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| Speak Up-Kōrerotia 16 March 2016LGBTQI+ rights |
| Male | This programme was first broadcast on Canterbury’s community access radio station Plains FM 96.9 and was made with the assistance of New Zealand on Air. |
| Female | Coming up next conversations on human rights with “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, here on Plains FM. |
| Sally | E ngā mana, E ngā reo, E ngā hau e whāTēnā koutou katoaNau mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. Join the New Zealand Human Rights Commission as it engages in conversations around diversity in our country. Tune in as our guests “Speak Up”, sharing their unique and powerful experiences and opinions and may you also be inspired to “Speak Up” when the moment is right.Nau mai haere mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. I’m Sally Carlton with the Human Rights Commission here in Christchurch. The topic for today is LGBTQI rights in recognition of Christchurch Pride which is on the 18th to 27th of March and which we’ll be hearing more about later in the show. We’ve got four guests in the studio: Richard Tankersley who is Commissioner for LGBTQI rights at the Commission, William Spurlin who is visiting all the way from London as our international guest, thank you William. Jill Stevens – Coordinator of Pride this year and Anne Nicholson from Qtopia. If we could start please with some introductions and tell us a bit more about your work it would be fantastic.  |
| Richard | Kia ora, as Sally said I’m Richard, I’m a part time Commissioner at the Human Rights Commission. I’m based here in our Christchurch office and for the last few years I’ve held the portfolio for LGBTQI rights or SOGII rights which is Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex. Because I’m a part-time Commissioner a lot of the time I spend at the Commission is involved in governance but when it comes to strategic leadership and advocacy stuff, particularly around our media work, then I’m one of the frontline Commissioners that works in this area.  |
| Sally | And I’m sure we’ll be hearing more about what the Commission is doing later on.  |
| Richard | Yup sure will, thank you.  |
| William | Hello, kia ora – I’m learning. I’m William Spurlin, I’m a Professor of English and comparative literature at Brunel University in London. My work is in queer studies, most of it. I work in postcolonial studies looking at sexual politics as they emerge out of postcolonial nations and I’ve also used this as a framework to talk about victims or gay and lesbian victims of the Holocaust so my work is kind of widespread over a wide variety of interdisciplinary fields, it’s very peripatetic and I’m very happy to be here in New Zealand giving talks that have been sponsored by the Holocaust Centre in Wellington and the Rule Foundation and other private organisations too that have funded me to come and speak. So it’s my first New Zealand trip and I’m very happy to be here.  |
| Sally | It’s nice to see you here as well.  |
| William | Thank you.  |
| Jill | Hi, my name is Jill Stevens, I’m the current Pride Chairperson here in Christchurch. I’ve been involved with Christchurch Pride, I think this is my fifth year. I’m part of a small group of just seven people who volunteer - so we all have our own fulltime jobs and lives going on - just to bring excitement into Christchurch, to bring some groups together, maybe give opportunity to some people to see some small groups that they might not already know about and just to bring a lot of life back into the scene within the Christchurch sector.  |
| Sally | And what do you do when you’re not coordinating Pride?  |
| Jill | I’m a mother and I have a fulltime job as well so most of the people work fulltime and we just literally do it part time through the weekend. It gets a little bit full on at this time of the year but it’s exciting and fun.  |
| Sally | And Anne?  |
| Anne | Hello, I’m Anne Nicholson, I’m the coordinator of Qtopia here in Christchurch. Qtopia is the Queer Youth Support Network for anyone under the age of 25 and for trans young people anyone under the age of 30. I coordinate the organisation at the moment along with one other person and I run the education programme and that is working with schools and organisations working with young people looking at how to support the new educational guidelines from the Ministry and working with the new “Inside Out” Rainbow Diversity programme. I also do a little bit of work around sexual violence in the Rainbow community and supporting our community around that area.  |
| Sally | A lot of stuff going on by the sounds of it.  |
| Anna | Yeah really positive stuff for our community at the moment.  |
| Sally | It’s really good to hear. I thought we might kick off today’s discussion by thinking about definitions and we’re talking about LGBTQI – Richard you also mentioned SOGII. There are lots of terms and acronyms. Maybe we could just talk about what are they and what’s the best one to be using? What’s the most up-to-date terminology?  |
| Richard | Not sure that there’s ever going to be the perfect terminology. Describing the range, the diverse range of experiences in the LGBTQI etc. community is evolved over time. LGBTQI talks about Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender…Q for Queer or sometimes Questioning and I in this acronym talks about Intersex. So that’s that one. And SOGII talks about Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Intersex so it’s a broader encompassing term but not a lot of people talk about SOGII at the moment in terms of common…it’s usually some form of the earlier acronym of LGBTQI but as soon as you define that you start to cut out other identities, other self-descriptions for other parts of our community so it’s proven to be a challenge for a long time. Back in the very, very early days they just talked about gay rights and expected everybody to stick with that idea. And then lesbians sort of said, well hang on, excuse us but we belong too and it’s sort of gone from there but that’s my take on it, I probably missed something out. Anne you might have something to add or…? |
