

NORTH SHORE
Outlook

BATTLE OF WILLS

Will executor and Public Guardian at odds over discovery of major fraud on North Shore seniors

THE NEW VETERAN

Combat engineer with the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan joins Remembrance Day ceremony in North Van



COMING OUT

What's life like for queer teens in West Vancouver? On the eve of a community education forum, teens at the Ambleside Youth Centre discuss the good, the bad and the ugly as it happens in our own backyard, Pages 14-15



KELLY MCMANUS and DANIEL PI

STAFF REPORTERS

Whatever. At the Ambleside Youth Centre, it's not a flippant dismissal so much as an unconditional welcome.

Gay. Lesbian. Bisexual. Transgendered. Transexual. Questioning. Straight allies. Those labels can feel intimidating for queer and questioning teens – and they can seem unnecessary, too, when sometimes teens want to take a break from negotiating identity politics and just hang out.

They come here once a month from all around West Vancouver. They chat with the youth workers, flop onto the squishy leather chairs around the fireplace and the big screen – a group of West Vancouver friends getting together to watch movies, make food, horse around. Sometimes they talk about tough stuff, things like coming out to friends and family. Sometimes they don't.

"Somebody who's a girl can talk about their girlfriend and somebody who's a guy can talk about their boyfriend," Liz Cave, Whatever program coordinator, explains. "We can talk about trans (transgender) issues and it's not like 'what?' ... But generally, we're not talking about sexuality or gender diversity... it's just a bunch of people hanging out."

As advocate and program facilitator, Cave's job is to let queer and questioning youth know about the program and other resources on the North Shore, to hear their concerns, and to help them make their voices heard.

They do have something to say: they want to feel more welcome in the community of West Vancouver.

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

She chooses to assume the best, not the worst about people.

Nevertheless, the slurs still make her wince. She hears them regularly amid the rush in the halls as students grab books from lockers, migrating from class to class – things like "fagot," or "you're such a queer."

Let's call her Helen. Because of family issues, she's not comfortable sharing her name, but she does want to tell her story.

"If you believe that people aren't going to change and are genuinely out to make you feel bad then you're not going to be very constructive ... most people don't mean what they say sometimes," Helen says.

She helps spearhead the Gay-Straight Alliance at West Van secondary, where



Coming out in West Vancouver

What's life like for queer teens in West Vancouver? On the eve of a community forum, teens at the Ambleside Youth Centre discuss the good, the bad and the ugly as it happens in our own backyard.

students can meet up, talk about books or movies or class or anything they feel like. The idea is that the club should provide a supportive, inclusive queer-friendly space for gay, straight and questioning students. The group aligns with West Van secondary's policies and school charter committed to "honouring diversity."

At school, not everyone honours diversity.

"There have been a couple of instances where one of our friends has been threatened," Helen says. "We talked about maybe going into classes and talking about it ... his friends got together in a big group and went to the office and said this is what happened and we want to see something done about it."

Administrators with the West Vancouver

school district are hesitant to discuss this "incident" – where one student allegedly threatened another with homophobic slurs on repeated occasions.

First off, the details and the resulting disciplinary action taken by the school district must remain private in order to protect the identity of the student who made the alleged threats.

Moreover, administrators argue it would reflect poorly on an otherwise inclusive, honouring youth population of 1,600 respectful teens.

After these incidents, Helen and other student representatives with the West Van secondary GSA took their concerns straight to assistant superintendent Chris Kennedy. He suggested they run an education seminar for the teachers.

"He really wanted to see the students take the initiative," Helen explains of the meeting with Kennedy. "He's been saying you've got to consider queer youth in the community ... we're not hearing from them."

Kennedy agrees: "There's no doubt we can do more for diversity and tolerance ... It's (the GSA) a neat group of kids and we want to make sure they feel supported."

Now Helen and some friends from the GSA and Ambleside's Whatever program have two consciousness-raising initiatives on their plate this fall.

The first is a sit-down with teachers at West Van secondary.

They hope to make their teachers aware that there are queer and questioning kids in their classes, and that they want a dialogue for discussing identity issues and homophobia.

"This isn't an issue they can pretend doesn't apply to them or people they love. I don't expect people to really rethink their conceptions. But if they could just realize that it (homophobia) can be a problem. Because it's one of the things that really goes under the carpet sometimes."

