

Working together for your health

A Historical Perspective

LGBTQ2S+ People across Canada

Adapted with permission from The City of Toronto, Long-Term Care Homes & Services (2017). LGBT Tool Kit: Creating Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Inclusive and Affirming Care and Services. For a copy, email Itc-ho@toronto.ca

Purpose

This information resource will help to enhance your awareness and knowledge of the 'lived' experience of many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and two-spirit (LGBTQ2S+) seniors.

It's important that you understand the background of LGBTQ2S+ seniors so when they are accessing continuing care services, they feel safe and welcome to live their lives as they choose and do not feel they need to hide their true identity. They will know they will be treated with respect.

Silence, secrets and the underground

LGBTQ2S+ seniors today were born and grew up in a time when being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender was criminalized and considered pathological. It was not until 1969 in Canada that homosexuality was decriminalized and until 1973 that the American Psychological Association removed 'homosexuality' from its list of mental disorders. Due to social stigma, outright violence, threat of imprisonment, job loss, family rejection and being institutionalized, many LGBTQ2S+ persons were forced to hide their identities for their own safety. Some of today's elder LGBTQ2S+ persons would have also entered heterosexual marriage in order to fit in. Hiding one's identity successfully as an LGBTQ2S+ person was a key selfcare strategy that served people well during this time. LGBTQ2S+ people incorporated societal values. As a result, LGBTQ2S+ people internalized phobias that added to their low self-esteem, self-doubt and depression.



Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S+) continuing care clients



Seniors born during the Depression Era (1912-1921) or in the Silent Generation (1922–1945) had few options for living their lives freely or without extreme stigma and discrimination. Still, despite the danger, some people were out and did disclose their identities to supportive friends and family members. For some others, hiding was not an option if they could not pass as heterosexual or cisgender. LGBTQ2S+ lives were forced underground and meeting people like one's self and developing loving relationships had to be kept secret, even if it was a so-called open secret. The creation of secret societies and clubs, relationships and communities were a source of strength and resilience for LGBTQ2S+ persons during these times.

Increasing activism and visibility

LGBTQ2S+ baby-boomers (b. 1946–1965) and Gen-Xers (b. 1966–1976) might be considered the LGBTQ2S+ activist generations. Several of the major events, like the Stonewall Riots (1969) in the United States, the Toronto Bathhouse Raids (1981), and the HIV crisis in the 1980s were major political turning points regarding LGBTQ2S+ equality and human rights in North America. In contrast to many seniors born in earlier generations, baby boomers are much less likely to be closeted and are more likely to be living their lives openly. With increasing equality of human rights since the 1970s in Canada many lesbian, gay and bisexual persons today are 'completely out' in many and/or all facets of their lives.

Global perspective

Globally the struggle for equality for LGBTQ2S+ people reveals profound differences in popular attitudes and legislative approaches. The United Nations resolution of 2008 urging members to support LGBTQ2S+ rights was supported by about one half of the General Assembly while the other half was either opposed or abstained. Criminal sanctions include lengthy terms of imprisonment and death. On the contrary, other countries have strengthened LGBTQ2S+ equality rights including same-sex marriage, uniform age of consent laws and recognition of gender identity and expression in antidiscrimination laws.

Note: Based on the material presented, the resulting fears and impressions may not be universal for all LGBTQ2S+ seniors.

Education resources

Alberta Health Services has developed a series of tip sheets to support your awareness, confidence, knowledge, and skills to create safer and more welcoming continuing care for LGBTQ2S+ clients.

Visit ahs.ca/lgbtq

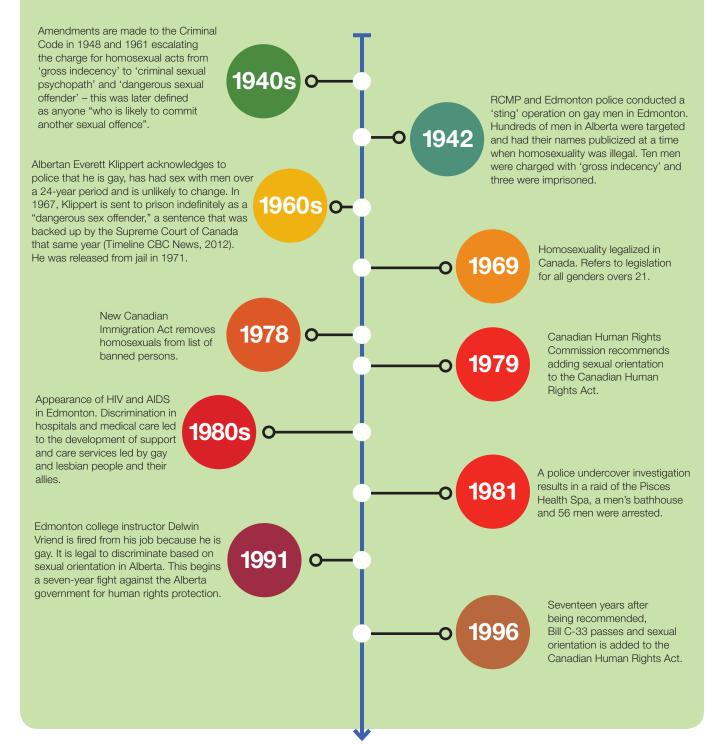
Get in touch: continuingcare@ahs.ca

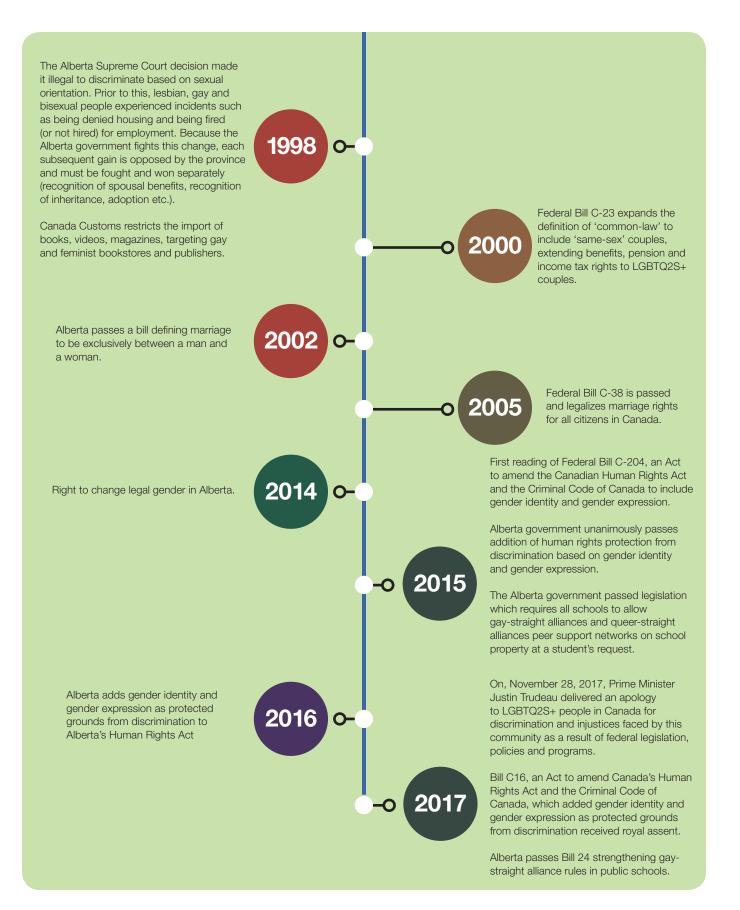


Historical Timeline

Alberta and Canada

*Used and adapted with permission from Edmonton Pride Seniors' Network.





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