| Anne | Well within our community there seems to be a move away from the acronyms, the move seems to be identifying as me, identifying as who I am. And some young people are identifying as more rainbow because it’s a friendlier term, it kind of fits with our community and the rainbow flag has been such a symbol for our community. We kind of had this conversation – I was talking to a reporter this morning and what we were talking about was where it’s going and we were very much discussing how it’s evolving and the massive growth in the terminology around our community and how our young people are just pulling it apart and coming up with these new and exciting and wonderful terms and references and then destroying those as well and pulling everything to bits and rebuilding and I think we’re going to see massive evolution of our terminology over the next 10 or 15 years before we start to settle I think on some terms. I don’t know what we’re going to be calling ourselves in ten years’ time.  |
| Richard | And I’m not sure that rainbow is going to cover everybody either. There have been….we were at a conference, William and I were at a conference last week - and we’ll talk a little bit more about that - and the Intersex people particularly are saying that there’s…dialogue within their own communities that says rainbow hasn’t included intersex enough for them to feel comfortable with that being an encompassing identity so as Anne says it’s evolving and continues to generate.  |
| Jill | I agree and I think for us at Christchurch Pride we do need to have something in our title that says we are rainbow. I guess LGBTQI is easiest terminology and LI’s but we are open to any classification, we’ve got people on our committee that are married with children, are in heterosexual relationships. This year we’ve decided not to have a male and a female event and we’re trying to keep it more gender fluid but whatever people classify themselves as, they need to understand that is completely open, we don’t care what you classify yourself as, if you feel part of the community then come and be part of the community.  |
| William | And I think the history is important, how the acronym and how it’s evolved over a very short time and that it’s still in process and I would worry that we try to fix it because once you try to fix an identity it becomes very oppressive and the inside/outside dichotomy takes place so that you’re including a group within but you’re automatically then excluding others. So I think that the sort of fluidity of the identities that we’re talking about - whether it’s LGBTQI or other names - that may even be changing over time is very good. We also have to remember however that these terms shift, this LGBTQI is a very western kind of phenomena and when we look in the post-colonial world, when we look in the developing world the very acronym and the terms they represent do not fit. It’s very interesting to look at for instance in the Arab Muslim world the word for a gay man was zamel which meant that he was passive and only passive homosexuality in the Arab Muslim world historically was stigmatised. Now there’s a new term muṯaliyy which you can’t tell if the person is active or passive because it’s evolved, it’s a new term so even sexual practices…I mean new terminology is changing as we go along.And the other thing that I wanted to say is that the intersectionality is very important that we can’t only look at sexual and gender identity alone because race, ethnicity, class – these things make a huge difference so it’s always interesting to look at whatever acronym or whatever name we’re giving them in relation to other things because it makes….we don’t want to reinvent what Lisa Duggan calls is homonormativity which just refers to very white privileged people in the LGBT group who argue for changes in gender and sexuality but everything else remains the same. Social class, economic disparities and so on. So it’s always a constant site of rethinking and re-theorising but I think makes this sort of work very exciting because it’s not fixed in any particular way.  |
| Richard | And in the Māori world we’ve got the term takatāpui which refers to same sex attracted people of either gender. We’ve got whakawahine – people who are male to female transgender and tangata ira tane who are female to male transgender – those are three terms and then right across the Pacific we have fa’afafine, we have fakaleiti, we have a whole range of identities that as William points out are culturally bound and so the shorter acronyms don’t really cover absolutely every identity in our spectrum.  |
| Sally | I think one of the things that strikes me when I think LGBTQI’s rights - however we choose to put it under a term - is that these terms are evolving and the rights behind them are evolving so much as one of the groups of rights that’s really started to gain momentum over the last few decades. And it’s a good place to take a break but I’m really looking forward to exploring this more as we go forward. Jill you’ve chosen the song for us, it’s a Pink, ‘Blow Me One Last Kiss’. Was there a reason for that choice or you just really like it?  |
| Jill | It’s a personal reason, it’s just a great song.  |
| Sally | Perfect, here it is.  |
|  | MUSIC BY PINK – BLOW ME ONE LAST KISS  |
| Sally | Welcome back to “Speak Up” – Kōrerotia. We’re thinking about LGBTQI rights today. We’ve got Richard Tankersley, William Spurlin, Jill Stevens and Anne Nicholson and we finished off thinking about the definitions and the changes that have caused these definitions to keep evolving and now we’re going to think a bit more about what is LGBTQI advocacy, why is it done? How is it done? And Anne I think you’re going to kick off this conversation.  |
