



mens briefs

HONE & OWN

SPRING EDITION 2010 ISSUE #8



ARLEN J PETERSON

On the market. Fresh meat. Get it while it's hot. These are among the numerous phrases circling the mind of this recent break-up wounded. Instinctively, I have become very comfortable with my choice to use this single

time as patiently as need be, to learn about myself, grow as an individual and govern myself with what's right for me. All inspirational speech and Dr. Philish advice aside, I converse to another instinct we in the animal kingdom relish: getting laid. It's truly not that hard to do these days, I mean compared to the past, we really take it for granted. All you got to do is take some pictures, describe yourself and what you need and depending on your demographics, you'll probably have booty call within 24 hours or less.

Upon reviewing a popular personals webpage offering anything from fuck buddy to long term, I was presented with an analogical point of view I had dismissed in my early twenties: The feeling of being a product, sitting with all the other products in a supermarket, having shoppers compare side by side. How fresh is this one? Which is more firm? What aisle are you located on? 2 for 1 special? The innuendo list goes on and the list of options available certainly is twice as long. I was overwhelmed with my selections and even more overwhelmed and disturbed with the amount of sticky supermarket tickets we placed upon ourselves: Masculine, straight acting, young, very good looking, intelligent, always in the mood. Always in the mood? Way to take the edge off a root canal. After

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MWP REPORT

BY CAPTAIN SNOWDON

The Men's Wellness Program continues to play a key role in the monthly intergenerational event Creating Connections. We are a coalition of groups including the Lesbian Seniors Care Society, University of Victoria Pride Society, Safe Spaces, Unique Entertainment, Camosun College Pride, Transaction Transgender Action Group who come together with the goals of sharing stories of queer lives and historical struggles and cross-generational mentorship.



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ABOUT MEN'S BRIEFS



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TO SUBMIT CONTENT OR PROVIDE COMMENT, PLEASE EMAIL MWP@AVI.ORG OR CALL 250.384.2366

viral monologues: men's edition

Presentation Synopsis and Script by TERRY GROOM

These words were written by Terry Groom and intended to be an HIV rant on his sex profile on squirr.org; gay.com; manhunt.net; and, gaydar.co.uk.

THE STORY BEHIND THE RANT

There was a time in my life when I was fascinated by the many online opportunities for sex with men by using various gay sex chat lines, made available on the many various gay websites. I was spending a lot of time viewing other guys' profiles and it was becoming more commonplace for quite a few misguided individuals to include the following text that clearly discriminated against individuals with HIV: "STD and HIV NEGATIVE – U BE TOO..."

Oftentimes, guys would not post these words but upon speaking to them, either by phone or in person, and once it was discovered that I was HIV positive, the guy would either get up and walk away without even a word, try to politely decline the hookup even though he was clearly interested just moments before, or just rudely hang up the phone on me. A few would berate me for even thinking that I could infiltrate the chat lines in order to "spread my disease."

Nobody enjoys being discriminated against, and I finally became so fed up that I took a stand against these guys and decided to fight back by including my take on this issue in my sex profile.

WHAT HAPPENED?

Unfortunately, the various website administrators got back to me to inform me that upon reviewing my revised profile, they could not allow the posting due to the nature of the text. They appreciated the intention and also agreed with my position, however, if one person got to do it, then others would certainly follow and the administrators did not want to open this Pandora's Box and deal with it but they appreciated my bravado. In a nutshell, they at least acknowledged it, but in the end, it was too "soap-box" for them...

THE SCRIPT

The stage is black. A soft, pale white light turns on to stage right. A man is sitting at his computer desk in his home typing furiously, trying in a desperate battle to juggle 16 open chat windows, for he is attempting to get laid on a Saturday night. He is clad in a tight black T-shirt that reads "I FUCK DUDES" in block white



lettering across his chest. The only other piece of clothing he is wearing is a small navy-issue green jockstrap with the word NAVY in yellow across his crotch. As he continues to try to manage the melee, he constantly feels his crotch and nervously tugs on himself.

