



# PRIDE SOCIETY OF THE COMOX VALLEY

## PRIDE SOCIETY OF THE COMOX VALLEY Co-Chairs Report Annual General Meeting November 2022

Our mission at the Pride Society of the Comox Valley is to unite the Comox Valley Pride Community, be visible, and celebrate diversity.

In 2022 we upheld our mission through connection to community, collaboration, advocacy, and celebration. Here are some of the highlights from the year.

### **Collaboration**

This year we experienced lots of amazing collaboration with local organizations and groups who uphold the values of the Pride Society of Comox Valley.

### **Gukwās sa Wagalus / Rainbow House**

In 2022, we formed a partnership with Dawn to Dawn Action on Homelessness Society to work together to support and champion the development of Gukwās sa Wagalus / Rainbow House – a specialized, peer supported, home for LGBTQQIA2S+ youth aged 16-28 years old who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness in the Comox Valley. This housing is very much needed in our community as queer youth experience serious challenges including higher rates of homelessness due to stigma and discrimination within their families and society.

### **Comox Valley Community Health Network**

We also continued to work with the Comox Valley Community Health Network. In 2021, queer community members were invited to participate in a focus group discussion which helped to inform the Poverty Assessment and Reduction Strategy. Since then we have been part of a group led by the CVCHN to discover ways in which we can implement the strategy. We are looking forward to continuing our work together around Collective Impact in the interest of working together more collaboratively.

Working closely with the Comox Valley Community Health Network and a local non-profit called Newstories, the Pride Society of the Comox Valley helped facilitate a **Queer Youth Community Conversation** to bring attention to the challenges Queer youth. Since then, a group of queer youth from across Comox Valley has been meeting with representation from Pride as well as the local school district to bring attention to the challenges Queer youth face in the Comox Valley.

### **Advocacy**

Sadly, discrimination against the LGBTQQIA2S+ community has continued to be an issue in the Comox Valley. This summer during Pride month there was a homophobic attack that happened at a local pub.

Comox Valley Pride issued a letter directly to the pub challenging them on their abhorrent response to the attack and shared our correspondence with the community for further accountability.

Unfortunately, we never heard a response from them, but fortunately, there are other community pubs who have identified themselves as safe, queer-friendly spaces by hosting some wonderful LGBTQQIA2S+ events.



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The Pride Society of the Comox Valley was heartened to see a strong community response opposing this attack. One of our queer community members organized a Pride March. The march was well attended and a safe space to be seen and heard.

### **Celebration!**

Pride Society was honoured to be invited to the 2022 Pride Flag raising at Courtenay City Hall as well as the Town of Comox. This was an awesome opportunity for CV Pride Society and Queer Culture to come together and discuss what we can do together to increase the visibility of queer people in the Comox Valley. There were talks of a Pride Parade and CV Pride is looking forward to working with Queer Culture on next year's festivities!

In August we had the opportunity to co-sponsor Vaudeville in the Valley - a night of drag, burlesque, and live music produced by Belladonna Glitteris. This event was such an amazing night full of energy, joy and so much fun.

This year we also welcomed a new board member, Marusha Taylor who has been an awesome asset to our team and we thank Richard Kerton for his 5 years on the board as he moves on to Vernon. We look forward to welcoming two new board members at today's AGM.

2022 was a year we were able to blossom after 2 years of isolation that the pandemic brought. This year was a year of connection, advocacy and celebration and we couldn't have done it without everyone who has supported our small but mighty organization. We are stronger and safer when we stand together to reduce stigma, hatred, and discrimination. We are healthier and happier when we can connect, collaborate, celebrate, and be proud of our LGBTQIA2S+ community.

We are looking forward to the plentiful opportunities 2023 has in store for us, and we are so honoured to be able to support our amazing queer community here in the Comox Valley.

In community,

Andrea Cupelli and Christopher Bate, Co-Chairs.