| Anne | Thank you. A lot of what Qtopia does in the field of advocacy is around our education work. Within schools there’s still very little education done around diversity, there is a new set of guidelines that the Ministry of Education put out last year which is a beautiful document that outlines best practice for schools around supporting their rainbow or queer or all of their young people through their diversity. How schools pick that up is entirely up to them and at this stage most of the schools in Canterbury have a gap in the knowledge around how to pick that up and what to do with it. So a lot of my work at the moment is around supporting schools. What does implementing this document look like? And alongside that there’s some really, really good information come out from Ministry of Social Development for schools in the form of diversity education package so they can now freely download that information. Qtopia can support them to implement it into their school and it gives the teachers a more robust curriculum to teach their young people and more opportunity for young people to start to understand who they are and we’re finding a lot of this information is starting to filter down into the schools. How sexuality education is being taught is changing and as a result our young people are getting a voice younger and younger so we’ve got young people as young as nine that we are supporting through Qtopia at the moment because their teachers have been able to give them a voice and then those young people who are really struggling with gender or sexuality have actually been able to say to their teacher this is what’s going on for me and then Qtopia can work with them and their families to say what do you need from us, how can we advocate for you and then we go off and do what they need us to do. One-fifth of our trans young people do not make it to adulthood, Qtopia is desperate to see that change and we’re doing everything in our power to educate the wider community so that those young people a) have a voice; b) have visibility; and c) have a bit more safety and their peers have some understanding of what’s going on for them.  |
| Sally | That’s a really tragic statistic.  |
| Anne | It’s horrific.  |
| Sally | And I suppose this is talking to why it’s necessary isn’t it…is that bullying, just lack of understanding?  |
| Anne | Yes a lot of what we teach within the “Inside Out” programme as it’s called looks at how to teach diversity and we look at critical thinking around what does that mean for anyone who is diverse and how do they feel about how they’re being treated and what can you do to be a supporter and an advocate for that young person with the sole aim of reducing that bullying because yes, homophobic bullying is at alarmingly high levels in New Zealand schools.  |
| Jill | And I think already when some of these young individuals are already struggling with what is happening with their body and how their life is changing and how it’s evolving and how they might be afraid to talk to their peers, their teachers, their parents. Having a support network within a school might give them the opportunity to approach someone that they don’t know on such a personal level and they know it’s secure and it’s not going to be discussed anywhere outside. I think that the problem is… Take Facebook for example, they’re afraid to go onto that page and “like” something in case someone from school sees that they’ve liked something that’s out of the normal and they’re really worried about being subjected to bullying. Social media really puts children through the wringers nowadays I think. I mean it probably does a lot of worse good than it does good. So I think within the school sector is the perfect opportunity for them to have a secure network, they’re there all the time and to see that the school is embracing it and it’s openly discussed is just going to give some of these children a little bit more…just give them a little bit more power to approach someone and feel like they’ve got an ally on their side and then by going to Qtopia, getting a lot of peer support. Let’s face it, all our teenagers listen to other teenagers and whether it’s in a positive side or negative side they still listen to what the other children are saying so if they can be put into Qtopia and get some positive feedback from peers their same age or people that have gone through a similar situation it’s just going to sit a little bit easier in their mind and maybe get a little bit of support and be able to guide them onto the trail of the fact that it’s completely acceptable to be whatever you want to be, your life is your own destiny so make it fabulous.  |
| Anne | Several of our schools now have diversity groups, several others are looking at them at the moment and alongside that we’re working with the schools on professional development to ensure that staff understand what diversity is as well. So we’re not just expecting our health teachers and our young people to understand these concepts, we’re wanting to get all of the school culture understanding why it’s important and why they need to be considering diversity education.  |