The second is a community forum, open to anyone, about queer youth issues.

The event is organized by Whatever and the Vancouver chapter of PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). It will bring together youth and adults, queer, questioning and straight – stakeholders and service providers under one roof.

"What we hope the event will be is a place where, just specifically talking about the youth, they can express themselves to the community, to their peers as well as adults," says Cave. "We really just want to start the dialogue. We hope that youth will come, and articulate what it is they think is working in the community and what they don't think is working in the community."

ROLE MODELS FOR TEENS

Darren Bruce is a 25-year-old Argyle grad who was recently crowned Mr. Gay Canada. After winning a spokesperson competition in Whistler this fall, Bruce was selected by a panel of judges to act as a role model and a spearhead in a national and international outreach campaign. He will meet with politicians, community leaders and activists as a voice for positive change and community education.

Now almost eight years out of high school, he remembers growing up on the North Shore.

Bruce wasn't out during his time at Argyle.

Be the first to add to the story or read what your neighbour thinks.

Be a part of your community paper. Comment online.

voices
there's more online »

North Shore Outlook

www.northshoreoutlook.com



"There was one guy who was out. It was really tough for him. It was brutal actually ... that's one of the reasons why I didn't come out. It was just so hard."

One thing that strikes him now is the absence of gay role models in his school experience: "For kids at school, not having gay role models makes it tougher."

As a teen, he wished for a queer leader he could look up to. "Maybe someone who was just a regular guy. Someone you wouldn't necessarily expect to be gay ... so you could say, oh, yeah, there's different types of gay people."

But there was nothing that he was aware of, and he was looking - for posters about support groups or overtures from counsellors letting kids know about resources.

"There was none of that. It was only (are) you having trouble with your school work or having trouble fitting in because of your race?" There was nothing related to sexuality."

There are stories from Bruce's era, stories from youth workers, teens and parents. Stories about young men labelled "flamboyant" in North Shore schools getting swarmed in gym class. Stories about parents calling other parents to tell them to "rein in" their queer kids. One story has an ostracized young man being sent to a non-existent after-party while the rest of his class celebrated grad some place else.

Parent support is a huge issue too. According to PFLAG, often when teens come out, parents pull away to various degrees while they process the new information.

Which isn't to say that queer kids are automatic victims; but awkward community responses, persecution from peers and conflicts with adults put queer and questioning kids at risk.

Recently Bruce chatted with the staff at Vancouver's The Centre, a support hub for queer youth.

Bruce was surprised to learn that coming out in hostile conditions can be linked to youth homelessness: "It's correlated to parent disapproval or maybe even fear of disapproval."

Helen was floored with some related findings when she attended a leadership



THE HANG OUT - The Ambleside Youth Centre features comfy couches, a fire place and flat screen TV, and pool and ping pong tables. It's a safe haven for youth to just hang out with friends or meet the outreach workers and support groups like Whatever. Facing page: A Whatever group poster on an announcement board at the youth centre. Daniel Pi photos

conference at UVic about queer issues in schools.

"Some of the figures were quite shocking," she says. "The numbers of queer kids who were not participating in sports and swim teams, who felt unsafe in washrooms, who considered suicide, who were drinking alone ... I think if teachers were more aware of those figures they might start taking the issues more seriously."

Jan Riddell, youth outreach worker at the Ambleside Youth Centre explains, "Any youth not feeling connected is going to be at risk to suicidal ideation, to depression and ultimately homelessness. That's a really good point to get out there," she explains, "that's (homelessness, depression) the result of not feeling connected."

Riddell points out that queer youth need

"I guess the encouraging word is it might seem like the end of the world now that you're gay... if you're openly gay and comfortable with yourself hopefully people will stand behind you."

**Darren Bruce
Mr. Gay Canada**



support and connection at a time when crucial family, school and community frameworks can fall away.

Bruce has encouraging advice for struggling teens. "See past the short term and see the bigger picture ... I guess the encouraging word is it might seem like the end of the world now that you're gay, but when you tell your friends and family, you'll be surprised how easy it is ... if you're openly gay and comfortable with yourself hopefully people will stand behind you."

For parents, he adds, "If they have gay kids, be supportive. If they don't, still be supportive. My parents had no idea I was gay until I told them at 22."

