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World Pride 2014 Toronto (WP14TO) is shaping up to be one of the biggest international events of our time. These ten (10) days of celebration will turn streets into parades, parks into parties and strangers into friends.

Come out and meet the people from around the world who are expected to gather downtown and in neighbourhoods right across the city.

Toronto will be the first World Pride celebration ever held in North America, and the 4th such festival in the world.

World Pride brings people together from around the world to honour our past, celebrate the present, and inspire a better future for LGBTTIQ2SA communities everywhere.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TORONTO:

❖ The Beginning of Pride

After years of being oppressed and bullied by the brutal NYC Police Department, the patrons of Stonewall Inn fought back. During the final weekend of June 1969, drag queens and queer street kids pushed back and a riot erupted. These riots marked the beginning of the gay liberation movement that transformed the suppression of the LGBTTIQQ2SA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersexed, queer, questioning, two-spirited and allies) community into a movement of pride.

Pride Toronto has been in existence in various forms since the late 1970s when “Gay Day” picnics were held at Hanlon's Point on Toronto's Islands. Eventually these picnics moved downtown to Cawthra Park with ceremonies on the steps of the 519 community centre and Pride Toronto's first-ever beer garden.

In 1981, Toronto police raided several bathhouses and publicly humiliated members of Toronto's gay community. Three hundred men were arrested and the media was present to record and publish it all; photographs and names appeared in the morning papers. These attacks motivated gays, queers and their supporters to organize a demonstration at Yonge and Wellesley the next day. This event raised public awareness of the LGBTTIQQ2S community and some of the abuses they were experiencing.

As Toronto residents became more accepting of queer issues, Toronto's pride movement began to grow. In 1984, Church Street was closed for the first time and people danced in the street. Toronto's first Pride Committee was created in 1986. It was also the same year that sexual orientation was added to the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. Momentum continued to build and in 1991, City Council proclaimed Pride Day for the first time and more than 80,000 people celebrated.

❖ The Dyke March

Lesha Van Der Bij and Lisa Hayes worked with a handful of volunteers and a budget of \$50. In spite of rainy weather and concerns a separate march would divide the community, Toronto's first Dyke march was held on June 29, 1996.

PRIDE, DYKE AND TRANS MARCHES

The march began at the 519 Community Centre where participants were forced to share narrow sidewalks while enduring heckling and objects being thrown from balconies. The march continued and participants became louder and more irrepressible – fighting back by chanting and dancing with increasing passion.

The Dyke March is now an annual event and welcomes all lesbian and trans-identified people. Allies are welcome to support the march but may be asked to respectfully march alongside the route. This is a statement that we are all one community but able to give each other the space and opportunity to strike out on our own. The Dyke March continues to raise awareness and increase visibility in the queer community and is an affirmation to Dykes and Trans people that they are a valued and welcomed part of communities and our greater society.

❖ The Trans March

In 2009, Toronto's first Trans March was organized after Karah Mathiason and her wife, Diane Grant, realized Toronto's Trans community was being overshadowed as the Dyke March and Pride Parade grew at an exponential rate. Mathiason is quoted in a June 18, 2009 Toronto Star article as stating "I really want to create a safe place where everybody's welcome to be who they are," she says. "I love Pride. I just wish we could have a Pride attitude 365 days a year."

As the Trans March tradition continued, many members of the Trans community and their allies became increasingly displeased. Compared to both the Dyke March and Pride Parade, the Trans march was confined to Friday evening on Church Street and significantly smaller - only three blocks long. In June 2001, after repeated requests for a longer and more visible route, a local Trans activist organized an impromptu ‘splinter-march’ down Yonge Street. Minutes before the March was to begin, participants were asked to follow because it was time the City and Pride organizers listened to the requests of the community.

Over the next few years, the Trans march has gained the recognition and respect it deserves and is now one of the longest Trans-Marches in the world.