His speech begins to become quicker and louder, his tone becomes aggressive until he is visibly angry and practically shouting at his computer screen, "HIV NEGATIVE, YOU BE TOO!"

The man turns and walks to center stage and begins the monologue.

THE RANT

IMPORTANT If u have a hangup with threes or groups – or especially, – [PAY ATTENTION TO THIS] if the guy(or guys – or gals) have to be just so fucking perfect and the chemistry must flow like the Fraser River and the planets must align in a perfect ... please turn around and go elsewhere. Don't waste my time with that kind of bullshit, alright?!

The very same goes for those who STILL remain uneducated about HIV (yes-I see you-and it's OK... I'm not gonna rip your head off or anything, but you might just wanna read the following text, you are gonna learn something new here).

Someone has got to say this: all it takes is a little effort to gain a bit of knowledge and in this day and age, to catch up with the rest of us. If you don't know the basics about having sex with someone who has HIV and, more importantly, if you don't know HOW to enjoy having RISK-FREE and SAFE(R) sex with a person living with HIV, then what the hell are you lookin' for sex for in the present time anyway. It's time to sport some smarts, people. This is important. This is SEX that we are talking about!!! If you were to gain some knowledge,

viral monologues: men's edition

then you won't sound and look like such a freaking FOOLISH LOSER to the rest of us (as well as to Society in general, because the knowledge is finally starting to catch on). Ya wanna fit in, right? Accepted by your peers? Definitely. At some level – we all do.

So how does one go about changing your own attitude about HIV? Get the right attitude through educating yourself (and while you're at it, those around you who may need a bit of attitude adjustment). It doesn't take much. I am lucky to have had some amazing lovers and friends who have benefitted greatly by the giving/receiving of sexual pleasure with Yours Truly. You can't get past the 'HIV thing'? Fine. Suit yourself.

But you miss out. I can boast because I am a very sexual male. And I know what I'm doing and I know what I'm talking about. You could say I am an authority, of sorts. You wanna pass that up (mind-blowingly wicked sex) because I have HIV, go right ahead. It is YOU who loses, OK?

Sorry if I'm going on a bit too long, but the ones on these sites that think they have some sort of mystical "green light" to publicly devalue the lives (and especially the sensual/sexual lives), of those of us living with (yes - I said LIVING WITH) HIV – by boldly, coldly (and ignorantly) stating in their profiles – that in order to be graced with the privilege of being granted permission to have sex with them, you MUST BE HIV-, you people piss me off. And I'm trying really hard to keep negative, dramatic chaos out of my life. I've taken too much of it. In this day and age there is NO EXCUSE for being scared stupid. Neither is it OK to be mean and nasty (u know who you are). So, get informed. Communicate. Ask questions – go ahead, it is OK now.

A fucking bus accident or a rampaging rogue spawning Salmon is gonna do me in wayyyyy before this (now very treatable) affliction will. One more thing, if you will allow me: There are many "situations" that can cause a person to become infected, OK. Even if contracted through sexual contact, don't always assume that a person gets HIV because they are careless, out of control losers. Some of us got it through the bad intentions of others. How? Well... why not grab some balls and ask me in person and I'll be more than happy to give you a multitude of ways that, if you are not moderately careful – someone MAY or COULD take advantage of an innocent lapse in the heat of passion... sounds like I've been there, don't it? I know what I'm talking about because I AM INFORMED...

OK.... Thanks. I just had to get that out before I wasted the energy of a dozen orgasms on this. I appreciate your patience. I would appreciate your consideration about what I am saying here even more tho... Sex is still very much fun for me. It should be for everyone else too. If one person changes their attitude upon reading my diatribe – OK – make that 210 people enlighten themselves and go out and enrich the sexual world with this way of thinking – then I would gladly waste the energy of a billion orgasms. And – speaking of which...

