



# 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 [lrc-ho@toronto.ca](mailto:lrc-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 self-care 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.

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together for  
your health*

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](https://ahs.ca/lgbtq)

Get in touch: [continuingcare@ahs.ca](mailto:continuingcare@ahs.ca)



# Historical Timeline

## Alberta and Canada

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

Amendments are made to the Criminal Code in 1948 and 1961 escalating the charge for homosexual acts from 'gross indecency' to 'criminal sexual psychopath' and 'dangerous sexual offender' – this was later defined as anyone "who is likely to commit another sexual offence".

Albertan Everett Klippert acknowledges to police that he is gay, has had sex with men over a 24-year period and is unlikely to change. In 1967, Klippert is sent to prison indefinitely as a "dangerous sex offender," a sentence that was backed up by the Supreme Court of Canada that same year (Timeline CBC News, 2012). He was released from jail in 1971.

New Canadian Immigration Act removes homosexuals from list of banned persons.

Appearance of HIV and AIDS in Edmonton. Discrimination in hospitals and medical care led to the development of support and care services led by gay and lesbian people and their allies.

Edmonton college instructor Delwin Vriend is fired from his job because he is gay. It is legal to discriminate based on sexual orientation in Alberta. This begins a seven-year fight against the Alberta government for human rights protection.

1940s

1942

1960s

1969

1978

1979

1980s

1981

1991

1996

RCMP and Edmonton police conducted a 'sting' operation on gay men in Edmonton. Hundreds of men in Alberta were targeted and had their names publicized at a time when homosexuality was illegal. Ten men were charged with 'gross indecency' and three were imprisoned.

Homosexuality legalized in Canada. Refers to legislation for all genders over 21.

Canadian Human Rights Commission recommends adding sexual orientation to the Canadian Human Rights Act.

A police undercover investigation results in a raid of the Pisces Health Spa, a men's bathhouse and 56 men were arrested.

Seventeen years after being recommended, Bill C-33 passes and sexual orientation is added to the Canadian Human Rights Act.

The Alberta Supreme Court decision made it illegal to discriminate based on sexual orientation. Prior to this, lesbian, gay and bisexual people experienced incidents such as being denied housing and being fired (or not hired) for employment. Because the Alberta government fights this change, each subsequent gain is opposed by the province and must be fought and won separately (recognition of spousal benefits, recognition of inheritance, adoption etc.).

Canada Customs restricts the import of books, videos, magazines, targeting gay and feminist bookstores and publishers.

Alberta passes a bill defining marriage to be exclusively between a man and a woman.

Right to change legal gender in Alberta.

Alberta adds gender identity and gender expression as protected grounds from discrimination to Alberta's Human Rights Act

1998

2000

2002

2005

2014

2015

2016

2017

Federal Bill C-23 expands the definition of 'common-law' to include 'same-sex' couples, extending benefits, pension and income tax rights to LGBTQ2S+ couples.

Federal Bill C-38 is passed and legalizes marriage rights for all citizens in Canada.

First reading of Federal Bill C-204, an Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code of Canada to include gender identity and gender expression.

Alberta government unanimously passes addition of human rights protection from discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression.

The Alberta government passed legislation which requires all schools to allow gay-straight alliances and queer-straight alliances peer support networks on school property at a student's request.

On, November 28, 2017, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau delivered an apology to LGBTQ2S+ people in Canada for discrimination and injustices faced by this community as a result of federal legislation, policies and programs.

Bill C-16, an Act to amend Canada's Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code of Canada, which added gender identity and gender expression as protected grounds from discrimination received royal assent.

Alberta passes Bill 24 strengthening gay-straight alliance rules in public schools.