



reroot pride

Community discussion report-back
June 2025

Contents

Who We Are	3
How Did We Get Here?	4
What Are Radical Queer Values?	5
Our Demands	8
The Community BBQ and Consultation	12
What We Heard	13
Pinkwashing and Rainbow Capitalism	17
Police and Military	26
Towards a Liberatory Pride	32
Conclusion	36

Who We Are

reroot pride is a collective of 2SLGBTQIA+ folks who feel that Pride Winnipeg has moved away from its roots as a political protest, and no longer represents us or serves our interests.



Photo courtesy of [Ryan Garcia](#)

In May 2024, Pride Winnipeg failed to acknowledge violence that had become undeniable. From Turtle Island to Palestine, from the Congo to Sudan, a growing number of queers felt alienated and disillusioned with Pride as an organization that queer communities could look towards to unite and center marginalized people. Would Pride Winnipeg ignore the deadly realities of the year?

Queer people had been active in, and at the forefront of resistance movements against the weaponization of our identities to excuse ethnic cleansing — such as Israel waving rainbow pride flags over Palestinian cities it bombed — and yet Pride Winnipeg seemed bent on not acknowledging this significant focus in queer communities of Winnipeg and the world at large.

In response to the business-as-usual approach to Pride amidst multiple genocides here and abroad, dozens of community members came together to halt the parade. The banners that were unfurled on Portage Avenue read “No Pride in Genocide” and “End Pink-washing.”

Pride Winnipeg representatives generously agreed to our collective's demands and allowed members to read them out on the festival mainstage. Since June 2024, representatives of reroot pride have been meeting with Pride Winnipeg in the hopes of bringing Pride back to its radical roots.

How Did We Get Here?

For years, queer folks have been disengaging from Pride as it no longer reflects us and our struggles. Corporate floats are more prominent than community floats and institutions that continue to harm queer folks are welcomed with open arms. Rather than serving our communities as a space to connect, or to deepen queer values and organizing, Pride Winnipeg functions as a rainbow street festival that diverts queer dollars to corporations without advancing queer movements to resist the urgent threats we face.

Queer folks continue to be marginalized. While some 2SLGBTQIA+ people have gained social acceptance and legal protections, many of us continue to live in poverty or financial precarity, encounter barriers to accessing gender-affirming healthcare, experience discrimination from employers and landlords, and face disproportionate police violence.

For five decades, queer movements have debated whether to pursue inclusion in harmful institutions like marriage, the military, and the police, or to resist these institutions' control over our lives. Trans scholar and activist Dean Spade writes:

“...for any marginalized group, there is an important tension and a contest always happening inside social movements. On the one side, there is a desire for liberation that would reach all the members of that group, which would mean having to oppose poverty, racism, sexism, imperialism, ableism and every force that creates intersectional harm in the lives of people from that group. On the other side, there is the pressure toward assimilation and the creation of a narrow reform agenda that props up and conforms to existing conditions and offers minimal relief from the harms that group faces, relief that is usually only available to the elite of that group.”

Spade notes that “the work that aligns with the dominant institutions in the country is more popular with wealthy donors, corporations and the corporate media than racial and economic justice-centred queer and trans work that seeks to dismantle the institutions that shape our racist, misogynist, anti-poor status quo conditions.”¹

This tension between assimilation and liberation has always existed within the queer community and has taken on renewed importance in this political moment. As the rise of the far-right threatens any social and legal gains we have achieved, institutions such as Pride Winnipeg need to consider how we can best protect our people in the face of mounting transphobia and homophobia.



Photo courtesy of Marlo Campbell, Uptown Magazine, June 12, 2008

What Are Radical Queer Values?

The word “radical” comes from the latin “radix,” meaning root. Radical ideas and radical values examine the root of the issues that plague our community and propose to address them from the root upwards, rather than through superficial solutions that leave the source of the problem intact. For queers as for any community, it is crucial to learn from those around us, especially those who carry wisdom and history.

¹ Dean Spade and Aaron Belkin, Queer Militarism: The Politics of Military Inclusion Advocacy in Authoritarian Times

Our values as a collective are the liberatory queer values we inherit from our movement Elders and visionaries:

- the anti-capitalist and police abolitionist values of Marsha P. Johnson, a famous mother of the queer movement and veteran of the resistance at Stonewall
- the environmentalist and decolonial values of Two-Spirit land and water defenders like Tara Houska, Indigenous lawyer and land defender who founded the Giniw Collective, an Indigenous women & Two-Spirit-led frontline resistance to stop the Enbridge Line 3 pipeline from crossing Anishinaabe territory
- the anti-assimilationist values of Sylvia Rivera, Puerto Rican transsexual activist who founded STAR, a mutual aid organization run by and for poor and houseless trans women of colour, often sex workers; the most disenfranchised and heavily policed members of her community
- the anti-war and anti-imperialist values of Leslie Feinberg, transgender socialist and Jewish advocate for Palestinian liberation
- the Indigenous feminist values of the MMIWG2S movement, which has led the resistance against policing and resource extraction projects funded by the same corporations who are sponsors at Pride today
- the values of AIDS activists who resisted annihilation and built networks of care, and whose legacy is visible in ongoing queer efforts to address state abandonment of disabled people, including the growing number of queer people impacted by long covid and other preventable diseases
- the values of young trans people who are still leading anti-fascist rallies in Winnipeg in 2025 as the far-right gain political ground around the world

Liberation is a group project. Queer communities will not achieve liberation in isolation from other marginalized communities. Solidarity with the most marginalized is always the right thing, and requires the 2SLGBTQIA+ movement to stand against all systems of oppression and domination.

Only together can we get free.

