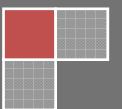




# WRRC Community Conversation Series Final Report

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## Executive Summary

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The Waterloo Region Rainbow Coalition (WRRC) was formed during the Fall of 2010 to help address concerns expressed by some members of the Rainbow Community in Waterloo Region. There was concern that there was a lack of advocacy and unity among the groups in our community. We define the “Rainbow Community” as those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, intersex, queer, questioning, fluid, unlabelled, asexual, straight allies, and all other members of our community who are interested in increasing awareness and inclusivity of gender and sexual diversity. Throughout the rest of this report, we will refer to this group of diverse people as the “Rainbow Community”. Also note that in some of the appendices, the Rainbow Community is also referred to as “queer”. Since the appendices are taken directly from the participants, the language was not censored or edited. For a description of members of the Rainbow Community, please refer to the list of glossary terms in Appendix A. WRRC is a fully grassroots community group, that is non-profit, and intends to compliment the current resources and services in Waterloo Region.

Throughout October and November 2010, WRRC’s objective was to hold a series of three “community conversations” to gather the Rainbow Community and its allies together to begin working towards building a unified Rainbow Community in Waterloo Region. This was a collaborative community-building process that we hoped would strengthen the local Rainbow community. Each of the three conversations were intended to reveal new ideas and possibilities, as well as to give WRRC feedback on how to proceed once issues had been collectively identified.

The first two meetings were an introduction to the process of the community conversation, and to the idea of working together to foster a sense of community, unity and advocacy to make some changes to improve services and communication for the Rainbow Community. Six themes were discovered from the first two meetings which were important to the Rainbow Community. These themes were: community building, allies, unity & diversity, lack of services, discrimination & harassment and information and awareness. A SWOT analysis was conducted to discover where the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are for the Rainbow Community in Waterloo Region. Then from the six themes mentioned above, four initial projects were created to enhance services and community connection for the Rainbow Community. The four projects are: Coalition, Education & Awareness, Physical Space, and Website. The participants have been working in the four project areas, and are in the planning process of the projects. They will come together again in January 2011 to continue moving forward with the four projects. WRRC has been asked to continue to host these meetings and facilitate the projects. The members of WRRC are excited and honoured to facilitate this collaborative community-building process that we believe has already begun to strengthen our local Rainbow community.

## **Introduction**

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The Waterloo Region Rainbow Coalition (WRRC) was formed during the Fall of 2010 because members of the Rainbow Community in Waterloo Region felt there was a lack of advocacy and unity among the groups in our community. We define the “Rainbow Community” as those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, intersex, queer, questioning, fluid, unlabelled, asexual, straight allies, and all other members of our community who are interested in increasing awareness and inclusivity of gender and sexual diversity. Throughout the rest of this report, we will refer to this group of diverse people as the “Rainbow Community”. Also note that in some of the appendices, the Rainbow Community is also referred to as “queer”. Since the appendices are taken directly from the participants, the language was not censored or edited. For a description of members of the Rainbow Community, please refer to the list of glossary terms in Appendix A. WRRC is a fully grassroots community group, that is non-profit, and intends to compliment the current resources and services in Waterloo Region.

Throughout October and November 2010, WRRC’s objective was to hold a series of three “community conversations” to gather the Rainbow Community and its allies together to begin working towards building a unified Rainbow Community in Waterloo Region. This was a collaborative community-building process that we hoped would strengthen the local Rainbow community. Each of the three conversations were intended to reveal new ideas and possibilities, as well as to give WRRC feedback on how to proceed once issues had been collectively identified. This final report will give detailed results of what occurred during the three community conversations.

## **WRRC – Life**

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The first conversation was titled “WRRC Life”, and was held October 21, 2010 from 6:30-9:30pm. This event was intended to gather ideas, thoughts and feedback from the Rainbow community about their experiences in Waterloo Region and what issues they felt were most important to the community. Approximately 50 enthusiastic people attended; some of them were new to Waterloo Region or new to the Rainbow Community. We had people representing many diverse groups who collaboratively worked to narrow down the broad issues that the local Rainbow community is currently facing. First, a large group discussion took place<sup>1</sup>, followed by two smaller group discussions where participants discussed the identified issues in detail<sup>2</sup>. Overall, six broad themes emerged out of this first conversation. We have summarized the themes, focusing on the main ideas expressed within each theme, to help us move forward in the two upcoming community conversations.

### **1. Community Building**

It was identified that a sense of “community” is an important issue in the Rainbow Community in Waterloo Region. There was a reoccurring theme that a central location needs to be established in the form of a community centre which can be the organizing location for continued work in the

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix C

Rainbow Community. There is also a strong need for resources, services and support to be identified and made available at this central location, and the information to be made available/distributed from this central location to those seeking the information. It was noted that there is a long history of the Rainbow community in Waterloo Region, but it is important to focus on celebrating, and strengths as well as working on improving access to services, support and resources.

## **2. Allies**

An overarching idea from the Rainbow Community was that Straight Allies do not get the recognition that they deserve. This could be established by creating a symbol for Allies, and by finding ways to increase awareness and visibility as well as celebrating their contributions to the Rainbow Community. Secondly, the need for training and services for allies was stressed as important. Included in this training would be the option to train local agencies and organizations in supporting the Rainbow Community, and giving them the language and resources to communicate the importance and benefits of being an Ally, as well as creating safety for people and organizations to “come out” as Allies. Finally, there should be an opportunity to build alliances between the Rainbow community and the Allies. Along with the idea of a central location for a community centre, was the hope for a designated space for Allies in the community centre as well. It was mentioned that referring to the LGBTQ community as the “Rainbow Community” was more accepting language to use.

## **3. Lack of Services**

One of the biggest issues identified was the lack of a central location for the Rainbow Community. This central location would host meetings, community space, social activities, peer support networks and more. The second issue was the lack of one central location for an electronic resource database/calendar. Currently, unless you belong to certain groups in the community, or are on their individual mailing list, then you need to check all the websites or call for information about upcoming events. Many people also felt a strong need for a directory to find the community resources they were seeking. It was also identified this would be helpful for newcomers to the community as well. Thirdly, there was an expressed interest in creating a mentoring system that offered one on one support for newly “out,” or for members who are new to Waterloo Region and our local Rainbow Community.

## **4. Discrimination and Harassment**

Community members candidly shared their stories of discrimination, harassment and other forms of prejudice. Most of these included experiences with individuals and organizations related to policing, education, and healthcare. In all three sectors, the following issues were noted: a lack of services aimed specifically at the Rainbow community, a prevalence of misinformation and prejudice, a lack of visible support for the Rainbow community on behalf of service organizations, not knowing whether services or individuals are welcoming, a fear of using services (e.g., reporting hate crimes), and the lack of appropriate and welcoming resources for transfolk. Providing outreach and education with all three of these sectors was seen as important to address gaps in knowledge, awareness and skill. Also important is the need to address prejudice (e.g., sexism, racism) from within the Rainbow community. Many people suggested having someone from the Rainbow community provide outreach to Waterloo Region.

## 5. Information and Awareness

Many people said the visibility of existing Rainbow services, groups and events is lacking. There was consensus that the lack of a central location makes it difficult to connect with the Rainbow community. Examples that were suggested included: a central calendar, resource list, a Rainbow publication/blog, all of which would be updated regularly and be available in multiple formats. As well as the need for a central location, it was suggested that a staff member would represent the Rainbow community on various committees and provide information in the community when needed. Finally, it was identified that a lack of reliable data and statistics about our community makes it difficult to organize, secure funding, and advocate for change.

## 6. Unity and Diversity

A disconnect was identified between various “niche” groups in the community. Groups work in isolation and are fragmented, which leads to a lack of visibility in general. It was suggested that more opportunities are needed to bring people together to build community. The challenge with the Rainbow community is that there are no clear “boundaries”; and a lot of intersection of multiple identities. Community-building efforts need to take this into account, uniting people while respecting difference. Also, it was acknowledged that there are groups this initiative may not be reaching, so more outreach must be undertaken. In particular, racialized communities, and people from non-Western ethno-cultural communities are generally not well represented within the local Rainbow community. There are also unique challenges faced by elders and youth.

