

# What Can I Do?

## Be Part of the Solution

### Learn More About The Connections Between Different Types Of Oppression

Many people still have difficulty seeing that homophobia, racism, poor bashing, sexism, and many other types of oppression are related. Learn about how they are.

### Listen

Listen, listen, and listen. Listen to people's stories of their struggles. Read about people who have faced oppression. Seek out discussion groups on the Internet that talk about homophobia, sexism, ageism, and other "isms."

### Humility

All members of society grow up surrounded by oppressive attitudes; we are marinated in it. Undoing prejudicial teachings is an on-going process, like keeping the dishes clean. Humility is a mark of someone who has gone down a portion of the road and has caught a glimpse of just how long the road is [6].

### Speak Out First

If you hear a homophobic joke or comment, be the first one to speak out. Do not wait for a GLBTT person to object to the comment. Remember that the struggle against homophobia and heterosexism is everyone's responsibility – do your part [7].

### Challenge Your Own And Other People's Thinking And Perceptions

Assume that there are lesbian, gay, and bisexual people where you work, where you go to school, etc. Hold hands with someone of the same sex in public. Wear pro-lesbian/gay T-shirts and buttons. If you are heterosexual, try keeping your heterosexuality in the closet for one week by not disclosing it to anyone [8].

## How to Handle Harassment in 3 Minutes [9]

These four steps are intended to address harassment in a public way so that people witnessing the incident are aware that harassment is not acceptable and that they should stand up if it does occur.

### Stop the harassment.

- ▶ Interrupt the comment.
- ▶ Make your interruption as public as necessary.

### Identify the harassment.

- ▶ Label the form of harassment: "You just made a harassing comment based on sexual orientation (gender orientation, race, religion, ethnicity, economic status, size, etc)."
- ▶ Do not imply that the victim is a member of that identifiable group.

### Broaden the response.

- ▶ Make your response as impersonal as possible. For example, "Our community group does not support harassing comments."
- ▶ Re-identify the offensive behaviour: "This name calling is hurtful to others who overhear it."

### Ask for change in future behaviour.

- ▶ Personalize your response: "Chris, please think about how your words impact on others."
- ▶ Check in with the victim at this time: "Please know that I am here to help. We want people to feel safe here at the community centre."

[1] Adapted from: Bishop, Anne. *Becoming an Ally: Breaking the Cycles of Oppression*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1997.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Marcus, Eric. *Is It A Choice?: Answers to 300 of the Most Frequently Asked Questions About Gay and Lesbian People*. San Francisco: Harper Publishing, 1999.

[4] Taken from the "Myths and Fact" Sheet produced by the Rainbow Resource Centre, 2000.

[5] Children's Hospital, Denver, Colorado, 1992.

[6] Adapted from: Bishop, Anne. *Becoming an Ally: Breaking the Cycles of Oppression*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1997.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Adapted from the Homophobia pamphlet produced by the Rainbow Resource Centre.

[9] Adapted from: "How to Handle Harassment in the Hallways in 3 Minutes!" produced by GLSEN/Colorado. [www.glsenco.org/](http://www.glsenco.org/)

## Community Resources

### City of Winnipeg

Citizen Equity Committee .....986-4167  
 City of Winnipeg Ombudsman .....986-5641  
 .....TTY 986-7030

### Winnipeg Police Service

Non-Emergency (includes TTY) .....986-6222  
 Diversity Relations Officer .....986-6453  
 Hate Crimes Unit .....986-6228

### Province of Manitoba

Manitoba Human Rights Commission.....945-3007  
 .....TTY 945-3442

### Other Community Resources

B'nai Brith Canada –  
 League For Human Rights .....487-9623  
 Council on Homosexuality & Religion .....772-8215  
 Facts of Life Line.....947-9222  
 Klinik Community Health Centre  
 Sexual Assault Line .....786-8631  
 Crisis Line .....786-8686  
 Manitoba Association for Rights & Liberties .....947-0213  
 Nine Circles Community Health Centre.....940-6000  
 Parents, Family, and Friends  
 of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) .....233-6602  
 Rainbow Resource Centre  
 Info/Peer Counselling Line .....284-5208  
 Administration Line .....474-0212  
 Sage House .....943-6379  
 Sexuality Education Resource Centre (SERC) ....982-7800  
 Teen Talk .....784-4010  
 University of Manitoba  
 Rainbow Pride Mosaic.....474-7439  
 Peer Advisors.....474-6696  
 University of Winnipeg - The LGBT\* Centre.....786-9025  
 Victims of Homophobic Violence  
 Memorial Committee.....772-8215



This pamphlet is part of an information series on promoting diversity in society produced by the Winnipeg Committee

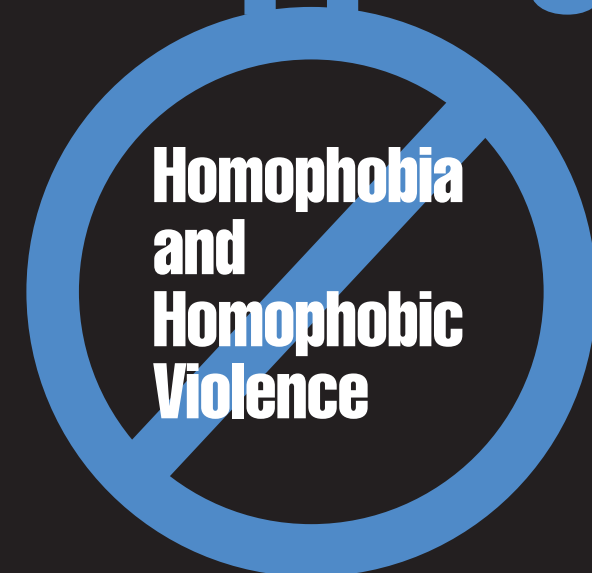
For Safety and the Ad Hoc Diversity Working Group, in cooperation with the Winnipeg Police Service.

