



Love in a **Dangerous Time**
Canada's LGBT Purge

Opening the Door
to 2SLGBTQI+ Hidden Histories

Teacher Guide



Canada



How to use this Guide

From the 1950s to the 1990s, the Government of Canada systematically investigated, harassed and fired 2SLGBTQI+ members of the Canadian Armed Forces, the RCMP and the federal public service under the guise of national security. Now called “the LGBT Purge,” this official policy destroyed thousands of careers and lives. 2SLGBTQI+ communities fought back.

As a part of a historic class action settlement in 2018 between Purge survivors and the Canadian government, funds were set aside for legacy projects. The LGBT Purge Fund, which has the responsibility to steward these projects and to increase awareness of this little-known chapter of Canada’s history, partnered with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) in the development of both large- and small-scale exhibitions, web content, published articles and resources for the classroom. All of these strive to amplify voices of survivors and tell stories that inspire action and create change.

Thinking Historically About the LGBT Purge

[Historical Thinking Concepts](#) are embedded in many Humanities, History and Social Studies curricula in Canada. The LGBT Purge is a **historically significant** event that demonstrates the struggles and resilience of 2SLGBTQI+ communities in Canadian society. It is important to understand this history to make sure this type of systematic discrimination does not happen again.

The story of the LGBT Purge is complex, interwoven with many other movements and events spanning multiple decades, including the Cold War and the development of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. These events allow students to make sense of **continuity and change** within this complex flow of history, identifying historical turning points as well as the decline and progress of 2SLGBTQI+ rights in Canada.

As part of the settlement, the LGBT Purge Fund has released thousands of pages of primary source materials, including many classified as “Secret” or “Top Secret,” which allow students to examine the **evidence** of the LGBT Purge. These primary source materials provide a window into the **historical perspectives** that led to the systemic, intentional discrimination and expulsion of 2SLGBTQI+ individuals in the civil service, military and RCMP.

By using the lessons contained within this resource, students will be able to identify the **cause and consequences** of the LGBT Purge and connect to the **ethical dimensions** of this event. There are many examples to learn from about the resistance of the 2SLGBTQI+ communities during this period to help inform current generations that are experiencing similar forms of discrimination today.

Lesson Summaries

Lesson One: Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ Pre- and Post-Colonization (page 7)

This lesson explores the collision of European and Indigenous ideas about gender and sexuality and the way those beliefs were imposed through the process of colonization.

Lesson Two: Origin and Othering (page 9)

This lesson examines the historical context, laws and systems that allowed for the systemic discrimination of victims of the LGBT Purge and the broader 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

Lesson Three: Fear and Prejudice (page 12)

Using primary source documents and stories from survivors, students will examine the laws, policies and practices which led to the targeted and intentional purging of 2SLGBTQI+ members in the military, RCMP and civil service.

Lesson Four: Resistance and Demanding Change (page 15)

This lesson examines how collective resistance and demands for change from victims of the LGBT Purge and their allies slowly brought change to not only the survivors but the broader 2SLGBTQI+ communities in Canada.

Lesson Five: Resilience and Joy (page 18)

This lesson goes through a brief history of Pride and showcases how 2SLGBTQI+ groups and individuals organized to demand an apology and compensation for the harm of the LGBT Purge. There are examples of heroic 2SLGBTQI+ people and events, and examples of survivors of the LGBT Purge.

A Note to Teachers

The lessons contained within this guide explore multiple themes and are not necessarily designed to be completed within a single class block. The purpose is to reveal the hidden history of the LGBT Purge and connect that history to broader human rights themes. Each lesson provides the opportunity to explore themes such as systemic discrimination, bias, workplace discrimination, power structures and intersecting rights. As you go through the lessons, be aware of opportunities to explore these themes with your students.

Curricular Connections

The story of the LGBT Purge offers educators an opportunity to help students recognize how Canada's approach to becoming an inclusive society did not happen without the tireless efforts of equity-seeking groups who advocated for change.

This resource is designed to be integrated into curricula across the country. Given the breadth of curricula available, we have not listed specific curricular outcomes. However, direct links can be made in the following areas of study:

- Civics
- Canadian Law
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Canadian History
- Cold War
- Post-Second World War Canada
- Social Justice
- Global Issues
- Pluralism

Lesson Elements

Discussions

Each lesson includes a series of discussion questions for students to have conversations about how systems can be designed to discriminate, as well as how to advocate and create change within those systems.

Background Reading

Each lesson includes short background documents to help students understand the factors leading to the intentional and systemic discrimination against 2SLGBTQI+ communities in the Canadian civil service. These documents are not exhaustive but serve as a springboard toward further discussion, research and understanding of the historical context, significance and ethical dimensions of the LGBT Purge. With this additional information, students can develop a holistic understanding of 2SLGBTQI+ history in Canada with a specific focus on the LGBT Purge.

Backgrounders/Profiles

The story of the LGBT Purge is ultimately the story of people. Behind each document, policy and action are lives that were deeply affected. Incorporated in the background documents are profiles of people who were affected by the LGBT Purge in some way. It is important to highlight the personal impacts of the government's policies and practices throughout the process of learning about the LGBT Purge.

These backgrounders can be found at the back of this guide. They can also be accessed to share or print as handouts at humanrights.ca/love-dangerous-time-teacher-guide.

Primary Source Documents

As part of the LGBT Purge Class Action lawsuit settlement, the Government of Canada is obligated to provide historical records relating to the LGBT Purge. The LGBT Purge Fund has been provided over 15,000 pages of documents and is committed to making these records available to the public. The records can be accessed here: lgbtpurgefund.com/projects/#historical-document-collection

Several lessons use these primary source documents to deepen student understanding of the intentionality of the LGBT Purge. As they are historical documents, some of which were marked as “Secret” or “Top Secret,” they use outdated terminology and they outline policies and describe scenarios and actions that may be triggering to some students. We encourage educators to take time to ensure that students understand the importance of using primary sources when learning about historical events and their impacts.



Additional Reading

As part of the development of the *Love in a Dangerous Time* exhibition, a companion book has

been developed, *Love in a Dangerous Time: Canada's LGBT Purge – Reflections on queer history and why it matters today*. The book includes a series of articles, essays and interviews that can be incorporated into the lessons in this document. The book can be purchased from the [Museum's Boutique](#).



Author's Note

As an educator for the last 25 years, I have noticed that local, provincial and federal 2SLGBTQI+ history is lacking in many classrooms and schools around the country. In fact, there is still a great lack of awareness of Canadian 2SLGBTQI+ history in 2SLGBTQI+ communities themselves, and an even larger absence of knowledge in the Canadian population in general. I wish it could be simply because it wasn't taught in schools in the past. That, of course is part of it, but there is also an element to do with the historical homophobia, biphobia and transphobia connected to teaching youth about these subjects.

Everyone has an attraction/sexual orientation. Some people are attracted to people of the opposite gender, some to the same gender, some to more than one, and others do not feel attraction at all.

Everyone has a gender identity. Everyone has a name and pronouns they use. If someone called you a different name or different pronouns than the ones you use, you would not respond because that is not how you identify. Sometimes people change their name and pronouns because it aligns better with how they feel inside or outside themselves. This helps everyone feel that they belong and are heard and respected for who they truly are inside and out. Many people have changed or altered the name they were given at birth. There are various reasons why this happens but most of the time, it is simply because the name that people use expresses their identity better.

Everyone has a gender expression. This often is reflected in the way we dress, our hairstyles, jewellery, and the way we interact with others. The clothing we select should make us all feel authentic to our identity. How we present ourselves to everyone can tell our own personal story, our own interests, our likes and even our dislikes. Many of the clothes we wear were predetermined by the dominant societal norms and based on cultural expectations of where we live. Most clothes are sold based on a gender binary. Clothes are marketed based on assumptions about what girls/women should or can wear and what boys/men should like or wear to fit in. Some people feel comfortable picking out their clothes based on this binary breakdown and others feel more content to mix and match from both. Some try to pick a look that does not clearly state the cultural gender binary they live in.

I feel so honoured to be able to have worked on this incredible exhibition, *Love in a Dangerous Time*. Being part of the largest 2SLGBTQI+ exhibition in Canadian history is humbling. The LGBT Purge is part of our collective history and needs to be taught in all schools. I hope this resource will help create that possibility. Much of the background information I have used for these lessons comes from the *Love in a Dangerous Time: Canada's LGBT Purge* exhibition, as well as online stories and digital content published by the CMHR. .

My main goal in these lessons is to create a discussion of the LGBT Purge and how it relates to human rights challenges today. It is vital to finally have these important, but often invisible, historical events be part of the educational mosaic in schools around the country.

It is also important to note that these topics are about Canadian history, not sex. These topics are about human rights and, therefore, should be taught in various classroom settings without prior permission. The lessons can be embedded in various curriculum objectives/expectations around the country, especially those that include Pre-and Post-Colonial History, Truth and Reconciliation, the First and Second World Wars, the Cold War, Law, Social Studies and, of course, any place where a teacher feels that human rights issues can be included.

2SLGBTQI+ communities in this country are part of the rich fabric of Canada. Our struggles, resilience, accomplishments and joy must be included in classrooms, regardless of what part of the country you live in, to make sure an injustice like the LGBT Purge is never experienced again in Canada.

Sincerely,

Walter Cassidy (he/they)

Educator in Residence
Canadian Museum for Human Rights

Special thanks to the following people who, among many others, contributed to the creation of this Teacher Guide: Opening the Door to 2SLGBTQI+ Hidden Histories.

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Lesson One

Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ Pre- and Post-Colonization

Lesson Objective

Students will learn that Indigenous understandings of gender and sexual orientation differed significantly from European understandings of gender and sexual orientation and that the process of colonization saw Indigenous understanding repressed until very recently.

Driving Question

How have many Indigenous people resisted the European view of normality?