## WRRC – Ideas

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The second meeting titled “WRRC Ideas” was held on November 4, 2010. Approximately 30 people attended this conversation; several had attended the first event, but there were also many newcomers as well. The focus was to look at our community’s strengths and weaknesses, at what opportunities for community-building exist, and what threats might hold up our progress. A large group discussion took place that explored these topics during the first part of this event<sup>3</sup>. We have summarized the primary themes that emerged below.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Our community is able/willing to educate and inform</li><li>• There is some community leadership already in place</li><li>• Ability to connect through the Internet and social media</li><li>• Our community’s history / institutional memory</li><li>• This is a small community, in comparison to other cities</li><li>• There are allies in our community who are receptive to change</li><li>• We have lots of momentum and enthusiasm for making change</li><li>• Existing LGBTQ businesses/services (i.e., Little Bean, Proud magazine)</li><li>• There is a sense of community ownership and an expectation of progress</li><li>• There is a progressive voice here; pockets of great things happening already</li><li>• Some organizations are already doing outreach (e.g., school system, Police)</li><li>• Existing LGBTQ community groups (i.e., Tri-Pride, GSAs, GLOW, Rainbow Centre)</li></ul>
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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix D

Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of advocacy services</li> <li>• The lack of a central Rainbow voice</li> <li>• Historical “rifts” between certain groups/individuals</li> <li>• WRRRC needs to develop more structure and organization</li> <li>• Lack of available funding for LGBTQ community initiatives</li> <li>• Lack of data and statistics about the local Rainbow community</li> <li>• Very little (updated) information out there about resources, groups, events</li> <li>• Various Rainbow groups do not communicate with one another; isolation</li> <li>• Marginalized individuals (i.e., immigrants, newcomers) are often left out</li> <li>• The resources that exist are already taxed; volunteer burnout is common</li> <li>• Our community is largely closeted; some people don’t want to participate</li> <li>• Unreasonable expectations (i.e., all groups must be everything to everyone)</li> <li>• False assumption that the area is already welcoming (tolerance vs. acceptance)</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WRRRC is an opportunity</li> <li>• Lots of various skills and talents in Rainbow community</li> <li>• Waterloo Region is growing quickly; this is the right time!</li> <li>• Partnerships with our allies helps build sustainability of initiatives</li> <li>• We can learn from other organizations and groups in other cities</li> <li>• Faculty of Social Work (Students and Faculty willing to learn)</li> <li>• Push from the Region of Waterloo to bring in more medical services</li> <li>• Other organizations are already doing good work to increase inclusivity</li> <li>• Empty real estate means opportunity for finding a central location</li> <li>• 2010 is an election year</li> <li>• Many organizations have stated they want to partner with the Rainbow Community (i.e., Police, Crime Prevention Council, community health centres)</li> </ul>
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General apathy in the community</li> <li>• Volunteers are key – but not everyone has the time</li> <li>• A lack of appropriate and welcoming medical services</li> <li>• To get funding, will need to develop a formal structure</li> <li>• Need to be clear about what our aims are as a community</li> <li>• A central location can’t possibly serve all of Waterloo Region</li> <li>• We are very close to Toronto; many people will just go there</li> <li>• Misinformation, assumptions, and prejudice in Waterloo Region</li> <li>• Geographically, we are very large – hard to connect 3 cities and 4 townships</li> <li>• Privilege, power, and oppression not always understood by Rainbow community</li> <li>• How to communicate with folks who are disenfranchised and/or marginalized?</li> </ul>

This large discussion was followed by smaller group discussions where participants commented on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the context of the six issues of concern identified during the previous conversation<sup>4</sup>. A brief summary of these discussions is below.

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix E

## **1. Community Building**

There was an emphasis from this group to focus on the existing strengths within the Rainbow Community. Recognizing the progressive and enthusiastic voice that we have, as well as the events and services that are currently provided, and to grow along with our currently growing community in Waterloo Region was an important theme. However, there is still an issue of invisibility for the Rainbow Community in Waterloo Region. There should be more opportunities for shared roles, leadership, volunteer positions, and collaboration between groups to make sure no individual or group sense of entitlement obscures our community vision. We should provide opportunities for groups to reconnect and work through their differences. The need for training, education, and agency involvement is very important. The lack of structure and unity among local groups and agencies, data and information has been a barrier to obtaining funding in the past. There are many diverse needs, and there is no way to be “everything to everyone”.

## **2. Allies**

There is no clear process on becoming or being an ally, and it is fraught with social and cultural misperception which is why more people likely do not become allies. Creating awareness that being an ally to the Rainbow Community is not about sexuality is important. Some allies do not want to claim the “ally identity”, and others fear the social repercussions of the label. Education and outreach needs to be offered in Waterloo Region in order for the role of the ally to be understood and strengthened. The concept of an “ally spectrum” was discussed. On one end, people can be an ally without claiming the identity, and on the other end of the spectrum, are allies who are activists for the Rainbow Community. The spectrum concept allows for specific roles as an ally to be created, and gives the opportunity for everyone to become involved regardless of their interests. The possibility of a certificate program was discussed, as well as exchanging training between local agencies and the Rainbow Community to implement an ally certificate and recruit/advocate for allies from all groups and service providers. A list of local service providers to contact was created, as well as the types of outreach that could be created.

## **3. Unity and Diversity**

The desire for the local Rainbow Community to create a unified voice, and work together to build networks and opportunities locally was a strong theme. There has historically been a lot of disconnect between groups because of high turnover rate, and unique service requirements. There is a social perception that groups who service or work with a certain segment of the Rainbow Community need to be relevant and open to everyone, but niche groups should be encouraged and recognized. We need to make sure that education, outreach, training and services are as accessible as possible to cater to both urban and rural communities. The Rainbow Community is so diverse that it can be hard to meet everyone’s needs, so we need to prioritize our focus and build from there. On a related note, while examination of how the rainbow community is organized in other communities can prove educational in identifying how to meet the needs of the Rainbow Community, we must avoid adopting an approach from another community that does not respect the uniqueness of Waterloo Region. A “Rainbow Show and Tell” could be a unique and interesting event where local groups and service providers can come together and showcase how they can work with and service the Rainbow Community. Also, the continuation of community conversations was deemed important to keep the dialog going within the Rainbow Community outside of the service providers and local events to avoid bias.



#### **4. Lack of Services**

This group discussed how WRRRC might develop into an organization that can advocate for inclusive services in Waterloo Region. It was suggested that a coalition format would work well, but that some key elements will need to be established, including: a mission statement, logo, website, core board of directors, and greater visibility. Many felt that it would be useful to have a coalition made up of an executive committee plus various subcommittees focused on specific projects. Emphasizing communication between groups would be important, so it would be helpful to continue holding these community conversations on a regular basis. Also, improving access to health services was seen as the most important area of focus.

#### **5. Discrimination and Harassment**

A focus here was on how to better address prejudice, discrimination, and harassment. Training and education were seen as key. Many people also placed a strong emphasis on developing partnerships with agencies. But how can we provide meaningful training on Rainbow Community issues to various service providers? What really works to create inclusion? How do we encourage people to reflect on their own privilege and its impact? Some said that it is difficult to report hate crimes. Discrimination from police was discussed, but it was noted that Waterloo Regional Police Services is working hard to develop ways to appropriately serve Rainbow Community citizens.

#### **6. Information and Awareness**

This group felt that what is most important is to have a way to inform the community and connect people more easily. This can make the Rainbow Community feel more welcoming. Some people felt that while a central focal point is necessary, it doesn't have to be a physical location – we can start by using the Internet and social media. A website/blog was proposed, that would be updated regularly with user-generated content, news, events calendar, resource list, editorials, videos, etc. The key would be to have it largely community-driven. It would be staffed primarily by volunteers. Also, people said that we should continue building a central voice/hub in order to advocate for our community; something like an umbrella group or a coalition that works together.