I like my cock sucked like it should be – lots of pressure on the down-stroke as well as the upstroke, and you know what? It is EASY to be able to remember to do that with a little effort and practice. It pays off. BIGTIME. EVERYTIME. So, if yer gonna suck my dick, suck it like u OWN it yourself. Pretentious fucker, ain't I? Well, I have arrived at the point in my life where, when it comes to sex – I should always get what I want. And now I do.

I am awesome with people, esp. three and groups, and one-on-one I have been told that I am a very skilled and lovingly patient lover. So there. I'm very easy to get along with and my sense of humor tends to work for me most of the time. Just don't think you can take advantage of that. If you get yer rawks off by causing friction, drama or chaos; if you think that it is OK to cramp my style or otherwise take advantage of a goodhearted guy like me, who just wants to share pleasures, I'll be the first one to tell ya to take a hike. I will not do it nicely either. And I won't ask twice...

So, as my nick implies, I am builtzfuk – NOT builtzfuck WITH. Love, intimacy and all that stuff is better left to the ones who need it or have use for it this year (2008). I do not, at least-not at this time. I am into serious hookups only – no LTR. If ya just wanna get to know me and hang out and be friends – you RAWK! 'nuff said...

WARNING: I'm the guy your Momma warned you about. If that bothers you then please step away quickly. All others... please step right up.

OH, and you DON'T have to be HIV+ Ö ... to get a good fuck thrown into ya by me :-)-~

Thank you Captain for allowing me to finally get up on my soapbox!!!

The man bows, turns and exits stage left.

STAGE LIGHTS DIM TO BLACK.



The great outdoors

BY STEPH DAVIS

For those who know me, yes I am still around. For those who don't know me.... well my name is Steph. For some time now, I seem to be known as a Kamping Guru. I got the kamping bug at an early age. As an adult I still love to Kamp. Yes Kamp with a "K." Kamping = Men only. The only difference from a young child kamping to an adult kamping is that I now love sex and kamping. It's been awhile since I last wrote about some kamping experiences, but Spring is around the corner and so is kamping.

This article will be short and sweet, yes just like me – short. Basically I would like to put it out there. If you are interested in joining me and others spend some quality time kamping this season, let me know via e-mail. I will add your name to my list. I am hoping to put together a few kamping excursions this season. I/we are thinking of heading down to Anthony's Court in Long Beach Washington, Triangle Recreation Camp near Granite Falls Washington, Shadow Falls outside Vancouver, and a couple of other closer to home trips here on the island.

Depending where we kampf may dictate some rules or regulations, but I will do my best to ensure we have a great time. I am hoping to find places where we can feel relaxed, safe, and be ourselves. Of course nude sun bathing and swimming in the buff has to be on the map. I will try and find places where you can sit and be alone, and/or spend some quality time with your "F" buds. If you have any suggestions or if you are or know of anyone who can host a bunch of us, please let me know and we can put it out there. I will do my best to reply to all ASAP. If you don't like kamping, then go Camping.

Until then, be good, be safe and have fun!

(justin_tillicum@hotmail.com)

THE NEW CLUBS IN TOWN

1. THE COPPER CLUB

BY GARY PENNY – www.copperclub.ca

My name is Gary Penny. I have been involved with gay rights all my life. Seattle, Vancouver, and now Victoria. I was the former owner of the nightclub now known as Papparazzi. It was called PRISM Lounge when I had it 3 years ago. Before PRISM, I owned a club in Vancouver called Denman Station. I was involved with Meals on Wheels when it was first getting started, and have always had an active part in the PWA community. I took a break, thought I was going to retire, but now I'm back!

Now....about my new club! I'm opening a new lounge The Copper Club! It is located above Paul's Motor Inn at 1900 Douglas St. It will be a lounge for gay and bisexual men. We will be serving pub food, made available from the downstairs restaurant Paul's. We have 4 big screen televisions (42 inches) plus a 16 foot screen that descends from the ceiling for movie nights, sports, and special events. We have an area at the front of the club that can and will be converted into a dance floor on the weekends, complete with a DJ booth. Other times it can be used for special productions such as Drag Shows.

