

## **Standing together against anti-trans and anti-2SLGBTQIA+ hate in the Central Okanagan and British Columbia – a joint statement**

19 January 2023

Kelowna, BC – Over the past year, trans and broader 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in Kelowna and the Central Okanagan have noted a deeply concerning trend: increased mobilizations by anti-trans and anti-2SLGBTQIA+ actors. This has **affected our ability to carry out events safely, free from harassment and abuse**. It has also led to an atmosphere of fear and intimidation for trans and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities looking to organize and hold community events.

We think it is crucial to **come together now and stand as a community against this wave of hatred**. We also believe it is important to educate the public and our political representatives so that they may stand with us as allies.

We note that events we are experiencing locally and provincially in our communities, are connected to national and global trends. We are living through times of **significant attack on trans and 2SLGBTQIA+ rights** in British Columbia, Canada, and around the world, led by anti-gender and anti-trans movements.<sup>1</sup> The now widely documented challenges created by these movements include increasing disinformation, rising harassment and abuse of trans and 2SLGBTQIA+ rights communities and campaigners, and weaponization of differences within our communities. Trans and gender diverse people are often the hardest hit, but campaigns also target wider safeguards for 2SLGBTQIA+ rights, gender equality, racial justice, children's rights, and human rights.

For example, in the last 12 months there have been at least 166 actions against drag events in North America, starting in the United States (141 protests and significant threats documented)<sup>2</sup> and spreading into Canada, where **at least 25 events have been targeted by anti-trans and anti-LGBTIQ+ actors in 2022**.<sup>3</sup> As these reports show, several events have involved violence. A combination of far right and extremist religious groups has been critical in driving these mobilizations; often spreading disinformation about the events and organizers, including **harmful and highly offensive myths, fears, stereotypes, and conspiracy theories** that trans and 2SLGBTQIA+ people are dangerous to women, children, and young people.

### **Timeline**

In the Central Okanagan and BC, key developments in the last year alone have included:

- Kelowna Trans Pride March 2022 was disrupted by a street preacher who shouted abusive, highly transphobic messages at attendees over an electric speaker.
- Kelowna Bike Pride 2022: same disruption as above.
- Protest by an extreme right linked online influencer/activist at Kelowna Pride 2022.
- A protest against the Queer Youth Halloween Drag and Dance in Kelowna on 27 October 2022, in which protestors made entirely false and highly offensive accusations about the alleged sexualization of children.<sup>4</sup>
- Challenges organizing publicly for Transgender Day of Remembrance in November 2022 in Kelowna, with organizers citing safety and security risks connected to rising attacks on trans communities.<sup>5</sup> This echoes trends elsewhere in Canada in 2022.<sup>6</sup>
- A protest in Kitsilano in Vancouver on 25 November 2022 against an all ages drag event.<sup>7</sup> Various well-known figures in the Canadian anti-gender/anti-trans movement attended, some of them representing or linked with far-right, conspiracy theory, or

Christian nationalist movements.<sup>8</sup> According to reports, protesters shouted hate speech such as accusations 2SLGBTQIA+ people are pedophiles and groomers.

- A protest against a drag event at DunnEnzies in Kelowna on 7 December 2022, at which a 2SLGBTQIA+ community member was allegedly assaulted by a protester.<sup>9</sup> Prior to the event, organizers received harassing messages including death threats.
- A protest against a 19+ drag event in Penticton on 9 December 2022.<sup>10</sup>
- A coordinated campaign to elect anti-2SLGBTQIA+ candidates to school boards across BC.<sup>11</sup>
- A set of coordinated campaigns against SOGI 123 (an inclusive education programme) involving conspiratorial ideas about 2SLGBTQIA+ people.<sup>12</sup>
- A campaign against a planned Drag Story Time event on 28 January at Downtown Kelowna Library, involving an online petition and threats of violence against attendees.
- As of 16 January 2023: reports of plans for an anti-2SLGBTQIA+ billboard to go up in West Kelowna, and to disrupt a future event in Enderby, BC.

We refuse to let this rising tide of intolerance go unchallenged.

We stand together with our trans and gender diverse and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, particularly our trans and gender diverse youth.

We ask elected representatives and policy makers to take active measures to ensure the safety of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

We call on our wider local and provincial communities to stand with us in solidarity in 2023 and beyond, to challenge this wave of hatred and help ensure this timeline stops now.

