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## **BACKGROUND**

### **Muskoka Pride**

Muskoka Pride is a volunteer group that formed in 2009, whose purpose is to increase awareness of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (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 LGBTQ people.

Muskoka Pride hosts the annual Picnic on the Sunday before the Civic Holiday weekend and Pride activities in Muskoka. The committee was founded by Matt Commandant as a result of his experiences with LGBTQ youth at-risk of homelessness in Muskoka Region due to hetero-normativity and systemic homo/bi-/trans-phobia.

In October 2014, Muskoka Pride was officially incorporated under the name Muskoka Pride Community. We currently have 9 members on our Board of Directors, host a fall Conference, and hold community social events throughout the year.

### **The Muskoka Pride Picnic**

The Muskoka Pride Picnic was first held in 2009 in Gravenhurst with 26 people in attendance. In 2016 the Picnic was attended by 400 people and over 800 people throughout the week of events.

The Muskoka Pride Picnic is an opportunity to ensure people of Muskoka are aware that there is an LGBTQ population. It is a chance to provide education and visibility, so that younger people in Muskoka know that they are not alone. The Picnic provides a place to socialize and meet other members of the LGBTQ community.

### **2018 Muskoka Pride Festival**

The Muskoka Pride Festival is being celebrated this year from July 20th to July 29th. This year is the 10th anniversary of Muskoka Pride. 20 Events are being planned throughout Muskoka over the ten days. Check our website [www.muskokapride.com](http://www.muskokapride.com) for full event listings.

July 20 – Muskoka Pride Kickoff BBQ from 4PM – 6PM in River Mill Park in Huntsville

July 22 – Pride church service at Port Carling United (Muskoka's first Affirming congregation) 9:30AM

July 20, 23, 24 – The Rainbow Pride Flag is being raised in all 6 municipalities of Muskoka and Wahta MT

July 25 –Pride Youth Event in Gravenhurst 7PM     Pride Night at the Gravenhurst Opera House 8PM

July 26 – Mini-Golf Tournament in Bracebridge 2PM – 7PM

July 27 – Speaker Series at 6PM and Film Screening “Love Simon” at 7PM both in Bracebridge

July 28 – Muskoka Pride Drag Show at Sawdust City Brewery 8PM

July 29 – the first-ever Pride Parade in Muskoka takes place on Manitoba St in Bracebridge 11:30AM

July 29 – 10th annual Muskoka Pride Picnic takes place at Memorial Park in Bracebridge 12PM-4PM.

### **The Rainbow Flag**

The Rainbow Flag is one of the most-recognized symbols of the LGBTQ community. The different colours symbolize the diversity of the LGBTQ community, and the flag is used predominately at Pride events. Originally flown in 1978 with 8 colours, pink and turquoise were removed for production purposes. In addition to the symbolism of a diverse LGBT community, the colours also symbolize: red (life), orange (healing), yellow (sunlight), green (nature), blue (harmony), and purple/violet (spirit).

### **LGBTQ Pride Events**

Pride Weeks are events celebrating lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) culture. Most pride events occur annually and many take place around June to commemorate the Stonewall Riots in New York City on June 28, 1969. The first Pride march happened in 1970. Today Pride events are held in cities and towns all over the world. One of the largest and longest-running, Toronto Pride, happens at the end of June and is attended by over 1 million people..

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