We have free wireless internet for those that may need it. And, we will have male dancers! We have free parking! If people need accommodation while visiting our city.... we have special pricing arranged with Paul's Motor Inn. We are just a block down the hill from the new arena, when people are in town to take in a concert or sporting event.

We will be open Sunday's through Thursday's 12 noon till midnight and Friday's and Saturday nights till 2am. Look forward to seeing you all there!

2. LEDGE WITH AN EDGE

Arlen J Peterson

Re-route your happy hour routine, plan a Saturday out with the boys. Scramble to that oversized Bastion Square clock which never seems to be the right time and I will tell you it is the perfect time to sink into relaxation at the

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farewell KAMP R&Os

As of November 1, 2009 Rick and Owen closed their gates to their property on Nanaimo River.

Rick Meyers and Owen Kinnersley along with Richard Cope and the Rainbow Campers began what became known as “Kamp RnO’s” in the spring of 2004.

Over the past 5 ½ years many men from across the nation and beyond came to stay on the property and take in one of the many events held by Rick and Owen. Events like the FRUIT FLOAT, The Great Easter Beer Hunt, and Nanaimo Gay Pride were very well attended. Gay men swam in the river, played games, and shared stories around the fire pit – all in a safe environment. The Men’s Wellness Program hosted a number of events including the island-wide Gay Men’s BBQ which drew an average of 60+ guys every year. Large groups such as the Border Riders, PCAN, and Prime Times also came out and celebrated.

The events at Rick and Owen’s became quite popular – especially their wedding, which boasted 400 guests while Rick and Owen exchanged their vows and later danced the night away to the disco sounds of Wunderbread.

I have a huge place in my heart for Rick and Owen and their vision that brought community together. I vividly remember the first time I drove on to the property. Arriving in my VW Van with my hound Abbadabado I was waved over by his hot looking guy with a big grin. I introduced myself and the Men’s Wellness Program – and this was before hormones and surgery – and he did not blink. From that day on Rick and Owen were great supporters of myself and the Men’s Wellness Program. They were great allies against transphobia, always calling guys on their shit and accepting me. The other really important piece that they seemed to naturally take on was educating people about trans stuff in an informal conversational way, this was delightful and a bit of a nice break.

Unfortunately, while they were becoming popular with the gay men of the world they were also became very popular with the local governments. The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) had some issues with what was “going on” at Rick and Owen’s property and began court proceedings in the early spring of 2009. Rick and Owen spent a great deal of energy and money attempting to work with the RDN until they exhausted all their resources. I guess we will never know just how much of the battle with



the regional district was based on homophobia.

Rumor had it that Rick and Owen would be able to work with the RDN to allow camping and events on their property... or that they may be able to purchase another property on the island and continue their dreams of a “Gay Man’s Retreat.”

At this time in their lives, Rick and Owen have decided to remain on their property. Owen, who was working with the elderly, has gone back to doing what he always did best...working with those who are in need. Rick is still working at BC Ferries and, of course, still performing as the Drag Queen Extraordinaire...Vikki Smudge! Rick is involved in a ton of creative projects including a new play and a pilot for a TV series.

Rick and Owen want to thank all those who supported them over the past 5 ½ years and look forward to seeing everyone again soon.

Thank you both for being the community minded, fun, supportive and welcoming guys you are.

You are both huge gifts to the community.

If you want to reach Rick and Owen...or have any questions...their email address is still alive and well and they would love to hear from you at kamprnos@telus.net.

QUEERLY, CAPTAIN

Looking for networking opportunities and to expand your business? Consider joining *Community In Business!*

Island Community In Business Society – a society formed to support the non-heterosexual community, provide a social club for members, and to provide a conduit for interaction and communication between and among non-heterosexual and heterosexual communities – meets three times a month for breakfast and dinner meetings and a social night. Over 200 Greater Victoria businesses and business people are already on its mailing list.