| William | I’m very glad to hear that all of this is contextualised within diversity and that broader notions of cultural diversity rather than just focusing on gender and sexuality alone because there are very important, I think, precedents of in terms of race. And in America you have the civil rights movement, you have the postcolonial sort of movements where people are reclaiming what has been taken from them under structures of imperialism because what we don’t want to do is to just sort of ghettoise gender and sexual difference by itself. And I think that’s where the rainbow flag sort of then becomes a question because those are parallel bars and parallel bars never meet or anything that’s parallel. It’s important to look at the intersectionalities and at the connections because people are multiple, most people are very multiply positioned and there are a variety of oppressions that intertwine. I mean as a white gay male – yes I’ve been oppressed for my sexuality but if I admit it quite honestly, I’ve been enabled or privileged by being white and by being male. So I think we also need to think of diversity not only in terms of changing the laws. I mean it’s very important to have marriage equality – those things are necessary but they’re not sufficient in themselves because diversity is a structure of mind or a structure of thinking and really we need to continually get people to ask themselves….is the culture, whatever culture it is, is it legitimate at any particular moment in the eyes of all of its participants across the board? And that can never be answered in any sort of final or affirmative way but that’s the issue, that’s the goal to move towards and I think when we can finally….because otherwise we don’t want…if you put gender and sexual struggles here and other struggles here, you don’t want it to be a self-serving kind of thing where people…I’m only going to focus on the politics that concern me. I mean we have to work in coalition and those of us who are doing this activist work in LBGTQI advocacy need to also do it when it comes to feminist struggles, when it comes to racial struggles, when it comes to minority struggles. I mean in Europe we’re sort of going through what is called “a migrant crisis” but I mean that calls into whole notions of what the EU is, what national identity is. And I mean this has ramifications for all forms of difference as well, So I think it’s important to focus on the specifics of the group we’re addressing and working with but also at the same time on the much larger picture.  |
| Sally | I just saw yesterday actually that the Australian Government has released a couple of refugees from the Detention Centre in Nauru into the community but in Nauru homosexuality is a criminal offence and so these two refugees are on the one hand refugees but they’re also gay and now they’re living in a situation where that side of their identity is not legal. So they’ve escaped one thing and run straight into another.  |
| Richard | And they’re publically identified.  |
| Sally | Richard, what’s the Commission working on at the moment in terms of these sorts of issues?  |
| Richard | So the sort of advocacy work that the Commission does is quite varied, it can be as structured as providing submissions to legislation that’s something before the House through the Select Committee process but also we’re able to advise decision makers really on the implementation of policies. And of course we’ve got the engagement with the United Nations Treaty bodies that we’re required to be part of on a regular basis, on an ongoing basis. One of those reporting’s is to the Universal Periodic Review which is a five year process where a panel of United Nations member states essentially examines New Zealand’s human rights record which has been informed by a report from the Government, a report from the Commission and a report from civil society groups and so what we actually say when we are advocating isn’t just determined by what the Commission thinks. One of the things that we need to do is have a very strong engagement with affected or vulnerable communities. With respect to sexual orientation and gender identity and the UPR process, that was carried out for the last UPR by a coalition of groups called the SOGII Coalition who made a very detailed and very thorough set of recommendations to the panel. Sadly because of the makeup of the panel in terms of who the states’ parties were that were on that panel, sexual orientation and gender identity didn’t actually get a look-in when it came to the feedback to the New Zealand Government, they just left those issues off the table for various reasons. So when the Minister was queried about that, there was a commitment to an ongoing consultation with civil society and there was an assurance that these issues would not be left undealt to and so at the moment we are re-engaging with the LGBTQI communities through a number of engagements.Last week at the Tāwhiritia nga ahi – Re-stoking the fires….ILGA (that’s the International Lesbian Gay Association Human Rights and Health Conference in Wellington) we did that and we facilitated a panel of MPs listening to members of the community including some of those submitters from the SOGII Coalition re-presenting an updated issues to Members of Parliament, now these are Members from the cross-party rainbow group of MPs so they’re Members from four different parties in the House. And Jackie Blue, our EEO Commissioner, sat on the panel as a fifth member and people put the issues before these people who represent us in Parliament. There’s another of those hopefully going to go ahead slightly later in the year in Auckland and we have an engagement with the intersex community particularly around issues relating to intersexual experience and the issues that need to be worked out for people there so our advocacy….at the moment it’s about facilitation and it’s about amplifying those voices where they need to be amplified - they’re pretty strong voices already but there are numerous ways that we can do that but those are some of the engagements that we’ve got going at the moment.  |
| Sally | Great thank you and that’s a good place to wrap up this segment. We’ve got your song William. What was the reason for this choice?  |
| William | Well I was on a beach in Ibiza, Spain and suddenly this song came on and I had never heard it and everybody just….people were just milling about and doing their own thing and talking and whatever and then suddenly everybody just started dancing the entire beach and you just looked up and suddenly…you had no choice but to join in. So it was just a wonderful sort of…people just doing very staid things to suddenly dancing all over the place.  |