REMEMBER BLUES! FIGHT POLICE BRUTALITY

On September 28, 1982, approximately 25 police officers stormed into Blues Bar (a midtown Manhattan gay bar patronized predominantly by Black and other 3rd World Lesbians and Gay men). They locked the door and proceeded to systematically beat, harass, and abuse both the patrons and the employees, because they were people of color and because they were homosexual. Twenty months later, those 25 police officers who committed this attack have not been disciplined and remain on active duty.

The assault at Blues is not an isolated event, but is part of a rising tide of right-wing violence and police abuse also directed at Black, Latin, Asian and Native peoples, women, unionists and undocumented workers and political activists. A glaring example is the 1983 murder of Michael Stewart, a Black youth, by the NYC Transit Police. These attacks go hand in hand with recent government and Supreme Court attacks on affirmative action, abortion and civil liberties --- all the gains we have fought for and must now rally to defend.

JOIN THE CONTINGENT AGAINST POLICE VIOLENCE

15 years ago a police attack on a Greenwich Village gay bar called "Stonewall" focussed worldwide attention on the oppression of Lesbians and gays when both Lesbians and gays, transexuals and transvestites -- many of whom were people of color -- fought back.

WE HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN BLUES

On October 15, 1982, 3,000 Lesbians and Gays, transexuals and transvestites, united to protest the racist police attack on Blues Bar. In the spirit of Stonewall, we are marching today on Lesbian and Gay Pride Day, 1984, wearing blue and black armbands to symbolize our determination to stop police attacks on all communities. Join us at 60th Street and Broadway, 11:30am, Sunday, June 24, 1984.

CONTINUE THE FIGHT AGAINST RACISM AND POLICE BRUTALITY !

Come to an organizing meeting to help plan further action. Some of the ideas which have been suggested are: holding a public hearing/speakout where YOU can tell how you have been victimized by the police; making a cable television show on police brutality; supporting the call for an independent Statewide Citizen's Review Board to check police abuse. Come share your ideas/experiences.

TUESDAY JULY 17, 1984 7:30 PM

Washington Square Methodist Church
135 W. 4th St. (bet. 6th Ave/MacDougal)
Info: 807-7269 or 691-7950 x6102

Representatives of the following groups attended the first meeting: Black and White Men Together/New York; Dykes Against Racism Everywhere; Freedom Socialist Party; Girth & Mirth; Greater Gotham Business Council; John Brown Anti-Klan Comm; Lesbian and Gay Focus of the People's Anti-war Mobilization; National Coalition of Black Gays; National Gay Task Force; Radical Women.



Photo courtesy of [Ryan Garcia](#)

Our Demands

1 Centre QTBIPOC Leadership

- a Provide full autonomy over decision making without interference.
- b Redirect funds and resources to 2SQTBIPOC spaces and events.
- c Have Community Liasons and Board Members be reflective of the 2SQTBIPOC population.
- d Revisit and strengthen Pride Winnipeg's 2020 statement of support for Black Lives Matter.
- e Return to the grassroots spirit of Pride by rejecting the neoliberal, capitalist, and corporate influences that now dominate Pride.
 - i Prioritize queer community over corporate money and mainstream respectability.
 - ii Divest from corporate pinkwashing in favour of uplifting grassroots organizations by amplifying local queer artists, organizations, and initiatives over, or in spite of, corporate sponsors.

2 End complicity with genocides

- a Complicity includes the understanding that we in so-called Canada are living on occupied land amid an ongoing genocide against Indigenous people and are positioned to either support or divest from genocide on Turtle Island and globally.
 - i Refuse sponsorship and participation in events for businesses, organizations or individuals that fund or profit from land theft, extraction, and climate chaos.
 - ii Divest from businesses complicit in genocide in the Congo. Commit to buying only used/refurbished tech to lessen the impact of exploitative and deadly resource extraction in the Congo and elsewhere.
 - iii Divest from Zionist organizations complicit in the occupation and genocide of Palestinians, including TD Bank.
 - iv Adopt spending guidelines based in community economic development principles.
 - v Practice full financial transparency: make public lists of all donors and paid parade entries.
- b Direct resources to Indigenous and Black groups and work with them to identify tangible ways Pride Winnipeg can support their initiatives as they relate to queer liberation, including but not limited to during the Pride festival.
 - i Land acknowledgments are not enough; denounce and speak out against violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people. Implement the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Calls for Justice, particularly [calls 15.1 and 15.8](#).
 - ii Hold all levels of government accountable to act on the Calls for Justice. Publicly place continued pressure on completing the landfill searches.
- c Take Pride's global responsibility seriously. Consider queer people with roots from around the world when choosing who is included and centred at Pride. Queer people from around the world participate in Winnipeg's Pride celebrations. Create internal policies to inform all future decision making, so Pride Winnipeg can be grounded in values of decolonization and anti-imperialism moving forward.

3 Remove policing from Pride

- a Ban the official participation of police and military at all future Pride celebrations, including plainclothes officers; their presence is harmful regardless of whether they appear in uniform.
- b Divest Pride from military and carceral systems, understanding incarceration and imperialism as the continuation of colonization and slavery.



Photo courtesy of [Ryan Garcia](#)

reroot pride

community discussion & bbq

sun sept 8

4:30–7:30

dufferin park

605 alexander ave

reroot pride is a collective of 2slgbtqi+ folks in wpg who feel that Pride Winnipeg does not represent us. join us for a collective reimagining of what pride could be.

bring food or enjoy the drinks & hotdogs provided (halal, gf, and vegan options available)



wheelchair accessible venue

some chairs & masks provided (bring your own if you can)

The Community BBQ and Consultation

“I want to feel like Pride makes a difference, feels inspiring, feels like a learning opportunity, feels political”

On Sunday, September 8th, 2024, reroot pride held a gathering in Dufferin Park for queer folks to talk about a new vision for Pride in Winnipeg. This event took place in the wake of the grassroots intervention at the June 2024 Pride parade, an action which stalled the corporate parade to draw attention to how far Pride has strayed from its grassroots origins. The blockade was a culmination of years of mounting frustration about the co-optation of Pride by corporations for advertising and brand rehabilitation, and outright collaboration with police, military, and weapons manufacturers. Tensions reached an inflection point when it became clear that Pride would either choose to ignore or tacitly endorse multiple ongoing genocides through corporate sponsors and partnerships that provided financial support to the forces enacting this violence.

