



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Lisa Hayes and Lesha Van Der Bij to lead 10th annual Dyke March

TORONTO, June 2, 2005 — Pride Toronto's Dyke March Committee has named Lisa Hayes and Lesha Van Der Bij as the Honoured Dykes for the 10th annual Dyke March, paying tribute to the founding mothers of the Toronto march.

"We're pleased to acknowledge and celebrate the important contribution these women have made to lesbian inclusion and dyke visibility in Toronto's Pride Week," said Natasha Garda, Pride Toronto Co-chair.

Hayes and Van Der Bij decided to organize a dyke march in Toronto after participating in a similar event in New York City.

"The dyke march in New York was a life-changing experience," said Van Der Bij, who felt that Toronto's queer women would benefit from participating in their own dyke march. "I saw women from all walks of life and cultures celebrating their sexual identity. It gave me a greater feeling of power and belonging than I had ever experienced before."

"The March is an effective antidote to the daily invisibility that lesbians inevitably feel, living in a world where heterosexuality is the norm," affirmed Hayes. "The explosive growth and lasting appeal of the March over the past 10 years indicates to me that it fills some important needs in our community."

"Historically, Pride Week events and Toronto's Village have been male-dominated spaces, a fact that emphasized the need for the Dyke March," stated Nicole Hardy, Dyke March Co-coordinator. "The Dyke March is one of the only events in Toronto that brings together lesbian, bi and trans women of all diversity in unity, empowerment and celebration of our community."

Over 1000 women participated in the inaugural Dyke March on June 29, 1996, despite rain, a less than desirable marching route down Sherbourne Street and numerous delays. Although the event attracted some controversy for excluding men, numerous gay men cheered from the sidelines, waving supportive signs.

Hayes and Van Der Bij continued to organize the Dyke March in 1997 and 1998, during which time it grew substantially, in both size and popularity.

Today, Pride Week's celebrations are more inclusive now because of the Dyke March. The Dyke March gives queer women the space to define themselves, showcase their activism and allow their experiences to be represented in their own way, without deference to queer men. Thousands of queer women experience a shared sense of empowerment from being a member of the majority in a public space for one day each year.

"We hope that the community will come out to the March to let Lisa and Lesha know how much this event means to them," said Crystal Johnson, Dyke March Co-coordinator.

The Dyke March Committee received nominations for Hayes and Van Der Bij to be honoured this year to celebrate the 10th Dyke March and to underline the importance of this event to the dyke community and to Pride Week.

About Pride Toronto

Pride Toronto (www.pridetoronto.com) is the not-for-profit organization that hosts Pride Week, an annual festival held during the last week of June in downtown Toronto. Pride Week is Canada's largest celebration of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersex and queer people, and is one of the leading cultural events of its kind in the world.

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