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

Some parents find it tough to accept that a child's sexuality doesn't fit the mainstream. For some it's no problem at all.

Susan, a West Vancouver parent, struggles with her son's identity, and she still struggles with it, not just because he didn't reflect the norm, but because he struggled too.

He was different from the other boys. He was more artistic growing up, made friends with more girls than boys in school, and he didn't dress like the other boys. His T-shirts were fitted, and he preferred tight jeans instead of the baggy low riders popular at the time. Being outside the norm made him the target of teasing and bullying in elementary school.

He came out at 15. "To be honest, my husband and I weren't surprised," Susan says. "We kind of wondered ourselves."

Susan speaks candidly about her son's story, although she doesn't want her real name used because she still has a younger child in the school system. She admits that there were times when she couldn't comprehend what it all meant.

The clothes were a big deal for her. There were times when she felt her older son's choices drew attention when the family was in public. At restaurants on family dinners, they would always be "that family" everyone watched, Susan recalls.

"Sometimes you want to say, 'Just give me a break,' but that's not your call - but you can't help thinking it sometimes," Susan says. "You want to support your child ... (being gay) really shouldn't matter."

When Karin Lind's son told her he was gay, he handed her a brochure and contact info for PFLAG Vancouver.

Call them, he encouraged his mother. Lind contacted the group that week and attended a meeting as soon as she could.

The West Vancouver woman has been a supporter of the group ever since.

"I knew I wanted to get involved (with PFLAG) because the work is not only being supportive for people but (the group) also does advocacy," Lind says.

Looking back, Lind says although she was supportive of her son coming out, she was also a "little hurt."

There's a whole spectrum of responses and even stages of grief, surprise and acceptance outlined in PFLAG's "Coming out to Parents" handbook. Parents can respond with hurt or bewilderment, and sometimes they respond with hostility. Hopefully they respond with love and acceptance.

continued, PAGE 18



Want to Meet the Characters From Disney's BEAUTY AND THE BEAST? They'll be at Capilano Mall on Saturday, November 22.

Tickets for the 11am, 12pm & 1pm Meet & Greet session are available by donation* at the Capilano Mall Info Booth/Lotto Centre.

PLUS you can enter online or at Grand Court in the mall to win a 'VIP' BEAUTY AND THE BEAST EXPERIENCE! prize package - valued at \$1000.

Visit capilanomall.com for full contest details.



*While quantities last, 100% proceeds go to support the North Shore Community Resources.

Outlook Search for Gold
 The search is on!
 Check page 43 for new clues.
 Plus - clue archive at www.northshoreoutlook.com
 (click on Community tab)
Win it all!
\$5,000 To be Won!
 Watch the North Shore Outlook for new clues each week!

BUY THE YARD TEXTILE CLEARANCE HOUSE

HUGE SELECTION OF FABRICS
 FASHION, SPORTSWEAR, CASUAL, BASICS, FANCIES, DRAPERY, UPHOLSTERY, PATTERNS, NOTIONS DECORATING HARDWARE AND MUCH MORE.
 YOU CAN GET A DESIGNER LOOK ON A BUDGET!
ALL FABRIC \$10.00 YD OR LESS

5550 FRASER ST. VANCOUVER
 Mon.-Fri. 10:00am-8:00pm Sat. 10:00am-6:00pm Sun. Noon-5:00pm
604-321-7188
 ALWAYS A BARGAIN! CHECK OUT OUR SUPER LOW SALE PRICES!

from **PAGE 15**

"Many families take the news as a temporary loss - almost as a death - of the son or daughter they have known and loved," the pamphlet outlines.

"One of the things that we emphasize (at PFLAG) is: that child is still their child and they're perfectly normal," Lind says. "They may be different on the gender spectrum than what the parents expect them to be, but they're perfectly normal."

Susan has a similar response: "(People have to) remember they've known this person ... think of the person as the individual and don't put the labels on."

Both Susan and Lind feel there wasn't enough support for their children when they were in high school,

and even now there doesn't seem to be much either.

For parents, there are even fewer resources. Lind crosses the bridge to Vancouver to meet with PFLAG, and Susan followed her son to the youth centre where she met other queer or questioning youth. There she understood the youth are smart, brave and healthy.

