



Take a Stand!

International Day Against Homophobia

Each and every day should be spent combating homophobia

Five-year Action Plan

June 2004

Updated in November 2005 and November 2006 :

In 2004, Fondation Émergence publicly revealed a five-year plan of action by proposing a specific theme for each campaign year and identifying an area of activity in society in which the need to fight against homophobia will be met. Some changes have been made to the original document, for example, regarding the event's name and date. The bulk of the document, however, remains the same: the goals originally proposed by Fondation Émergence have not changed especially when it comes to national campaigns and annual themes. As for the rest, readers can make the necessary changes including the idea that this annual event is evolving and that this day now has an international scope.



www.homophobiaday.org

FIVE-YEAR PLAN SUMMARY

1.	A plan to combat homophobia	3
2.	Contributors' commitment and role	5
3.	The five-year planning	6
4.	<i>National Day Against Homophobia</i> for June 2, 2004	7
5.	<i>National Day Against Homophobia</i> for June 1, 2005	8
6.	<i>National Day Against Homophobia</i> for May 17, 2006	9
7.	<i>International Day Against Homophobia</i> for May 17, 2007	10
8.	<i>International Day Against Homophobia</i> for May 17, 2008	12
9.	<i>International Day Against Homophobia</i> for May 17, 2009	13

1. A PLAN TO COMBAT HOMOPHOBIA

1.1 Introduction

The term "homophobia" has only recently been included in French dictionaries: 1997 for the *Petit Robert* and 1998 for the *Larousse*. Even today, many reference works do not provide a definition for "homophobia". In Quebec, people have become more familiar with the term thanks to the launching of the *National Day Against Homophobia*. The following definition sums up well what the notion means to various authors and specialists:

Homophobia is an attitude, a feeling, an uneasiness or an aversion towards gays and lesbians or toward homosexuality in general.

Beyond Fondation Émergence's expectations, the idea of a day to combat homophobia is stirring a lot of interest a bit everywhere outside of Quebec.

Held under the theme *From Tolerance to Acceptance*, this first event enabled people to understand that we must go beyond tolerance, which is, in reality, a form of indifference. Acceptance means that we are capable of going further, that we are not indifferent and that we are ready to make a commitment to combat homophobia.

This commitment will determine the theme of the second *National Day Against Homophobia*:

**Take a stand!
Make a commitment to stamp out homophobia!**

If the first edition enabled us to launch the idea and set up an infrastructure, the second edition will draw on mobilization and participation. The success of such an event relies on, more than anything, the participation of all members of society and members of the gay and lesbian community. Likewise, the *National Day Against Homophobia* is a means of structuring efforts within gay and lesbian communities.

A five-year plan will help bring together all contributors towards common goals, meet expectations in the gay and lesbian community, orient the community and help obtain desired results. An invitation has been extended to representatives from the gay and lesbian community as well as to professional contributors. Over 80 people have given their opinion on what the combat against homophobia should be and have inspired the five-year plan.

Over the next few years, a specific topic will be added to the general theme so that the *National Day Against Homophobia* will always be an event that fosters the uniting of efforts toward a common goal. Partners and players in the gay and lesbian community will be invited to get involved and to organise activities. Among a few examples of how to become involved are opportunities:

- for teachers to address homophobia at school;
- for employers to set up programmes to combat homophobia;
- for unions to organise activities;
- for community groups to promote the event within their environments;
- for television broadcasters to present extended reports and documentaries;
- for newspapers to print reports;
- for radio broadcasters to use artists, personalities and works that foster tolerance;
- for Internet distributors to withdraw or refuse any homophobic content all the while promoting the *National Day Against Homophobia*;
- for gays and lesbians who choose to come out;
- for parents to talk at home about homosexuality;

- for governments to fulfill their commitments and pass a resolution in support of combating homophobia.

1.2 Five-year plan target

Proposing a five-year plan is a dialogue method that focuses on getting results. It aims to:

- encourage players to take charge of combating homophobia in their environments;
- encourage leaders of targeted sectors to promote combating homophobia within their respective environments;
- further the coordination of contributors' efforts;
- continue dialogue on efforts;
- support research and propose specific topics;
- set targets to reach and maximise results;
- spread, on an international level, the idea of a day-long event to combat homophobia.

2. CONTRIBUTORS' COMMITMENT AND ROLE

2.1 Fondation Émergence's role

Fondation Émergence is the promoter of the *National Day Against Homophobia*. Its role is to:

- consult those individuals and groups involved;
- design communications campaigns:
 - propose campaign themes;
 - find spokespersons;
 - produce and distribute promotional material;
 - develop tools;
 - find sponsors;
 - design and post an Internet website www.homophobie.org;
- hold an educational event;
- prompt and encourage individuals, groups and partners to organise activities within their environments;
- ensure the financial arrangements for the event;
- draw up an annual review;
- keep an updated record on the status of homophobia;
- support research on homophobia.