Community In Business members network and promote their business interests at regular meet-

ings; advertise to a target market through the Community In Business newsletter; and enhance their online presence with interactive business profiles and links on the Community In Business website.

Everyone is invited to come to a Breakfast, Cocktails/ Dinner or Social Club meeting. First Timers have the opportunity to place a Coupon in our Newsletter. Visit www.communityinbusiness.ca for full details and to register your membership today! For more information, e-mail: info@communityinbusiness.ca

LEDGE WITH AN EDGE

(CONT'D. FROM PAGE 4)

newest gay lounge our fair city has to offer.

Appropriately nestled upon the second floor mezzanine within the ascetically modern and yet traditional styled Bedford Regency, I had the privilege of meeting up with Terry Jacques, assistant manager of the newly established Ledge Lounge. Terry is a familiar face as a bartender at Garrick's, also in the Bedford Regency and has been proudly working at a number of GLBT established lounges and nightclubs over the years.

It became clear there was a demand from Victorians for a gay oriented tavern and upon opportunity, he quickly ambitioned to co-manage the latest development in contemporary pub life with Jay Nowak. "There is a definite need for the community to have a pub of our own in the city," Jacques commented upon me asking of inspiration, "a pub style atmosphere to fill the gap between coffee shop and nightclub." Music to my ears. Jacques plans to give back to the community with patronage to various pride areas.

The Ledge offers a breath of fresh air to any standards of a true pub, literally. Upon entrance there is a wide open feeling of continuous space and anyone who appreciates natural light or the lure of night time glow will be pleased. A wide enough flat

screen borders the bar for all the replay action; you can be your own DJ with a fully functioning Jukebox, or chill at the bar over a cocktail. If you're like me and get a little competitive after a pint or two, ease your fire by challenging your entourage to a free round of pool or foosball (I know I'll be hogging the latter).

And do Jacques and Nowak ever know their target audience, with a broad variety of health conscious choices on the menu, selections are far from traditional common greasy pub selections as "nothing is deep fried!" described Jacques. Appetizers offer an impressive arrange of starters, be it a taste of malaysian chicken skewers to oyster shooters or edamame and the greens are anything but boring with selections such as halloumi and arugula parmesan salads. Among an entrée collection with the high appetite in mind you'll find a savory braised lamb shank, a dish of risotto or beef rogan josh. And there's a decadent dessert menu and a fine selection of drinks to choose from, be it local draft beer, cocktails and wine and with daily drink specials all week, all I can say is keep 'em coming!

So there you have it, a tailored up-to-date pub environment with something for everyone amongst the imposing character at 1140 Government Street within the second floor of the Bedford Regency. To find out more visit The Ledge Lounge Facebook page or the Victoria Pride website. Last, but certainly not least, there is an elevator in the hotel lobby as the establishment is wheelchair accessible, or, if you happen to be like me and find a flight of stairs after a few rounds of drinks to be... challenging.

HONE & OWN

(CONT'D. FROM COVER)

having a seemingly not so stimulating conversation with an unidentified male who labeled himself as 'Intelligent' (who looked nothing like his profile picture), I decided it was foolish to prey such hostility and effort into something as trivial as online profile descriptions. It's none of my business as to why people behave as such.

Then, that same gut feeling of passion struck me once more as I asked for inspiration to write this very article. "What queers on Vancouver Island are up to" was a suggestion for inspiration. I was turned off, not for the advice which I asked for in the first place; but my own skirmish reaction to the word *queer*. I have never liked it, I have never identified with it. Ever since Kurt Morley in the seventh grade informed me my haircut "made me look queer," it has always been one of least favorite expressions; yet it has turned from offensive to mainstream so rapidly, it's apparent that I should to conform to it positively somehow. Then I realized it wasn't the word itself, my issue was with usage of labels. Suddenly inspiration hit like a wildfire and it became my business.