For more information, please phone or write:



510 Main Street, Council Building, Lower Level  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 1B9 Phone (204) 986-7924

# Stopping



## Homophobia and Homophobic Violence

**"The City shall provide leadership in dealing with discriminatory barriers including racism, sexism, and homophobia and shall promote the full and equal participation of all citizens in the social, political, economic and cultural life of the city."**

From *Plan Winnipeg... Toward 2010*  
adopted by City Council  
June 23, 1993 (By-law No. 5915/92)



## What is it?

### What is Homophobia?

Homophobia is hatred, fear, or discomfort towards bisexual people, gay men, lesbians, transgendered people, and/or two-spirited people.

### What is GLBTT?

GLBTT stands for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and two-spirited people. It is a lot faster and simpler to say GLBTT communities than it is to list everyone.

### What is Heterosexism?

Heterosexism is the assumption, belief, or structure(s) within society, which favours one kind of loving – between a man and a woman in a monogamous marriage with children – over all other kinds of loving. Heterosexism not only oppresses GLBTT people, but also single people, one-parent families, unmarried couples, childless couples, and anyone else who does not fit the “ideal” mold [1].

### What is Sexual Identity?

Sexual identity is each person's inner-sense of oneself as a sexual being, including how one identifies in terms of gender and sexual orientation.

### What is a Solution?

You can be part of the solution by working alongside a marginalized group to end forms of discrimination which give you privilege [2]. For example, a white person who works to end racism, or a straight person who works to end heterosexism and homophobia.

# Myths and Facts

Most of us are ignorant about homosexuality and heterosexism. Ignorance breeds homophobia – a fear and intolerance of bisexuals, gay men, lesbians, transgendered people, and two-spirited people. Learn to separate fact from fiction.

**MYTH:** Homosexuality is unnatural.

**FACT:** It is no more abnormal or sick to be homosexual than it is to be left-handed. Homophobia and heterosexism are what need to be redressed.

**MYTH:** Homosexuals want to “convert” heterosexuals.

**FACT:** Gay men and lesbians do not recruit people to become gay. A heterosexual person can't be seduced into being a gay man or lesbian any more than you can seduce a gay man or lesbian into being a heterosexual [3].

**MYTH:** AIDS is a gay disease.

**FACT:** HIV/AIDS is everyone's concern. If you are not concerned, such thinking may be putting you and your potential sex partners at risk. Heterosexual women comprise the highest percentage of new HIV cases in Canada. More than any other group, the homosexual community knows about the consequences of AIDS and reducing the chances for its transmission. If you haven't already done so, it is time you learned too.

**MYTH:** Lesbians and gays could change if they wanted to.

**FACT:** The American Psychological Association (APA) states that there is no scientific evidence supporting the effectiveness of conversion therapies and opposes “all portrayals of

lesbian, gay, and bisexual people as mentally ill and in need of treatment due to their sexual orientation.” Those who are highly motivated to change their sexual orientation may change their behaviour, but not their underlying desire. Energy should go into eradicating homophobia so that people will feel comfortable with their sexuality, whatever that may be [4].

**MYTH:** Gay men are child molesters.

**FACT:** It is a well-researched fact that the highest proportions of child molesters are heterosexual men who are relatives, family friends, or persons in positions of authority or trust to a child. “Between July 1, 1991 and June 30, 1992, only one of 387 cases of suspected child molestation involved a gay perpetrator. Overwhelmingly, the study found that boys and girls alike said they were abused by heterosexual male family members.” [5].

**MYTH:** If I stand up against homophobia, people will think I'm gay.

**FACT:** Well, this is not a sex issue; it is a human rights issue. You don't have to be homosexual, or a woman, or of a certain race, religion or culture to believe in and work for the acceptance of diversity, to believe we are all entitled to the same basic human rights. Speaking out against homophobia or speaking up in support of GLBTT people makes you a better friend, relative, co-worker and neighbour.



## What You Should Know

Many families have a GLBTT relative – a mother, father, son, daughter, aunt, uncle, cousin, niece, nephew or grandparent.

Your GLBTT acquaintances, friends, relatives or co-workers have been and still are working towards having the same rights as straight people. Still, many people see GLBTT people only in terms of their sexual or gender orientation, not as individuals with basic rights. The following are some basic human rights that GLBTT people do have:

The Manitoba Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender-determined characteristics, and sex. You can't deny someone an education, employment, career advancement, housing or any other service because they are or may be GLBTT.

In a safety survey conducted in the Winnipeg GLBTT community by the Rainbow Resource Centre, 49% of people surveyed responded that they had been verbally or physically assaulted under the assumption that they were GLBTT.

Since April 1993, the Winnipeg Police Service Hate Crimes Unit has been investigating offences based on hatred of a person's race, culture, religion, or sexual orientation. In 2000, there were 39 reported hate crime incidents in Winnipeg including 7 homophobic-related incidents. All reported hate-related assaults were homophobic in nature.

It's time to stop discriminating against GLBTT people and to put an end to homophobia and gay bashing.