| Sally | That sounds like a lot of fun. Awesome, here we go.  |
|   | **MUSIC BY DALIDA – LAISSEZ-MOI DANSER** |
| Sally  | Nau mai haere mai, welcome back to “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. We’re talking about LGBTQI rights and we just were talking with Richard Tankersley of the Human Rights Commission about some of the general practices that the Commission does. Richard if you could give us some specific examples of what the Commission is working on in terms of LGBTQI rights at the moment.  |
| Richard | Well some of the issues that came up again in the context of that conference last week - and we’ll come back to this again I think - around compulsory…what they called “gender normalising surgery” for children and young people who are born intersex - and I mean that covers a diverse range of conditions by itself - but the practice has previously been for children without any consent on behalf of the child – parents and medical staff tend to make decisions on behalf of the child as to what their gender is going to be and later in life this can provide huge mental health issues, physiological issues sometimes. But also gender identity issues as well and international best practice says that this isn’t an OK way of going and so that’s one of the issues that’s coming up and again we’ll be working on in conjunction with the communities that we’re in conversation with.  |
| Sally | I’ve got some stats here actually on this issue and the UN says that there must be between about 0.5 and 1.7% of babies born with intersex traits which means that of the 57,000 live births in New Zealand in 2014 that somewhere between 28 and 972 babies born like that so it’s actually a large number. I was quite staggered.  |
| Richard | The Intersex Trust people have their signs up at their stall last week said one in a hundred babies - that’s what they’re talking about - which is a significant number of people in our population.  |
| Anne | But not all of those babies will know until they hit puberty that there are issues.  |
| Sally | Is there any legal obligation for their parents or for medical staff to tell the children about it when they reach a certain age or something?  |
| Anne | Not that I’m aware of.  |
| Richard | Not necessarily, in fact I had conversations with intersex people who found out quite later on in their life that they had had surgery when they were children before they could remember.  |
| William | And also, I mean coming back to that, the figures that we have may not even be fully accurate because there’s been a whole period when this was not even reported. I mean surgical intervention just happened immediately after birth usually with parents and doctors making some sort of agreement, often with doctors sort of pushing the parents towards this decision in the best interest of the child. And we have to remember that there’s a whole history in the history of medicine related to the best interest of the child and I think what we have to do critically is ask whose interests are really being served by this? I mean when you look at the history of homosexuality and the DSM then you look at the history of what was called gender identity disorder in childhood, it’s the same sort of thing and the types of therapies that were used to get biological sex lined up with gender were really quite destructive. I think with this as well, our culture in the west especially can tolerate no ambiguity between the sexes. I mean this is foundational to understanding everything about our culture. And I was giving a talk in a Wellington high school last week and they are developing - which is very interesting - unisex toilets or unisex bathrooms which I think is a way to really question this whole male/female dichotomy that goes through our culture. But biomedicine has….we tend to think of it as objective and caring and sort of ideologically neutral but it’s not, it’s very much tied to the perpetuation of social norms particularly heteronormativity and I think that all we can do to interrupt that and actually question it and to show the effects that it has on people is necessary. I mean I try to do it in the classroom because that’s my space where I work but in the broader social world as well. And to what extent is there support for parents who decide to leave things alone and let the child develop and understand his or her own gender? Or even if his or her is enough because we’re even trapped for language with this very binary thinking about gender that it has to be one or the other. And is there support for parents who want to sort of leave things be and let the child figure it out as children tend to be much more elastic than we give them credit for? They are much better able than us to deal with the complexity of the issue.  |
| Richard | There are another couple of issues in the health space, mental health and alcohol and drug issues for people in rainbow communities is pretty well documented and again there’s some issues around orientation of services towards LGBTQI people but there’s a couple more that have been in the media more recently and that’s the housing of transgender prisoners. There was a policy change in Corrections in 2014 that said that prisoners would be housed appropriately but recent evidence that’s come to light - and there’s been some protest about this, and quite public protest - that says that essentially the policies aren’t currently being followed through. So that’s one of the things that came up in the conference again last week and will continue to be on the radar. And then identity documentation and inconsistencies between what’s happened so there’s been some wins in terms of we can now change the gender on our passport if we do that without having to change our birth certificate and that can be male or female or indeterminate which is currently signalled on a passport by an X. We can change our gender on our drivers licence but there’s a very difficult process at the moment to change on your birth certificate which is the foundation document and there are certain things you simply can’t do without your birth certificate so you end up with incongruent gender identity on your multiple documents and that needs work and that’s really…we’re hearing that loud and clear, we’re hearing that absolutely loud and clear. I think those are some of the key issues at the moment that are coming up in our communities but not the only ones.  |