### **WRRRC – Plans**

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The third meeting of the three conversations was called “WRRRC Plans”, and it was held on November 18, 2010. Approximately 30 people attended this conversation; several had also attended the first or second event. The goal of this evening was to break into smaller groups and focus on four major projects areas that were identified in the previous group meeting. The four small projects included the following: Coalition, Education & Awareness, Physical Space, and Website. The six previous topics that were identified (i.e., community building, allies, unity & diversity, lack of services, discrimination & harassment and information and awareness), were to be included in the small group discussions about the four project areas. At the start of the meeting, everyone was asked in a large group how they would like to define the scope of each of the four projects, so there could be a framework to work from when the projects were executed in January 2011. After discussing the four projects briefly, the four groups broke into their smaller project groups. Besides defining the parameters of the project, and referring to the six themes mentioned above, the goal at the end of the small group discussion was to create a small paragraph to describe the project that would be used to recruit new project members in January

2011<sup>5</sup>. People then signed up for the project they wanted to work on, and divided into their smaller groups to discuss the four projects along with the six themes. After the small group meetings, everyone came back together as a large group to debrief about the process, and we thanked the participants for their time. The following summarizes the small group discussions about the four projects.

## **1. Coalition**

The format of the Coalition was discussed, and the need for a clear infrastructure that would ensure that people would stick to their positions so leadership “burn out” would not happen. The idea of a (possibly rotating) central leadership “hub” was discussed, including people that represented different sectors of the community. The core hub would include community representatives, Rainbow Community members, newcomers, and allies from diverse backgrounds<sup>6</sup>. The desire to be open, grass roots, and use a democratic approach while being community led was also deemed important. Some policies and guidelines would need to be developed, along with a clear nomination process for leaders, and clarity about how to resolve conflict (use of a mediator), and delegate responsibilities. The importance of being accountable and transparent was discussed. Language is essential to keeping everyone included, as well as giving everyone the opportunity to voice their concerns and become involved. It is important that people only speak for themselves. The idea of a unified front with multiple voices was envisioned. The role of the Coalition would be to partner and work with other local service providers and organizations to make sure the Rainbow Community receives the services and supports that it needs. Therefore, liaising with service providers and organizations is an important function of the hub. The need to recruit, inspire, and motivate people to get involved is also important. There would need to be someone to handle volunteer management, communications and media, and people who will train those who will be involved in the Coalition, as well as service providers and organizations who wish to work with the Rainbow Community. The possibility of reaching out to other communities, cities and townships was discussed as future plans once the Coalition is established.

## **2. Education & Awareness**

It was decided that WRRRC should work with existing groups to find out where the gaps are, and how to complement the existing training. A component of training should be outreach to local service providers and organizations (i.e., police services, the Board of Education) to find out what training is needed. This could be done in a survey format online. The training should include LGBTQ members and allies from diverse backgrounds, as well as local service providers and organizations. Training should dispel myths, educate about who is included in the Rainbow Community, and increase the knowledge of language and inclusivity. It could consist of small activities that are facilitated by a number of people with different skills and expertise. Training should target the complexity and diversity of the Rainbow Community, and be offered to members of the Rainbow Community, and anyone else that lives in Waterloo Region. There should be a progression to the learning by offering a “Rainbow Community 101” workshop, along with an

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix F

<sup>6</sup> The original members who founded WRRRC in the Fall of 2010 decided to open up Coalition membership to the community of Waterloo Region to be more inclusive. The future direction of this Coalition and/or future groups that result may not include all the “founding” members, because participation is voluntary. This is a community-based and community run Coalition, so the structure is created collaboratively by the community.

intermediate and an advanced class, as well as a specific training for allies. Ally training could include information about the ally spectrum, breaking down events from history and the role of allies. Partnering with existing ally training groups such as GLOW, or HSSE (Heterosexual for Same Sex Equality) would also help grow the ally program. Also, offering training about specific sectors of the Rainbow Community (i.e., seniors or youth), as well as offering specialized trainings to key service providers and organizations (i.e., health care) would also be a good approach. The training should take an anti-oppression and human rights perspective, and a “core” training could be developed, then specific material could be added or taken away depending on who the group is that we are training. Training needs to be unique and take a dynamic approach to attract people to it. In order to get creative, a tagline or “motto” could be developed, and there should be numerous ways that we advertise this training (i.e., newspaper, radio, online, through Rainbow businesses, during other local events etc). A community inventory, as well as a central database of service and information is important to create and use during this training. Including a timeline of local history would be interesting and useful to help attendees learn about the local Rainbow Community.

### **3. Physical Space**

The vision for a Rainbow or “Wellness” Centre would be consciously and deliberately safe as well as accessible and recognized in Waterloo Region. There should be one central satellite location with the possibility of other locations in the future. The space could be shared with other rainbow agencies. The space should be community funded (i.e., City of Kitchener, other Rainbow businesses or interested agencies). The physical space could be run by a board of directors with one main director, staff (service providers, marketing and fundraising), and volunteers. This space would need the physical location, furniture (desk, chairs, magazine rack, bookshelf, coffee maker, area rug, lamps, computer, fax, photocopier etc). There would also need to be internet, utilities, a secured entrance, as well as insurance. The ideal space would be large, with an open space for reception and the main area/library, as well as separate rooms to host groups or events. There would also be a separate space for peer support and allies.

### **4. Website**

The main purpose of the website would be to host and disseminate information that is relevant to the Rainbow Community that is kept up to date. The website should be used as a tool, with a complete directory for people to access local information and services. The website would be welcoming to people who are newly coming out, as well as people who have been out. The intention of the website is to facilitate growth and community building that includes regular contributors. It would encourage in-person meetings, groups and activities, and be the “hub” of the Rainbow Community. Services, organizations and groups that currently exist could contribute and have space on the website as well. There would be a link to major service providers and organizations (i.e. Waterloo Region), and the starting point could be to work with the Grandriver Rainbow Site. Bandwidth needs to be considered for rural users or those with dial up internet services (i.e. have html and flash). Software that could be used includes: Jive, V-Bulletin, Website Tonight. There will be links to other social networking groups such as Facebook, twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn etc., allowing for diverse opportunities to connect.

The layout of the site should have the following features: History of Rainbow Community, “Who are We” ( info about WRRRC and Rainbow Community today), event calendar (users and events would be approved), user-created content (forums, blogs, discussion boards, E-Zine, Wikipedia entries, sub-sites), RSS Feed/News feed or announcements section, a directory of businesses (created by local businesses and user recommended), advertising (paid to generate revenue, would be scaled according to what is paid), links to other community resources, an email list (use existing rainbow lists by coordinating with other groups), calendar (printable), photo gallery (with consent of individuals), chat rooms, moderation and a code of conduct (tied to user content, anonymous reporting of offensive/inappropriate material, support (chat rooms, or referrals to in person support). The Tagline could be “Your Community, Your Voice”

## **Conclusion**

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After facilitating the process of engaging Waterloo Region in these community conversations, we realize that there have been a multiplicity of needs and services identified which cannot all be addressed immediately. So while these four projects are not inclusive of all the projects that could take place through WRRRC, they are the starting projects that will move the Rainbow Community in Waterloo Region forward by establishing WRRRC as a clear, visible and unified local organization. We have encouraged the participants involved in each of the four projects to be in contact with each other over the holidays and think about what they would like to commit their time to in the New Year once the projects begin.

In January of 2011, another community conversation will be facilitated by WRRRC as requested by the Rainbow Community. A date, time and location will soon be posted on our website which is located at: <http://wrrc.webs.com/>. The members of WRRRC would like to thank Wilfrid Laurier’s Faculty of Social Work (FSW) for providing us meeting space, as well as the Social Innovation Research Group at the FSW for their support; the City of Kitchener; Little Bean Coffee Bar for their coffee donations; as well as all of the participants who have been involved. WRRRC has felt very excited and honoured to facilitate this collaborative community-building process that we believe has already begun to strengthen our local Rainbow Community. We intend to continue to work with and compliment local service providers and agencies to build towards our vision of a more inclusive and supportive community for everyone. We look forward to seeing what the year 2011 brings!

## Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

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*Please note the following terminology is only a brief list that is used in this report to identify some members of the Rainbow Community. For further information about LGBTQ terminology, review the website references below and/or contact WRRC.*

*Lesbian* - A woman who has romantic/sexual and/or emotional attraction and interest in other women. Some lesbians may prefer to identify as “gay” (adj.) or as “gay women”.

