

2SLGBTQ+/Pride Community

The 2SLGBTQ+ community in Red Deer is one of our most colourful. Tracing its roots back to early organizations such as GARD (the Gay Association of Red Deer), the 2SLGBTQ+ rights movement continues to this day with annual events such as Pride Week.



Red Deer Archives, E21177

Search terms/key words/parallel names:

- 2SLGBTQ+
 - o Note: other acronyms may be used in captions or in records such as LGBTQ2S+, LGBT, LGBTQ, as the accepted acronyms have changed over time
- Pride
- Gay Straight Alliance
 - o Note: GSA or G.S.A may be used as acronyms in captions or in records

- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual

History:

Members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community have always been a part of Red Deer's history, whether they were visible in the city or not. The first organization to become a formally organized meeting space for the community was GARD (the Gay Association of Red Deer), which formed in 1979 but did not really hit its stride until late 1980. The organization was active in Red Deer for the next decade, acting as a support group, education source, fundraiser, and host for social events.

During the mid-1990s, local activist group Just People Equal Rights Society of Red Deer was instrumental in fighting for the rights of gay and lesbian people in Alberta. Organized by Anne Claessens, in 1993, the group presented to the Alberta Human Rights Commission about the importance of including rights for homosexual people in the Alberta Human Rights Charter—a campaign that had been advocated for since the inception of the Alberta Human Rights Commission in 1972. These rights included the right to adopt and access to fertility treatments, among others. Just People disbanded in 1998 after the Supreme Court ruling in *Vriend v. Alberta* which ruled that provincial governments could not exclude protection of individuals from human rights legislation based on sexual orientation, and subsequently forced an update to the Alberta Human Rights Code to include sexual orientation as a protected ground.

Alberta's first GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance) for students was formed at Lindsay Thurber Comprehensive High School in 2000. The group, which was a sub-committee of the school's well-established antiracism group STOP (Students and Teachers Opposing Prejudice), was started by students and overseen by teacher sponsor Darren Lund. Within the broader community, a Red Deer chapter of PFLAG Canada (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) held their first meeting in February 2016.

Diversity Day was first proclaimed in Red Deer by Mayor Gail Surkan in 2003 as an alternative to Gay Pride Day initially proposed by the Pride on Campus group at Red Deer College. This name was chosen to broaden the scope of the celebration in response to some negative community perception to a dedicated day to celebrate the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Pride Week in Red Deer has since become a regularly proclaimed annual event.

It is unclear when the first Pride Parade occurred in Red Deer, but some sources state that the most recent happened in 2016. More recent efforts by the Red Deer Queer Association have been made to host an annual Car Pride Parade—the first taking place in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns.

Central Alberta Pride Week continues to be hosted in Red Deer annually during the middle of August, featuring a festival, drag shows, and many other community events.

Community groups such as Pride on Campus, the Red Deer Queer Community Association, the Central Alberta Pride Society, the Trans and Non-binary Aid Society, and HOME – A Place for Youth to Live and Gather continue to build and support the community in Red Deer and more broadly in Central Alberta.

Citations:

- The Canadian Press. "Society battles transgender discrimination." *Red Deer Advocate*, October 28, 2017, page A9.
- Jarvie, Michele. "Gays unite to sound rights call." *Red Deer Advocate*, April 6, 1993, page 11.
- Kennedy, Cameron. "New student group fights anti-gay bias at local high school." *Red Deer Advocate*, November 20, 2000, page 1.
- Lulla, Mamta. "Maskwacis shows it[s] Pride." *Red Deer Advocate*, June 15, 2018, pages 1 and 3.
- Martindale, Carolyn. "The gay life is far from gay." *Red Deer Advocate*, October 6, 1982, page 21.
- Maynard, Andrea. "Celebration of diversity." *Red Deer Advocate*, June 14, 2003, page 1.
- Maynard, Andrea. "Diversity Days not simply for gays, mayor says." *Red Deer Advocate*, June 26, 2003, page 1.
- Red Deer Advocate staff. "Red Deer recognizes Transgender Day of Remembrance." *Red Deer Advocate*, November 19, 2019, page A9.
- Red Deer Advocate staff. "Transgender ID clinic comes to Red Deer." *Red Deer Advocate*, October 5, 2019, page A5.
- Richards, Harley. "Pride at RDC." *Red Deer Advocate*, March 11, 2001.
- Zielinski, Susan. "Rainbow flag flies over Red Deer College." *Red Deer Advocate*, August 15, 2017, page A4.
- Zielinski, Susan. "LGBTQ support group holding first meeting next month." *Red Deer Advocate*, January 21, 2016, page A2.
- Zielinski, Susan. "This pride parade has a twist." *Red Deer Advocate*, July 30, 2020, page A

