



P.O. Box 253 • Bracebridge, ON P1L 1T6

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For immediate release

April 30, 2020

First Muskoka Queer Film Festival Goes Virtual

The Festival will take place despite the quarantine and isolation

April 30, 2020 – Bracebridge – The MQFF Festival Committee is proud to invite spectators from all over the world to join the three-day Festival online.

The First Queer Film Festival in Muskoka will be streamed live, in support of the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, on **May 15, 16, and 17, 2020**. With this event Muskoka will contribute to the global fight against discrimination, bigotry, and prejudice. The Festival will present a dozen films celebrating different sides of queer life, produced both in Canada and internationally including the United States, Switzerland, and France. Every festival day will be followed by a live chat with the directors whose films were chosen by the MQFF Festival Committee.

“This is an exciting and ambitious project for our community, and we’re thrilled to be showing these films to the world from Muskoka,” says Mervin Taylor-Morin, President of Muskoka Pride. *“It was hard to choose from all the great films submitted for selection to our festival, however, we believe we’ve created a diverse lineup of short and feature films that will resonate with the people who tune in to see them.”*

He adds that while disappointed the film festival can’t be live and in person, taking the festival online means it can reach a greater, world-wide audience and raise attention to the Muskoka region. Plus, attendance is free. There will be a ‘tip jar’ function for people who want to support Muskoka Pride’s efforts and will help cover the extra costs of preparing these films for virtual viewing.

Muskoka Queer Film Festival will also honor directors with two awards. The Festival Favorite will be selected by the MQFF jury while the Audience Choice award will be voted on by festival goers online.

Michelle Emson and Olena Semenova of Sanctuary Studios, a multi-media production company based in Muskoka, are also international human rights activists and filmmakers and were integral to making the online presence of the Festival a reality. *“In these times of isolation, we understand how important it is to stay together united by common views and sharing common values. We are happy to apply our technical skills and make Muskoka Queer Film Festival happen despite all the odds and to be available for everyone regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or place of*



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residence. We welcome everyone to join us online and share the festival atmosphere of a historic event for Muskoka”, says Emson.

To join the Festival online please visit mqff.ca

The films selected for the festival are:

Another Sad Gay Love Story; Super Zee; Coming Out; AYANEH; So Beautiful; Consent factory: lesbo-queer perspectives; The Noose; One More Please; Queering; Good Bi Kiss; Punch Card; and The Unlikely Story of the Lesbians of First Friday.

Whilst the festival can be viewed on any device, we strongly recommend the use of a computer for the interactive segment with the Directors and for discussing the films as they play.

The Muskoka Queer Film Festival is a collaboration of Muskoka Pride, Sanctuary Studios Inc., and the Muskoka Lakes Chamber of Commerce, and is sponsored by the Canadian Experiences Fund delivered through FedNor. The MQFF Festival Committee expresses considerable gratitude to FedNor and the Parry Sound Muskoka Community Network for their support.

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Photos attached: Photos show selected scenes from the film, One More Please, by director Aleksei Borovikov. Photo credit: Aleksei Borovikov

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About the Canadian Experiences Fund

The Canadian Experiences Fund (CEF) supports communities across Canada as they create and enhance tourism products, facilities and experiences. Delivered through Canada's Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), this two-year Fund helps Canada's tourism sector innovate and grow by providing targeted investments based on regional priorities (including inclusiveness, especially for the LGBTQ2 community).



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About Muskoka Pride - Muskoka Pride is a volunteer group that formed in 2009, whose purpose is to increase awareness of the LGBTQ+ community of Muskoka and to create opportunities for inclusivity within Muskoka that overcome heterosexism and homo/bi/trans-phobia, providing a safe community for LGBT people. Muskoka Pride hosts the annual Muskoka Pride Picnic on the Sunday before the Civic Holiday weekend and Pride Week activities throughout Muskoka. A conference is held each fall, and regular social events happen throughout the year.