Materials

- Backgrounder: A Clash of Values: Colonization in Canada (page 22)
- Reading: "[What Is Two-Spirit? Part One: Origins](#)," by Scott de Groot"

Lesson Summary

Students will be introduced to the concept of normality and European ideology of gender and sexual orientation. The lesson aims to show how colonization had negative effects on Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ individuals and cultures, and to show how people and groups resisted imposed colonial ideologies.

Students will learn about some Indigenous nations' complex understandings of gender and sexual orientation. Students will learn about the negative effects that colonization-imposed prohibitions against 2SLGBTQI+ expressions had on North American (Turtle Island) First Nation cultures and how, for many years, Indigenous individuals and groups fought back against this colonial prejudice and oppression.

Pre-Teaching Supports

This lesson requires students to have a basic understanding of the process and impacts of colonization of Indigenous peoples in Canada. If students are unfamiliar with this subject, they can learn more in this article entitled "[Colonialism in Canada](#)" (*The Canadian Encyclopedia*).

It should be noted that not all Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ have adopted the term Two-Spirit. Some Indigenous people prefer the term Indigiqueer. Others use LGBTQI+ and there is a growing movement to reclaim the traditional terms used in the language of their First Nation. Students should note that only Indigenous individuals can adopt a Two-Spirit identity or identify as Two-Spirit.

Further Two-Spirit resources and research opportunities can be found at the [Two-Spirit Archives at the University of Winnipeg](#). This archive is one of the most significant repositories of correspondence, poetry, photographs, artwork, textiles, journalism, multimedia and ephemera related to the Indigenous Two-Spirit movement in North America.

Instructions for Teachers

Introductory Discussion

1. How is a “normal” day different for a student/parent/doctor/professional athlete, etc.?
2. Who decides what it is to be “normal”? How are they able to dictate this normality?
3. Can you identify some of the ways the concept of being “normal” has changed in society throughout history?
4. How do different cultures see gender and sexual orientation?

Reading

Backgrounder: A Clash of Values: Colonization in Canada (page 22)

Follow-up Discussion/Assigned Questions

1. How did colonization contribute to the erasure of diverse expressions of sexual orientation and gender identity in Indigenous cultures?
2. What methods did the Canadian government adopt to eradicate many of those historical Indigenous understandings of gender and sexual orientation?
3. In what ways have Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ individuals and communities created visibility on Turtle Island?

Additional Reading

[“The Re-emergence of 2Spirit People in the 21st Century,” by Albert McLeod](#): This article is also published in the catalogue *Love in a Dangerous Time: Canada’s LGBT Purge – Reflections on queer history and why it matters today*, pp. 30-39.

Lesson Two

Origin and Othering

Lesson Objective

Students will understand that societal and geo-political pressures can create systems and laws that allow for marginalized groups, in this case members of 2SLGBTQI+ communities, to be discriminated against.

Driving Questions

Should parts of our personal identity be open to examination by the government?

Who can keep you safe?

Who should know our personal secrets?

Should your workplace be a place to express yourself?

Are there things about who you are that make you afraid of getting in trouble at work or school?

Materials

- Worksheet: Social Identity Wheel
- Backgrounder: What Is the LGBT Purge? (page 26)
- Backgrounder: Timeline of 2SLGBTQI+ Federal Laws in Canada (page 29)

Lesson Summary

Students will begin by examining the concepts of identity and intersectionality and explore how, in certain contexts, people are not able to express all aspects of their identity.

Students will then examine historical and current Canadian laws and court decisions that both diminished and upheld the rights of 2SLGBTQI+ individuals.

Finally, students will examine the historical context that led to the LGBT Purge and how perpetrators of this violation justified their actions.

Pre-Teaching Supports

[EGALE: Genderbread Person: Components of Human Identity](#)

["Canada's History: Pride & Prejudice" \(Wolfenden Report\)](#)

["The power of uncovering hidden pasts,"](#) by Matthew Cutler.

This article is also published in the catalogue *Love in a Dangerous Time: Canada's LGBT Purge – Reflections on queer history and why it matters today*, pp. 7-9.

"Shaking a Lavender Fist: Canadian 2SLGBTQI+ activism during the Cold War," by David Churchill. *Love in a Dangerous Time: Canada's LGBT Purge – Reflections on queer history and why it matters today*, pp. 40-57.

Instructions for Teachers

Introductory Discussion

1. Before starting the discussion, ask students to complete the social identity wheel on page 24.
2. Discuss how we all have similarities and differences in our identity. Examine how these differences make us unique and complex.
3. Use this discussion to introduce the concept of intersectionality to students.
 - *Intersectionality is a framework for conceptualizing a person, group of people, or social problem as affected by several discriminations and disadvantages. It considers people's overlapping identities and experiences to understand the complexity of prejudices they face.*
4. Discuss with students about how some stories and voices have been forgotten in history because of identity, and about how some elements of a person's identity are taboo subjects in many contexts.

Reading

Backgrounder: What Is the LGBT Purge? (page 26)

Follow-up Discussion/Assigned Questions

1. How would you react if you lost your job because of your identity?
2. How did 2SLGBTQI+ communities react as information about the Purge was revealed?
3. Are there parallels between people who were affected by the LGBT Purge and other groups who have been discriminated against throughout Canada's history (e.g. Chinese head tax, women's suffrage, Japanese internment, Indian residential school system)?

Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Legal Timeline

1. Review groups that were discriminated against throughout Canadian history. Discuss the importance of human rights and recognizing Canada's discriminatory past.
2. Print out the backgrounder Laws and Challenges: A Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Legal Timeline (page 30).
 - a. Cut up the timeline elements.
 - b. Ask the students to work in groups to arrange them in chronological order.
 - c. Ask groups to reorganize the timeline elements according to a theme they determine. (e.g. pro-/anti-2SLGBTQI+ laws, pre-/post-Confederation or Charter, connecting to cultural, social and political events, etc.).
3. Ask groups to share with the class how they categorized the timeline elements.

Follow-up Discussion/Assigned Questions

1. What did you find surprising in the timeline?
2. How do you think these laws made people from 2SLGBTQI+ communities feel about themselves and about their sense of security in their country?
3. How did these laws affect the concept of who is "normal"?
4. Is there a period in the timeline where you started to notice a change in the laws regarding 2SLGBTQI+ individuals?
 - a. What were some of the social, political and global events happening around this time?

The Cold War, the Lavender Scare and the LGBT Purge

Reading

Backgrounder: What Is the LGBT Purge? (page 26)

Follow-up Discussion/Assigned Questions

1. How did members of 2SLGBTQI+ communities respond to the increased pressure and scrutiny they were facing during the Cold War?
2. What were some of the systemic barriers that members of 2SLGBTQI+ communities faced during that time? How were they able to deal with these barriers?

Extension Activity

Many members of 2SLGBTQI+ communities were facing discrimination in other spaces at this time. The story of Jackie Shane is one example:

- [Heritage Minutes: Jackie Shane](#)
- [No Other Way: The Story of Jackie Shane](#)

Have students research 2SLGBTQI+ people who were forgotten in history and who were rediscovered, e.g. Jackie Shane. Students could identify an equity-deserving person in history who has been rediscovered or who might be rediscovered by the student themselves.

- [Canadian Pride Historical Society: 7 Queer Black Trailblazers You Should Know](#)
- [Queer Events: We've Been Here: Notable QBIPOC](#)

Have students find information and answer the following questions about these individuals:

- a. Name, period they were alive, birthplace, background (i.e., race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, etc.).
- b. What important accomplishments did they achieve in their lifetime?
- c. What were some of the factors that contributed to their initial exclusion from being recognized for their accomplishments?
- d. Why is it important for everyone to know about them today?

Lesson Three

Fear and Prejudice

Lesson Objective

Students will examine the policies, practices and actions that were directed towards 2SLGBTQI+ community members in the public service, RCMP and Canadian Armed Forces, and understand the far-reaching impacts these had on the people who were targeted.

Driving Questions

Why is it important to learn about the LGBT Purge?

What was the impact of the LGBT Purge on its victims?

How does this experience relate to today's workplace environments?

Materials

- Backgrounder: Systemic Discrimination and the LGBT Purge (page 34)
- Primary source documents from the LGBT Purge Fund

Lesson Summary

Students will be introduced to some primary source documents released as part of the investigation to the LGBT Purge. Students will examine the documents and explore the rationale and the intent behind these policies.

Students will learn about the result of these policies and understand the far-reaching impact they had on the people subjected to these practices.

Pre-Teaching Supports

As part of the LGBT Purge Class Action lawsuit settlement, the Government of Canada is obligated to provide historical records relating to the LGBT Purge. The LGBT Purge Fund has been provided over 15,000 pages of documents and is committed to making these records available to the public. The records can be accessed here: lgbtpurgefund.com/document-library/

Instructions for Teachers

Introductory Discussion

1. What are some of the root causes that can lead to the rights of groups being taken away?
2. Do you know of an example of workplace discrimination?
3. Do you think people who identify as part of a 2SLGBTQI+ community experience workplace discrimination today?

Reading

Backgrounder: Systemic Discrimination and the LGBT Purge (page 34)

Follow-up Discussion/Assigned Questions

1. What methods of intimidation and investigation were used to identify 2SLGBTQI+ community members in government jobs?
2. When individuals were investigated, how were their rights infringed upon?
3. How do you think people being investigated felt about their workplace?

LGBT Purge Fund: Historical Document Collection

1. Review with students the [statement and settlement process](#) that the LGBT Purge Fund shared on their website.
2. Remind students that they will be reading historical documents which may include outdated terms and views reflective of a historical moment in time.
3. Choose one of the two following research projects for your students:
 - a. Analysis of “Secret” and “Top Secret” documents: Provide students with one of the following documents that were distributed during the LGBT Purge.

