost to AIDS. Sergeant Leonard Matlovich, a much-decorated Vietnam Veteran dying of AIDS, proposed that when a cure was eventually found the black stripes should be removed from all the flags and ceremoniously burned in Washington, D.C.

The multicultural symbolism of the rainbow is nothing new – Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition also embraces the rainbow as a symbol of that political movement. The rainbow also plays a part in many myths and stories related to gender and sexuality issues in Greek, Native American, African, and other cultures.

From [www.rainbowcoin.com/flag\\_history.htm](http://www.rainbowcoin.com/flag_history.htm)

*See page 9 for examples of the rainbow flag being used internationally and in other cultures as well as for a discussion of another symbol adopted by the LGBT community, the pink triangle.*

## Rainbow Flag

A rainbow flag is a multi-colored flag consisting of stripes in the colors of the rainbow. The actual colors used differ, but many of the designs are based on the traditional scheme of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet, or some more modern division of the rainbow spectrum (often excluding indigo, and sometimes including cyan instead).

The use of rainbow flags has a long tradition; they are displayed in many cultures around the world as a sign of diversity and inclusiveness, of hope and of yearning.

There are several unrelated rainbow flags in use today. The most widely known is perhaps the pride flag representing gay pride. The peace flag is especially popular in Italy and the cooperative flag symbolizes international cooperation. It is also used by Andean people to represent the legacy of the Inca empire (Wiphala) and Andean movements.



**Wiphala: Banner of the Inca Empire**



**The PACE flag (Italian for "peace")**



**Greek language peace flag**



**Flags of the International Co-operative Alliance (1925 version on the left, and current version on the right).**



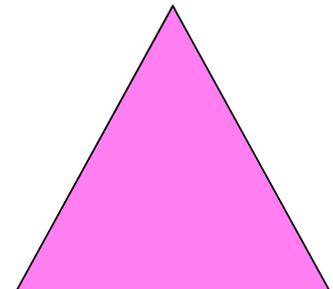
From [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow\\_flag](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow_flag)

## Pink Triangle

The pink triangle was used by the Nazis in concentration camps to identify and shame homosexuals. This symbol, which was used to label and shame, has been embraced by the gay community as a symbol of pride.

However, in the 1930s & 1940s there was nothing celebratory about the pink triangle. Gays were forced to wear the pink triangle on their breast pockets in the concentration camps to identify them as homosexual to set them apart from other prisoners.

Triangles of various colors were used to identify each category of "undesirable": yellow for Jews, brown of Gypsies, red for political prisoners, green for criminals, black for anti-socials, purple for Jehovah's Witnesses, blue for immigrants, and pink for homosexuals.



From [www.thepinktriangle.com/history/symbol.html](http://www.thepinktriangle.com/history/symbol.html)

## Relisting of Sex Reassignment Surgery under OHIP

By Christine Ann Leahy

*“One of the great myths of our culture is that at birth each infant can be identified as distinctly ‘male’ or ‘female’ (biological sex), will grow up to have correspondingly ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ behaviour (public gender), live as a ‘man’ or a ‘woman’ (social gender role), and marry a woman or a man (heterosexual affective orientation). This is not so. There is much disagreement as to why this is not so, but a significant number of people in fact do not fit this simple idea of biological gender destiny.”*

(Quote from the Ontario Human Rights Commission “Toward a Commission Policy on Gender Identity, Discussion Paper”, October 1999)

For a part of our LGBT community, for a part of the T community, for the pre-op transsexual amongst the transgendered, the news that SRS is being relisted under OHIP has been met with much hope and anticipation.

It has been 10 years since SRS was delisted, there have been OHRC cases, campaigns by trans activists, support from LGBT organizations, social groups, unions, health professionals and politicians to restore transsexual (TS) health care. In my experience the message has been consistent, Gender Identity Disorder is a medical condition, it is not a choice, for some people SRS is a part of the internationally recognized treatment. The World Professional Association for Transgendered Health (WPATH) standards of care should be used.

In the OHIP Bulletin 4480 at [www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca) it states that advice was sought regarding the use of WPATH standards of care from Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and Sherbourne Health Centre to inform the implementation strategy.

In the intervening 10 years some TS have transitioned to full time life in their target gender role without passing through the CAMH Gender Identity Clinic program. They may have used a clinic at a different health centre or local psychiatric/medical resources. Some of these people are waiting for SRS and the question of how they can be accommodated by the relisting is still unclear.

CAMH and their LBGT Working Groups will be holding a community information/discussion on: Monday August 11th at Sherbourne Health Centre. One of the agenda items is to update gender identity clinical support options. Details and other trans community news can be found at [www.themenace.net](http://www.themenace.net).

---

## Thanks ...

A special thank you goes out to members of the Communications Team, as well as to all other members of the OPS Pride Network, who contributed story ideas, articles and pictures to this issue. The newsletter is not possible without your assistance.

We invite readers of our newsletter to submit story ideas to [OPSPride@ontario.ca](mailto:OPSPride@ontario.ca)

The OPS Pride Network Newsletters (PNN) have been brought to you by a dedicated team of volunteers that meet regularly to decide on issues and distribute reporting, writing and administrative tasks. As communication lead of an LGBT group, I've been at the forefront of their dedication and their work but as a leader I've been remiss. As a volunteer LGBT organization, it is difficult to publicly recognize individuals that, for some reason or another, prefer to work anonymously. In this issue, those below have agreed to be recognized and thanked for their contribution to this and past newsletters. I thank everyone for their help – but for those below – I wish to thank them for their courage, creativity and camaraderie while being “out” there with me. — Richard

### Publishing editor:

Bradley Hilderley (MGS)

### Contributors, Writers & Reporters:

Alan Moon (MET)  
 John Sproule (MOHLTC)  
 Tim Hilliard (CSS)  
 Christine Ann Leahy (MGS)  
 Maria Buscemi (EDU and MET)  
 Michah Rynor (MAA)  
 Dave Ross (FIN)

### Administrative Support:

Evelyn Perdue (FIN)  
 Minh Huynh (CSS)

### Photographer:

Theresa Baguio (CAB)

### Logo Design:

Yoti Goudas (MAH)

### Executive Sponsors:

Philip Steenkamp (TCU)  
 Ellen Waxman (CSS)  
 Adalsteinn Brown (MOH)

## Contact Us ...

[OPSPride@ontario.ca](mailto:OPSPride@ontario.ca)

**Executive Relations:**  
**Terms of Reference:**

Enrique.Garcia@ontario.ca  
 Ravi.Bhusia@ontario.ca

**Communications:**  
**Events:**

Richard.Belzile@ontario.ca  
 Selma.D'Souza@ontario.ca  
 and Michael.Went@ontario.ca

**Business Case Development:** Michael.Went@ontario.ca

**Disclaimer:** This newsletter is produced by the OPS Pride Network, a volunteer group of Ontario Public Service employees. It is not an official publication of the Ontario Government or the OPS. All views and opinions expressed are those of members of the OPS Pride Network and are not intended for public distribution outside of the OPS.