The consultation brought together community members who wanted to see changes within Pride for years. Frustration was widespread and it was clear that no single issue was what brought folks to this discussion. Rather, multiple overlapping and unaddressed concerns brought community members together and have produced this collective call for change.

The consultation was open to everyone and outreach for the event was conducted through social media and word of mouth. Free food, drinks, and washroom access were provided, along with additional seating and KN95 face masks. Over 40 individuals came out to participate, sharing a meal and several hours of conversation about what it might look like to have a Pride that is truly representative of all queers. Attendees were invited to share ideas verbally, as well as to write their thoughts on sticky notes and large rolls of paper in a group brainstorm.

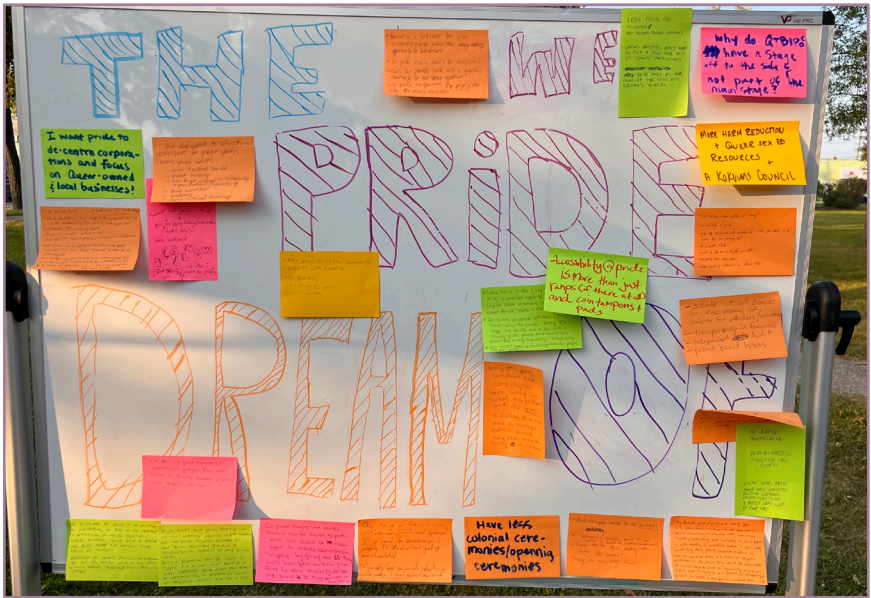


Photo courtesy of Jody Martens

This report is an overview of the ideas generated that day, including an overview and selection of comments from participants. The quotes included throughout the report are direct quotes community members shared with us at the BBQ. The report represents a start to the grassroots consultation and direction-setting work that can align Pride Winnipeg with queer values from our histories and for our collective future. Pride in Winnipeg can be a site for joy and resistance if we reclaim the place of community, front and centre!

What We Heard

“Pride should have specific political demands! Pride used to be a protest - let’s keep it that way!”

In total, reroot pride received 102 comments from participants. Many called for the removal of police and military from Pride; a shift away from corporate sponsorship; and the recentring of radical demands that move Pride’s advocacy beyond visibility and assimilation and towards a liberatory future.

Comments by Theme



Theme	Count
QTBIPOC Community Leadership	7
Health, Harm Reduction, Accessibility	9
For Us and By Us	19
Decolonial Queer Values	15
Transparency from Pride Winnipeg	10
Politicians vs a Political Pride	8
Banks and Corporate Sponsors	18
Police and Military	16

QTBIPOC Community Leadership: 7

Health, Harm Reduction, Accessibility: 9

For Us and By Us: 19

Decolonial Queer Values: 15

Transparency from Pride Winnipeg: 10

Politicians vs a Political Pride: 8

Banks and Corporate Sponsors: 18

Police and Military: 16

The comments have been organized thematically to encapsulate the topics community members felt were most pressing. We grouped similar comments into eight categories that most frequently came up, as a way to highlight the emphasis that BBQ participants collectively assigned to certain areas. While people were critical of the presence of corporate sponsors, police, military displays, and politicians, many shared positive visions of what Pride could look like without their involvement, imagining an accessible Pride with QTBIPOC leadership run by and for us. Community members at the BBQ shared creative and constructive feedback, excited by the prospect of envisioning how Pride could recentre itself in the politics that made it possible.

The rest of this report is divided into three sections of supporting analysis for the comments and perspectives shared during the community consultation. The sections do not neatly map onto the graph above; rather, people made intersectional demands that we felt were best explained and analyzed under the umbrella of the broader concepts the demands were rooted in. Community demands to not have banks, corporations, police, and military present were rooted in decolonial queer values, as were the demands for QTBIPOC leadership. A rejection of assimilationist politics and a desire to see a truly radical and liberatory pride were evident, and we organized

the sections according to the underlying anti-capitalist, abolitionist, and liberatory frameworks they draw on.

The first section, Pinkwashing and Rainbow Capitalism, defines the terms and highlights how community members feel that Pride has been co-opted by corporate interests. The second section, Police and Military, builds on the well-documented demand to have cops and military out of pride celebrations. The third and final section, Towards a Liberatory Pride, paints a picture of what a decolonial, radical Pride could look like. The sections are intended to be understood together and to build off each other. After all, a liberatory Pride is not possible so long as corporate sponsorship and police partnerships are staples of the Pride Festival.