- i. [Letter about homosexuality, the public service and national security](#) [Secret]
- ii. [Federal document describing security risks and methods of weeding out homosexuals in government](#) [Top Secret]
Warning: There is written graphic material in numbered paragraph 6. We recommend focusing on numbered paragraphs 2, 3, 10-12, 16 and 18.

- b. Case Study: Get students to go to the link below, scroll down to “Individual Case: Dwyer,” and study related documents. lgbtpurgefund.com/document-library/?cat=canadian-armed-forces

Follow-up Discussion/Assigned Questions

For the analysis of “Secret” and “Top Secret” documents:

- a. What time period are these documents from?
- b. How are dissenting voices addressed in these documents?
- c. What rationale is presented in this document that supports the argument against employing homosexuals in the workplace?
- d. What kind of “pressure” do you think the government is talking about?
- e. How does the document justify discrimination of homosexuals based on “national security”?

For the case study:

- a. How were Corporal Derrick Dwyer’s rights violated?
- b. What time period are these documents from?
- c. How did the Canadian Armed Forces justify their actions?
- d. How are dissenting voices addressed in these documents?
- e. How did these violations affect Derrick Dwyer’s life at the time?

Extension Activity

The LGBT Purge Fund's [Document Library](#) houses thousands of documents that have allowed us to understand the systemic and intentional nature of the discrimination against 2SLGBTQI+ individuals at the time.

1. Ask students to select one broad segment of the documents: (Overview, Public Service, RCMP or Canadian Armed Forces) and then one subsection of documents.
2. Review three or four documents from the subsection.
Be aware that some documents might have some explicit language in them.
3. Identify the type of document (policy, directive, incident report, etc.) and highlight at least two elements within the document that illustrate the systemic and intentional nature of the LGBT Purge.
4. Ask students to connect their subset of documents to two or three profiles, included in the backgrounder Systemic Discrimination and the LGBT Purge (page 34), of individuals who would have been directly or similarly impacted by these documents.

Follow-up Discussion/Assigned Questions

1. What themes did you start to see on how the government saw 2SLGBTQI+ community members at that time?
2. Reflect on what you felt when reading these documents.
3. How do you think the actions outlined in these documents affected those who were government employees? How might it have affected those around them?

Social Media Awareness Campaign

1. Give students copies of the backgrounder Systemic Discrimination and the LGBT Purge (page 34), which includes profiles of early victims of workplace discrimination and of victims/survivors of the LGBT Purge.
2. Break students up into small groups and have each group pick a person to do an online search about, focusing on workplace discrimination. Students should be encouraged to do research beyond the profile included in the backgrounder.
3. Have the group come up with a social media awareness campaign of workplace discrimination that highlights one or a few of the individuals included in the backgrounder. The posts could explore why this person should be highlighted. Have students come up with a tag line that helps explain these people's importance and the need to create an environment in the workplace that is free of discrimination.
4. Students can explore the method they would use to highlight this information, e.g. images, skit, dance, talking points, etc.

Lesson Four

Resistance and Demanding Change

Lesson Objective

Students will recognize how pressure and activism from equity-deserving groups can result in significant changes in thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and systems.

Driving Question

What societal factors or conditions allow for individuals or groups to create positive change in Canada?

Materials

- Backgrounder: Demanding Change (page 38)

Lesson Summary

Students will learn about how a community of people came together to advocate for and achieve change. They will examine primary source correspondence, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and legal cases that will illustrate how laws and policies can be interpreted in multiple ways that can simultaneously protect and discriminate.

Pre-Teaching Supports

“Why Queer History Matters: Two views from Western Canada,” by Valerie Korinek and Scott de Groot. *Love in a Dangerous Time: Canada’s LGBT Purge – Reflections on queer history and why it matters today*, pp. 58-73.

Primary Sources

[Confidential letter written in 1976 by the Deputy Director General about gay liberation groups](#)

[A letter written to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in 1977 by the National Gay Rights Coalition](#)

[A letter written by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in 1978](#)

Additional Documents

[Letter dated 1987 by George Wilkes to the Minister of National Defence](#)

[Response letter dated 1977 from Canadian Forces from Gay Social Services Project](#)

[Government of Canada letter to Solicitor General on James Stiles v. Her Majesty the Queen](#)

Instructions for Teachers

Introductory Discussion

1. How has life in Canada become different since your grandparents'/elders' time?
2. How have human rights in Canada changed in the last 60 years?
3. Who or what drove that change?

Reading

Backgrounder: Demanding Change (page 38)

Follow-up Discussion/Assigned Questions

1. How did the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* fall short of protecting rights of 2SLGBTQI+ individuals?
2. How did the Charter provide a way for 2SLGBTQI+ individuals to create change?

Activity

1. Review the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Focus on Article 15.
2. Have students discuss the creation of the Charter. Have them look at Article 15 and see if they can identify the protected rights that are not included, such as sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.
3. Watch the [Heritage Minute about Jim Egan](#) then read "Charter Challenge; Egan v. Canada (1995)" included in the backgrounder Demanding Change (p. 38).
4. Examine the court case Egan v. Canada and the importance of this case on future court rulings.
5. Have students research other precedent-setting cases such as:
 - a. 1992: Haig and Birch v. Canada
 - b. 1998: Vriend v. Alberta
 - c. 2002: Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36
 - d. 2005: Board of School Trustees of School District No. 44 v. Azmi Jubran, et al.
 - e. 2012: S.L. v. Commission scolaire des Chênes
 - f. 2021: Attorney General Québec v. Centre for Gender Advocacy
 - g. 2023: Hansman v. Neufeld

Follow-up Discussion/Assigned Questions

1. What is the significance of the Egan Case in the interpretation of the Charter going forward?
2. How does the Egan case show the importance of standing up for human rights?
3. How have other court rulings advanced 2SLGBTQI+ human rights in Canada?

Demanding Change

Students are shown a primary source of a community group writing letters to the Prime Minister.

- a. [Confidential letter written in 1976 by the Deputy Director General about gay liberation groups](#)
- b. [A letter written to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in 1977 by the National Gay Rights Coalition](#)
- c. [A letter written by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in 1978](#)

Follow-up Discussion/Assigned Questions

1. How do you think these letters were received by their intended audiences?
2. What does this sample of correspondence tell us about how the government and 2SLGBTQI+ communities were approaching this issue?
3. Based on what you have learned about the LGBT Purge, do you think these letters helped create change? Justify your response.

Extension Activity

Here is additional correspondence that could be examined in a similar way as above;

- a. [Letter dated 1987 by George Wilkes to the Minister of National Defence](#)
- b. [Response letter dated 1977 from Canadian Forces from Gay Social Services Project](#)
- c. [Government of Canada letter to Solicitor General on James Stiles v. Her Majesty the Queen](#)

Current Implications

- a. Discuss in what ways the LGBT Purge relates to current issues that 2SLGBTQI+ communities are facing.
- b. What can we learn from the Egan case and/or other cases, Charter challenges and lobbying the government as a way to create change?
- c. Based on class discussion, identify an issue 2SLGBTQI+ communities are facing and an action that could be taken to advocate for and create change. E.g. write a letter, create awareness, critique policy, etc.
- d. Get students to develop a detailed plan to implement these actions..

Lesson Five

Resilience and Joy

Lesson Objective

Students will recognize how learning from the past can create resilience to continue to strive for current and future human rights protections for 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

Driving Questions

How can we learn from the LGBT Purge to make sure this type of government overreach is prevented in the future?

How can we connect the lessons of the LGBT Purge to current struggles that members of 2SLGBTQI+ communities are presently experiencing?

Materials

- Backgrounder: We Demand an Apology (page 41)
- [Government of Canada: Apology to LGBTQ2 communities](#)

Lesson Summary

Students will discover how 2SLGBTQI+ groups and individuals began to organize to demand an apology and compensation for the harm of the LGBT Purge. Students will learn about the history of Pride and review examples of heroic 2SLGBTQI+ people and events, as well as examples of survivors of the LGBT Purge.

Pre-Teaching Supports

[“She said | He said,”](#) by Leslie Vryenhoek. This article is also published in the catalogue *Love in a Dangerous Time: Canada’s LGBT Purge – Reflections on queer history and why it matters today*, pp. 86-97.

“The Stars Align: Connections, class actions and activism out of the LGBT Purge,” by Leslie Vryenhoek. *Love in a Dangerous Time: Canada’s LGBT Purge – Reflections on queer history and why it matters today*, pp. 18-29.

Instructions for Teachers

Introductory Discussion

1. When was the last time you said sorry but didn't really need to?
2. When you receive an apology, how do you know the person apologizing is genuinely sorry?

Reading

Backgrounder: We Demand an Apology (page 41)

[Government of Canada: Apology to LGBTQ2 communities](#)

Follow-up Discussion/Assigned Questions

1. What are your first impressions of the speech?
2. Do you think it went far enough?
3. Why do you think some people were not happy with it?

Resilience and Joy:

The History of Pride

1. As a class, get students to talk about a moment of celebration they had recently that was not an annual event (e.g. team championship, graduation, overcoming a challenge, achieving a goal). What is it about these types of moments that make them worth celebrating?
2. In small groups, ask students to look into and summarize one of the following moments:
 - a. Stonewall Uprising (1969, New York City)
 - b. We Demand (1971, Ottawa and Vancouver)
 - c. Toronto Pride Parade, Black Live Matter Protest (2016)
 - d. First local Pride event
3. Make sure the students create connections to what they have learned about the LGBT Purge and the people who resisted it, i.e. key players in the event, methods of celebration and in what ways are these moments worth celebrating.
4. Ask students to share a summary of their event to the class.

