

Riverdale Women's Dances – The Edmonton Women's Music Collective-
December 1988 to December 1997

written by Sheryl Ackerman
January 20, 2015

(Documents include photos, article and Pride Passport Edmonton)

These dances for women began in December 1988 and lasted until December 1997. They were unique in three ways:

- they were smoke free
- we played only women's music
- they were alcohol free (only because no one wanted to do all the work of getting the permit and alcohol!)

We held 4 dances per year, the dates of which were as close as possible to the spring equinox, summer solstice, fall equinox and winter solstice. We always checked with Womospace to make sure our dates never overlapped. People gradually came to refer to our dances as the "Riverdale Women's Dances" because they always took place at the Riverdale Community League Hall.

The collective changed through the years, but usually consisted of 6 to 8 women. Pauline Bélanger and I, Sheryl Ackerman, were the only ones who stayed with the collective the entire 9 years. Founding members included: Sheryl Ackerman, Pauline Bélanger, Leslie Stewart, Anna Pellat, Karen Caulkins, Reni and Cathy.

Some interesting features of our dances include:

- for women only
- all women's music
- no alcohol
- no smoking – at the time quite a novel concept (though originally we permitted smoking in the small lounge, then later outside)

- \$7 entry fee – sliding scale
- completely volunteer run
- honour system for purchasing beverages
- for music, at first we used cassette tapes (!), then CDs, then switched to a live DJ
- sometimes included card games and board games set up in the small lounge
- occasionally line dance lessons beforehand
- occasionally a softball game and a picnic before the dance
- food catered by the Bagel Tree in the early years
- advertising of other women's events

We called ourselves the Edmonton Women's Music Collective because we promoted women's music. This we did in a number of ways:

- we played only women's music at the dances
- we publicized women's music events such as the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival
- we helped create, subsidize, sponsor or co-sponsor concerts featuring women singers and groups

We had amazing, fun-filled, spirited, empowering times. We worked like crazy as a collective, and had fabulous support from volunteers too. However, by 1996, the energy to mount these dances was flagging. We committed ourselves to one final year, with our last dance held December 13th, 1997. What was left in our account we later donated to the A.S.W.A.C. Defense Fund.

I plan to submit a binder with all of the archival materials to the Edmonton Archives at a future date.

Edmonton Women's Music Collective Founding Members
Founded in December 1988
This was photo taken in spring of 1989.



EDMONTON WOMEN'S MUSIC COLLECTIVE

FOUNDING MEMBERS

December 1988

Back row: Reni Cathy Anna Sheryl Leslie

Front seated: Karen Pauline

Poster of Edmonton Women's Music Collective Founding Members



Our Summer Solstice Dance during Pride Week 1992 As mentioned in ASWAC article by Sheryl McInnes

BEFORE.....STONEWALL.....AFTER

by Sheryl McInnes

Pink, Pride, Power... the theme of Edmonton's Pride Week, 1992: a week long celebration of 23 years of our involvement in the Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights Movement. (Similar celebrations are occurring in Calgary and other cities across North America. What is this PRIDE stuff all about? Why do lesbians and Gay men need "rights"; are these "special rights"? No, we are simply asking for the same individual rights protection that all other Albertans take for granted, in other words, an end to discrimination. And how does all this fit with feminism and the women's movement?

Beginning in approximately the 1920's, when among other things the label of 'lesbianism' silenced the first wave of feminism, there was a slow, somewhat secretive movement aimed at ending discrimination based on 'sexual orientation'. By the 1950's and 1960's, homosexual male and lesbian organizations such as the Mattachine society and Daughters of Bilitis (USA) and the Vancouver Association for Social Knowledge began to create a sense of community for gays and lesbians. In Canada in May of 1969, consensual homosexual acts were decriminalized for persons over the age of 21 (this was dropped to age 18 in 1987), provided that such activity takes place in private.

On June 27-28, 1969 the New York Vice squad raided the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village (a known gay bar) under the pretext that they were "serving liquor without a licence". The 'street queens' protested verbally which drew a crowd. When a lesbian (described as a woman dressed like a man) emerged from the bar, police attempted to put her in a paddy wagon. She resisted and this struggle led to a full scale riot. Over the next two days, hundreds of lesbians and gay men openly rebelled against years of repression, harassment and 'bashing'. The Stonewall Riots have come to be known as the 'birth' of the Gay and Lesbian Civil Rights Movement. Subsequently across North America, thousands of organizations formed around the issues of rights to privacy and freedom of association (USA) and individual rights protection under the Human Rights Act (Canada). Taking their cue from the Black and Native Civil Rights Movements (racism), and the Women's Movement (sexism), lesbians began to develop theories around heterosexism (a belief that the only "natural" sexual relations are between a man and a woman) and homophobia (the fear and hatred of same sex relationships). Working in parallel with the other social movements that arose out of the 1960's, the movement for lesbian and gay rights has both an academic strand of activity and grass roots activism. The grass roots movement is somewhat divided between lesbian-only (some would say 'separatist') associations and the mixed gay/lesbian rights organizations.