What are labels in our society and what are our motives for using them? We need to identify things, organize and communicate amongst ourselves as to what to expect. This meat will expire in five days. This spray is explosive and hazardous if used incorrectly. Labels seem to be good so far. Wait a minute, what about masculine and straight acting. By whose standards defines 'masculine'? Is acting a common action of your insecurity? The vague, open ended descriptions involved my curiosity so much; I couldn't help but wonder: When do labels upon ourselves really inflict hazards? A straight man can be identified in our PC world as a heterosexual male. Simple. What's not so simple is which of the billions are being acted out, the steel worker, the compassionate doctor, the alpha rugby player, or, the shy, skinny gentle natured artist who likes the occasional Cher song and bangs his girlfriend five times a week. Excuse me, which are you acting like? It seems like credibility is deferred when such an arbitrary identity issue takes place. As someone who has worked in the industry, a decent acting role has distinctive character development.

Speaking of which and in the arena of abusing labels, penalty points are due for those who make quick assumptions and label others. All I want to



express is a very important quick story to outline what labeling a person does and how insightful it is to break the mould. About three years ago I was living with a close friend of mine as a roommate. At the time she had a boyfriend who to say the least was homophobic previously, and to the requests of conformity, him and his buddies would identify the fags, queers and wimps and relinquish their disgust as need be. He certainly would not hang out with one.

Then something magical happened! After leaving the realm of high school and getting a job, place to live, etc, he dated my friend and hung out at our place constantly. At first, he had no idea I liked guys, a few months went by and after overhearing some of my conversations he no doubt knew. In fact I knew he knew, because I told him so. But nothing changed. I did not alter my actions, he remained comfortable all the time, and we hung out with his other buddies. My friend would always comment to myself saying "Before, he was the complete opposite of this" or, "he has never hung out with a gay guy before. I never would have guessed that he would in a million years."

Naturally, I was delighted and a most inspiring characteristic of the relationship occurred: all he had to do was be around me, realize a connection between reality and the illusion of previous definitions, that's it. I didn't have to do anything but be myself. I didn't have to lecture, defend myself, raise a stir, and pretend to be someone else. The label previously employed had been shattered and a new attitude birthed in it's place. And a comfortable label I can prescribe to in that situation is *Pride*.

I'm a man, you're a man, she's a woman, she doesn't look like a woman, you're a woman; we're human. I am Caucasian, he is not. Those people are middle class. There's countless labels in our society, what we do with them is up to us and if we choose to incorporate these labels and make them our own, we should know what they stand for and be contented with them. And if the labels you are wearing cover your eyes you might be blinded from the possibilities to become something you never knew existed. Or, you might get run over by a bus.

SEX NOW!

GUYS KNOWING GUYS

That's what the Sex Now Survey is all about. The Community Based Research Centre has been researching gay men's sexuality, health and culture in British Columbia for more than a decade. Now we're extending the Sex Now survey across Canada and beyond.

HIV remains a major concern and according to Statistics Canada, mental health is the most significant issue gay men experience. It is only fitting that the focus of this year's Sex Now Survey be on the sexuality and mental health of gay and bisexual men. The results of the survey will assist gay men's health organizations with the assessment and creation of new health programs.

Take the survey and help spread the word through email, Facebook or Twitter. To learn more about us and the Sex Now Survey, visit our website at www.cbrc.net.

www.sexnowsurvey.com

SEXUAL STYLES

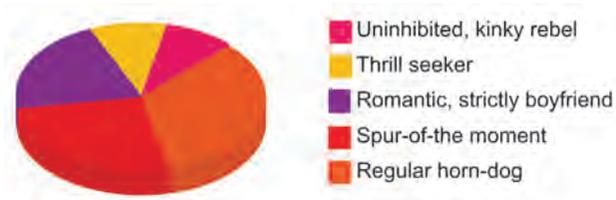
We – SexNow survey guys – got interested in sexual styles from research studies suggesting that various personality types react differently to sexually charged situations. Sexual styles are the innate patterns we express in our personal approaches to such situations. Predictable differences show up in the way that each of us would handle a particular scenario.