Pride as Protest and Celebration

1. Ask each student to identify a person or event related or connected to a 2SLGBTQI+ community and identify the following:
 - a. Name of person, event or moment
 - b. Date
 - c. Human rights violation(s)
 - d. Acts of resilience/resistance
 - e. Reason for joy
2. As a class, decide how to make these moments, people and their connection to Pride celebrations and protests known in your school community.

Name: Jim Egan

Dates: 1988 (first court challenge);
1995 (Egan v. Canada decision)

Human Rights Violation: Was unable to receive the same spousal benefits as heterosexual couples.

Acts of Resistance: Regularly wrote articles to challenge norms and launched a legal challenge about spousal benefits.

Reason for Joy: Although he did not get spousal benefits, for the first time, the courts agreed that sexual orientation is a protected right under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Culminating Activity:

Create a Bulletin Board Display

1. The purpose of this activity is to share about the LGBT Purge and the people who helped to create positive change for 2SLGBTQI+ individuals and communities.
2. Get students to take elements from the five lessons and create a bulletin board display in your school, hallway or classroom about the LGBT Purge. Examples:
 - Students could include many of the resources in the lessons to create a timeline.
 - Students could include elements they learned from all the lesson plans.
 - The students could highlight some important historical dates such as the 1952 *Immigration Act* and the repeal of it in 1977, and 1992 court case of Michelle Douglas.
3. Create a bulletin board display from the profiles or personal stories of victims/survivors included in the backgrounders.



Backgrounders



A Clash of Values: Colonization in Canada



Dancers at the first annual Two-Spirit Pow Wow in Winnipeg, 2017. Photo: Sadie Phoenix Lavoie

When Europeans came to North America centuries ago, they brought their social and cultural norms with them. Traders, missionaries, settlers and soldiers spread these values as they colonized what is now Canada. The new arrivals encountered gender and sexual diversity among Indigenous peoples. This diversity was condemned as “sinful” and “immoral.” When Canada became a nation-state in 1867, new laws and policies enforced Christian forms of marriage and family life. Same-sex relationships became crimes. Two-Spirit people were shunned and removed from public life in their communities.

Indigenous Concepts about Gender Identity

Across Indigenous North America, some people lived as neither men nor women. Others were seen as combining – even transcending – masculine and feminine qualities. They performed important social roles, held knowledge, led ceremonies, raised children, married and lived in same-sex relationships. Customs related to gender and sexuality varied between First Nations. But they did not divide people into two groups of men and women based on biology. Nor was there a single moral code that condemned same-sex and same-gender relationships. That came later with Christianity and colonial settlement.

Gender Oppression: Canada’s *Indian Act*

In many First Nations, family lines were traced through women. But in 1876, Canada passed a law called the *Indian Act*. It undermined the right of Indigenous peoples to govern themselves. The Act declared the status of an “Indian” woman depended on her husband. This eroded the social and political roles of Indigenous women, gender-diverse individuals and Two-Spirit people. According to Canada’s *Indian Act*: “.. any Indian woman marrying any other than an Indian or a non-treaty Indian shall cease to be an Indian in any respect...”

Profile:
Osh-Tisch



Osh-Tisch (1854-1929) was a well-known *bade* – a male-bodied person who performed social and spiritual roles alongside women within the culture of the Crow Nation. Osh-Tisch achieved great renown as a warrior, fighting bravely in the Battle of

the Rosebud (1876). They were also celebrated as a maker of jewellery and clothing.

Courtesy of Dr. James Brust, photograph by John H. Fouch

Forced to Conform

In the early 1800s, Canada introduced Indian residential schools to destroy Indigenous cultures and identities. Christian churches operated these schools. They divided and dressed children according to gender. Boys and girls had separate dorms and classrooms. Rules often prevented them from socializing with one another. Students were taught in ways considered suitable for their gender. Indigenous youth who displayed queer forms of expression were severely punished.

With colonization, and particularly after the birth of Canada in 1867, Indigenous cultures were attacked and suppressed. New Canadian laws enforced Christian marriage. Same-sex relationships were criminalized. Children were removed from their families and “re-educated” in Indian residential schools, which enforced European gender norms and punished queer expression.

The Meaning of Two-Spirit

Two-Spirit is an inclusive term used today by many Indigenous people. “Two-Spirit is indefinable,” mentions Felix Clarence Berry, curator at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. “It’s a complex term, an umbrella term, a placeholder: an organizing

tool/framework for people to find their way home (to a nation- and/or language-specific term that works for them). It’s about—or ought to be understood in relation to—self-determination.”

It describes individuals whose gender and sexuality resist colonial definitions of masculinity, femininity, homosexuality and heterosexuality. Indigenous languages, including Cree and Anishinaabemowin, have many terms and expressions for people we would now call Two-Spirit. “It’s more of an understanding than a definition,” according to Myra Laramée, who coined the term Two-Spirit. “It’s a meaningful and complex signifier. Alex Wilson refers to it as (among other things): ‘a modern term that recognizes our ancient understandings of our identity.’”

Two-Spirit Resurgence

The late twentieth century saw efforts to recover and reclaim Indigenous traditions of gender and sexual diversity. In 1990, an international gathering held near Beausejour, Manitoba, embraced the term Two-Spirit. It was adopted by participants as an identity that linked contemporary LGBTQ+ experiences with Indigenous traditions and worldviews. Today, Two-Spirit organizations exist across North America. An upcoming generation of youth are continuing the struggle for Two-Spirit resurgence through art, literature, music, film and political activism.

Selected Cree Terms and English Translations

Napêw iskwêwisêhot	A man who dresses as a woman.
Iskwêw ka napêwayat	A woman who dresses as a man.
Ayahkwêw	A man who dresses, lives, or is accepted as a woman.
Înahpikasoh	A woman who dresses, lives, or is accepted as a man.

Profile:
Albert McLeod



Albert McLeod (Cree and Métis) is a respected educator, activist and Two-Spirit Elder. He played a pivotal role in organizing the international gathering at which the term Two-

Spirit was adopted in 1990. Albert was the Director of the Manitoba Aboriginal AIDS Task Force from 1991-2001. He has facilitated Two-Spirit recognition and inclusion in countless contexts, such as the National 2SLGBTQI+ Monument in Ottawa and advising on content in the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

Photo: University of Winnipeg Archives, Albert McLeod Fonds, 11.11,5-2, 16

Profile:
Ma-Nee Chacaby



Elder Ma-Nee Chacaby's (Oji-Cree) life has been full of challenges – abuse, homelessness, addiction and homophobic attacks. But she has emerged to become a respected Two-Spirit Elder whose influence extends across Canada. Ma-Nee's journey was nourished by her grandmother's insistence that being Two-Spirit is a gift with deep roots in Indigenous worldviews and traditions.

Photo: Ruth Kivilahti

Profile:
Charlotte Nolin



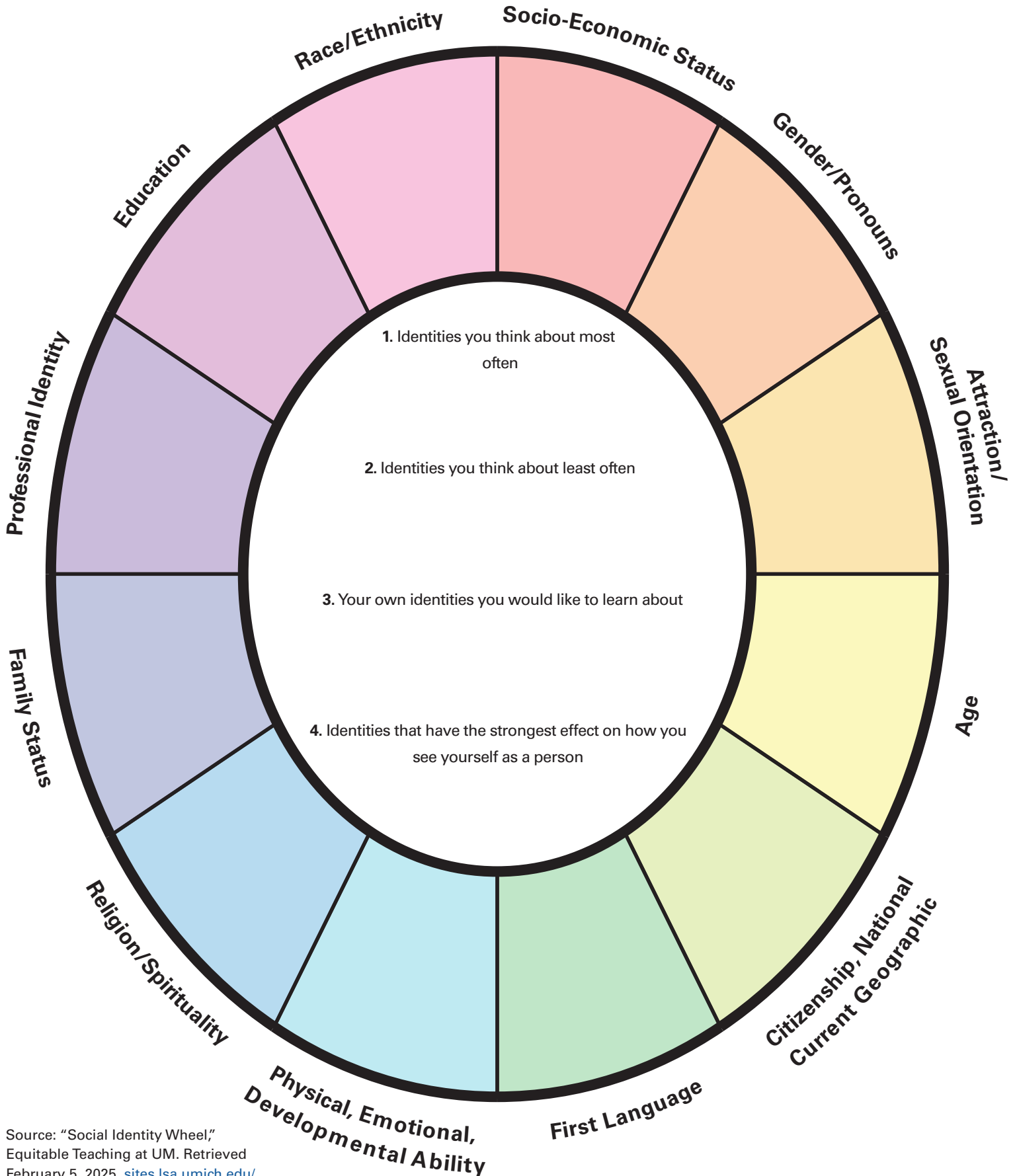
Born in Winnipeg in 1950, Charlotte Nolin was taken from her family as part of the Sixties Scoop. Assigned male at birth, she was shuffled between foster homes in southern Manitoba and was abused both at home and at day school. Charlotte ultimately escaped the foster system in her late teens. Turning to sex work and dealing drugs to survive, she moved back and forth between Winnipeg and Vancouver and spent stints in jail in both cities. Understanding that she was trans from a young age, Charlotte lived as a woman for brief periods when it was not too dangerous. She first heard the term Two-Spirit at a sweat lodge ceremony in British Columbia in 1990. And something truly clicked in her self-understanding.