*Gay* - This adjective describes men have romantic/sexual and/or emotional attraction and interest in other men.

*Bisexual* - An individual who has romantic/sexual and/or emotional attraction and interest in both men and women. This is also considered to be a fluid identity (which is defined below).

*Transgender* - An umbrella term (adj.) for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the biological sex they were assigned at birth. The term may include but is not limited to: transsexuals, some cross-dressers and other gender-variant (non-traditional gender oriented) people. Transgender people may identify as female-to-male (FTM) or male-to-female (MTF), or just use the terms “male” or “female”. Transgender people may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically.

*Transsexual* – A person who identifies psychologically/emotionally as a gender other than the one they were biologically assigned at birth. Transsexuals often wish (or have) transformed their bodies hormonally and/or surgically to match their inner sense of gender.

*Two-Spirit* – A gender term that refers to an American Indian who is believed to possess a mixture of both masculine and feminine spirits. This is not to be confused with sexual orientation.

*Intersex* - Describes a person whose biological sex is ambiguous. There are many genetic, hormonal or anatomical variations that make a person’s sex ambiguous. Parents and medical professionals usually assign intersex infants a biological sex at birth and perform surgical operations to conform the infant’s body to that assignment. This is not to be confused with the term transgender.

*Queer* – This term is a reclaimed word for some members of the Rainbow Community who use it to describe themselves. However, it is not universally accepted even within the Rainbow Community. It is most often used by younger generations of the Rainbow Community.

*Questioning* – Usually refers to a person who is unsure what their sexual orientation is. This is an exploratory phase when they are trying to understand their sexual orientation and claim their identity. This does not mean the person identifies in the Rainbow Community yet, but they are exploring it. This can sometimes refer to a person who is questioning their gender orientation as well, but it is not used as common for this.

*Fluid* – Refers to a person who has romantic/sexual and/or emotional attraction and interest in people of many different gender and/or sexual expressions. Some of them do not choose their

partner based on their gender or sexual orientation (pansexual), and others have specific interests in both men and women (bisexual). There are also many other fluid labels in addition to those mentioned above.

*Unlabelled* – Refers to a person in the Rainbow Community who does not feel any of the labels currently describe their sexual orientation very well. They choose to be unlabelled, which is a term used to describe their sexual orientation label.

*Asexual* – Refers to a person who is not typically interested in forming romantic or sexual relationships with others. They are interested in intimacy, but not sex. This is used as their sexual orientation label.

*Straight Allies OR Ally* – Refers to a heterosexual person (someone who is not in the Rainbow Community) that is supportive of, and concerned about members of the Rainbow Community. They believe in equality for everyone. They can also be an advocate for positive change for the Rainbow Community. They stand up against Homophobia, and are often educators to those who are unfamiliar with the Rainbow Community.

*Homophobia* – A dislike/fear/hatred of the Rainbow Community, or certain members of the Rainbow Community, or anyone that does not confirm to traditional gender/sex roles in society. Homophobia can take on many forms. Sometimes homophobic people commit hate crimes against members of the Rainbow Community, or they show disgust in members of the Rainbow Community being public about their identity, or in their same-sex relationship or when someone appears to be gender non-conforming.

*Please note that this terminology has been adapted from the following 3 sources:*

- 1) GLAAD Media Reference Guide. © 2010 Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, Inc. from: <http://www.glaad.org/document.doc?id=99>
- 2) National Lesbian & Gay Journalist's Association (NLGJA) stylebook supplement of terminology © 2010 National Lesbian & Gay Journalist's Association from: <http://www.nlgja.org/resources/2010stylebook.pdf>
- 3) Green, E.R. & E. N. Petersen (2003-2004) c/o the LGBT Resource Center at UC Riverside. From: <http://out.ucr.edu/pdf/Terminology.pdf>.

## **Appendix B: WRRC Life – Points from Large Group Discussion**

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### **Allies**

- Educating our allies (e.g., language, being more inclusive)
- Including our allies – What is their role? How to include them?
- Fear of backlash if people express support or ally themselves
- Acknowledging our allies
- Welcoming and supporting our allies (e.g., PFLAG, parents, gay-friendly landlords)

### **Visibility and Centralization**

- Statistics and data – Who are we? What are our numbers?
- Need actual, professional data (e.g., survey, needs assessment)
- Need to develop a vision for our community
- We are hidden, both as people and organizations – How do we become visible?
- A central organization (e.g., social network) – could pull our diverse community together
- A central platform that is well-publicized to list events, resources, etc.
- A central calendar for events and community happenings
- Developing awareness of groups and places for support
- Information lacking – What resources are there?
- Awareness lacking – Where are the resources?
- There is so much turnover in community leadership
- We need a Rainbow directory in a central location, online
- Communication is lacking in the community in general
- Need a central organization for advocacy

### **Community-Building**

- Who are we? Who is included in our community?
- Who has the authority to speak on behalf of our community?
- Sustainability of resources; ongoing support is needed
- Websites that list resources are often out of date
- Burnout of Rainbow Community volunteers and community leaders
- Lack of recognition for Rainbow Community volunteers and community leaders
- Need to build on strengths – do not recreate the wheel or start from scratch
- Making connections and maintaining community history/memory
- We should not expect one place to be everything to everyone
- History of inter-group politics – how can we come to agree to disagree then move forward?
- Educating ourselves – we also need to learn to understand one another
- Addressing our own internal homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, racism, sexism, etc.
- Acknowledging the difference between volunteers and paid staff – mediating our expectations
- How does the Rainbow community support itself?
- What do we want from the larger Waterloo Region community?
- Investing in the local Rainbow Community
- Finding a central location or meeting place

- Building from what we have
- Self-confidence and self-image in the Rainbow Community
- Issues around faith, religion, and spirituality
- Lack of feedback location
- Police discrimination
- Mental health and medical – lack of knowledge

### **Unity and Diversity**

- Community lacks unity
- Newcomers have hard time connecting to community
- A need for different services, but all working together
- Diversity within the community (e.g., age, race)
- Ethno-cultural sexuality; not reducing people to only one aspect of identity
- Lack of communication between agencies
- Race and cultural diversity
- Unified community through supporting diversity – coalition!
- Boxes are okay sometimes
- Who aren't we hearing from? How do we reach everyone?
- Building bridges between us and other marginalized communities
- Needing to fit into a box in order to belong or to get services



## Appendix C: WRRC Life – Notes from Small Group Discussions

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### Allies

These are not listed in any particular order. The underlined areas were common themes between both groups.

- Need to celebrate and acknowledge ally current and past contributions. Create space for people in queer community to express their thoughts about receiving ally support.
- Knowledge – Strong need for training and services for allies. This would include recruitment of others when the benefits become clear to others.
- Give allies the language to explain why they are supporting the rainbow community (i.e. they are inclusive, against discrimination and homophobia, and they understand the “risk” associated with being an ally). This also helps reduce safety concerns.
- A process to address safety if something does happen to allies.
- A Symbol for allies is needed– suggestions are two hands, one a rainbow with Ally below or a rainbow overtop. (There is currently no ally symbol promoted anywhere that the groups knew of).
- Ally shirts, buttons etc to advertise and spread awareness and increase visibility
- Give benefits/reasons for being an ally – currently not clear for some people
- Need a central location that fosters inclusiveness (rainbow centre)
- Provide an opportunities for allies to “come out” like we do in the queer community
- The need to identify “positive space” with a sign/symbol etc.
- Create group of community stakeholders to be/promote, and assist others in becoming allies.
- Need to normalize the role of allies in queer community as well

#### *Other important things to note:*

- Need space on WRRC website for info about allies, welcoming allies, giving information about their role, and giving them opportunities for training and meeting other allies – building ally community.
- Suggested that terminology be part of website as well so allies can become familiar with new language.