She also met parents of queer youth, finding her own support group.

"It's not about everybody having the answers. It's about knowing someone else is going through it too... It's being able to talk to someone else."

In the West Van and North

Van communities, Susan remembers she and her family came in conflict with parents and adults more than teens.

Young people "all knew who he (her son) was and who he was choosing to be," Susan says. "Our hardest experience in high school was the adult responses?"

Some adults

avoided her son and their family because they "felt awkward," Susan remembers. Others phoned her up to tell her to rein in her child.

"What I really hope is parents do what I did: go down to the youth centre and meet these amazing kids."

DIVERSITY AT SCHOOL

There's still the question about what happened at West Van secondary this fall.

According to one side, one student uttered homophobic hate speech and threats to another on several occasions. According to district administrators, these incidents are internal business only.

Assistant superintendents Chris Kennedy and Warren Hicks each assert that discussing the case in any further detail could compromise the identity of the student who uttered the threats.

Hicks adds that the threats were linked to a situation that was "much more complicated."

"We respect individual cases," says Hicks, who handles disciplinary issues for the district. "But it's our philosophy that these cases should be treated very seriously."

continued, **PAGE 32**



Go over town for one little thing?

yes!

Because **this** little thing will **change** your world.

A sophisticated hearing device that's loaded with high-tech digital processing at an affordable price!

Introducing **Oticon Tego**

FULL SHELL

\$895 each
 Complete. No taxes.

Canadian-made 100% Digital Hearing Aids from one of Canada's leading suppliers.

Take that short drive across the bridge and we will change the sound of your world.

- FREE** Hearing Evaluation
- FREE** Trial Period (no deposit required)
- FREE** Cleaning & Servicing
- FREE** Supply of Batteries
- FREE** Three Year Warranty
- FREE** 1 Year Loss & Damage Insurance

Don't be left out!

Book your appointment today with one of our Licensed Audiologists.

604.215.3345



EARS HEARING CLINICS INC.

Two Licensed Audiologists to serve you.

- Licensed under the Hearing Aid Act (B.C.)
- D.V.A. TAPS cards accepted
- Part of WorkSafeBC Hearing Aid Provider Network

2484 East Hastings Street, Vancouver (1 block east of Nanaimo)
 604.215.3345 www.earshearingclinics.com

Spring Air and Simmons Mattresses are **WAREHOUSE PRICED EVERY DAY AT COLONY**



Enjoy the savings and selection at Colony. **Ask about our package pricing for extra savings.**



- ✓ Lower Mainland delivery (some conditions apply)
- ✓ Bed frame, bed set up & old mattress removal with purchase (some conditions apply)

Colony - a family business based on service and value



COLONY
 Major Appliance & Mattress WAREHOUSE
 "Saving you money since 1969"

1075 Roosevelt Crescent, North Vancouver
 (2 blocks behind Indigo Books - south of Marine Drive.)
604.985.8738
 • Mon-Thurs: 9am - 5:30pm • Friday: 9am - 9pm
 • Saturday: 9am - 5:30pm • Sunday: 12pm - 4pm
 Visit us on line: www.colonywarehouse.com

'01 SUV - Domestic 160K,
 Drug Smglr 4x4, fake flr undr
 bkst hlds 9 kg coke. impnd,
 strpped, Ownr dng 15 yrs
 Kgstn Pen. MUST SELL!
Research before you buy.
www.VehicleSalesAuthority.com

BUYER BEWARE



Motor Vehicle Sales Authority of British Columbia

vehiclesalesauthority.com

FIRLANDS RANCH
SINCE 1800
Radium Hot Springs, BC

We are proud to offer for sale 100% all natural and hormone-free **Beef Sides**, government inspected, cut and wrapped by our experienced award-winning butchers.

Just \$4.99 lb, that's a 50% saving over retail.
How do we do it? We cut out the middle and sell direct to you.

Our beef is naturally raised, no antibiotics, irradiation, or hormonal/steroid enhancers.
"You are what you eat" and so is your beef.