Photo: Aaron Cohen, CMHR

Lesson Two: Worksheet

Social Identity Wheel

Share what you feel comfortable and safe discussing.
There is no pressure to fill in every box.



Source: "Social Identity Wheel,"
Equitable Teaching at UM. Retrieved
February 5, 2025, [sites.lsa.umich.edu/
inclusive-teaching/sample-activities/
social-identity-wheel/](https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/sample-activities/social-identity-wheel/)

Lesson Two: Backgrounder

What Is the LGBT Purge?

Between the 1950s and mid-1990s, 2SLGBTQI+ members of the Canadian Armed Forces, the RCMP and the federal public service were systematically discriminated against, harassed and often fired as a matter of official government policy. In what came to be known as the “LGBT Purge,” people were followed, interrogated, abused and traumatized under the guise that being queer made a person a national security threat.

The LGBT Purge was implemented at the highest levels of the Government of Canada and was carried out with callous disregard for the dignity, privacy and humanity of its victims. With its roots in the Cold War, the Canadian Government’s LGBT Purge continued for over 40 years.

An estimated 9,000 lives were devastated over those years, and the irreparable psychological trauma continues to this day. The careers and self-esteem of a generation of young people were destroyed; victims were denied benefits, severance, pensions and opportunities for promotion if they managed to keep their jobs. This shameful period in Canadian history also resulted in suicide, fear, depression, PTSD, addiction, disownment, criminalization, rejection, isolation, erasure and many other enduring and painful experiences.

The Cold War



When the Second World War ended in 1945, Europe lay in ruins. The Soviet Union and the United States emerged as the world’s two superpowers. They became locked in

a confrontation known as the Cold War. The Soviet Union sought to spread its systems of communism and socialism globally. The United States, Canada and other Western allies resisted Soviet expansion. They wanted to promote their own systems of democracy and capitalism around the world. In tense moments, the Cold War threatened to turn hot, with potential for another world war.

Tensions mounted as both countries raced to develop and stockpile nuclear weapons. During the Cold War, Soviet spy-rings were detected in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States. This created fears that disloyal civil servants might be spying for the Soviet state. The United States government developed strict screening processes to ensure trustworthy public servants. It was believed that queer employees would be prime targets for Soviet agents. The government falsely held that queer people could be pressured to give away state secrets to avoid exposing their sexuality. The solution? They would have to be purged from positions within government.

Photo: U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command, public domain

Profile:
Frank Kameny

Frank Kameny was fired from his job as an astronomer for the US Army Map Service in 1957 for being gay. He devoted many years of his life to trying to get his job back. In 1960, he co-founded the Mattachine Society of Washington, DC, which campaigned for gay rights. In 1965, Kameny organized the first gay rights protest in front of the White House. In 1975, he helped Leonard Matlovich, a Sergeant in the US Air Force who was also fired for being gay. Matlovich sued for reinstatement. The Air Force settled out of court. On June 29, 2009, the US government formally apologized to Kameny. Kameny's home in Washington is designated as a Washington, D.C., historic landmark.

Lavender Scare

American leaders worried that queer civil servants could be forced to reveal state secrets. The belief was that Soviet agents could threaten to expose their sexuality. Queer workers were falsely assumed to be deceptive and unreliable. As a result, they were blocked from employment. Other Western nations adopted similar programs of discrimination. Senator Joseph McCarthy stated that homosexuality "led people toward communism." Many politicians viewed both communists and queers as threats to American values.

Pre-Purged

Historically, the federal government usually hired white, cisgender, heterosexual men. Later, some positions opened to cisgender, mostly white women. The government seldom hired people from Indigenous communities and visible minorities. They were "pre-Purged." In other words, they were not offered employment in the first place and experienced racism.

LGBT Purge

Canada typically fell in line with American defence policies. When the United States government called "homosexuals" a security threat, Ottawa had to respond. This meant removing queer workers from sensitive government positions. Otherwise, Canada could lose valuable defence contracts with American companies. It also risked losing agreements with NATO agencies to share information.

The LGBT Purge was implemented at the highest levels of the Government of Canada and was carried out with callous disregard for the dignity, privacy and humanity of its victims. Between the 1950s and mid-1990s, LGBT members of the Canadian Armed Forces, the RCMP and the federal public service were systematically discriminated against, harassed and often fired as a matter of policy and sanctioned practice.

The military opened many positions to women in the 1970s and 1980s. But women who joined drew attention from the Special Investigations Unit (SIU). Despite working in a masculine field, they were expected to behave and dress according to feminine standards. If women worked with heavy machinery or played softball, they were often suspected of being lesbians. And lesbians were more likely than gay men to be harassed, investigated and discharged.

Both men and women who were affected by the Purge fought back against the injustice. Across the same decades that the Purge continued, 2SLGBTQI+ individuals and communities took part in a growing resistance.



LGBT Purge Fund members at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in 2024. Photo: Ian McCausland, CMHR

Profile:

Douglas Sanders



The Association for Social Knowledge (ASK) was the first Canadian gay rights organization, formed in 1964 in Vancouver, British Columbia. The group created a social and political network for both gays and lesbians at the time. Douglas Sanders was the second president of ASK and was a human rights lawyer. In 1968, he made a submission to the Royal Commission on Security, arguing against denying government jobs for gays and lesbians. In 1992, Sanders was the first out gay man to speak at a United Nations Conference.

Photo: City of Vancouver Archives, 2018-020.2751

Profile:

We Demand Protest



The first large-scale gay rights demonstration in Canada occurred on August 28, 1971, in Ottawa, with a parallel rally in Vancouver. The protest included a list of demands for gay and lesbian rights, including an end to the LGBT Purge.

Photo: Jearld Moldenhauer



Pride Week event in Toronto, in 1973. Photo: Jearld Moldenhauer

LGBT Purge Survivors Going Public

Profile:

Gloria Cameron

After eight years in the military, Gloria Cameron was interrogated for nine hours about her sexuality. She was released from the military in 1977. After grieving her case, she was told that she might corrupt younger service members. Cameron was so outraged that she publicized her case through the CBC and other media outlets.

Profile:

Barbara Thornborrow

In May 1977, Barbara Thornborrow was interrogated about her sexual identity. She was given the choice to confess and be discharged or see a psychiatrist to alter her sexuality. She refused both. Instead, Thornborrow told her story to news outlets to expose the reasons for being purged.

Profile:

Jacques Gallant

Jacques Gallant served seven years in the military when he was dismissed as a “sexual deviate.” He became the first queer service member to appeal his discharge in federal court. Although he didn’t succeed, his case was covered in the gay liberation press.

Laws and Challenges: A Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Legal Timeline

Before 1533	Ecclesiastical courts enforced anti-2SLGBTQI+ laws, which included torture and the death penalty.
1533	British <i>Buggery Act</i> : Britain's first anti-queer law. The "offenders being hereof convict[ed] by verdict confession or outlawry, shall suffer such pains of death." This act was enforced in Britain's colonies as well.
1841	The <i>Criminal Code</i> enacted the death penalty for all persons engaging in same-sex sexual relationships.
1859	Canada's <i>Buggery Act</i> : Canada repatriated the British law using the same language as the British Act.
1861	The British <i>Buggery Act</i> was amended so instead of the death penalty, queer people could be sentenced to between ten years in jail and life imprisonment.
1866	British <i>Naval Discipline Act</i> : "If he shall be guilty of sodomy with man or beast, he shall suffer penal servitude," and "if he shall be guilty of indecent assaults, he shall suffer penal servitude, or other such punishment as is hereinafter mentioned." This act was adopted by the Royal Canadian Navy.
1869	The death penalty for being queer was removed in Canada and instead, one would be given life imprisonment. "Unnatural offences" were subject to life in prison.
1885	The British "Labouchere Amendment" of the <i>Criminal Law Amendment Act</i> introduced "gross indecency": "Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or is a party to the commission of, or procures, or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanour, and being convicted thereof."
1892	<i>Gross Indecency Act</i> : "Every male person is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to five years' imprisonment and to be whipped who, in public or private, commits, or is a party to the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency with another male person."

