



CELEBRATION OF PRIDE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

By Andi Christine Bednarzig

Rainbows shone bright in Brockville and Gananoque this summer as Pride Week was celebrated. This event brought together members of the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) community, their families, friends and supporters.

The rainbow flag has long been a symbol of LGBTQ pride. There may be variants of the flag with additional stripes, but the symbology is universal. Red represents life, bright orange stands for healing, yellow for sunlight, green for nature, calming and cool blue for serenity and lilac, the last colour of the rainbow, stands for spirit.

According to Ryan Northrup, Social Media & Events Coordinator of Brockville Pride, during the initial stages of Pride, local businesses were offered rainbow stickers for their entranceways to allow customers to know they are an LGBTQ safe space.

"Most businesses still have these stickers visible in the storefronts," Northrup said.

Brockville Pride Week kicked off this year with a flag raising ceremony on June 3rd, 2019 at 11:00 am at the top of the Railway Tunnel and Pride Committee and members of City Council attended this event.

Later that week, on June 8th, the Brockville Pride Parade commenced at noon, at the park beside the Brockville Rowing Club. The parade continued to Hardy Park, where the Rainbow Village Fair featured vendors, food services, and entertainment.

According to Northrup, parade participants usually fall between 200-300 persons, with about 500-750 spectators.

Brockville City Councillor, Leigh Bursley recalls the first parade in 2011 as a march

for civil rights and social justice, and to commemorate the loss of a LGBTQ community member.

Bursley has been a strong advocate of the event. He worked hard to persuade his colleagues to see an opportunity for micro economic tourism, by providing a venue for activities, events and vendors, as well as to educate and create a fun event.

Alongside local businesses, church groups and medical workers, the Brockville Police have played an active and supportive roll. "It's mutual respect back and forth," Staff Sergeant, Tom Fournier explained.

According to Northrup, the Brockville Pride community is still growing and building on previous years' successes. "Everyday our community gets a little more prouder of our LGBTQ+ involvement. We will continue our work of building a proud community."

Councillor Bursley agrees that things have come a long way since being stopped and shamed while out with his Grandmother about his endorsement of Pride Week. He also recalls however, being offered a hug while out and about in Brockville. "It's the first time my city has ever felt like a home to me" they had told him.

Later in the summer, Gananoque will host its own Pride Week from July 18 to July 21. The town of Gananoque has celebrated Pride in previous years. The newly-incorporated, not-

for-profit organization, 1000 Islands Pride, Inc., aims to provide an annual summer Pride and Arts festival.

The rainbow flag will not be flying high however, as the Town of Gananoque has a bylaw prohibiting two flags on one pole, though the rainbows will be prominent at the parade on July 21. This colourful parade will start at 1:30 p.m. behind City Hall, ending up at Joel Stone Heritage Park on Water Street, where the village fair is set up for the next two days. Various artisans will feature woodwork, art, photography and jewelry.

Roger Dodier CEO of 1000 Islands Pride, Inc. has also found the community to be very supportive.

Celebrations will begin before the actual Pride Week in July in Gananoque.

On June 22, 1000 Islands Pride, Inc., in collaboration with the Royal Theatre and a show of performers, will offer impersonations of your favourite stars, such as Celine Dion, Cher, Marilyn Monroe, Diana Ross, and Dolly Parton. The show will be hosted by a Joan Rivers impersonator. (it is advised to keep it an adults only event and not to bring young children)

On the first day of pride week on July 18th, A Meet and Greet will be held at Stonehouse Pub in Gananoque, with staff and organizers of 1000 Islands Pride, Inc. to meet and enjoy some entertainment. **LH**

Check out the website and Facebook pages for continuing updates and additions. Happy Pride!

**Gananoque: www.1000islandspride.ca / Facebook @1000 Islands Pride Inc.
Brockville: www.brockvillepride.com / Facebook @Brockville Pride**