To probe this intriguing theory we asked a series of questions in 2008 to find out how our respondents fit into sexual styles. We took a self

assessment approach to the questions which allowed respondents to sort out their best fit among available options.

First, we asked respondents to select from a list of traits to identify the one that tends to predominate their approach to sex.

Here's the way our respondents sorted.



We also asked respondents to select an appropriate name for their sexual style.

What name would you give your sexual style?

Adventurous	31%	Impulsive	20%
Intimate	26%	Anarchist	3%
Conventional	20%		

The result shows a unique way of slicing the gay male population pie. We noticed a large migration away from the term "conventional" to describe a "regular horn-dog" in favour of "adventurous."

Maybe adventurous is the way the largest proportion of gay guys like to think of themselves even if they are just "regular guys." But the results also show just how hard it is to describe "normal" when it comes to sex. You end up having to explain "conventional" by what it is not: i.e., "not kinky." Even so, large portions of gay guys think of themselves as either "intimate" or "impulsive." The self-described "anarchistic," kinky rule breakers appear to be a small minority. Interestingly, when we cross-tabulated style traits with style names we noticed that whatever name you give to a sexual style, one trait will dominate but all other traits are represented.

So, even if you think of yourself as an intimate romantic the impulsive kinky rebel is still in there with you. And so it goes that there is an intimate side to every thrill seeker. How do these findings fit your experience?





meditations on sex

Meditations on Sex is a seven month old group facilitated by Etienne Gour and Captain Snowdon. It is an effort to bring a sense of cohesion in the community and co-create a safe receptacle for us to share our experiences formidable and horrible, spectacular or far from it, with all things related to sex. Among the offerings we would like to participate in are heart circles, mindful touch, erotic massage, creative writing, life drawing, yoga and everything else our hearts can open to. If you are interested in meeting with one of us to find out more about the group and see if it is a match for you send us and email at meditationsonsex@gmail.com.

Etienne says:

In theatre jargon, this is a black box. The light is dim and the hugs are warm. The words are few and the music is enticing. I have come here to move and be moved. Is it enough to say that Meditations on Sex (MoS) is a safe haven? No, because it is far more than a resting place; miles away from complacency,

we chose to come together to acknowledge our willingness to be challenged. Yes, to be honest there is always a mix of excitement and anxiety before each MoS. Excitement for the gift it is to have this space to share what it's like to be queer, to be erotic, to be sexual beings.

I enjoy the absence of predation, the presence of peers, the exchange that occurs when we allow ourselves and each other to be vulnerable. I revel in the sense of spirituality, not as a prescribed dogma but as the emergence of what is sacred at the heart of each human body. And a dose of anxiety I can cope with: the fear of truth. What I may discover each time I betray a secret, each time I reveal what obstacles I laid on the road for I do not believe yet I can go any further... to remove prison walls I've become accustomed to is scary business indeed. But it is that I long for, the open horizon, I am addicted to freedom and I know that MoS is the help I need to extirpate myself from taboos that don't serve me. This is why I'm here!

RELECTIONS OF A NEWLY-MINTED POZ PEER COUNSELLOR

BY TERRY J. GROOM

I stared at the email I received from Captain in disbelief at first, but that feeling quickly gave way to excited anticipation of becoming part of a learning experience that I had longed to be a part of for the better part of a year. To be a participant, or rather, a student of Bill Coleman, who would teach me how to become a well-rounded Peer Counsellor to newly-diagnosed HIV positive individuals, was too good to be true. I immediately responded with “YES – I AM IN!” and the coming weeks saw me plugging the dates of the classes into my Blackberry.

To be truthful, I already had some experience under my belt. I have been doing street-based Peer Counselling on the ‘street-level’ of my own accord for the past 18 months and I felt that it would serve me well as I entered formal instruction. I couldn’t have been more right.