To secure your order now for Jan 09 or a June 09 delivery call 250-347-6811
Visit our website for more details www.firlandsranch.com

Spring Air and Simmons Mattresses are WAREHOUSE PRICED EVERY DAY AT COLONY



Enjoy the savings and selection at Colony. **Ask about our package pricing for extra savings.**

- FREE** ✓ Lower Mainland delivery (some conditions apply)
- ✓ Bed frame, bed set up & old mattress removal with purchase (some conditions apply)

Colony - a family business based on service and value

COLONY WAREHOUSE
Major Appliance & Mattress
"Saving you money since 1969"

1075 Roosevelt Crescent, North Vancouver
(2 blocks behind Indigo Books - south of Marine Drive.)
604.985.8738
• Mon-Thurs: 9am - 5:30pm • Friday: 9am - 9pm
• Saturday: 9am - 5:30pm • Sunday: 12pm - 4pm
Visit us on line: www.colonywarehouse.com

from **PAGE 18**

Hicks and Kennedy also points out that one unfortunate incident should not overshadow the school's culture of mutual respect and inclusion.

"Not talking about specific cases I can tell you it would be very unusual for us to be dealing with a situation like that today," Hicks says.

But the situation speaks to an urgent message from the staff at the Ambleside Youth Centre.

"I think what the youth are finding is they are not necessarily safe or accepted in the community. We need to change that," says Jan Riddell, youth worker.

What that means at the school-level: "Our schools are working hard on supporting a full range of what diversity means," says Kennedy, citing West Van secondary's popular diversity week and also noting that Social Justice 12, an optional socials course that treats Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered issues and rights in one unit, is on the roster in district schools next year, depending on student enrolments.

Thomas Longridge, the principal at West Van secondary, says the district and the school teachers will help foster the students' Gay-Straight Alliance group.

"I would support them any way I can," he asserts.

So the question goes straight to Helen and the other students at the GSA and the Ambleside Youth Centre. How can youth, district administrators, parents, police, clergy, politicians and all community members support queer and questioning teens on the North Shore?

They could start by coming to the community forum next week, says Helen. She's focusing on positive change, change through education, conversation, cooperation.

kmcmanus@northshoreoutlook.com,
dpi@northshoreoutlook.com



POSITIVE OUTLOOK - North Vancouver's Darren Bruce wished for a gay role model in high school. Now he fills leadership and advocacy roles after winning Mr. Gay Canada, making him a spokesperson for the gay community. *Daniel Pi photo*

For more information about the monthly Whatever group for queer and questioning teens, and for more information about the open community forum happening Nov. 18 at the Ambleside Youth Centre, contact Jan Riddell at 604-925-7233.

Other resources:

PFLAG Vancouver provides support for family members and friends of queer individuals. Their website is www.pflagvancouver.com, and members can

be contacted at info@pflagvancouver.com or phone at 604-626-5667. Messages are checked daily.

The North Shore Women's Centre has a lesbian and bisexual women's support group. There are closed and drop-in groups to meet, socialize and tackle important issues like coming out. For more info, visit www.northshorewomen.ca or call 604-984-6009.

In Vancouver, **The Centre** is a resource for queer people and their allies. There's also a Youth Gab service. For more info, visit www.lgbtcentrevancouver.com or call 604-684-4901.

ELECT GUY HEYWOOD

Independent voice & deep roots in the community.

On November 15th, vote Guy Heywood for City Council.

WWW.GUYHEYWOOD.CA

David McKee
for District of North Vancouver Council

Elect a Progressive Voice for a Sustainable Community.

IEVA BAKLANE

November 14-23, 2008

Buckland Southerst GALLERY

2460 MARINE DRIVE, WEST VANCOUVER, BC | TELEPHONE 604 922-1915
www.bucklandsoutherst.com

Considering the benefits of weight loss surgery?

Did you know? Modern advances in weightloss surgery offer many new options: Sleeve Gastrectomy, Lapband, Realize Band, Gastric Bypass, StomaphyX.

Attend a FREE Seminar
Thursday, November 27, 7pm at Lions Gate Hospital
Our Canadian patients enjoy custom packages and exceptional service. Call for details:

Puget Sound SURGICAL CENTER

470-C Birchwood Ave., Bellingham
1-877-548-2424
www.PugetSoundSurgicalCenter.com

WEIGHT LOSS RESULTS IN:
85% Resolution of Type II Diabetes
90% reduction of joint pain
80% decrease in sleep apnea
60% decrease in heart disease
100% NEW LIFE!