### Community Building

Discussion Point: *Build on Strengths, don't recreate the wheel*

- How important is it to have a sense of community?
- Sometimes you need it
- There is vacillation; some want it, some do not
- Community means identity and a sense of belonging
- “I’m here because I feel most akin to this community”
- When one takes the decision to connect, it’s there for them when they need it
- Informal organizations can build community
- A part of the community doesn’t know how to connect
- People don’t know how or if they want to contribute
- It’s not just about social networking
- “Before tonight, I really wasn’t aware of all the issues people were facing”

- Maybe it's just a problem of not knowing how or where to look

Discussion Point: *Burnout of leaders and volunteers*

- There is a fear of leadership and commitment
- Contribution has to happen at the right time, in the right way
- People have to be passionate about their contributions, there has to be lots of kinds of contributions people can choose from
- Contribution needs to be 'efficient'
- Leaders have to step back and let others take positions
- Some volunteerism goes unnoticed
- Some volunteers want options which do not 'out' them
- So few people are natural leaders; needs to be a variety of leader and quasi-leadership roles available

Discussion Point: *Loss of History*

- Politics get in the way, even though half the time, no one remembers why things are done this way, who made it so?
- Too often one person has all the information and then disappears
- We re-create the wheel because we have to
- There is a loss of institutional memory
- History is lost, not recorded
- No central resource
- The Canadian LGBTQ Archives at 519 have information about Waterloo Region - - for example, this area had the first radio program for LGBTQ

Discussion Point: *Sustainability*

- Stuff just isn't up-to-date, which makes it useless
- Too many initiatives do not have ongoing support
- Websites out of date
- Programs are vulnerable
- This is about advocacy efforts – identifying what's needed
- Identify types of resources, and determine how we can obtain these things
- Pride Pages was a struggle to get people to contribute, both advertising, articles, features, and maintain distributions: people still said they never got them
- Do we need publications/posters at schools?
- Library resources
- There was a trans video – what happened to it?
- Where is the TRUTH Exhibit?
- Just a list is needed of everything in one spot

Discussion Point: *Who has the authority to speak on behalf of the Rainbow Community?*

- You are the message
- "It's just a part of who I am, it's not all of who I am"
- People have to "be present"
- The media focuses only on the sensational

- What IS the message?
- It's a Judgemental community
- Who represents the community
- Can authentic queer leadership be non-queer?
- What makes someone qualified?
  - Common experience
  - Uncommon experience
  - No experience
  - Can allies be representatives? (the case of the non-queer WLU centre leader)
- Who is included in the community?

*Other Notes:*

- Is it because our community is small?
- Is it feeling if not being engaged? Lack of engagement
- "We're just a bedroom community of Toronto"
- We don't invest here, we invest in Toronto
- How can we make it vibrant here as well?
- Get involved and not do the whole job
- Suspicion of a much larger group of people who are 'moderately engaged'; that is, they passively receive information about events and programs but do not participate and are not easily reached
  - Rainbow Community has traditionally been aligned with arts and culture; perhaps because we have been champions of inalienable rights
  - They share lack of visibility, support, funds, and volunteers
  - This kind of fusion is 'standard' in larger urban areas
- There has to be a spirit of celebration rather than politics
- Priorities are various:
  - Friends
  - Social dynamics
  - Dating
- How many are open to the communication?

**Discrimination and Harassment**

- Police, medical, and education
- Police spoke to Tri-Pride – no follow-up and didn't attend = Not building bridges
- Community Outreach Person – all organizations, specifically police (VWAP and more)
- Transfolk have no connections (to Sherbourne Health Centre, CMHA)
- Only one local doctor supporting transfolks
- Need to educate doctors and teach them to embrace Rainbow Community people
- Challenge to belief that queer women don't need paps, have no risk of pregnancy
- ASO cannot teach HIV101 at schools – people not affiliated w/ASO okay
- Education at schools re: same-sex families
- Less than 6 books published about kids with HIV = hiding RX of HIV from kids
- Lack of HIV services at schools including those of higher learning

- Campus harassment and homophobia
- Recruiting Rainbow Community persons for leadership
- Shift in forward thinking
- Focus intentionally for transfolk
- Straight folk using Rainbow Community folks as though we must be the fount of all knowledge
- Need to educate ourselves so we can be
- Bill C104: trans community does not face anything different (letter)
- Police – Who in the police is actually friendly? Only know 1 officer
- A place to vent about place not board
- Safe space within police for police
- Blatant “you were drunk”
- Hate crimes – what it is and recognize it even if it isn’t violent (systemic)
- Fears of reporting
- Gender crimes are hate crimes
- Queer community can be oppressive (i.e., sexism, racism)
- Intersectional oppression
- Gender exclusion – male privilege not working
- Women only group not advertised as
- Educate our community
- Level of denial within queer
- Allies as resource against discrimination
- Have come to far
- Media – Ellen!!!
- Upcoming youth know no different
- Some are shocked that police discrimination
- Bubbled enviro police
- Cultural shift needed in institutional/systemic
- Outreach person needed
- Full circle
- Gynecological office offers options catered to WSW (Dr. Schnarr)
- McMaster satellite office here in town
- Doctors feel they don’t have information
- Invite doctors
- Network resources
- Anecdotal no discrimination in mental
- Connection with other agencies hit and miss
- Educating mental health professionals
- Discrimination on jobs hit and miss

### **Information and Awareness**

#### **Summary of Themes:**

- A lack of centralized source of information about the local Rainbow community makes it

difficult to know what is happening in the community (e.g., services, events, places to go, etc.)

- The visibility of existing Rainbow Community services, groups and events is lacking. There is lots happening in our community, but no one knows about it.
- There is a lack of Rainbow Community -friendly or specific spaces for socializing and entertainment. There is a lack of Rainbow Community space in general.
- A lack of reliable data and statistics about our community makes it difficult to organize or advocate for change.
- An inability to secure funding for initiatives also seen as a major barrier to achieving community goals.
- Continuity and sustainability of any centre/service is a concern. Volunteer burnout is common.
- Maintaining a sense of our history is important, but difficult in the current context due to lacking a central source for information.
- It is difficult for people to know how to get involved in the community here. This is also a function of not having a central location for information.
- The overwhelming response to tonight's conversation illustrates the palpable need for Rainbow Community community-building in this region.
- Small groups of committed volunteers should be able to achieve any of our selected goals, so long as they have the support of the community.
- Further outreach is needed to ensure we are truly reaching as many sectors of the Rainbow Community as possible

#### **Solutions Offered:**

- A central, physical location in addition to a central, online location is needed. The purpose of such a centre would be to provide a singular means of connecting with the Rainbow community.
- Some suggested the need for a staff member whose role it would be to represent the Rainbow Community to services, governments, community groups, and so on. They would be responsible for keeping up-to-date on community goings-on and communicating these.
- Space, funding and volunteers were mentioned as barriers to starting a wellness centre. Accessibility of the space was also a concern.
- A central calendar, central resource list, and central Rainbow Community publication/blog, all of which would be updated VERY regularly and be available in multiple formats.
- Investigate sources of funding and what would be needed to write a grant proposal
- Investigate what research has already been done with the Rainbow Community and do a needs assessment.

