



Samantha Roberts  
*Image Credit: Contributed*

## OUR TOWN

# Why an LGBTQ Safe Space is Important in Revelstoke

**By Samantha Roberts, Special to the Revelstoke Times Review - July 2, 2014**

On Thursday, June 26, I hosted an LGBTQ & Allies get together at Castle Joe Books. (LGBTQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer, but is inclusive to pansexual, questioning, two-spirited people and people who would prefer no label, etc... and allies are people that support them.)

The purpose of hosting this SAFE SPACE get together was to have an environment where people could meet without prejudice or judgement. The activities during this time were open for but not limited to having discussions, researching and finding books on LGBTQ and allies issues, reading poetry or plays, acting out skits, painting and creating art in all its forms, and planning group trips outside of this monthly get together.

Since the creation of this space I have fielded many questions, such as, “Since when are you gay?”, “are there that many gay people in Revelstoke?” and “why do we need to single people out by having a group? I have no problem with gay people”.

I am by no means an expert, I don't have statistics, so I don't know how many LGBTQ folks there are and quite frankly it's doesn't matter, but I still try to answer the first and the latter.

The first question is one that is of importance because it shows the social norm of having to categorize and label. This is the question and frame of mind that keeps allies from coming and being supportive. (I'll be happy to chat with anyone about social justice and social inequality another time.) It also, in many cases including my own, keeps people from coming out and living in their norm.

Revelstoke needs this group because invisibility is not the same as integration and acceptance. Visibility is the first step to living OUT in the open. People need a place to express themselves that is safe from fear, judgment and violence.

It's important for allies to attend as well because they are our individual safe spaces. You don't have to have a huge knowledge base on social justice issues (that's a whole other group), you just have to care and be supportive.

Businesses and community partner's can show opposition to discrimination by displaying a small rainbow flag in their window or doorway. Just a quick reminder that the rainbow sticker on a business is recognized worldwide as the symbol of a safe space that is free from discrimination, judgement and violence — whether it's shopping, doing business or otherwise. It does NOT mean you are having a pride parade in your lobby.

Thank you to those of you that attended, took posters/rainbow flags, gave me positive feedback and plan to attend in July, and thank you to the folks that helped me with donations and ideas.

I will be hosting \$2 drop in nights from 7–9 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month, making the next get together July 24 at Castle Joe Books. If weather permits we will be doing poetry/play readings and possibly painting in the courtyard. There will be snacks and refreshments provided.