At one level rights for gay men and lesbians have a common ground under the term 'sexual orientation'. But lesbians, as



females, also have a different experience of oppression that may require closer attention to the combined effects of sexism and heterosexism and how the courts adjudicate those rights' issues for lesbians. Currently L.E.A.F. (Women's Legal Education and Action Fund) is holding consultations with lesbians across Canada to examine these issues (an information package is available through ASWAC or Womospace). Lesbians are not a homogenous group; we are quite literally everywhere, and therefore are also subject to discrimination based on able-bodiness, race, religion, ageism and so on. Lesbian issues are feminist issues; feminist issues are lesbian issues. The false division among us based on a 'label of deviancy' must not become part of our collective work for our rights of equality, as women. With that in mind, I would like to call on all ASWAC members and friends to join with us during the week of June 20 - 28; come talk, sing, and march with us in solidarity. Wear PINK, celebrate PRIDE, and help us take our own POWER to effect change.

PRIDE WEEK EVENTS: Edmonton

Friday June 19, 8pm, Boyle Street Community Centre (9515-104 St) PRIDE WEEK DANCE sponsored by Gay and Lesbian Community Centre Youth Group

Saturday June 20, 8pm, Bonnie Doon Hall (9240-93 St) WOMONSPACE DANCE

FILM FESTIVAL: Monday June 22, Centennial Library Theatre 7:30 show, 9pm reception ... Tuesday/Wednesday National Film Board Theatre (Canada Place) 7:30 pm showing

Friday June 26, Riverdale Hall (9231 - 100 Ave) WOMEN'S SUMMER SOLSTICE DANCE

... AND ... the BIG DAY, Saturday June 27 ... PRIDE - A - THON (cycle, walk, jog) 10am Kinsmen Field House

PARADE AND RALLY (with Svend Robinson), meet at 83 Ave and 104 St (Gazebo), wear pink, march proud - 2-4pm

ROMANOVSKY & PHILLIPS 7pm, Garneau Theatre (Gay & Lesbian, social/political satire in concert)

Full information on all this and more, call Gay and Lesbian Community Centre, afternoons or after 7pm 488-3234
Calgary: 233-0731
Lethbridge: 328-GALA

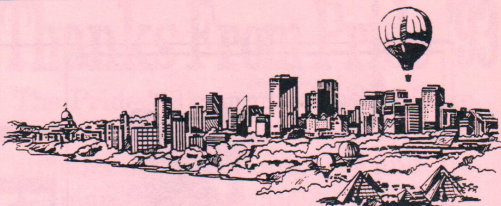
Alberta Status of Women Action Committee

June/July 1992

Volume III, Number 2



Our Summer Solstice Dance during Pride Week 1993
 As seen in the Pride Passport Edmonton



PROCLAMATION

GAY AND LESBIAN PRIDE DAY


WHEREAS every person deserves to be treated with dignity and respect, and;

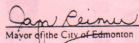
WHEREAS in support of this principle the City of Edmonton has adopted an Equal Opportunities Policy that promotes freedom from discrimination, and;

WHEREAS public information and discussion help to break down stereotypes and build respect for every person, and;

WHEREAS special events have been planned by the Gay and Lesbian Pride Committee '93, in memory of the Stonewall Riots;

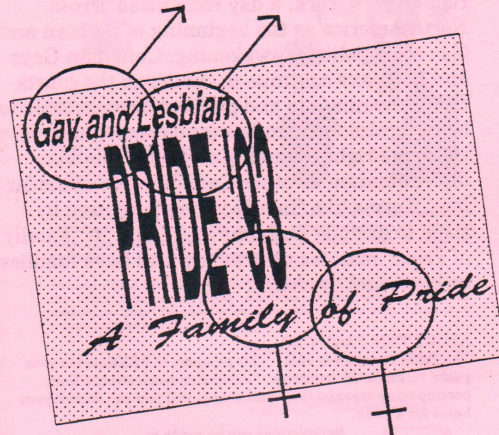
THEREFORE I, MAYOR JAN REIMER, DO HEREBY PROCLAIM
 JUNE 26, 1993 "GAY AND LESBIAN PRIDE DAY" IN EDMONTON.




 Mayor of the City of Edmonton

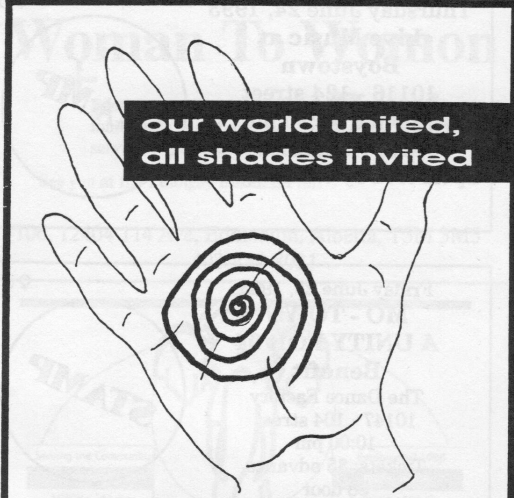
 City Clerk Date May 5, 1993

PRIDE PASSPORT EDMONTON



SAFER SEX IS PART OF GAY PRIDE

Sponsored by G.M.O.C. (Gay Men's Outreach Crew) & G.L.C.C.E. (Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Edmonton)



**our world united,
all shades invited**

THE DAILY PLANET

Cappuccino & Food Bar
2nd Floor Rotunda CityCentre 425-0812

♀

Friday June 25, 1993
Summer Solstice Dance
 Riverdale Community Hall
 9231 - 100 Ave.
 8:30 pm
 Tickets: \$7 sliding scale

STAMP

♀♂

Saturday June 26, 1993
Pride Day Parade & Rally
 McIntyre Gazebo Park
 83 ave & 104 street
 1:30 pm

STAMP

Our community has seen big changes, but together we're proud to make them. Together we are all responding. And no one is alone.