#### **Additional Observations:**

- Many people felt they already have a good idea of what the problems are in our community. Many were eager to discuss possible solutions, rather than explore the issues themselves.
- Several people were quite excited to participate in any community-building exercise, but had only vague conceptions of what this might be. It will be necessary to find specific, short-term goals to maintain people's excitement and support.
- Having a central Rainbow Community voice in Waterloo Region is desired by the community. Yet it was noted that we must create space for different voices and avoid essentializing the "Rainbow Community voice"

- There are specific initiatives that were recommended: wellness centre, Pink Pages, publication, research.
- Visibility and making connections were two themes not explicitly named but strongly present throughout
- Concerns were raised about the time commitment involved in participating, yet there was also the desire to have additional conversations

### **Unity and Diversity**

- Disconnect in community
  - Where do people go?
  - Where do people go together?
- Different groups serve different niches. Not bad in itself, but it leads to isolation and lack of visibility
- Get support from your niche, but do not learn about other groups
- A lot of overlap with the community building topic
- What if you are questioning? Which niche do you visit?
- If one out of 5 people in a niche group identifies as trans, could be isolating, but if part of larger unified community = empowered
- Unity:
  - Community is accepting of everyone
  - We “fit” together
  - Like a family, there is a “bond” (do not get that crazy aunt, understand cousin, but we accept)
  - Foster an environment of safety to allow conversation and education
- Community has “blurred” boundaries and intersect with others
  - Native, Chinese, Asian = separate cultures, different issues, and one community
- Connections with other agencies who serve other minority groups = form partnerships
  - See people as whole people and be willing to support identities which extend beyond the rainbow
  - Communication between agencies
  - Individuals feeling part of community
  - Respect for diversity as ideal
- Balancing respect for differences of opinion, perspective and experiences – need to be flexible and accommodating enough to allow the community to speak with a unified voice on issues of importance
  - Acknowledging that not everyone will agree with issues, but we can respectfully agree to disagree
- As different groups move forward on their journey, they will do so at different paces
  - Need to keep moving forward, but look back and support others who may be falling behind (human rights) and bringing forward
- Issues of unity and diversity speak to the values that must form the foundation for community.
- Community building efforts that do not respect differences and do not try to unite in a respectful way should not be pursued
- People we are not reaching:
  - Street youth

- Parents of youth
- Allies who have had to support queer individuals as no other services were available
- Elderly, mobility
- What does the wider community think? Are they supportive? Homophobic? Do they think it is a non-issue?
- Queer identified, but do not feel ties to the community
- Diversity in artistic tastes
- Ethnic communities are not represented (e.g., Muslim women)
- Club Renaissance is exclusively Caucasian
- We need to get input from organization that other identities feel more comfortable in
- Windsor has a 50+ group
- It is okay to have “boxed group” – so long as there is communication
- Safe spaces are required for certain groups or issues (support/assault)
- What actually defines the box that contains the “Rainbow Community”?
- By focusing on sexuality, we may not see person as a whole
  - How do we reach out to other groups?
  - Need a means to connect to other groups, need a champion who can connect
- Cultural or religious groups, visible minorities have groups and shared culture/history
- What defines the rainbow community? What is the shared history? How to make the invisible, visible?
- Can allies represent the queer community?
  - Can one person represent the community?
  - What qualifies someone to represent community?
- Difficult to access people of colour and faith communities because of stigma in culture
- “Black community and gay community do not exist in isolation”
- “I will put my love life on hold to save my family”
- Do we support individuals who hide their sexuality due to cultural factors?
  - We need to respect the impact of family, culture, race on individual queer identity
  - A queer identity is an individual experience made up of cumulative experiences = need to unify individuals, not just groups

### *SUMMARY*

- What questions do we need to answer to ensure that any solution adequately includes the myriad voices of our community?
- How do we do reach out to diverse communities?

## **Appendix D: WRRC Ideas –Points from Large Group Discussion**

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### **Community Building**

#### **Strengths**

- Little Bean (cafes)
- Growth of community
- Progressive voice present
- Pockets of great things happening
- Representative power of community
- Willingness to talk
- History of community in the area
- Waterloo Region is growing → spotlight
- Expectation of change and progress
- Sense of community ownership
- Lots of services
- Busy, urban opportunities (the right time!)
- Universities
- Word of Mouth
- Enthusiasm for positive change

#### **Weaknesses**

- Volunteer and community leader burnout
- Expecting all groups to be all things to all people
- Tolerance, not acceptance
- Need more outreach for communication
- Lack of community involvement from some gaps
- Training and education needed (for both Rainbow folks & straight allies)
- People/agencies feeling entitled (“this is mine”)
- It needs to be there when people need it
- Access, but not for all
- Lack of data
- Lack of community leadership
- Lack of visibility
- We are a closeted community
- Negative history between some groups / individuals
- Lack of funding!
- Not enough opportunities to communicate
- Assumption that acceptance exists

#### **Opportunities**

- Partnerships and allies = sustainability
- Election year
- Help/support from other people and agencies
- Some agencies are open and interested in queer issues



- Empty real estate (opportunity for central location)
- Strength in universities and local agencies
- We are about to become a large region
- Learning from one another is happening
- Skills and talents in community
- The Well (Hamilton)

### **Threats**

- Legitimacy unearned
- Is what we're building wanted? Relevant?
- Funding constants
- How to stay the course?
- Need more structure to get funding
- Misunderstanding of identities
- Managing expectations
- Conservative appearance of Waterloo Region
- Central location can't serve all of Waterloo Region
- We are too close to Toronto
- General apathy in our community

### **Lack of Services**

#### **Strengths**

- Current momentum
- There ARE lots of services
- Larger community is willing to make changes
- Services are often receptive to our feedback
- We have lots of social activities already
- Many Rainbow Community-friendly locations
- School system is very welcoming
- GSAs in highschools
- Services are receptive / open to communication
- Lots of pockets of great things happening

#### **Weaknesses**

- Lack of advocacy services
- Low communication about groups/happenings/others
- Immigrant/Newcomer outreach
- Need to have time (e.g., volunteering)
- Need to have a solid base → structure and foundation
- One location can't serve all of Waterloo Region
- Taxing the resources that are successful
- Expecting all organizations to be everything to everyone.

#### **Opportunities**

- Region is pushing to bring in more medical services

- Crime Prevention Council wants to partner
- We can learn from other communities and their structures
- This is an election year
- Police are doing outreach with Rainbow community
- There are 4 community health centres; they just don't know how to reach us

### **Threats**

- Our expectations need to be reasonable
- To get funding, need structure
- Lack of funding and proving we have a mandate for services

### **Unity & Diversity**

#### **Strengths**

- GSAs
- Tri-pride
- Pockets of small, great things
- Strength in diversity
- Willingness to work together
- Connections (Facebook, Twitter)
- Small community
- History of the community

#### **Weaknesses**

- Non-mainstream Rainbow Community groups marginalized
- Rifts in the community
- Isolation of groups
- Understanding power and privilege in Rainbow Community
- Low attendance
- We assume people WANT to be part of our community
- Immigrants and newcomers who are Rainbow Community (lack of outreach)

#### **Opportunities**

- Diverse representation here = lots of skills

#### **Threats**

- A central centre can't serve ALL of Waterloo Region
- Our location is very close to Toronto
- Waterloo Region is geographically large
- Sense of false entitlement on the part of some service providers / organizations
- Leaders of the community aren't working together
- Hard to define the "Rainbow" community. Who is "we"?
- Not feeling a responsibility to the community (apathy)
- Diversity of the group is also a threat
- Needing to explain how diverse we are to others
- Unity and Voice is lacking

- Without a central voice, others will speak for us
- Resistance or misconception of the “whole”
- What are we trying to be?
- What are realistic expectations?
- How do we stay the course?
- We need to build relationships

## **Discrimination and Harassment**

### **Strengths**

- Services are often receptive to feedback
- Our community is willing to educate and inform
- We have lots of momentum!
- Generally open community in Waterloo Region
- Willingness to make change
- Police are doing outreach

### **Weaknesses**

- Lack of advocacy services
- Lack of data and statistics
- Individuals are not represented
- Lack of understanding of power and privilege in local Rainbow community
- “Closeted per capita”
- Assumption that acceptance already exists
- Lack of resources/knowledge from medical community

### **Opportunities**

- Push from the Region to bring in medical services
- Faculty of Social Work – willingness to learn

### **Threats**

- Misinformation about sexual orientation and gender identity
- Misconceptions, prejudice, assumptions
- Not possible to share experiences
- Homophobia

## **Information and Awareness**

### **Strengths**

- We DO have leadership
- Universities
- Ability to connect through Internet
- People are willing to share their stories
- Attendance
- Institutional/Community memory
- Proud Magazine

### **Weaknesses**

- Not knowing of any advocacy services
- Disconnect between in-group (formal) and out-group (isolated)
- Rainbow community doesn't communicate with itself
- Lack of communication between groups
- Isolation of groups
- Lack of data and statistics
- Lack of knowledge about ourselves (e.g., civic responsibility)
- Difficult to capture the "armchair fag" (i.e., who doesn't participate widely in the community)
- Lack of knowledge of Rainbow Community-friendly medical services
- Lack of funding

### **Opportunities**

- Waterloo Region Rainbow Coalition!
- Learning from other successful/not successful models

### **Threats**

- Be very clear about what we are building
- Need to have time to volunteer
- Lack of central voice means others will set our agenda
- To get funding, will need to have a formal structure
- A central location can't serve all of Waterloo Region
- How do you communicate with folks who are disenfranchised?