| Sally | When you say the housing of transgender prisoners, you’re talking about whether they’re housed in male or female prisons?  |
| Richard | Yes and one of the presenting issues was transgender people who had not necessarily had surgery or hadn’t changed their identity on their birth certificates and may or may not have been taking hormones for example. And it’s usually male to female transgender people - that’s the most common in terms of this issue - are being housed in a male prison with a formed or partially formed female identity or presentation and they end up experiencing considerable vulnerability, subject to harassment, subject to rape in the context of the male prison and sometimes the only way of keeping people safe in that context is put them into segregation unit or into solitary confinement which of course is another imposition over and above the sentence that they have been sentenced to by the Court and sometimes in a segregation unit you haven’t got the best of co-inmates either for various reasons. So that’s where the activism is coming from, people don’t feel that has been listened to or acted upon after they felt like there had been a win really with the change in policy. So it’s about under what circumstances can you be housed in a more gender appropriate situation.  |
| Sally | This kind of ties into something else I was wanting to ask you which is around inequalities and LGBTQI people not perhaps having the same access, for example, to resources as other groups and Anne you mentioned to me on the phone when we were talking before that in terms of funding for example, maybe some of the youth groups don’t get the same access to funding as you feel other groups might get. Any idea…any reflections on why this is and what might happen to change it?  |
| Anne | What I was referring to there is that minority groups in New Zealand who have very poor health and wellbeing outcomes generally funding starts to follow as a result of being able to measure those outcomes. With the rainbow community or within our community we’ve only just started collecting that data so it was the first data sets that we have to show that our young people are doing really, really badly, some of the worst statistics in New Zealand is the Youth 7 and Youth 12 report. There has been no funding that follows the outcomes of those reports and it’s now got to the point where it’s looking likely that they will not collect that data next time which means that we lose that voice and that ability to say this is a need, we’ve finally got some evidence to show that this is a problem and it actually needs some funding put around it in order to reverse those poor outcomes - which turn out to be lifelong outcomes with alcohol and drugs, poor mental health and all those other issues that go alongside that. So without that block of data we can no longer go to the Government and say hey look, you need to be doing more, which we are able to do at the moment. The decision which hasn’t been confirmed yet but the likely outcome of this is we’re not going to be collecting that data anymore, I see that as discrimination and a form of absolute discrimination because it silences our community once again, it takes away that voice which is absolutely critical for us to be able to fight for funding to do our job because until a couple of years ago there was no funding from Government went into supporting LGBTI rainbow young people and just recently there has been more funding going in up until around about a couple hundred thousand dollars but so far that’s it. Within other minority communities as the need is identified, funding has followed and we need that to cross over to the rainbow community as well.  |
| Sally | That seems like another good point to break, we’ve got Richard’s choice now. ‘This is why we sing’ by Greg Gilpin.  |
| Richard | This song has been used by numerous, we quite often call them rainbow choirs or gay and lesbian choirs - there’s one in Auckland called GALS, the Gay And Lesbian Singers - as a big chorale number and it talks about music bringing people together as one and the song is being songs of hope and peace and love and I think it’s quite an inspirational song.   |
| Sally | That sounds fantastic and when we come back we’re going to talk more about Pride and hopefully that might be a way of increasing awareness and visibility of these communities.  |
|  | **MUSIC by GREG GILPIN – WHY WE SING** |
| Sally | Welcome back to “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, here on Plains FM 96.9. We’re with Richard Tankersley, William Spurlin, Jill Stevens and Anne Nicholson talking about LGBTQI rights and we finished off thinking about the different issues that this community or these communities face and we thought we might hone in now a little bit on Christchurch and what’s the situation in Christchurch, do we have a sense of numbers? What kind of organisations exist here, that sort of thing.  |