1910	Canada's <i>Naval Service Act</i> : Canada repatriated the British law using the same language as the British act.
1952	The <i>Immigration Act</i> included homosexuals as a reason to prohibit admission into Canada. "No person...shall be admitted to Canada if he is a member of any of the following classes of person: ... e) prostitutes, homosexuals or persons on the avails of prostitution or homosexuality... f) persons who attempt to bring into Canada or procure... homosexuality."
1953	The <i>Gross Indecency Act</i> was amended to include women and exclude whipping. "Everyone who commits an act of gross indecency with another person is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for five years."
1960	The <i>Canadian Bill of Rights</i> included freedom of speech, religion, press and the right to life, liberty and security. Being 2SLGBTQI+ was illegal in Canada at this time and was not considered a human right by governments.
1969	<p>Bill C-150 <i>Criminal Law Amendment Act</i>: Homosexuality is partially decriminalized. This came to be partly because of the Klippert v. Canada Supreme Court ruling that allowed Everett Klippert to be imprisoned for being gay for the rest of his life. Klippert was released in 1971.</p> <p>Canada also echoed the 1967 change in the <i>Sexual Offences Act</i> when the British government adopted the Wolfenden Report's recommendations. The committee had recommended that "homosexual behaviour between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offence" and that the age of consent be 21 years old.</p>
1977	<i>Canadian Human Rights Act</i> : Canada's first federal law to protect people from discrimination. It did not include sexual orientation, even though gay liberation groups were lobbying for its inclusion.
1977	After many protests, letter-writing campaigns and public engagements from various 2SLGBTQI+ groups around the country, the <i>Canada Immigration Act</i> was changed to allow gays and lesbians to enter the country, but only heterosexual Canadians could sponsor their spouses as family class immigrants.
1982	The <i>Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i> was signed and became part of Canada's Constitution. Many in the gay liberation movement demanded that sexual orientation be included in the list of protected rights. Sexual orientation was deliberately excluded from the list.
1987	After over a decade of 2SLGBTQI+ lobbying, the government repealed the <i>Gross Indecency Act</i> .

1992

Haig and Birch v. Canada: Captain Joshua Birch launched a human rights complaint in Ontario after he was discharged from the Canadian Armed Forces for being gay. He successfully argued that the omission of sexual orientation in the *Canadian Human Rights Act* was discriminatory under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The Ontario Court of Appeal decided that the *Canadian Human Rights Act* be interpreted to include sexual orientation.

1995

Egan v. Canada: John Norris Nesbit applied to the Department of National Health and Welfare for a spousal allowance. He was refused on the basis that “spouse” did not include same-sex couples. Jim Egan sued the government. They lost but the Supreme Court of Canada concluded that that *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* be interpreted to include sexual orientation.

1996

Since 1971, 2SLGBTQI+ groups have been demanding the inclusion of sexual orientation in human rights codes across the country. Bill C-33, *An act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act* was enacted to include “sexual orientation” as prohibited grounds of discrimination.

1998

Vriend v. Alberta: Delwin Vriend was fired from his job for being gay. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that sexual orientation is a protected right under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and therefore must be included in provincial human rights codes.

1999

Canada’s Parliament voted 216 to 55 in favour that marriage is a “union of a man and a woman.” This was in response to the M. v. H. Supreme Court of Canada decision that ruled that same-sex couples should have the same legal benefits and obligations as opposite-sex common-law couples and equal access to benefits from social programs to which they contribute.

2000

Bill C-23 *Modernization of Benefits and Obligations Act*, in response to the M. v. H. ruling: The bill affected 68 federal statutes relating to a wide range of issues such as old age security, income tax, bankruptcy, and the *Criminal Code of Canada*. The act gave same-sex couples living together for more than a year the same benefits and obligations as common-law couples.

2002

Immigration and Refugee Protection Act: This act expanded the family class to allow conjugal, common-law and married spouses to apply for immigration. The law included gay and lesbian couples.

2002

Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36: The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that not allowing books in schools about gay and lesbian lives was unreasonable.

2003

Halpern v. Canada: The Supreme Court of Canada found that current marriage laws discriminated against same-sex couples.

2005

Bill C-38 *Civil Marriage Act*: Same-sex marriage became legal in Canada.

2005

Board of School Trustees of School District No. 44 v. Azmi Jubran: The Supreme Court of Canada found that the school board had a duty to provide a learning environment free from discriminatory bullying.

2012

S.L. v. Commission scolaire des Chênes: The Supreme Court of Canada found that “a state-organized, multi-faith, ethics and religious class did not infringe the right to freedom of conscience and religion.”

2017

Gender identity and gender expression are included in the *Canadian Human Rights Act*.

2017

The federal government officially apologized for the LGBT Purge. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau: “Mr. Speaker, today we acknowledge an often-overlooked part of Canada’s history. Today, we finally talk about Canada’s role in the systemic oppression, criminalization, and violence against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and two-spirit communities.”

2019

Bill C-75: *An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and other Acts and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*: Since 1971, 2SLGBTQI+ groups have been demanding the age of consent be the same for both heterosexual and homosexual acts. The age of consent was changed to 16 years old for both heterosexual and homosexual acts.

Lesson Three: Background

Systemic Discrimination and the LGBT Purge

After the Second World War, norms around gender and sexuality grew more restrictive. Society expected men and women to behave in ways that were considered masculine and feminine – and always heterosexual. Those deemed “abnormal” were viewed as suspicious and even dangerous. The Canadian government developed policies that punished gender and sexual diversity. Popular culture and mainstream media also enforced social stereotypes.

Gender roles were clear for people living in the postwar era. Men and women were expected to marry and have children. The “nuclear family” was seen as the foundation of a strong and moral nation. Images of wives as homemakers and husbands as breadwinners were everywhere. Movies, television and magazines presented this way of life as the key to happiness.

Life in the Closet

Historically, many 2SLGBTQI+ people had little choice but to lead double lives. They had a public life and a closeted one that allowed them to love on their own terms. Government officials distrusted queer workers because they could be threatened with exposure – or “outed.” But homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, discrimination and harassment were the real problems. Ironically, the Purge forced queer people to be secretive and remain in “the closet.”

Profile:

John Watkins



John Watkins was born in Norval, Ontario. He became Canada’s Ambassador to the Soviet Union in 1954. He was photographed with a male lover in Moscow. Russian attempts to blackmail Watkins failed. Nevertheless,

NATO security agencies launched investigations. Watkins was interrogated in London and Paris. During further questioning in Montréal, he suffered chest pains. They were ignored by RCMP officers. He had a heart attack and died in custody.

Photo: National Film Board of Canada

State Enforcers

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) used aggressive and degrading tactics to expel queer people from the federal civil service. RCMP officers harassed and spied on their targets and devoted extensive resources to detecting “homosexuals” working for the government. They were seen as a threat that justified intrusive and unethical actions. The RCMP spied on queer people in bars and in outdoor spaces. Officers worked to coerce informants who could identify “homosexual” civil servants. They followed them in unmarked cars and wiretapped phones.

For Purge Survivors, the K-car is an important symbol. It is associated with being pursued by the Special Investigations Unit. For a queer member of the Canadian military, to see a K-car pull up to your home or workplace signalled trouble. It meant that interrogation was next, and discharge would likely follow.



Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Tactics of Intimidation

The military's Special Investigations Unit (SIU) interrogated thousands of queer service members. These sessions occurred in offices, hotel rooms and military buildings. Questioning could last for days or weeks – even months. Some SIU officers were courteous. Others were crude and abusive. They asked invasive questions about sex acts and intimacy. Many Purge survivors recall darkened rooms and lie detector machines. Thousands of workers were interrogated as potential enemies of the government. Those regarded as “confirmed homosexuals” were demoted and dismissed. They were also pressured to disclose the identities of other queer civil servants. To refuse was considered an act of disloyalty to Canada.

Bad Science, Shattered Lives

In the 1950s and 1960s, the fields of psychology and psychiatry gained powerful influence. Mental health professionals advised governments on public policy. They published popular books on family life. At this time, many psychiatrists and psychologists regarded queer sexuality as a mental illness that had to be cured. Gay and lesbian workers were subjected to aversion therapy, electroshock treatment and experimental drugs.

Profile:

Ross (Marjorie) Hamilton



Ross (Marjorie) Hamilton was born in Pugwash, Nova Scotia. He served as an ambulance driver during the First World War. He joined a troupe of “female impersonators” called the Dumbells, playing a popular character named Marjorie. Hamilton also enlisted during the Second World War. But military officers discovered he was gay. They dismissed him from service for “reasons other than medical.”

Photo: Nova Scotia Archives, public domain

The Fruit Machine



Spying on thousands of “suspected homosexuals” was expensive and time-consuming. Queer people increasingly refused to cooperate with RCMP investigations in the 1960s – they resisted.

The Canadian government paid Dr. F. R. Wake of Carleton University to find a “scientific” solution. He devised a system of detection commonly known as the Fruit Machine. In fact, it was not a single machine. It was a flawed series of tests meant to determine sexual orientation.

Dr. F. R. Wake's research was based on scientific methods considered credible at the time. But his Fruit Machine relied on false assumptions – namely, that there are only two genders and two sexualities. Furthermore, pupils dilate in ways that do not indicate sexual orientation. Another problem was testing – most people did not want to be involved. By 1967, it was clear the project did not work. The government abandoned it.

Photo: Sol Mednick, public domain

Profile:

Dave Van Norman



Dave Van Norman, an RCMP officer, was born in Manitoba. He worked as an interpreter and built relationships with Inuit communities along the DEW Line in the Canadian arctic. While in Ottawa, he was seen entering the Lord Elgin Hotel bar, a popular queer hangout. Through interrogation, Van Norman was labelled a “homosexual.” He was forced to resign his position in 1964, despite a stellar employment record. Van Norman’s career with the RCMP spanned 17 years before he was fired for being gay.

Photo: RCMP-GRC, supplied by Elenore Sturko

Profile:

David Nixon



David Nixon was only 19 when he was hired by the Department of External Affairs. Beginning in 1954, he served with the International Supervisory Commission in Cambodia. He was then posted to the Canadian Embassy in Bonn, West Germany. Nixon’s final posting was Léopoldville (now Kinshasha) in Congo before the RCMP learned he was queer. He also toured all over Canada to create awareness about firings.