## Appendix E: WRRC Ideas – Notes from Small Group Discussions

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### Community Building

How can we discuss what community is when we have so much trouble defining it? For now, we can do our best, and create some kind of foundation, and then refine it. Start with a list of existing groups and service groups, programs, services, an inventory.

We aren't re-inventing what already exists; we merely need to expose existing work, reinforce it, and promote it. We aren't tasked with creating community, only reflecting it. Let the community articulate the demand, when we can knit the community together (i.e. no one knew there was an existing "Rainbow List" listserv or online listings of groups and services at "Grand River Rainbow" (although it's out of date))

Gaps in services for age ranges (mostly a weakness)

0-12 almost nothing

12-17 (high school) lots

18-25 (college/university) lots

25-45 not much

45-55 almost nothing

55+ almost nothing

- People really aren't thinking about what we already have. They take it for granted, and have mostly discounted that it is there.
- If there was a channel of cohesive communications, community would grow and network better

A "Physical Location" is not a solution in and of itself

- not highly sustainable (funding, volunteers, objectives)
- big costs associated not just with square feet, but with assets, compensation
- why do we need a 'drop in space'? Is that just another groove out place for 12-25 age group?
- storage, a lending library, a place to store non-electronic data, to support the documentation and retention of institutional memory
- an office might suffice
- shared accommodation

But also, a "website" cannot do it all

- cold, impersonal
- goes out of date easily
- has to stay fresh, innovative, 'exciting' - difficult to do  
tons of stuff can't actually be relayed on a website, and needs real human discourse, connection, encounter.
- Most important to building community: something sustainable and cohesive, something concrete, singular, one voice, so that people know where to turn -- we just don't have that, a complete weakness
- You aren't a community unless you can articulate with a large enough number of people and a focused agenda
- It is not important that many who might identify with this community are not strong participants; rather:

1. It needs to be there for people when they need it; and
2. People need to know it's there (not just the rainbow folk, but everyone else too)

*Weakness:* no shared history. We're doomed to repeat and re-invent because we don't have a collective history.

- We must pay attention to the documentation of process. Must be organic, and not set in stone. We can/must constantly revise (*Jacquie totally volunteers to be process documentarian*)
- Racing to get funding or square feet is not the solution. These are red herrings. We can get a lot done and go a long way without ever needing to secure big funds

### *THE ESSENTIALS*

- List of groups, programs, services, allied groups
- A Board of Directors (small, tactical, formal model)
- An Advisory Group/Council (larger, hand-picked representatives)
- Devise and empower Committees of the Board
- A website
  - Listings
  - Resources
  - Calendar
  - Everyone has to feel some ownership
- One communication channel (email listserv? newsletter?)
- One Champion (i.e. this is the person to call), a 'political' figurehead
- One telephone number that is sustainable over time
- One URL that is sustainable over time
- One physical address that is sustainable over time
- A large pool of people each willing to do a bit of the work (rather than a few doing all the work)
- Assign people "hard" responsibilities
- Must provide for "Perspectives":
  - Newcomers
  - Multicultural (multi-lingual)
  - Youth/Aged/Middle Aged
  - Faith
  - Rainbow communities
  - Allies
  - Advocacy/political
  - Personal, one-on-one (blog personalities?)
- Finally, strong, cohesive promotion of the singular resource, so that everyone (not just the Rainbow Community, but politicians, media, etc) know "THIS IS WHERE THIS COMMUNITY IS"

Once we have articulated, we can seek out the resources to execute, such as an 'outreach worker' or examine physical space, and get into funding

### **Discrimination and Harassment**

- Conference addressing homophobic police
  - Unite addressing hate crimes against Rainbow Community members

- Intentionally addressing – naming the crime, so they are not invisible
- Renfrew/Ottawa – progressive policing unity
- Toronto – outreach
- WRPS – researching other centre
- WRPS – has hate crimes unit focusing on non-Rainbow Community
- WRPS need to be intentional about naming Rainbow Community hate crimes
- Women represented due to the women’s movement
- WRPS – needs to clean house first (e.g., “that’s so gay” in WRPS, but no culture racist jokes)
- Queer WRPS women not addressing slang
- WRPS language
- Ottawa has transgender officers
- Focus on police, but applicable systemically
- Education needed – what constitutes a hate crime?
- Within queer community to feel comfy identifying hate crimes
- How do we get services to be welcoming?
- Police hire society
- Identifying queer officers – welcoming officers
- Visibility of welcoming – PSAs
- Utopian goal of all welcoming
- Same sex domestic violence and sexual assault training
- How to provide meaningful training?
- How to address one’s own privilege?
- How to report without outing – create safe space (confidential)
- Political correctness / language can be intimidating
- In education – address misconceptions
- Rainbow community to provide training
- Exposing WRPS to same sex – not new and scary
- Who’s gay game – address misconceptions stereotypes
- Learn from overcoming ableism/racism – use the past
- Respected persons – obviously homophobic
- Religious right – can they do the right thing while still holding homophobic attitudes – Hippocratic oath for doctors
- Would a rainbow sign make the difference?
- Would “partner” (instead of wife/husband) make a difference?
- How to avoid patronizing
- Bryan Larsen – champion of cause
- Diversity comm. Focused on diversity
- Threat of allies who are safe
- Openly gay women champions
- Not openly gay men – afraid to come forward
- GSA working with WRPS focus on kids – bring it along generationally
- Why won’t all officers walk through Club Renaissance but will straight bars?
- Straight officers at Tri Pride felt they had good learning experience
- Change of culture – difference

- Office walking through Club Renaissance with a Rainbow Community person
- Partnerships are key – connectivity
- Lack of ego to run the agenda
- Hate crimes – political movement but hard to get crown attorneys
- Openly gay judge in Canada?
- Until people at top government are accepting, will be hard to change – 10 years, not 10 months
- WRDSB – openly gay superintendent
- Lesbians Gay – children
- LIHN – “Paps are for dykes”
- Local medical access
- Cost of medical access prohibitive

### **Information and Awareness**

- A central location doesn't have to be physical – we should use internet and social media
- But not everyone uses Internet, so need to tap multiple venues
- People's needs are different
- We need to know why we're here, and not work in silos
- Biggest thing is cohesion – bring people together, provide comfort
- We are really just talking about diversity – isn't just sexual orientation or gender identity
- We do need a central focal point
- Need to create comfort even if not possible to get everyone
- Part of making people comfortable is providing information, making available
- Need some way to have information, to know where to go
- Hard to reach the most marginalized
- My attraction to WRRC was that it seemed to be the “hub of a wheel”
- Attitude is important – if foster welcoming environment, will bring people in who are willing to contribute
- When managing and distributing information, need to be sensitive of the context
- If we lack political support, is it because we lack a common voice?
- If only 10 people ask for support, will get nothing, but if 100 ask....
- Again: CENTRAL VOICE
- This community has historically lacked an umbrella group – much needed
- Lack of visibility of support for Rainbow community (on part of services)
- Tricky balance → need leadership that is mature and balanced
- Communication among leaders is needed
- Lack of leadership in the Rainbow community
- VISIBILITY HELPS
- No one wants to risk the backlash, but if we all do it, we can stand together
- The community is changing (e.g., police at Tri-Pride wore rainbow buttons)
- Word of mouth is really important
- Are we getting ahead of ourselves? Is it too early to start answering these questions?
- First, identify what is common to all groups
- Develop communication channels
- Mailing lists, website, calendar, resource list, etc.