Photo courtesy of [Jasmine Tea](#)



Pinkwashing and Rainbow Capitalism

“I’m tired of my struggle being used for corporations to make a profit!”

Community members at the BBQ named that Pride is inherently political and always has been. This understanding of Pride as inherently political is rooted in an understanding of our history: Pride began as an illegal protest against state-sanctioned police violence.² Community members who attended the BBQ also expressed that they understood the violence and oppression queer people face as political and colonial violence. This is rooted in the understanding that homophobia and transphobia are colonial impositions on diverse Two-Spirit, Indiqueer, and trans-Indigenous identities.^{3,4} The link between violence against queer people and colonial violence cannot be ignored: Pride Winnipeg’s work and events take place on occupied, stolen Indigenous land. Decolonial queer values understand that queerness transgresses colonial norms and does not ally itself with the state of so-called Canada. Our shared values stand in direct opposition to the assimilationist movement which saw the domination of White middle-class gay interests over radical queer demands.⁵

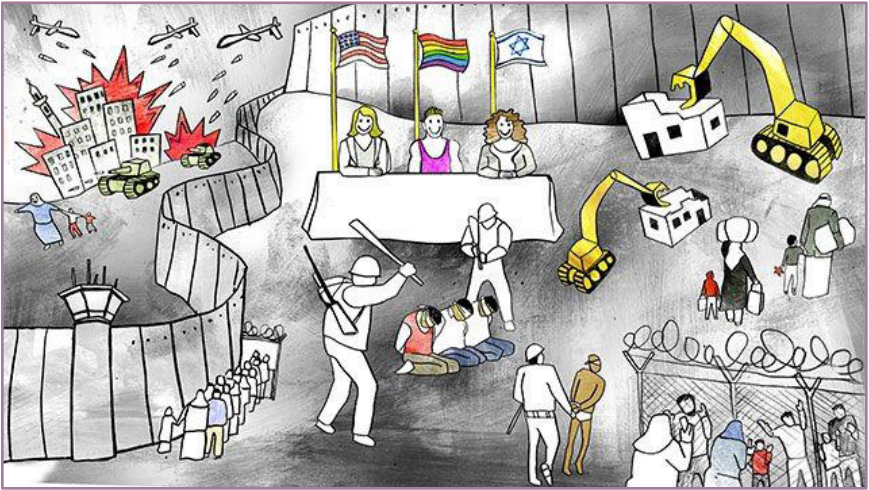
2 Delaney Nevius, *The First Pride Was a Riot: How Queer Activism Has Partnered with Police to Hurt the Community’s Most Vulnerable*

3 Alex Wilson, *Our Coming In Stories: Cree Identity, Body Sovereignty and Gender Self-Determination*

4 Martine Cannon, *The Regulation of First Nations Sexuality*

5 Jennifer Miller, [Thirty Years of Queer Theory](#)

Pinkwashing, or rainbow-washing, is often referenced in terms of both feminist and queer politics. It describes “claims of inclusion or tolerance for women and, or as LGBT people, as an effort to evade or cover for violence, exploitation, or oppression”⁶. Put simply, pinkwashing is the propaganda and marketing strategy by which practitioners exploit 2SLGBTQIA+ people and their rights in order to appear progressive and distract from the harm they perpetrate.



Art courtesy of Micah Bezant, [shared](#) by Dean Spade

Community members voiced their firm opposition to the weaponization of queer identities in new colonial and imperial projects, such as israel’s pinkwashing in its genocide against Palestinians.⁷ Pinkwashing is present in the israeli occupation of Palestine as a claim of acceptance of queers in exchange for the complete erasure of israeli war crimes in occupied Palestine. An example of this type of exploitative narrative is the one shared during a 2020 event where Pride Winnipeg and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) partnered to uplift zionist voices.⁸ One panelist explicitly described israel as a safe haven for queer Palestinians, failing to acknowledge in any way the disproportionate danger the israeli occupation poses to Palestinian people and their lands.

6 Joseph A. Marchal, [Pinkwashing Paul, Excepting Jesus: The Politics of Intersectionality, Identification, and Respectability](#)

7 Kai Cheng Thom, [Why queer and trans people need to resist pinkwashing](#)

8 The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, [Pride Perspectives from Israel](#)



Photo courtesy of [Ryan Garcia](#)

At the BBQ, community members also shared deeply felt desires to attend a Pride where there were no displays of colonialism and imperialism. Nationalistic displays at Pride, from rainbow maple leaf flags to the military recruitment tent, imply that our community at large supports the colonialism and imperialism of our federal government. This is not the case. Pride Winnipeg must work from an anti-colonial perspective to envision a world that transcends restrictive ideas of sexuality and gender and resists oppression in all its forms, here and abroad. Community members want a Pride that is willing to take a stand against injustice, even and especially when it has something to lose.

By developing and adhering to political principles of decolonial solidarity and liberation for all, Pride could be a politically powerful space for making change as well as celebrating all that makes us queer, including our resistance to oppression. In doing so, Pride Winnipeg could demonstrate to queers here and abroad a recognition that the fight has not ended with western settler comfort.



Photo courtesy of [Ryan Garcia](#)

Rainbow capitalism — the annual display of pro-LGBT sloganeering and pride flag corporate logos in the month of June — has run its course.⁹ We heard loud and clear that corporate pride has lost its sheen among the grassroots of the local 2SLGBTQIA+ community. As far-right homophobia and transphobia encroach further into the mainstream, corporations are capitulating by pulling back on their pro-gay lip service. Putting these businesses at the centre of our celebrations and uplifting their brands is a missed opportunity to put the spotlight where it belongs: on local community members and community organizations who show up year-round, in good times and in bad.