2.2 The role of partners and the community

If Fondation Émergence is the event promoter, then the real players are groups in their own environment and members of society. Their effort is independent, yet in continuity with goals set. Their role is to:

- participate in needs assessment;
- promote the event within their environment;
- suggest means of action and update them;
- initiate and organise activities within their environment;
- keep their efforts in line with national themes;
- assess the status of homophobia.

2.3 Governments

The Quebec and the Canadian Governments, as well as municipal administrations, have the role of supporting the event, and of declaring a moment of the year as the *National Day Against Homophobia*. More specifically, the various Ministers' Offices and organisations need to propose efforts toward combating homophobia in their fields of expertise. These include the:

- Minister of Citizen Relations and Immigration;
- Minister of Health and Social Services;
- Minister of Education;
- Minister of Municipal Affairs;
- Minister of Labour;
- Minister of Justice;
- Minister of Employment and Social Solidarity;
- Minister of Status of Women;
- Commission (on Human Rights and Youth);
- Council of the Elderly;
- Permanent Council of Youth;
- Council on the Status of Women.

3. FIVE-YEAR PLANNING

3.1 Themes for the next five years

The *National Day Against Homophobia* is an event that creates structure, gathers people and generates initiatives. Combating homophobia is an ambitious project aiming to change the mentalities of a sizeable portion of the population. It is a long-term project.

The proposed strategy is to carry out combat on two fronts, with each year being:

**an overall awareness campaign on the devastating effects of homophobia
and a campaign focusing on a specific theme.**

Over the next few years, the *National Day Against Homophobia* will focus on the following themes:

First Wednesday in June	Themes
June 2, 2004	Commitment
June 1, 2005	The Family
May 17, 2006	Work and Sports
May 17, 2007	Education
May 17, 2008	Health
May 17, 2009	Cultural Communities

Event set-up has begun and will progressively continue. The event will grow in scope as people and groups understand its significance and become involved in both how the *National Day Against Homophobia* is organised and run.

There will also be a need to develop expertise on and an excellent knowledge of related issues. That is why the current five-year action plan will help identify sectors in which combating homophobia can be carried out.

4. NATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA – JUNE 2, 2004

Theme: Commitment

The 2004 Edition of the *National Day Against Homophobia* is under the theme of Commitment. It aims to encourage all people and all partners involved to make a commitment in combating homophobia.

The 2004 awareness campaign encourages people to make the commitment to fight against homophobia. A war must be waged against homophobia. The soldiers of this new war will have nothing to do with violence. These soldiers in the war against homophobia are armed with a rose in hand and strongly disapprove of any methods of violence and stand between military equipment. They encourage us to get involved in the war against homophobia.

For the first time we will have a heterosexual outlook on homosexuality. Heterosexual panelists from our round table will reveal their thoughts on gay men and lesbians' place in society. The round table will bring together various personalities who will discuss the place that gays and lesbians occupy in society, the extent to which they are accepted and ways to combat homophobia. It will also deal with subjects such as minorities and the Human Rights Charter, the courts and minority rights, children and homophobia, the evolution of both the status of women and the status of gays and lesbians, faith and homosexuality as well as gay men's and lesbian's contributions to society.

5. NATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA – JUNE 1, 2005

Theme: the Family

The goal of the *National Day Against Homophobia* for **June 1, 2005**, will be to combat homophobia in fields that concern the family, children and parents.

The theme of the family was chosen first to prevent youth and children from becoming victims of homophobia. Even though marriage may not be essential to forming a family, its current debate leads to discussions concerning the family and parenthood.

5.1 Young gays and lesbians, and their parents

The choice of the family as the first theme of the five-year plan also aims to underscore the importance of family relations for gays and lesbians. Life environment, school environment, emotional environment, and an environment of support, the family plays a determining role for gays and lesbians. It is also the main environment through which values are handed down from generation to generation. Something must be done so that homophobia does not get passed on from one generation to the next. Gays and lesbians often struggle with the idea of losing their family just by revealing their sexual orientation. Parents' attitudes may be the deciding factor. Parents often display homophobia out of ignorance through their words and attitudes, without the slightest clue that their child might have a homosexual orientation. It doesn't take much to imagine the damage.

Brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins are also part of the family. It's quite an environment someone has to face when they reveal their sexual orientation. Parents also need to be reassured as to what their child will have in store. Parents must also go through an adjustment period with their child's sexual orientation and often they fear how people will react in their environment. The family also includes the services offered to the family and its relationships with daycare centers, kindergarten and school, its relations with public services, doctors, and so on.

5.2 Being a gay or lesbian parent

The family also means the situation of some parents who had children from an ostensibly "heterosexual" way of life and who came to terms with of their homosexual orientation later on. These parents are confronted with far-reaching issues. The best interests of both child and parent demand that homophobia not compound the issue.

5.3 Gay and lesbian parenthood

Until now, gay and lesbian parenthood had been a single-parent affair; a couple-based family is a new reality these days. The Quebec Civil Code recognizes parental rights for same-sex couples, either via adoption or through parentage. The biological mother's spouse can have her parental rights recognised for the very same reasons as opposite-sex couples.

This new reality has sparked resistance and generated homophobia among some individuals. What is most important is to ensure that children from these families are protected. These children must have the right to develop without having to deal with homophobia in their environment.

5.4 Civil marriage

For some, marriage is a component of the family although it is not required to create a family. The gay marriage debate has been an exceptional occasion for outbreaks of homophobic talk. This still unfinished debate has stirred emotions, questioned society's values and left homophobia in its wake.

6. NATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA – MAY 17, 2006

Theme: The Job World, the Sports World and International Influence

The goal of the *National Day Against Homophobia* for **May 17, 2006**, will be to combat homophobia in both the job world and sports world.

The job world is not spared from homophobia. It is an extremely difficult environment for gays and lesbians, even if some environments may be more tolerant than others. As is often the case for other forms of discrimination, the workplace needs to make it a point to offer a homophobia-free environment.

Discrimination in the workplace is the concern of all those involved, workers, unions, employees, the Minister of Labour and the Commission des normes du travail. Client-worker relations, employer-employee relations and relations between employees themselves must through respect. Homophobia needs to be listed on anti-discrimination programmes; it should also go hand in hand with an implementation policy and include any necessary corrective measures.

The construction field is the most difficult to get through to. It is known for very few gay and lesbian-positive initiatives; it remains uncharted territory.

In 2006, the *Act on Psychological Harassment in the Workplace* will be two years old. This will be the moment to evaluate its application with respect to sexual orientation.

It will be the opportunity to start up research on the status of gays and lesbians in the workplace, to evaluate measures implemented to fight homophobia, to increase participants' awareness in the workplace, to suggest positive models and to produce informational material for the job world.

The year 2006 will also be the year the sporting and cultural event *Outgames 2006* will be held. If there is any another area in which homophobia is deep-rooted, it's surely the sports world. Taken individually, sportspeople are no more homophobic than others can be. However, they perform in an environment in which the image of male virility cannot tolerate even the slightest shortcoming and in which homosexuality is perceived as weakness.

Therefore, the year 2006 will be an opportunity for all players in the sports world to highlight the *National Day Against Homophobia*.

The year 2006 will also be the year in which an international conference on the rights of gays and lesbians will be held in Montreal. This conference will be an excellent way to promote the idea of a *International Day Against Homophobia*.

7. INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA – MAY 17, 2007

Theme: the Education Field

The goal Fondation Émergence has proposed for the *International Day Against Homophobia on May 17, 2007*, is to to combat homophobia in the sphere of early childhood and in the education field, to raise all participants' awareness, and to support the development of pedagogical tools and to work toward their application.

After the family, it's at school that we learn. School is also an environment in which questions concerning sexual orientation have been ignored, apart from some initiatives made in the past few years.

Discovering one's sexuality should be paired with educational programmes or, at the very least, with policies concerning sexual orientation and combating homophobia.

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms of the Person prohibits any form of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Abiding by the rights and freedoms of the person should begin at a very young age, during the very first learning stages. Youth need to learn how to respect others on the basis of their difference, regardless of race, religion, ethnic origins, cultural origins or sexual orientation. School should serve as a vehicle for these inclusive values.

All participants in the education field have a role to play in combating homophobia. By applying the charters of rights and freedoms, they have the legal obligation to intervene and to counteract discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, as well as for other forms of discrimination.

7.1 Early childhood

A new reality exists in the sphere of early childhood. Some children attend childcare centres and have two same-sex parents. Their parents live in a *de facto* union, are joined by a civil marriage or may even be married, as is now possible.

These children need to be protected from any form of discrimination or homophobia. They have the right to live, grow up and develop just as any other child.

7.2 School

School must also attend to the status of:

- children who have same-sex parents;
- youth who become aware of their sexual orientation;
- the treatment of children who are identified either as gay or lesbian;
- the treatment of youth who decide to reveal their homosexual orientation.