| Richard | We had a very interesting experience after the February earthquake because there were four LGBTI venues in the city and they were all either destroyed or behind the cordon and so even though those natural bumping spaces and hubs were just simply totally out of commission. So the community rallied around after a little while and started doing pop up parties here and there just to try and reconnect people. We set up a charitable trust called the Uprising Trust which has quietly chugged away in the background trying to help redevelop communities and to replace something that still hasn’t been replaced in terms of those bumping spaces. And it’s gone through a number of phases but one of the things that we’ve done is to establish a periodic collaboration of organisations that the moving and shaking organisations in the community sector in Christchurch and get together and talk about things. Pride is a member of that, Qtopia is a member of that collaboration, the Trust itself is a member and a handful of other groups that do 90% of the community or lead 90% of the community work do actually get together and talk together on a hopefully more regular basis this year than we did last year. We’re currently building a website which will have a calendar function and a portal to a directory of help services. So that’s some of the stuff that’s going on and this came out of a needs assessment, we ran a needs assessment process and the community identified what they wanted to have happen and this hub was one of the things that came out of it, the regeneration of Pride was another thing. So there are real positive things going on in the collaboration but also there’s positive things going on in the individual groups as well.  |
| Jill | I think from a Pride point of view we…like I said before, we’re just a group of people that try and organise events and that for Christchurch but our biggest thing is looking at all the small groups that are around Christchurch so maybe the small groups of people that go bowling every Sunday or go tramping up the Port Hills or do poetry reading or vegetarian dinners or the beers group... What our aim is, is to put a big umbrella over all those small groups and help them bring it all in to one festival. So we don’t just run it all ourselves, we try and give these smaller groups some advertising, put it on Facebook so that one individual person might look at a flyer and it’s like oh Christchurch has a Pride…oh gosh, there’s an afternoon tea party and I didn’t even know that there was anything to support trans people or other people in the LGBTQI community that we didn’t know that there was a group out there that met regularly. So if a handful of people come to a Pride event and find some educational information, they find a group of people that they can connect with whether it’s a parent that’s got a young child – they might come along to the Qtopia picnic and think well this might be a good way to bring my youth into the community and maybe find them someone to support them because it’s very open. We clearly don’t mind what you associate yourself as, we do try and be gender fluid but we like to give everybody the opportunity to be heard. So we’ve got archos, tramping, rainbow picnics, beers pool parties, dance parties, sea kayaking….I think the list goes on. So the Qtopia gay bingo is one of your biggest fundraising events of the…  |
| Anne | And probably our most fun fundraising event, it’s a great night out.  |
| Jill | Yup you’ve never seen a couple of queens drop their balls like these ones.  |
| Anne | Nope and if you want your child to learn all of the swear words at once and all of the inappropriate language it’s a great place to take them.  |
| Jill | Because I remember back, when I first started with Pride actually, I remember messaging someone and saying is it acceptable for me to bring my….I think it was nine and 11 year old to gay bingo and I was told that it might be a little bit tongue-in-cheek but never ever vulgar and seriously every year since then I’ve taken my children to gay bingo. I think one afternoon at gay bingo my nine year old said oh mum, I just saw Aunty Pippy coming out of the boys toilets! It just opens a little bit of dialogue with children and I’m like “Well you know Aunty Pippy...” and you can get into a little bit of dialogue with your child and start naturally explaining things that happen without having to sit down and feel like you have to educate your child. I mean I’ve got two children myself, I raise them in a lesbian home, also live with a couple of guys that are gay as well and it’s completely open in our household. We don’t care what you are, you’re quite welcome in our household. I’ve never sat down and said to the children this is how it works, we educate them as life goes along, when a child is six and you bring them up with prejudice to what these people in your life are all you say to them is they’re safe people and they’re going to look out for you then you don’t put any prejudice on them, you don’t need to explain in lengthy details about their gender or who they choose to sleep with, it’s a natural occurrence. And my children are very openly educated just by living life, I think, and that is what Pride’s all about whatever your age you age that you find something in the programme that might suit you. Every year we try and squeeze a little bit more into the programme, we’ve got the oasis light which are a churches services…I mean let’s face it, like we were speaking before, not everyone is your straight 20 to 30 year old male that’s…. |
| William | Party bopper.  |
| Jill | Exactly. But like I say, it’s about bringing everyone under the one umbrella. We try and donate as much of our money back into the community and we’re always looking for more communities to donate to, we try and support Qtopia the best we can.  |
| Anne | Pride has been a massive support of Qtopia in the past and we’ve done some great work from the support we’ve had.  |