Inclusion by government institutions and corporations, achieved through assimilation into systems that harm us, has not made queer folks safer. The same threat of reversing our rights faces us each election cycle today, just as it has throughout the last five decades of queer history on the prairies.¹⁰ The same corporations and financial institutions that use us for rainbow PR in June funnel money to the far-right not only through political parties, but also through oil and gas industry lobbyists who fomented the movements that became the Freedom Convoy and more recently the anti-trans One Million March for Children.^{11,12} As far-right politicians have gained power, corporations have abandoned their performative rainbow-covered campaigns and sponsorships, proving that their endorsement of our communities was conditional on it being profitable for them.

9 Terris Schneider, [What is Rainbow Capitalism and Why is it Harmful?](#)

10 Tom Warner, *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada*

11 Simon Enoch, [The oil industry's Frankenstein](#)

12 Luke LeBrun, [Anti-LGBTQ+ 'Million Man Marches' Are Being Held Across Canada. Who is Behind Them and What Are They Really About?](#)

In addition to wanting a Pride that is rooted in radical queer values, community members shared that they would like to see Pride make political demands of those in power. In our discussion, people shared that they felt Pride should challenge politicians to demand more for queer people, rather than welcome them to the Parade and other events. The 2024 Pride season saw demands from grassroots queer organizations and activists for Pride boards to act in compliance with the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions campaign. When Ottawa Pride worked with their community towards these goals, governing politicians and parties turned their backs on the queer community over our dedication to justice.¹³ This does not mean that Ottawa Pride made the wrong decision: the politicians did.

When politicians are platformed during the Pride Festival, it both restricts Pride from acting in courageous ways and erases the harm these politicians do to our communities by cutting public services, inflating police budgets, increasing wealth inequality, and failing to improve access to housing and healthcare. These austerity measures invariably harm queer people who are disproportionately low-income and vulnerable due to intersecting oppressed identities. Community members felt that Pride should raise the bar. It is not enough for politicians to wave a rainbow flag to claim the title of ally; Instead, politicians need to make commitments to materially improve the lives of queer people and then follow through on those promises.



Photo courtesy of [Ryan Garcia](#)

When the Manitoba NDP marched in Winnipeg's 2024 Pride Parade, Pride let them put a rainbow face on their agenda of resource extraction, such as:

- [approving silica sand mining](#) despite years-long protests from Hollow Water First Nation Anishinaabe land protectors
- funding weapons manufacturing, with investments in [Magellan Aerospace](#) despite sending F-35 fighter jet components to be used in imperial wars
- “tough on crime” [spending increases on RCMP and other police](#) despite widespread police violence

These are not policies we as queer people should be co-signing.



Photo courtesy of [Ryan Garcia](#)

STOP
POLICE
BOOK
BANNING

BA
STION
DA



Anti-Censorship Demonstration, November 1980, [Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives](#)

Cops ignore assaults, Gays say

Editor's note:

Some may find the language in this story offensive. Reader discretion is advised.

By John Bertrand
Sun Staff Writer

7/2. 2011

It's called queer bashing. The victims often aren't old enough to vote and young Winnipeg gays say violence on "the hill" behind the Legislature is routine.

They complain that the police aren't interested in stopping the beatings and some gays are brandishing knives to protect themselves from gangs of "straight" attackers.

"Gay bashing has been really bad this summer, it's really bad," said 18-year-old Doug Morrison. "The police don't give a shit about protecting us."

"It shouldn't matter if you're black, white, gay or straight, everybody should get equal protection from the police."

Crime superintendent Herb Stephen admits that attacks on gays have been a problem on the hill for countless years but he denies allegations the police are turning a blind eye.

"We do care because these things can very easily turn to murder," Stephen said. "The problem has been around for years and years but I don't think it's getting worse."

Maureen Morton says that in the past a van load of people armed with knives and chains have assaulted gays congregating on the hill.

"There was a case where a guy in a van pecked up a gay and a bunch of straights hiding in the back beat him up," she said.



Doug Morrison and Maureen Cullens: 'It could happen to you.'

Morrison said that about a week ago he was talking to a 17-year-old youth on the hill when they were approached by "two football player types."

"I heard a crack and when I turned around one of the guys was beating the shit out of my friend," he said. "They told him to turn over his money or he was dead."

Morrison claims the two constables who arrived on the scene after the assailants escaped did not interview the victim or take any statements.

"One straight girl kept asking the

cops if they were going to do something and one of them said: "What's that bitch screaming about, she's just a faggot," Morrison said.

He reported the incident to the duty officer at the Public Safety Building. Stephen said any complaints would be investigated by internal affairs. The head of that department was not

available for comment.

Morrison is circulating a petition calling on the police to clean up the "arrogant, prejudicial and generally uncalled for behavior" of most officers.

"Think about it, someone you care for walking home gets mistaken for gay, it has happened, he ends up in a ditch battered and beaten," the petition says. "Who is there to help him, our brave boys in blue?"

Chris Vogel, head of Gays For Equality, said many homosexuals don't report beatings because they are convinced the police will simply ignore them.

Others, are still in the closet and don't want to risk the publicity, he said.

"The police respond to reports of gay bashing the same way they respond to native beatings, which is to say not at all," Vogel said. "Police patrol that area basically to chase gays away."

Why do gays continue to gather on the hill if it is violent?

Vogel says people go there as "a desperate measure," a way of finding other homosexuals who understand their frustrations and loneliness.

"If you don't get beaten up, you can meet friends and lovers and get away from the loneliness," he said. "It's a survival tactic."

Morrison puts it more bluntly. "It's the only place where we can go at night."

Poor police practices are endangering 2SLGBTQ+ survivors of intimate partner violence

By: Kendra Nixon, Professor, Faculty of Social Work & Director, RESOLVE (Research and Education for Solutions to Violence and Abuse), University of Manitoba and Ashley Haller, Research Technician at RESOLVE (Research and Education for Solutions to Violence and Abuse), The Conversation
Posted: 9:53 AM CDT Tuesday, Sep. 5, 2023

Our research examined how 2SLGBTQ+ communities seek help when experiencing intimate partner violence in the Canadian Prairies. We found that participants' perceptions and experiences of dealing with police were negative. Police responses ranged from not taking the cases seriously to engaging in discriminatory behaviours towards 2SLGBTQ+ survivors.