Key dates:

- **1969 June 28-July 3** Stonewall Riots occur in New York City
- **1969** Bill C-150 decriminalizes homosexual acts in Canada
- **1979** GARD (Gay Association of Red Deer) formed
- **1979** Alberta Lesbian and Gay Rights Association established
- **1988** Central Alberta AIDS Network established (later known as Turning Point)
- **1993** Just People Equal Rights Society of Alberta formed in Red Deer
- **1998** Sexual Orientation included in the Alberta Human Rights Act as a protected ground
- **1999** Pride on Campus formed at Red Deer College
- **2000** STOP (Students and Teachers Opposing Prejudice) forms Alberta's first Gay-Straight Alliance for students at Lindsay Thurber Comprehensive High School
- **2003** Diversity Days proclaimed in Red Deer
- **2005** Same-sex marriage legalized in Canada
- **2012** Central Alberta Pride Society formed
- **2015** Gender identity and gender expression included in the Alberta Human Rights Act as protected ground

- **2016** First rainbow crosswalks painted in Red Deer at Ross Street and Gaetz Avenue, leading up to Central Alberta Pride Week
- **2016** Trans and Non-binary Aid Society (TANAS) formed
- **2016** PFLAG Canada holds first meeting of Red Deer Chapter
- **2017** Pride Flag first raised at Red Deer College
- **2018** Maskwacis paints first rainbow crosswalk on a First Nations reserve in Canada, in front of Samson Cree Nation Administration Building
- **2019** First Transgender ID clinic held in Red Deer, hosted by Skipping Stone Foundation (Calgary)
- **2019** Transgender Day of Remembrance recognized for the first time at City Hall
- **2020** Red Deer Queer Community Association formed
- **2020** First Car Pride Parade held in Red Deer
- **2022** Conversion therapy is banned in Canada
- **2024** First Two-Spirit Powwow in Red Deer held at Fort Normandeau

Primary Records in Red Deer Archives:

Restrictions:

Due to the nature of these records many will fall under FOIP legislation and therefore have access restrictions around personal and medical information. Some records will only be available for in person research, some records may not be able to be reproduced, and some records cannot be viewed at all. **Please contact the Archives before your visit to learn more about the records you are seeking to access.**

- Gay Life in Alberta project (accession 2006-083, 2018-037)
 - o Contains oral histories collected by the Red Deer Museum + Art Gallery, including audio recordings and transcripts.
- MG 581 Central Alberta Regional Museums Network fonds
 - o Report: "Lesbian and gay life in Alberta" (accession 2006-119)
- Protest posters (accession 2019-069)
 - o Posters created and used at a rally in support of Gay-Straight/Queer-Straight Alliances in 2019, held by Central Alberta Pride Society.
- MG 612 Curtis Labelle fonds
 - o Local gay musician who performed at Pride events
- MG 624 Jillian Staniec fonds (accession 2024-064)
 - o Photographs and video of Pride events in Red Deer 2017-2022.
- MG 508 Central Alberta AIDS Network Society fonds
 - o Includes meeting minutes, photographs, correspondence, and marketing materials of the Society.
- MG 511 STOP (Students and Teachers Opposing Prejudice) fonds
 - o Contains records from STOP group, who formed Alberta's first student Gay-Straight Alliance.

External sources:

- The ArQuives: Canada's LGBTQ2+ Archives

- <https://arquives.ca/>
- Calgary Gay History Project
 - <https://calgarygayhistory.ca/>
- Edmonton Queer History Project
 - <https://www.edmontonqueerhistoryproject.ca/>
 - <https://archive.org/details/edmonton-queer-history>
- Pride Centre of Edmonton: Gay and Lesbian Archives of Edmonton
 - <https://pridecentreofedmonton.ca/about/our-history/gay-and-lesbian-archives-of-edmonton/>
- Alberta Human Rights Commission History
 - <https://albertahumanrights.ab.ca/what-are-human-rights/about-human-rights/alberta-s-human-rights-history/alberta-s-human-rights-history-text/>

Online sources:

- Central Alberta Pride Society. Accessed September 2024. Online: <https://www.centralalbertapride.ca/>
- HOME – A Place for Youth to Live and Gather. Accessed September 2024. Online: <https://www.facebook.com/p/HOME-A-Place-For-Youth-to-Live-and-Gather-61554285562742/>
- Pride on Campus. Accessed October 2024. Online: <https://sardp.ca/enactus-rdc/>
- Red Deer Queer Community Association. Accessed September 2024. Online: <https://rdqca.com/>
- Turning Point. Accessed September 2024. Online: <https://turningpoint-ca.org/>