Nixon was a patient of Dr. Donald Cameron. The Central Intelligence Agency paid Cameron to conduct unethical experiments on Nixon and many others. The experiments were designed to “reprogram” people. Nixon moved to Victoria, British Columbia, in 1977. He enjoyed a long-term relationship with his partner Ken Sudhues. In his later years, Nixon worked for the provincial public service.

Photo: Supplied by Ken Sudhues

Fighting Back Against Workplace Discrimination in the 1970s

Systemic discrimination against the 2SLGBTQI+ community was not limited to the civil service, military and RCMP. There were many examples across Canada of individuals from 2SLGBTQI+

communities being discriminated against in their workplace. In the 1970s, some of these individuals began to fight back.

Profile:

John Damien



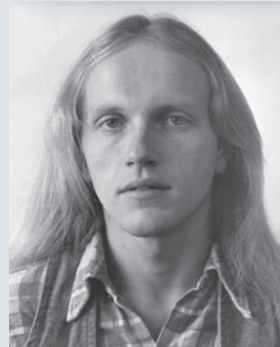
John Damien was born in Sainte-Croix in the Municipality of Lotbinière, Quebec and grew up in Windsor, Ontario. Damien had a remarkable background in thoroughbred racing in Ontario with 20 years of experience, including five years

as a Racing Commission Steward. In 1975, he lost his job because he was gay. Damien wasn't one to back down. He took his case to court, challenging the discriminatory dismissal. His fight became a symbol of resilience and a rallying point for 2SLGBTQI+ rights advocates around the country. Organizations across Canada demanded his reinstatement and justice for all queer people by pushing for equal rights and protections. Damien's courage and determination left an indelible mark. His struggle contributed to broader awareness and progress in 2SLGBTQI+ rights in Canada. His human rights struggle lasted 11 years. He died just a few weeks after sexual orientation was included in the Ontario Human Rights Code in 1986.

Photo: Gerald Hannon, The ArQuives: Canada's LGBTQ2+ Archives

Profile:

Douglas Wilson



Gay activist Douglas Wilson was born in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan. In 1975, the dean of the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan did not allow Wilson into the schools to supervise teacher

candidates because he was openly gay. Wilson took his case to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission and lost. He became a Western Canadian symbol of the need for sexual orientation to be included in human rights codes. He also toured all over Canada to create awareness about firings.

In 1988, Wilson was the first openly gay candidate to be nominated by a major political party. He also toured all over Canada to create awareness about firings. He ran for the New Democratic Party in the Toronto riding of Rosedale but lost. He was the founding chairperson of the Canadian Network of Organizations for People Living with AIDS. He died in 1992 of complications related to HIV/AIDS. In 1993, the province of Saskatchewan included sexual orientation into its human rights code.

Photo: Gerald Hannon, The ArQuives: Canada's LGBTQ2+ Archives

Lesson Four: Background Demanding Change

In the 1970s, queer people built the gay liberation movement to challenge all forms of oppression. Activists called for law reform and an end to police harassment. They opposed discrimination at work and sexism in society. And they demanded the Canadian government stop the LGBT Purge. Gay liberationists protested outside government buildings and media outlets. News coverage brought their messages into homes across the country. These actions for change helped lay the groundwork for ending the Purge.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, enacted in 1982, was a milestone in the struggle for 2SLGBTQI+ rights. The Charter forms part of Canada’s Constitution – the country’s supreme law, meaning that all other federal, provincial and municipal laws and bylaws are subject to and must conform to the protections of the Charter. If they do not, they must be modified or removed.

Section 15 of the Charter states everyone is entitled to equality without discrimination.

“Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.”

Unfortunately, after much debate, the term “sexual orientation” was not included in the list of protected rights in the Charter.

The military and the RCMP continued to discriminate against queer people and to purge them from service. Activists pressured the government to stop these violations.

Challenging the Charter

Many Purge survivors invoked the Charter to challenge unjust treatment. By taking legal action, they forced the government to end its policies of discrimination. They created the conditions for change.

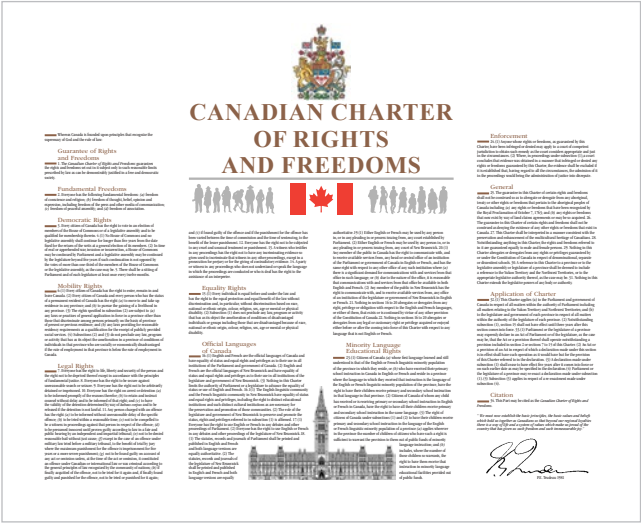


Image: Department of Justice Canada

Profile:

James Stiles

In 1984, the RCMP forced James Stiles to resign as an officer because he was gay. He launched a lawsuit based on his right to equality under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. He settled out of court and was reinstated. His case contributed to the RCMP formally ending its purge of LGBT service members in 1988.

Profile:

Joshua Birch



Joshua Birch was born in St. Catharines, Ontario, and grew up in Windsor, Ontario. In 1992, he took the Canadian military to court for purging him on “medical grounds” in 1989. Consequently,

the courts added “sexual orientation” to protections under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. Birch’s case expanded 2SLGBTQI+ rights under the law, setting precedent for future legal actions. The emotional impact of being purged was immense. Birch died by suicide five months after the verdict.

Photo: Courtesy of Pam Verney

Ending the Military Purge

In 1989, Michelle Douglas launched a historic lawsuit against the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) for discrimination and unfair dismissal. After joining the CAF in 1986, Douglas excelled in her training. She was soon assigned to the military’s Special Investigations Unit (SIU). She then found herself being investigated. She was taken to a hotel room in Toronto by two male members of the SIU. For two days, they interrogated Douglas about her sexual orientation and secretly videotaped the sessions. She later affirmed she was lesbian, which led to her discharge.

But Douglas fought back by taking the military to court. Douglas had strong allies. Svend Robinson, a member of Parliament who was openly gay, encouraged her to take legal action with support from civil rights lawyers Clayton Ruby and Harriet Sachs.

Douglas’ lawyers discovered that the military knew that its homophobic policies violated human rights law. They used Section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to assert that her rights had been denied by the military. Such treatment could not be defended in court. The military settled with Douglas before the trial even began and formally ended its LGBT Purge partially because of the lawsuit from Birch. In 1992, she won a settlement that forced the military to change their policies and practices and end the LGBT Purge. Those who had been identified by the CAF for being queer were also restored to their proper rank. This case proved to be an early victory in the courts for the 2SLGBTQI+ community.



Demonstration at the Manitoba Legislature, Winnipeg, 1980. Photo: Doug Nicholson, The ArQuives: Canada’s LGBTQ2+ Archives

Charter Challenge – Egan v. Canada (1995)

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* is a part of the Canadian Constitution that protects the rights and freedoms of Canadians. The Charter came into force in 1982.

Only one province in the country recognized sexual orientation as a protected human right at that time (Quebec, since 1977).

Section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*:

“Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.”

Does this mean other human rights are not included?

Other rights can be “read in” by the courts. This is to say that, looking closely at the wording of Section 15, there is a specific term which allows these rights to be expanded. Using the words, “in particular” within this section allows other grounds for discrimination to be “read in.” The language of “in particular” functions to highlight that there are other grounds as well. In 1995, sexual orientation was read in because of the activism of Jim Egan.

Profile:

Jim Egan

(1921-2000)



Jim Egan (left) was a gay activist, writer, politician and an environmental activist. He was born Toronto, Ontario and died in Courtenay, British Columbia. Egan was the first person to publish long articles written from a gay point of view in Canada. He even wrote articles against the LGBT Purge in the 1960s. He was one of the first openly gay politicians to serve in Canada.

Egan is best remembered for a court challenge that he and his partner, Jack Nesbit, launched against the spousal allowance benefit under the *Old Age Security Act* in 1988. They fought it all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. The Egan v. Canada decision (1995) was a partial win for them. They did not get their spousal allowance, but the courts agreed that sexual orientation was a protected ground of discrimination in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Therefore, the courts formally “read in” sexual orientation into the constitution.^[1]

Photo: The ArQuives: Canada’s LGBTQ2+ Archives

^[1] thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/jim-egan

We Demand an Apology

Over the past several decades, scholars and journalists have investigated the LGBT Purge. John Sawatsky wrote a book called *Men in the Shadows*, which addressed the RCMP's role. Journalist Dean Beeby published articles exposing the hunt for gays in the civil service. Historians Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile authored a major book called *The Canadian War on Queers*. This research fueled demands for redress by Purge survivors and their allies.



Class action members at the LGBT Purge settlement, Federal Court, Ottawa, 2018. Photo: Mitchel Raphael

In 2015, Purge survivors and their allies organized the We Demand an Apology Network. They issued a press release in 2016. It read: "An apology for the wrongs committed by the Government of Canada against LGBT people is the least that is required to begin to right these wrongs."

The Government Apologizes

Purge survivors and their allies sought redress from the government. One of the first calls for an apology came from Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile in 1998. Queer activists kept up pressure on the Canadian government. Eventually, in 2017, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau delivered a formal apology. He said the government was sorry for the oppression of 2SLGBTQI+ people. Purge survivors and activists were present for the apology they had waited so long to hear.

