

Newsletter

January 2020

Happy New Year to our members from your executive!

Here to serve you are:

- Paul-André Gauthier – your President;
- Linda Holm – Finances;
- Ruth Trinier - Communications;
- Christopher Draenos – Policy and Political Action;
- Abigayle Howell – Membership;
- Erina Park – Student Liaison;
- Alexander Vincent – Social Media.

You may contact us through our website: <https://chapters-igs.rnao.ca/interestgroup/58/about>

Follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/RainbowNursing/>

or contact the President directly: pgauthier@rnao.ca



Our Mission:

To foster and advocate for nursing practice and environments that support people of all sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions.

Message from Paul-André, RNIG President

Active and Alive!

Dear colleagues,

It is with great humility that I accepted to run, a few months ago, as President of the Rainbow Nursing Interest Group (RNIG) of the Registered Nurses' Association Ontario. Choosing to become the lead of an executive is always a challenge, even more so when we represent the LGBTQ+ community. I will elaborate further in the following paragraphs. I would like to mention that I was on the Board of Directors of RNAO when we supported and approved the creation of RNIG in 2007, a proud moment for me!

Being an openly gay individual for many years is different than having to take a public position on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community. In nursing, health care, and as Canadians we should be speaking

out against discrimination, prejudices, stereotypes, harassments, bullying, whenever we observe it. But far from reacting to situations, we should take a pro-active role, as our predecessors have done in the past.

I have been involved in my community by participating and volunteering at events during the LGBTQ+ *Fierté Sudbury Pride* week in July for the past few years, and in public forums about the transgender population. While I was working full time, I took opportunities to inform nursing colleagues and other health care providers regarding the needs of LGBTQ+ individuals/patients /clients. Not easy when hearing some troublesome comments and having to remind some that these are not acceptable.

In my previous position as a nursing teacher, I was able to provide some insight regarding the LGBTQ+ population, especially in regards to discrimination and the needs of individuals who are gay, or lesbian (terms that students were most familiar with). In the sexual health courses (3 hours/week for 15 weeks), I had many opportunities to introduce and discuss many topics, including the LGBTQ+, and reflect with the students on these topics despite the fact that they “all” said they were straight. What was most heartening was for me and my ex-boyfriend to meet former students at the only gay bar in Sudbury and have them mention how appreciative they were, accepting themselves following the class discussions without being aware myself of what they were personally experiencing.

A little about me. My first Master studies were in palliative care, and I did my clinical work at the former Royal Victoria Hospital in Montréal, internally renowned for their work. During my second Master’s program (in nursing), I became a clinical nurse specialist doing counselling with men and women affected by HIV and AIDS at the-former-Hotel Dieu de Montréal in 1991. I was able to develop a nursing/palliative care approach using Peplau’s nursing model to help individuals who were dying when they were admitted to our care. In those days, the treatments were not really as “effective” as they are now and death was often the outcome that we observed. While we (the AIDS team) provided care, we were able to hear first-hand of both direct and more subtle forms of discrimination towards our clients. A topic that became a chapter of my master’s report.

Despite laws, policies, regulations and procedures, we are still subject to discrimination in various ways and forms both as a LGBTQ+ community, and on an individual basis. We need to continue to demand respect and provide support to each other, even in the nursing and healthcare community.

In doing so, we formally and informally influence the community at large for the betterment of our LGBTQ+ community. As an organization, we can influence our nursing colleagues, nursing students and other health care providers. I appreciate the work done by previous executives of RNIG and the founders that stood up to speak out. Together we can take on the challenge of promoting better health for our community.

In closing, it is our plan to continue increasing the visibility of our association and to continue to seek the respect that we deserve as individuals and as a community.

Sincerely,

Paul-André Gauthier, Inf./RN, CNS; PhD (nursing)
Provincial President RNIG (RN - LGBTQ+)
Rainbow Nursing Interest Group (Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario).
Association des infirmières et infirmiers arc-en-ciel de l’Ontario.
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With that in mind, **Linda Holm (Finances)** presents the following information on activities in her area of the province ...

What is Oxford County's Rainbow Coalition?

