

LGBTQ Community Takes Its First Baby Steps

The Revelstoke Current - October 5, 2014

By David F. Rooney

A meeting that considered ways to make Revelstoke the kind of community where gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans-gendered (LGBTQ) people feel not only comfortable but safe enough to be themselves is pushing ahead despite a low turnout for its initial start.

Seven people turned out for the meeting, which was led by Social Development Coordinator Jill Zacharias, at the Community Centre on Thursday, October 2. It's hard to know precisely how many people identify themselves as LGBTQ but there are certainly more than that especially when you consider that at least four of the people who attended were heterosexuals sympathetic to the gay community.

Historically, Revelstoke is no different from any other rural BC community; there have always been gays and lesbians living here but they generally kept their heads down and their sexual inclinations to themselves for fear of persecution. One gay man who attended the meeting recalled that back in the late 1970s and '80s there was a group here called Lothlórien (a reference to an Elvish forest kingdom described in the *Fellowship of the Ring*, which is the first volume in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy). It was quite a large group. They used to have picnics at Five Mile (Summer Palace). It was organized by two men who are still here in Revelstoke. They had a post office box and people could connect through mail. Members are quite a bit older now and many are still here, he said.

Then a few years ago Community Connections tried to create a Safe Spaces program but it didn't take off.

The last 12 months or so have seen what could be described as watershed moments in community attitudes. One was the talk given at RSS by Ryan Clayton, a young gay man who grew up in Salmon Arm. The second was the *Dog Sees God* theatrical production in May that was extremely well received.

On a related note, Samantha Roberts has started a Safe Spaces program on the fourth Thursday of every month at Castle Joe Books. LGBTQ community members are welcome to drop in the shop in the evening to drink tea or coffee and socialize without fear of being challenged by homophobes.

The group agreed to continue meeting to discuss ideas for action like a rainbow flag campaign. Among the objectives this ad hoc group wants to achieve are:

- Making Revelstoke a town where LGBTQ partners can walk down the street hand in hand;
- Where gays and lesbians believe they are respected, accepted and their aspirations are regarded as legitimate; and
- Where being LGBTQ is no big deal.

The group will meet again later this month at Castle Joe Books. The time of that meeting will be announced in The Revelstoke Current. In the meantime anyone interested in attending the meeting should contact Jill Zacharias at 250-814-3875.