7.3 Parent committees

Parent committees should be informed and aware of issues concerning sexual orientation.

7.4 Teachers

Teachers must be able to include homosexual orientation in their instruction, which requires they themselves being comfortable with the idea.

In addition, gay and lesbian teachers should not conceal their homosexual orientation out of fear they may lose their job or be faced with homophobia.

7.5 School principal offices

School principal offices need to set goals, provide direction, and dispense adequate teacher training on sexual orientation. They should make resources available, such as the help and infoline Gai Écoute, and allow groups such as G.R.I.S. to meet with students.

7.6 Other participants

School nurses, psychologists, guidance counsellors, and special education teachers must be able to offer services to young gays and lesbians in distress.

7.7 School boards

It is the responsibility of school boards to adopt policies on sexual orientation and on combating homophobia.

7.8 Minister of Education

It is surprising to note that the Minister of Education has yet to take care of issues related to sexual orientation. The socio-political context should have already prompted the Minister's Office to do so, given the facts that:

- the Quebec Charter of Rights and Freedoms of the Person and the rights of youth;
- the National Assembly's recognition of *de facto* unions;
- the passing of a law on civil marriage;
- changes to the Civil Code, permitting adoption and establishing parentage rules for same-sex spouses.

In this matter, there is some discrepancy in government efforts.

8. INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA – MAY 17, 2008

Theme: the Health Field

The goal Fondation Émergence has proposed for the *International Day Against Homophobia* on **May 17, 2008**, is to combat homophobia in the health field, to raise all participants' awareness, to encourage setting up policies and training tools and to work toward their application.

The *International Day Against Homophobia* for the year 2008 will be an occasion to highlight gay and lesbian health issues. Just as other citizens do, gays and lesbians need to receive health services free of discrimination. It will be the opportunity to review the Minister's policy entitled *Adapting Health and Social Services to Gay and Lesbian Realities*. Gays and Lesbians need to feel comfortable visiting a doctor, going to a CLSC, the hospital or living in a residential centre, without the fear of becoming a victim of homophobia or without having to conceal their sexual orientation, which is quite often the case.

8.1 Participants in the health field

Participants in the health field must be aware of gay and lesbian realities. Training programmes tailored to client needs must be offered to participants. Health professionals, among others, need to be aware of gay and lesbian sex practices so as to be able to provide proper services.

Physicians must never assume what a patient's sexual orientation is, with the negative possibility of breaking the bond of trust that needs to be established between doctor and patient. Medical exams must be performed in an environment of trust and openness. There should not be any "hiding places". Lifestyles and sexual practices must not be concealed. Physician training must supply an adequate knowledge of gay and lesbian realities.

8.2 Mental health and suicide

Happiness is within reach for most gays and lesbians, as it is for heterosexuals. However, gays and lesbians must go through a trying period of adapting to their sexual orientation. It's a period of discovery, of becoming aware, and lastly, of coming to terms with their sexual orientation. It is at this time that the issue of suicide crops up for those who are unable to cope with this reality.

8.3 Procreation

Help in procreation and methods of assisted procreation must be discrimination-free and accessible to lesbians. Those who work in this field must have an attitude free of any form of homophobia.

8.4 Aging

After having lived their sexual orientation openly, a first generation of gays and lesbians are becoming senior citizens. It is inconceivable that these people should retreat to the closet after having struggled to come out of it. People who work in establishments for the elderly need to be aware of gay and lesbian issues and need to be able to adopt appropriate behaviour. Companionship, loneliness, isolation, and organising leisure activities are inseparable from gay and lesbian realities.

9. INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA – MAY 17, 2009

Theme: Cultural Communities

The goal Fondation Émergence has proposed for the *International Day Against Homophobia* on **May 17, 2009**, is to combat homophobia within cultural communities, to raise awareness among the newly arrived and to support gays and lesbians from these communities.

Cultural communities are occupying greater and greater roles in our society. They arrive with their values and those of their country of origin. In many cases, homosexuality is something hidden, or even worse, something punished. Sometimes the religious values of the newly arrived encourage them to adopt homophobic behaviour.

Contributions from cultural communities are an invaluable heritage and their inclusion within their host society must take place while respecting each other's values. Freedom of religion and cultural diversity are values of Canadian society. Included in these values is respecting rights guaranteed by the charters, such as those concerning sexual orientation.

Another aspect of the issue is the presence of gays and lesbians within their cultural communities and the extent to which they are accepted by their community. Already, there are gay and lesbian groups that have been in existence in several of these communities.