We are:

[Advocacy Canada](#)

[Essie's Place](#)

[Free Parent Hugs Kelowna](#)

[Health Initiative for Men \(HIM\)](#)

[Kelowna 50+ Pride Network](#)

[Kelowna Pride Society](#)

[Living Positive Resource Centre](#)

[Pacific Trans Wellness](#)

[Rebellious Unicorns](#)

[South Okanagan Similkameen PRIDE](#)

[Third Space Charity](#)

[This Space Belongs to You](#)

[TransParent Okanagan](#)

[Dr. Wayne Broughton](#), School Board Trustee, Central Okanagan Board of Education

[Chantelle Desrosiers](#), School Board Trustee, Central Okanagan Board of Education

[Val Johnson](#), School Board Trustee, Central Okanagan Board of Education

[Ella Lamoureux](#)

Emmett MacMillen, Co-Director, Okanagan Gender Identity Group

Jade Walters, Co-Director, Okanagan Gender Identity Group

[Frieda Whales](#)

### What can I do?

- Please **sign onto and share this statement** (if you would like be added as an organization or individual, please email: [claire@kelownapride.com](mailto:claire@kelownapride.com))
- **Join and share community events** for trans and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, including the [Open Hearts Rally for Drag Story Time](#) on 28 January 2023: 10:15 am rally, Okanagan Regional Library, 1380 Ellis St., Kelowna.
- **Sign and share petitions** in support of our rights, including the [Continue Family Drag Show Storytime](#) petition at Change.org

- **Join the cross-community working group** where we will discuss how we can work together as a community to respond to challenges – this is open to ALL organizations and individuals with a verified commitment to trans and 2SLGBTQIA+ rights (for more information please email: [claire@kelownapride.com](mailto:claire@kelownapride.com)).
- **Contact your elected representatives** to express your concern, request they show clear and visible support for trans and 2SLGBTQIA+ rights, and are proactive about ensuring the safety of all our communities.

## Media contacts

- Kelowna Pride Society:  
Dr. Claire House, They/Them. Email: [claire@kelownapride.com](mailto:claire@kelownapride.com)
- Advocacy Canada:  
Wilbur Turner, He/Him. Email: [wilbur@advocacy-canada.lgbt](mailto:wilbur@advocacy-canada.lgbt)

## References

<sup>1</sup> These challenges have been documented and contested nationally and internationally by: the [United Nations Independent Expert for prevention of violence and discrimination based on SOGI](#), [over 100 Canadian feminist and allied organizations](#), [a global network of leading feminist, LGBTIQ+ and allied organizations](#), the [Association for Women in Development](#), [Canadian Anti-Hate Network](#), [Press Progress](#), [Global Action for Trans\\* Equality](#), the [Equal Rights Coalition](#), [GLAAD](#), [Human Rights Campaign](#), [Center for Feminist Foreign Policy](#), [American Civil Liberties Union](#), [Southern Poverty Law Center](#), [Elevate Children Funders Group](#), [Sexuality Policy Watch](#), [Williams Institute](#), and many other sources worldwide.

<sup>2</sup> GLAAD (22 November 2022) [GLAAD Report: Drag events faced at least 141 protests and significant threats in 2022](#).

<sup>3</sup> 15 events are documented by Press Progress to 26 October 2022 [here](#). A further 10 events have been documented by Maëlys McArdle during November and December 2022 [here](#).

<sup>4</sup> INFO News (29 October 2022) [Halloween queer youth event interrupted by protestors](#)

<sup>5</sup> Turner, Wilbur (7 December 2022) [Exposing the Hate: The Truth Behind Drag Protests](#)

<sup>6</sup> McArdle, Maëlys (23 December 2022) [What does maintaining perspective mean in this climate?](#)

<sup>7</sup> City News (26 November 2022) [Emotions flare as protestors gather outside drag queen story time event in Kitsilano](#)

<sup>8</sup> Press Progress (30 November 2022) [Far-Right Group Opposed to 2SLGBTQ+ Resources in Schools Protested BC Drag Queen Story Time Event](#)

<sup>9</sup> Castanet (8 December 2022) [Police disperse protest against drag show at DunnEnzies in Kelowna](#)

<sup>10</sup> Global News (9 December 2022) [Second drag show disrupted by protestors in one week in the Okanagan](#)

<sup>11</sup> The Tyee (10 October 2022) [Across BC, Right-Wing Candidates are Bashing How Schools Teach](#)

<sup>12</sup> Press Progress (26 September 2022) [Christian Nationalists Are Organizing Against LGBTQ Education Resources in Schools](#)