- Maximize our electronic resources
- Need a big Rainbow umbrella!
- How to identify the “long term” community leadership
- Have to provide a venue
- Central source, not committed to only one thing → an updated resource
- Subject areas AND resource lists
- Lists of places that are Rainbow-friendly
- But how to ensure accountability?
- Could be user-generated (e.g., Wikipedia, reddit)
- Yes to a central location – like OutOttawa or OutNiagara
- What would be on the website?
  - User generated content
  - List of resources
  - Friendly places
  - Editorials
  - Blog sort of thing
  - Videos
  - World/Canada/Ontario issues
  - Local issues
  - Calendar
- Build it and they will come
- Volunteerism – providing a central area for coming together
- VOLUNTEERING IS THE KEY
- Capitalizing on what we have
- Make it community-based
- Make it easy to get involved
- Show people – we are volunteers, and you can volunteer too!
- Got to other community leaders to get them involved
- We don’t really need that much funding
- Make it all tangible
- What are we going to be? A community organization? A service? A not-for-profit?
- Need to think about this at the onset
- Coalition?

### **Lack of Services**

Mission Statement short

Logo

Website

Viable core committee

Multimedia visibility

Health services – no access

List of Rainbow Community

Website!!!!!!

Subcommittees

Communication → groups

More open meetings

Executive

Format of Group:

Chair/goodwill ← executive

/ | \

Committee Committee Committee

## Appendix F: WRRC Plans – Notes from Small Group Discussions

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### 1) Coalition:

#### *Coalition/Group Process*

- Biggest issue is always burnout, the “founders” often leave the project
- How to avoid burnout, is to have infrastructure in place = sustainability
- Being “open” needs to be built into the infrastructure
- 2 way conversations are needed
- Should be community led
- Need to think about how to define “we”, will it be the “board”?
- We want everyone’s voice to be heard, but can we do that and move forward?
- Need to check egos at the door, and people should only speak for themselves
- Who will be the spokesperson/people? What process will we adopt for this?
- Need to make sure leadership does not marginalize people
- Some formal and informal processes should be put in place about membership
- Diversity is important, and the group should be made up of different sectors, representing different orientations, cultural, gender, youth, occupations, health care etc. This would speak to strengths in diversity. Make sure marginalized groups are recognized (i.e. Trans community in particular faces particular barriers and there is added fear about involvement)
- Membership - It is important to be open to all people when/if they want to join
- Need a way to encourage and motivate people to get involved
- Legality should not be a barrier for involvement in the group
- Training important
- Networking
- Communication is key
- Liaise with other cities, communities, townships (i.e. The Well, 519, Guelph).

#### *Values*

- Language is essential because it shapes perceptions of the group
- A united front, but with multiple voices
- Value and encourage diversity
- Create positive experiences, membership
- Transparency, community based decision making
- Allies need to be included
- Need to be accountable to newcomers of the group
- Celebrate what we have in common

#### *Structure*

- Organizations are always looking for volunteers, but the Board of Directors are ensconced in their roles.
- Board of Directors is ok for visible leadership and a way for service providers to get involved.
- It will not work unless there is a grassroots approach, however it still needs to be community led

- Democratic leadership is important. A proposed name could be the “Coalition Leadership Committee”. A board of Directors name is not preferable
- There should be a liaison person with service providers
- The community group needs to involve local services
- We need a united front, but with multiple voices
- We need to be “loose” about belonging to the Coalition and how people come in and out of the group
- How do we avoid conflict of interest and handle conflict resolution?
- Hub – is necessary for central leadership, the people who make decisions and support the group
- Need to define who is in the hub and how large it gets! Make sure it meets the needs of sub committees/project groups. A nomination process needs to be developed
- Need a terms of reference
- Community based decision making could involve a voting system
- Rotating leadership
- Continuity
- Volunteer/membership recruitment - Continually recruiting people to get involved
- Volunteer management needs to be central to leadership
- Have a mediator to facilitate participation and processes within leadership
- Media spokesperson
- Reps/spokespersons should be from university groups, youth, service providers, social groups, throughout Waterloo Region

## **2) Education & Awareness**

### *Training:*

- Education will be accomplished through training. Training should include the following: different levels of training i.e. – Rainbow community 101, intermediate, advanced, focused on specific groups such as youth, seniors etc.
- Training should use an anti-oppression and human rights approach
- Meet the needs of local service providers or groups (i.e. health care)
- Educate and emphasize unity
- Include small activities to demonstrate training principles
- Include people with numerous skills and expertise to facilitate the training
- Target the complexity, diversity and inclusion in training
- Offer inter-group and community level training
- Get existing rainbow groups involved – work together
- Include local information about Rainbow Community
- In future consider videos for the website, include a section for this on the website with free information, activities, quizzes etc.
- Pair up with specialty providers to offer the training
- Must be adaptable – include a “core” training that can be adapted to specific group that is being trained

### *Specialized Training Example: Allies*

- Include “Ally spectrum”
- Work with current training programs (i.e. GLOW ally training program)

- Include history of allies locally
- Use exercises (i.e. the wall of oppression)
- Explain how to be an ally and why they are needed

*Awareness:*

- Need to dispel the myths
- Need to increase awareness of where to go for services and training (i.e. need marketing and advertising such as radio and media publicity, create a tagline)
- Need a central location with a database
- Must offer outreach services to the community, and get key stakeholders involved (such as police, school boards etc)
- Awareness should dispel myths, build community, increase visibility, provide access and recognition in community
- Attend local events, network and secure partnerships
- Create a timeline in history of local Rainbow Community (also have stories, testimonials about history of community). This celebrates and helps us remember our roots!

*Other Considerations:*

- Create a unified voice/front for the public
- Unity & Diversity – reps from diverse groups can speak about their stories and experiences in training.
- Services – work with service providers to create training, target service providers and health care facilities

**3) Physical Space**

- Need to consciously & deliberately keep this space safe!
- More than one location would be ideal – is this feasible down the road?
- Should start with a satellite location that is permanent
- It could be shared space – with other rainbow/friendly groups/agencies
- Consider location, insurance, funding, marketing/advertising, fundraising
- Sources of funding – City of Kitchener
- Find out what other existing rainbow groups want space
- There is currently multi-purpose rooms available to the public
- Creation of location should be based on client flow
- Location must be credible, accessible
- Should have information and services – health info, location of WRRC hub, rights and legal information, education and training, multi-disciplined and inclusive
- Should have staff (i.e. director, non paid board, volunteers)

*Moving Forward:*

- Ask for meeting space
- Investigate Insurance
- Acquire furniture (desk, phone, computer, magazine rack/bookshelves, chairs, fax/printer, cubicle, coffee maker, area rug, lighting, controlled entrance, separate meeting space for peer support, counselling, services, allies etc.

#### 4) Website

##### *Key Priority/Purposes – High Priority*

- Information – relevant to community, and up to date
- Community Building/Belonging – user connection & interaction important. Need contributors to the website. It should have its own presence and be a tool for people to use.
- Accessibility – consider differing abilities for use. Make sure it is comfortable for people who are coming out (evolution of the process)
- Need to draw people out, encouraging offline interactions
- Acknowledge and bring existing groups together
- Acknowledge different interests and needs of the diverse Rainbow Culture/Community
- The website should be a framework to facilitate WRRC efforts, but not “own” the efforts
- Link to Waterloo Region geographically, need to consider bandwidth for rural users

##### *Moving Forward*

- Could start with Grand River Rainbow Website
- Potential software that could be used includes: Jive, V-bulletin, website tonight
- Can we use Facebook or other social networking site to gather information, and announce tools?
- Consider diversity – for urban and rural users

##### *What to Include on the Website*

- Event Calendar – approve users/events, users can put their own events in.
- User created content – forums, blogs, Wikipedia, subsites (include public and private usage options). Need to keep people coming back to the site, allow group discussion between users
- Directory of businesses and services – created by businesses and service providers. Include user recommendations and reviews (like/dislike options)
- Advertising – avoid free advertising by scaling information according to what was paid for advertising
- Links to other Community Resources should be included
- E-zine - user content will keep people coming back, is this sustainable? Try to coordinate material with other websites and groups
- E-mail lists – use existing rainbow lists, coordinate this with other groups
- RSS Feed
- Printable Key Features on the website – calendars, e-zine, allow other groups post or print materials online
- Photo gallery – with consent of those in the pictures
- Chat rooms – future consideration
- Moderation & Code of Conduct – tied to user-created content
- Anonymous reporting – links to other sites
- Support Chat rooms – trained volunteers to manage
- Tagline: “Your Community, Your Voice”