Mixed Reactions

The apology drew mixed reactions, from joy to bitterness. Many people who had been purged were no longer alive to hear it. Prior to the apology, a class action was also brought against the government.

The Settlement

In 2016, survivors of the LGBT Purge launched a nation-wide class action lawsuit against the Canadian government. The three representative plaintiffs were Todd Ross, Martine Roy and Alida Satalic. These brave Purge survivors led the class action on behalf of the class members.

A historic settlement was reached in June 2018. It included a global settlement amount of \$145 million. Up to \$110 million was set aside for the payment of damages to LGBT Purge victims.

The settlement allocated around \$23.5 million for "reconciliation and memorialization measures." These funds are a gift from LGBT Purge victims for these measures. Indeed, the funds symbolically represent compensation for the suffering of victims of the LGBT Purge who did not live long enough to be eligible to receive individual compensation under the LGBT Purge settlement.

Profile:

Wayne Davis



Wayne Davis was born in Drumheller, Alberta, in 1947. He joined the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in 1967. Davis's RCMP service included postings in British Columbia and Ontario. Davis worked in the administration and finance fields and reached the rank of Staff Sergeant. In 1986, he was forced to resign from the RCMP as part of Canada's LGBT Purge. For the next three decades, Davis pursued a managerial career in the federal public service and then at the University of British Columbia until he retired in 2015. He is currently one of the directors of the LGBT Purge Fund.

Photo: Allen Gammie

Profile:

Steven Deschamps



Steven Deschamps was born in Cornwall, Ontario, in 1956. In 1979, he became a pilot in the Canadian Armed Forces. He was purged in 1982, after five months of interrogation by the Special Investigations Unit. But he successfully fought to restore his career in 1992. His return to duty followed Michelle Douglas's landmark case that forced the military to end its LGBT Purge. Deschamps went on to serve 31 years in the Regular and Reserve Forces. He was appointed an Honorary Colonel by the Minister of National Defense in 2022.

Photo: Daniel Rutley

Profile:

Michelle Douglas



Michelle Douglas was born in Ottawa, Ontario, in 1963. She joined the Canadian Armed Forces (Air Force) in 1986. Douglas trained to be an officer, but she was discharged from the CAF in 1989 as part of Canada's LGBT Purge. She challenged her dismissal in court and in 1992 settled her case against the CAF, which reversed its discriminatory policies based on sexual orientation. Douglas moved on to work for the federal public service and retired from the Department of Justice in 2019. She remains an activist for 2SLGBTQI+ rights and is currently the Executive Director of the LGBT Purge Fund and an Honorary Colonel in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Photo: Department of National Defence, supplied by Michelle Douglas

Profile:

Douglas Elliott



Douglas Elliott was born in Toronto, Ontario, in 1956. Elliott studied law at the University of Toronto and was called to the bar in 1984. His law practice has focused on class action work on constitutional cases concerning same-sex partners and 2SLGBTQI+ rights. This includes serving as lead counsel in the 2016 LGBT Purge class action. In 2023, Elliott received the Carl Mitchell Community Impact Award, which recognizes University of Toronto alumni who advance the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion through their volunteer contributions. He currently lives in Elliot Lake, Ontario, and is one of the directors of the LGBT Purge Fund.

Photo: Ian McCausland, CMHR

Profile:

Patricia (Patti) Gray



Patricia (Patti) Gray was born in Windsor, Ontario, in 1959. She joined the Canadian Armed Forces (Air Force) in 1979 and worked as a supply technician in Chatham, New Brunswick. Her career was cut short when

Gray was discharged from the CAF in 1981 as part of Canada's LGBT Purge. Gray returned to Windsor and later moved to Hamilton, Ontario, to work for Bell. After retiring in 2012, she moved to Toronto and worked for the Blue Jays organization. In 2017, Gray joined the class-action lawsuit by LGBT Purge survivors against the Government of Canada.

Photo: Canadian Armed Forces, supplied by Patti Gray

Profile:

Kareth Huber



Kareth Huber was born in Red Deer, Alberta, in 1957. Following in the footsteps of her father, grandfathers, and uncles, she joined the Canadian Armed Forces (Air Force) in

1975. Huber was stationed in Borden, Ontario, working as a safety systems technician. Her career lasted only about 18 months because the CAF discharged her in 1976 as part of LGBT Purge. In the early 1980s, Huber moved to Toronto and became active in gay and lesbian rights organizations. Currently, she lives in Ottawa and is one of the directors of Rainbow Veterans of Canada.

Photo: Supplied by Kareth Huber

Profile:

Diane Pitre



Diane Pitre grew up in Campbellton, New Brunswick. She is a longtime advocate for 2SLGBTQI+ veterans. In 1980, she was dismissed from the Canadian Armed Forces

during the LGBT Purge. For almost 40 years, she lobbied the Canadian government to apologize to veterans who were purged before the apology was finally delivered in November 2017. Pitre went on to found the Rainbow Veterans of Canada in 2019.

Photo: Supplied by Diane Pitre

Profile:

Todd Ross



Todd Ross was born in St. Stephen, New Brunswick, in 1969. He identifies as Métis. After being an Army Cadet, Ross joined the Canadian Armed Forces (Navy) in 1987. He was posted in Cornwallis, Nova Scotia, and then served on HMCS Saskatchewan. Ross was discharged by the CAF in 1990. He has since advocated for Indigenous, health, and human rights issues, and he became a lead plaintiff in the class-action lawsuit launched by LGBT Purge survivors in 2016. Ross currently lives in St. Andrews, New Brunswick, and is co-chair of the LGBT Purge Fund.

Photo: Al Corbett Studio, supplied by Todd Ross

Profile:

Martine Roy



Martine Roy (centre) was born in Montréal, Québec, in 1963. Roy joined the Canadian Armed Forces (Army) in 1983 and was stationed in Borden, Ontario. After investigations as part of the LGBT Purge, the CAF still renewed Roy's contract but soon rescinded the offer. They discharged Roy within months of her enlistment. Roy worked various jobs until 1999, when IBM hired her. She authored some of the company's inclusivity policies. In 2016, Roy joined the LGBT Purge survivors' class-action lawsuit against the Government of Canada. Currently, she is co-chair of the Board of Directors of the LGBT Purge Fund.

Photo: Supplied by Martine Roy

Profile:

Simon Thwaites



Simon Thwaites was born in Portsmouth, England, in 1962. Thwaites moved to Canada when he was 13. In 1980, he joined the Canadian Armed Forces (Navy). After almost a decade as a sailor, Thwaites was discharged by the CAF in 1989 because he was HIV-positive. Thwaites fought this dismissal as a case of workplace discrimination based on a disability, and the Federal Court ruled in his favour in 1994. He then continued working with AIDS organizations and supporting people in palliative care. He also became a Christian minister and an artist. Thwaites now lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Photo: Aaron Cohen, CMHR

Profile:

Svend Robinson



Svend Robinson (right) was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1952 and grew up in Burnaby, British Columbia and was the district's Member of Parliament from 1979 to 2004. In 1988, he became the first member of Parliament to openly identify as gay. Robinson helped Michelle Douglas, a survivor of the LGBT Purge, in her discrimination suit against the Canadian Armed Forces. He resigned from politics in 2004. Both within and outside Parliament, Robinson has advocated for 2SLGBTQI+ rights, environmental protection, the right to physician-assisted death, and mental health.

Photo: Thomas Fricke, CMHR

Profiles: Post-LGBT Purge Stories

The LGBT Purge came to a formal end in 1992. But discrimination has continued against 2SLGBTQI+ employees of the Canadian government.

Their personal stories express the need to keep fighting for change.

Profile:

Kathryn Foss

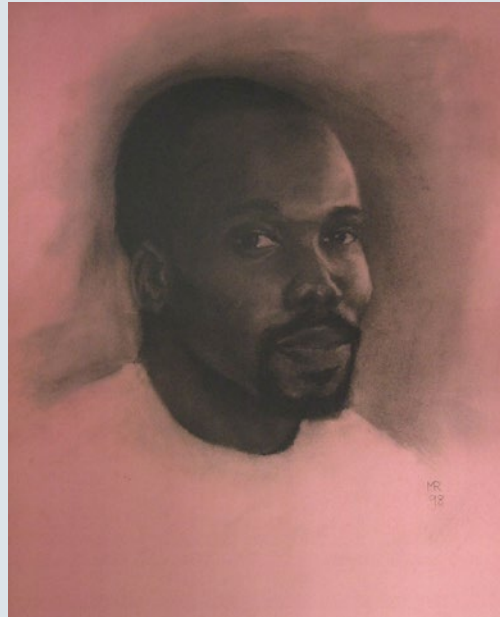


Retired Major Kathryn Foss served in the military from 1987 to 2019. She identified as transgender in the early 1990s despite her fears of being discharged. Foss is now a consultant, coach and mentor with expertise in diversity, gender issues and inclusion.

Photo: Department of National Defence, CAF Ombudsman

Profile:

Douglas Stewart



Douglas Stewart is a founding member of Zami, the first Black queer group in Toronto. His activism challenges racism and exclusion faced by queer people of colour in areas such as government employment.

Photo: The ArQuives: Canada's LGBTQ2+ Archives, National Portrait Collection, portrait by Mark Reid

Profile:

Mark Berlin



Former Department of Justice lawyer Mark Berlin served in various senior posts in the Canadian Department of Justice. Yet, he experienced discrimination and was denied career opportunities. Berlin found a platform to speak out by joining the 2017 class action lawsuit.

Photo: Supplied by Mark Berlin

Profile:

Marco Manna



Former RCMP officer Marco Manna joined the RCMP in 2005 but left just four years later. He was subjected to homophobic behaviour that included offensive language and physical assault. Manna now speaks out about the need for meaningful change in the ranks of the RCMP.

Photo: Supplied by Marco Manna



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