Despite historical harms, many survivors described reaching out to police for help. However, police responses towards them ranged from disinterest at best to discriminatory at worst. While a few survivors reported positive encounters with police, these were reported much less frequently.

1991 2023



The cops aren't on our side. So why are cops at Pride?

**WE LIKE OUR QUEERS
OUT OF UNIFORM!**

**RECLAIM
PRIDE**



Police and Military

“No permits, no police - we keep us safe!”

Community calls to remove police and military from Pride are not new, and were a central concern shared at the BBQ. Critical reflection on the role of policing and the violence done to members of 2SLGBTQIA+ in Canada reached an inflection point when Black Lives Matter activists halted the Toronto Pride Parade in 2016 with their demand for police out of pride.¹⁴ In May 2017, Pride Winnipeg released a statement in collaboration with multiple BIPOC-led queer organizations following community consultations on police involvement in Pride. The outcome was the removal of uniformed police officers from marching in the Pride Parade. No additional progress has come from those efforts, and police remain present at Pride despite continued pressure to have them removed entirely. In our consultation, community members expanded the critique of police to include the military and weapons manufacturers.



Photo courtesy of [Ryan Garcia](#)

At the BBQ, participants reflected on the incompatibility between policing and queer safety. Police protection has been suggested in response to rising hate, however, radical queers have long known that when we face fascists, police are aligned with them, with their guns pointed at us. Since the conception of the RCMP as a colonial police force in 1873, Canadian police have engaged in discrimination and violence against queer people, including harassment, expulsion, and investigations. Some of these historical happenings

14 Rinaldo Walcott, [Why We Should Abolish ‘Corporate Pride’ Once and for All](#)

include: the criminalization of Two-Spirit people, suppression of Indigenous experiences of gender and sexuality, the “LGBT Purge” (1950s-1990s), sting operations and public shaming, and criminalization of same-sex activity.¹⁵ This violent and discriminatory behaviour continues today. In an Ontario-based study, 24% of trans people reported being harassed *by police themselves*.¹⁶

The inclusion of police in Pride, as a “security” presence and in previous years as active participants in the parade, is retraumatizing for those among us who have experienced police violence, and creates further opportunities for violence and harassment at the hands of the police. While it is tempting to look hopefully towards efforts to reform policing, both through changes to policy and through inclusive hiring practices, attempts at police reform in Winnipeg have been unsuccessful, and the Winnipeg Police Service remains dangerous and unaccountable to the community.¹⁷ Overwhelmingly, community members shared an abolitionist outlook on policing, knowing that police reform has never been and will never be successful.

I am writing this letter to your organization regarding the conduct of a member from your organization.

On June 21, 2020 the heading was placed on @Dirttoforeground social media account stating “no good cops, but dead cops”. This directly violates the Harassment Prevention Policy with Pride Winnipeg, as well as goes against Pride Winnipeg’s code of conduct. Although this person is not directly representing Pride Winnipeg they had applied for various spots on our main stage for the Pride Winnipeg Festival. Due to their actions Pride Winnipeg does not feel it would be in best interest of the organization to have Dirt continue to perform in the festival at this time, as we do not stand behind or condone such messages.

Pride Winnipeg understands that this was the views and statement of one individual not the views or beliefs of your organization. Pride Winnipeg would like to continue our valued relationship with your organization going forward and thank you in advance for supporting our decision to remove Dirt from performing in the upcoming Pride Winnipeg Festival(s).

Due to the actions of @Dirttoforeground violating our Harassment Prevention Policy as well as our Code of Conduct Pride Winnipeg is proceeding with removing and restricting @Dirttoforeground from performing in any Pride Winnipeg Festival, or related events hosted by Pride Winnipeg for a period of 1 year (365 calendar days) from the date this was posted on their social media. During this period of time if there are no further concerns with @Dirttoforegrounds conduct and the community feels safe we will look at allowing @Dirttoforeground to apply for performances with Pride Winnipeg. In the event there are similar incidents going forward a permanent removal from all Pride Winnipeg Festivals and Events is possible for @Dirttoforeground.

Facebook [post](#) by Taliesin Dorais-Fleming excerpting a Pride Winnipeg email

15 Leon Laidlaw, [A Local History of Queer Abolitionist Organizing and a Call for Police Abolition](#)

16 Greta Bauer and Ayden Scheim for the Trans PULSE Project Team, Transgender People in Ontario, Canada: Statistics to Inform Human Rights Policy

17 James Wilt, [Dogged and Destructive: Essays on the Winnipeg Police](#)

State violence against subjugated people is never the “safety” we seek, whether committed by police here or by western imperial military forces abroad. Understanding the role of the canadian military in imperialist violence, and the use of pro-queer propaganda to pinkwash imperial and colonial violence abroad continues to grow amongst queer community locally, and emerges in mobilizations like Queers for Palestine at times of heightened imperialist violence.¹⁸

Writing on the regrettable role of queer activism in recuperating the reputation of the military and police, Dean Spade notes:

...the rise of a pro-military, pro-marriage, pro-policing gay and lesbian rights formation (that later marginally included bi and trans people and issues) was a boon to the general rightward shift of the last four decades. The most violent and harmful institutions in our society, which faced a legitimacy crisis in the wake of the domestic and global antiwar, anticolonial, feminist, and antiracist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, got a makeover as they were cast as sites of liberation and inclusion for gay and lesbian people. Queer and trans people are associated with progressivism, freedom, and equality. Believing that we should “get to” join the military, call the police or be cops, and marry provided a path for emotional reinvestment in these institutions — hearts (of straights and gays alike) warmed to images of gay weddings, gay service members kissing, and rainbow police cars. (298)¹⁹

