

Halloween has come and gone, leaving behind our first blanket of the white stuff. Very pretty but way too soon. This year has been a challenge with a renewed frontal attack on our community. The focus has been and continues to be on people who look different to the average male. To be clear I mean Trans folk and drag queens again.

In 1968-69 in the USA and 1982 in Canada the queer community was under attack by the right. 54 years later, the far right led by 1 Million March 4 Children and the Freedom Convoy, is once again dragging out the same old rhetoric (protect the family/parent rights). These groups seem to have the support of rightwing provincial governments across Canada and it has fallen to labour and the queer community to stand up for the rights of the child.

This summer we partnered with the District of Muskoka to produce antidiscrimination signage. The "Hate has no home here" signs were distributed around Muskoka. The message is on lawn signs, window signs and window decals helping to spread the message. You might see the message on lawn signs on private property and on window signs in store fronts.

We are pleased to have been able to attend some in-person events this year after a long hiatus due to covid. Our presence was felt at the Minden Pride festival once again. We had an information booth at the Hike for Hospice walk at Johnston's Cranberry Marsh. In October Muskoka Pride staffed a gate during the Bala Cranberry Festival. Our board and general members attended flag raisings and other events throughout Muskoka. We partnered with the YWCA to organize the walk to end gender-based violence, which was another successful event.

2023 saw the return of face-to-face pride week events around Muskoka. The festival in Memorial Park was well attended by a diverse group of supporters. We had to deal with a couple of protesters with negative comments about 2SLGBTQ+ visibility. Members of the board add a queer perspective by sitting on other committees in Muskoka.

Now that the festival season is slowing down, we are gearing up to organize the 5th annual 2024 Muskoka Queer Film festival. Films are being submitted as we speak. We

were very pleased with the support, attendance, and feedback from High Schools and the GSA students. Hopefully we will hold the student focused viewing again. We had such a good experience holding the festival at the Rene Caisse Theater we plan to go back for the 2024 film showings.

Like many community organizations we need volunteers. Please check out our web page to see where you can help support the community. You can use the links there to sign up.

Finally thank you for my time as your president for 2023. I look forward to further serving you.

Merv Taylor-Morin
President Muskoka Pride