| Jill | I think even we sent a couple of the youth to a hui last year. People need to understand that we’re not just about having a party, that the funds we make – yes go into next year’s Pride but we also try and get them out to the community as well. Yes we like to make enough money to make another party next year but it’s minimal, we’re a non for profit charity group that try and put it back into the community and it’s about giving everyone that sense of belonging again. I don’t know how many times I’ve been to a Pride event and I’ve run into someone that I haven’t seen for ages, it’s like a four hour meet and greet. The art show I think often attracts…. |
| Anne | Oh one of the biggest events.  |
| Jill | Yup this year for the art show we’ve got Joe Bennett.  |
| Anne | Joe Bennett is doing a reading from his new book King Rich and that’s going to be really exciting. We’ve got New Zealand’s leading slam poet - young slam poet of the year, crowned a couple of months ago - she’s coming along to talk. We’ve just got some of the most beautiful community people.  |
| Jill | And the artwork as well! Like, there’s an amazing array of both amateur art right through to people that this is their life.  |
| Anne | We have some quite high end artists coming this time, Julia Morrison is exhibiting, we’ve got some fantastic artists.  |
| Richard  | And my darling is submitting for the first time. |
| William | And it’s very interesting what you said about bringing people all under the umbrella because the umbrella itself is shifting constantly.  |
| Jill | Very much so.  |
| William | And that’s that fluidity that we mustn’t I think ever lose. I think it’s very sort of integral to the LGBTQI and broader community. I mean I think it’s wonderful that you were saying that young children go, I’ve seen other Pride events in London and other parts of Europe where kids who have just come out to their parents bring their parents to Pride and this can have wonderful effects because the parents sort of up until that time have lived in a little glass bubble and suddenly their world…so the whole process is of them coming out as the parent of an LGBTQI child. I mean the ripple effects of that can move into so many different stratifications of society and this is where I think it’s truly transformative, I mean that is sort of the….that ripple effect of maintaining an identity but knowing that that umbrella shifts and it has far reaching consequences and possibilities.  |
| Jill | I think that often people say to me so if LGBTQI people are about being part of the community, why do you actually need a Pride event? I think it’s one of my most asked questions: If you feel like you’re part of the community why do you need to have a separate party? Well no we don’t, you can go to any bar you like with anybody you like and quite frankly make out with anyone you like - this is a different era than it used to be - but I think at the same time there is some older people that are not comfortable about that so this gives them a little bit more opportunity and we’re completely open like I said before to whatever you do. We don’t need to have a Christchurch Pride but it’s about bringing a unity and educating everybody.  |
| Richard | And the other thing is we put on the best parties.  |
| Jill | Well we try to! |
| Anne | I would also argue that we still do need our Pride because we need to be able to show the general population that we do still have young people coming through with high needs, we do still have older members of our community who need extra support and this is a way of us saying hey look we’re still here and we don’t as yet have equality. We have it under the law but we don’t have it under society.  |
| William | Yes there’s a huge gap I think between juridical practices between the law, that’s necessary but it’s not sufficient and there’s a huge gap between what the law says and people’s actual material everyday lives and we need to try to sort of do something about that.  |
| Jill | Yes and I guess we’re trying to bring the social aspect of it back in. Like you say you can write a report to cover everything in the world if you want, you can make it as long as you like but it’s still not going to make people interact. We’re still all humans that interact with each other.  |
| William | And unlike the larger society we don’t discriminate. I mean that’s why this notion that everyone is welcome, I mean that’s a model that could be very, very powerful and very strong - to be inclusive in the broader sense of the word.  |
| Jill | Yup even when we’re doing this Pride we’re still looking forward to next Pride. If one or two people always pop up and say hey, we didn’t have our thing in Christchurch Pride and we’re like ok well you need to give your details because if you’re a new group or you’re not being heard come and see us, we’re completely open to you being heard and you might meet a few more people, have a few more people in your group or somebody might find life a little bit easier by meeting a likeminded peer or a support person.  |
| Richard | We just have to keep working at the inclusion because of that shifting umbrella and the shifting sands, we need to make sure every time we do something that we keep in mind that principle and that will serve us really well I think.  |
| Sally | That seems like a fantastic place to halt the conversation, I’m sorry I’m sure we could keep talking for lot lots more hours but unfortunately we’re out of time so I just want to say ngā mihi nui - thank you very much to all of you for coming in, fantastic. This is the first show we’ve done on these particular set of rights or this particular group, this particular community and I’m hoping that the listeners will have got a lot out of this conversation.So everyone who is listening - make sure you check out the Pride programme which I’m sure you can find online, I’ll post the information to Facebook as well.  |
| Jill | Yes we’re Facebook and we’ve got a webpage as well available.  |
| Sally | And tune in again next month, the 20th of April or the 24th and we’ll be talking about researching, monitoring and activating human rights on line. Kia ora.  |