When community members at the BBQ called for police and military out of Pride, and an end to pinkwashing, it is a correction to this misguided approach that has led our movement astray. Community members shared that they felt that the sanctioned presence of the military contributed to furthering the myth that the canadian military is a peacekeeping force that “helps” in other countries, and erased both violence done by the military abroad and locally. This perspective, that the harms done to queer people in the military are

18 David Jefferess, [Responsibility, Nostalgia, and the Mythology of Canada as a Peacekeeper](#)

19 Dean Spade and Aaron Belkin, *Queer Militarism: The Politics of Military Inclusion Advocacy in Authoritarian Times*

rooted in the same logics that empower the military (queer members included) to harm people on the receiving end of their military “service” is echoed by Gary Kinsman, one of the lead researchers on the purge campaign. Kinsman writes:

The Canadian state made LGBT2S+ ... people into ‘national security risks’ and threw us outside the fabric of the ‘nation’ denying us our rights. There are major problems with national security as an ideological practice that includes only some within the ‘nation’ while expelling others. We must always ask which nation and whose security was/is being protected? We forget this question at our peril – and part of what we must remember is the connections with other groups who have been under national security attack, currently including Indigenous and Muslim and Arab identified people, who can also be two-spirit and queer.²⁰

It is not a “win” or “progress” to be included in systemically racist institutions like the police and military, and assimilationist tendencies have failed to secure safety and well-being for our communities. Founded on white supremacy, these systems were built to enact violence upon Black and Indigenous people. This is what is meant by “systemic violence”: that the system itself produces violent results no matter who you feed into it. Funnelling queer bodies into a machine that disproportionately harms us is not progress.



Photo courtesy of [Ryan Garcia](#)

This is why “diversity and inclusion” is not enough; we need to have ethical standards for the institutions in which we seek inclusion. Failing to insist on these ethical standards only serves the regressive forces that threaten queer and trans people, along with the safety and well-being of all marginalized groups.

²⁰ Gary Kinsman, [Remember This: A brief statement on Memorializing Resistance to the Canadian War on Queers](#)



STONEWALL '25

it's a riot!

Lesbian, Gay, & Bisexual Pride 1994 Celebrates:

STONEWALL 25

It began as a routine raid on a gay bar, the Stonewall Inn, by the New York Police, on a hot night at the end of June, 1969. There were the usual homophobic slurs as the police rounded up the patrons and threw them out of the bar and into the street. This time however, the visitors to the Stonewall Inn resisted.

Drag queens, Gay men and Lesbians hurled bricks and bottles at police, barricading them in the bar itself, at one point. The commotion brought others and confused police called for reinforcements as the brawl dragged on into a 5-day riot. There was singing, shouting and chants of "Gay Power!" The Gay Rights Movement was born.

We in Winnipeg have our own his/herstory to celebrate, and on June 26, 1994, we will join the rest of the world in recognizing the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion and the birth of the modern Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Rights Movement.

Be a part of history!

June 25 Third Theme /PFLAG presents the screening of Queer Son, Planetarium Auditorium, 100 Rupert Street, 8:00 pm

June 26 Pancake breakfast sponsored by Metropolitan Community Church, CLUB 200, 9am to 12pm
Rally at the Legislature at 2:30 pm. Hear Gay Games Organizer Betty Baxter, City Councilor Glen Murray, Activist Albert McLeod and other local community leaders speak on this historic anniversary.

March the streets of downtown Winnipeg at 3:30 pm Bring your musical instruments, noise makers, and voices to mark the spirit of the Rebellion.

Special MCC Pride Day Service at St. Steven's United Church, 7:30 pm

Party at The Forks, 8:00 pm Fabulous catered buffet provided by the Bridgeport Restaurant; a diverse arrangement of music from the 70's, 80's and today by D.J. Richard; cultural performances and displays.

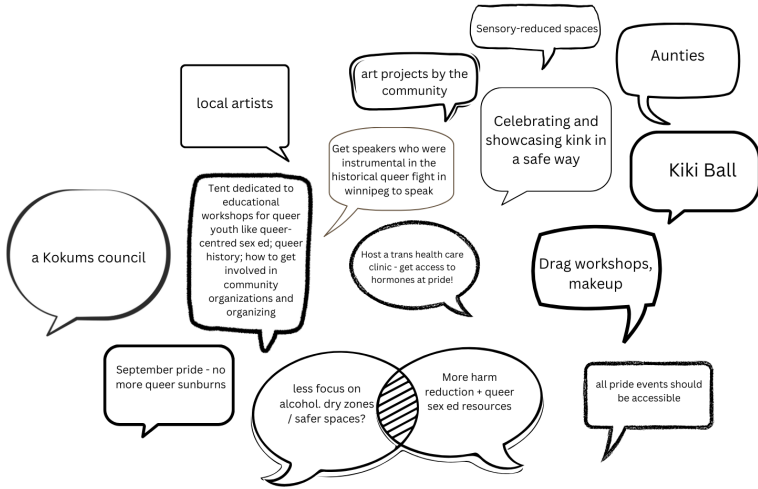
Sign Language Interpretation

To arrange childcare for the march/rally, call Gloria during working hours at 784-4049. Wheelchair transportation available, contact Blu 931-5162.

For ticket or general information, call 284-5208 or 474-0212.

Towards a Liberatory Pride

“Pride should be about transforming the city and reclaiming our identity”



Contributions from the community discussion

Community members shared a vision of a liberatory Pride that must be political. Community members envisioned Pride as something we create for ourselves that serves and answers to our community: to 2S Aunties, Kokums, and Elders; to the grassroots groups providing life-saving care and fighting for our lives; to the local artists that mentor and spread queer joy. If this Pride is less palatable to the straight allies looking for a feel-good weekend or corporate partners there to line their pockets and rehabilitate their image, that is a sacrifice they were eagerly willing to make in order to see what more Pride could become.