Oxford County's Rainbow Coalition is made up of expert community members as well as people from the mental health, social services and public health sectors. Gayle Milne, a public health nurse, with the Southwestern Public Health, Woodstock site, chairs the coalition. Members are invited from all sectors in the community. Anyone with a passion for human rights and equality is welcome to join.

Their mission is to create a safer and more supportive Oxford County for all people in which to live, work and play. Their work includes:

- challenging homophobia and heterosexism
- providing education in order to create more safe spaces
- increasing resources and services available for people who are LGBTQ+

Coalition volunteers work with Oxford County Pride to plan and provide events, not only in June, but year-round. Partners with Oxford County Pride include unions, a music lounge, banks, agencies, stores, restaurants, drug stores, a church, a bakery, and a bowling lane. Family and youth social events are a priority. The following are some of the events and activities organized/partnered with:

- A World Suicide Prevention Day was held by the Canadian Mental Health Association at the Museum Square in downtown Woodstock on September 10th. There was free food, live music, interactive activities for ages and a silent auction. Oxford County Pride participated and provided a booth.
- A Queer Book Club meets every 2 months at the Ingersoll Public Library.
- PRISM (Pride/Respect/Identity/Safety/Mentoring) – Big Brothers and Sisters is designed to connect LGBTQ+ children and youth with LGBTQ+ adults.

Oxford County's Rainbow Coalition continues to grow and evolve.

<https://oxfordpride.ca/>

https://www.southwesthealthline.ca/pdfs/oxford_county_rainbow_coalition_brochure_may_2017.pdf



When we consider whether or not it is still important to advocate for our community perhaps, we should consider the experience of our members ...

My Experience as A LGBTQ+ A Nursing Student

As a new nurse, the memories of nursing school are still fresh in my mind. As a nursing student and member of the LGBTQ+ community, I waited for the day when LGBTQ+ informed health care would be covered in class. After four years of university classroom learning, that day came along, which included approximately ten minutes of LGBTQ+ content presented within the classroom. While education on culturally competent care and care of minority groups was present (albeit scant) throughout my school years, the content and delivery of our ten-minute segment on the LGBTQ+ community and health care were sloppy, uninformed, and outright disrespectful to the community as a

whole. The information presented, spanned around six to seven slides on a power-point, mostly filled with definitions (that were incorrect), and the absence of any explanation or exploration of these terms but rather skimmed over, as stated “that we knew all of this already”. That was all. I left this class feeling upset and confused, I had high hopes that the lecture would have been informative and helpful, especially to students who may not have a strong grasp of these terms (or LGBTQ+ health care in general). After a discussion with a fellow classmate, an email was sent to the teacher’s assistant regarding what had happened. We were assured that there would be follow up education in the next class, but this never occurred.

Luckily through lived experience, discussions with other members of the LGBTQ+ community, and a personal drive to seek and educate myself, I believe I have a competent foundation to apply to practice in regards to LGBTQ+ health care. Even when I thought I knew all there was to know, an experience at a trans health clinic made it apparent to myself, that there is always more to know. I reflect upon the practical experiences I have been lucky to have versus my classroom experiences, and realize that seven slides of skimmed over definitions does not provide future nurses with the knowledge to provide informed, competent care, and this can lead to unnecessary hardships faced by members of the LGBTQ+ community while interacting with the health care system. My hope is that nursing professors work towards incorporating meaningful knowledge and teachings into their classes to prepare students to provide competent LGBTQ+ health care. There is a common misconception that interaction LGBTQ+ clients within the health care system is far and few between. However, we are here, as providers, and patients, and it is essential that informed, and competent health care is given. My hope for future nursing students is that they receive the often overlooked but extremely important education on LGBTQ+ health care that I was unable to obtain in the classroom setting.



As long as there are people and processes in our world that reinforce a negative attitude towards those who stand outside of the lines of heteronormativity, it is imperative that we speak out and make our voices heard. We have come a long way in decades past yet we still have a long way to go. Join us in speaking out either as an individual when you challenge discrimination by a colleague at work or negative stereotypes at home, or by increasing visibility by joining a group at PRIDE celebrations across Ontario in the spring. You could even consider hosting an event of your own. We would gladly allow you to borrow banners or offer handouts for your audience. If you are in Toronto on Sunday, June 28th, consider joining us as we march in Canada’s largest PRIDE parade.



The more voices that speak out, the more voices that are heard.