This liberatory vision of Pride is led by Queer, Trans, and Two-Spirit Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour and grounded in anti-racist, anti-imperialist, decolonial politics. Most of the criticisms, visions, and suggestions that were shared at the community BBQ relate to this theme. Effectively acting on any of the above sections must be done through community leadership, especially from QT-BIPOC leaders who bring crucial knowledge and perspectives that have been missing from Pride Winnipeg. Until QTBIPOC commu-

nity leadership becomes a core component of the Pride Winnipeg decision-making structure, Pride's events and community contributions will fail to meet the needs and fulfill the expectations of huge swaths of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in Winnipeg.



Photo courtesy of [Ryan Garcia](#)

Year after year, we have experienced for ourselves or heard from our disabled comrades about the inaccessibility of the Winnipeg Pride Festival, and community members who participated in our consultation had a lot to say on the topic. Every Pride celebration features a lack of accessible washrooms, sensory-friendly spaces, and shady places to sit and cool off. Pride returned to the reality of COVID with reckless abandon, hosting unmasked events where participants are exposed to our new contagious virus with

immunocompromising effects similar to HIV.²¹ While alcoholism remains a prevalent issue in our community, beer gardens offer the best seats to live performances and consumption is encouraged. Our community wants our Pride to be safe and healthy, approached with harm-reduction in mind. We want to see spaces for queer sex ed, trans healthcare access, and harm reduction resources. A liberatory Pride is accessible to all by prioritizing the health and well-being of the most vulnerable and marginalized in our community.

For our Pride to be truly by us and for us, we need to celebrate, nurture, pay, and provide exposure for our developing local queer artists from right here in Winnipeg. Winnipeg's queer community is incredibly talented and can cover everything that Pride needs to be a beautiful and joyous experience for all, from art installations and stage productions to live music and drag performance. Of particular concern with Pride Winnipeg's recent entertainment events is the relegation of local QTBIPOC artists to a side stage while the main stage is reserved for established, touring performers, which is an insult to the collective talent and power of our grassroots community. Additionally, working with local artists can help offset a predictable challenge of implementing our demands to divest from many of Pride Winnipeg's biggest corporate sponsors, which is that whatever comes next for our Pride will have to be less expensive. When local artists can be hired for fair pay while still costing less than big-name out-of-town acts, everybody wins. Pride could be an investor in opportunities for growth and resilience in our own creative community.



Photo courtesy of [Ryan Garcia](#)

21 Miles Griffis, [As Queer Spaces Return to “Normal,” Disabled LGBTQ+ People Are Being Left Behind](#)



Photo courtesy of [Jasmine Tea](#)

BBQ attendees repeatedly voiced concerns over Pride Winnipeg's overall lack of financial transparency and accountability to the community. Community members with a fresh interest in finding out to whom Pride Winnipeg is financially beholden and how the organization operates were frustrated by the incomplete picture made public by the available online materials. We want to know that our Pride is truly by us and for us. We need to be able to see who the organization benefits and how, so that our communities can be at the forefront of deciding how we are represented to ourselves and to Winnipeg as a whole.

In addition to paying and supporting local artists, community members wanted a Pride that brings our communities together to address our collective needs, both serious and joyful. From drag workshops to Kiki Balls to sex ed to harm reduction to radical queer history, elders and leaders and creatives among us have so much to share with the broader community. Pride Winnipeg can be a place for queer cultural transmission, where we learn about who we are and where we come from, and envision liberated futures. Community feedback was clear: Pride should platform queer communities of Winnipeg and get rid of the corporate clutter so we can meet, learn from, and take care of each other.

Conclusion

“My favourite parts of pride are seeing ppl in the wider community that I’m not close with — kind of reconnecting socially and being cute n gay together and seeing kids (including my own) witness a wide diversity of beautiful queers. I don’t need or want big fancy floats, corporate presence, or even as much as there is in terms of stages and performance. The whole thing would be way better if scaled back to focus on community at the core.”

Our consultation yielded a vision of a much smaller Pride that is deeply political, where police and military are not present, and which cannot be used as a profit-driven ad campaign for capitalists. Community comments remind us that Pride is a protest, and should be full of queer joy and resistance.

Conditional and temporary inclusion is not enough. Visibility without protection is not enough.

The rise of the far-right today threatens the safety and well-being of queer and trans people of colour and Two-Spirit people. It is imperative that our community organizations resist the rising fascism around the world by building power within our communities, investing in and building up the most equity-deserving, and following their leadership. Our communities need tangible improvements, not corporate sponsorships. Pride Winnipeg can create space for 2SLGBTQIA+ people to find each other, deepen our understanding of liberatory queer values, and build solidarity with other marginalized groups to fight oppression.

We believe in the possibilities of a transformed Pride that is rerooted in its history of demanding change and liberation for all queer and trans people. We want to dance and celebrate but we cannot do so unless we are also committed to improving the material circumstances of queer people’s lives. If refusing unconscionable and opportunistic sponsorships means working within a smaller budget,

then let that be an opportunity to cut the expensive headliners and invest in the smaller, local grassroots initiatives and artists. You can do more with less.

reroot pride invites Pride Winnipeg to radically reimagine what a “by us, for us” Pride could look like: a Pride that doesn’t just serve its corporate sponsors and the most socially-accepted white cisgender gays, and instead seeks to improve the lives of the most marginalized queer people in Winnipeg by fighting the social and political forces that threaten us today.

“A liberating space for making change AND celebration”



Photo courtesy of [Ryan Garcia](#)



PRIDE has always
been **POLITICAL**