I entered AIDS Vancouver Island’s cafe at its newly-acquired headquarters in downtown Victoria with a fresh and open mind, excited to meet Mr. Coleman for the first time. Of course, Bill did not disappoint, he is as friendly as he is knowledgeable and an amazing source of wisdom. I felt very honoured, lucky – justified, even – to be in this course, given that I had come such a long way in my journey from the self-absorbed, self-destructive person I had once been when I was struggling with my own fate as a newly-diagnosed HIV positive man. These feelings washed over me as we got down to the business of learning reflective listening skills and what it actually means to be empathetic towards another person.

As an actor in my own right, role-playing exercises are nothing new to me. However, the more I participated in such activities as part of our structured learning, the more I came to understand what would be the most important factor in Peer Counselling – that it is not my job to fix my clients or to even ask questions of them or about their lives.

This took me by surprise because I’ve had counsellors of my own throughout the better part of the past five years who had constantly and consistently asked questions of me in order to illicit a response from me, so that they could ‘fix’ my problems of the day. I thought that this style of approaching a client through counselling would be very tough – and I was right.

But soon, through further discussion and much more role-playing practice sessions, I realised with

fascination that I was quite wrong. As a parent, I have always been a good listener, so the tools I was garnering throughout the course of learning this new way of reflective, empathic listening fit easily with me and I began to ‘get it’.

There were many times throughout this course that caused me to pause and to reflect upon my own journey. The most valuable spin-off effect was my own realisation that I had come so very far from where I had once been. Medically, my CD4 count is currently among the highest on the island, and my medical team is very pleased to see me becoming the picture of great health, good habits, wellness, positive empowerment and self-esteem.

I have worked hard to get where I am now and have done this pretty much on my own. When in 2004 I was diagnosed with HIV in Vancouver, there simply was no access to a Peer Counsellor for the newly-diagnosed and I longed to speak to one who knew what I was going through. But all resources were stretched at the time, for the city had experienced a spike in new HIV diagnoses, so save for a few large group counselling sessions I attended at St. Paul’s Hospital, I was on my own and heading down a most destructive path that would have seen me dead if not for the smart choice to move to Victoria to get away from the madness and the chaos that was taking place in my life in Vancouver.

Once I arrived in Victoria, I was lucky to find a very special person who became my mentor over the past three years. Without his help and patience, I wouldn’t have come as far in the amount of time it has taken me. This amazing man, Claude, has been successfully dealing with his own HIV diagnosis for the past 24 years. You’d be right to say that I’ve burned him out a few times, yet he is still very much there for me and I am sure that he is ecstatic about both my turn-around and my future path as a mentor and Peer Counsellor.

You know, it is much akin to coming around full-circle, a measurement of my own healing, to a realisation of my own self-worth through giving back to the community that has supported me and to my clients – a very special chance to give what I can – to help them live better lives than I initially did.

To lend an empathetic ear to those who truly need it is worth its weight in gold.

SEX AND HEPATITIS C IN HIV-POSITIVE GAY MEN

BY ROB GAIR

Hepatitis C is a virus that causes chronic liver disease. It is spread when the blood of an infected person gets into your blood, usually from sharing needles when injecting drugs.

Hepatitis C has not traditionally been classified as a sexually transmitted infection but in recent years new infections are being documented in HIV-positive gay men who report unprotected anal sex without injection drug use. The mechanism for how hep C may be passed on during sex is not obvious so let's explore the issue a little further.

Hepatitis C is different from other types of viral hepatitis (e.g. hepatitis A or B) in a few ways: it is only passed in blood (not saliva, semen, or feces), it usually does not cause a noticeable illness right after infection, most people are not able to clear the virus on their own and there is no vaccine. Hep C gradually causes damage to the liver, the first sign of trouble often coming many years after the initial infection. This means that some people who have hep C may not know it. There is treatment for hepatitis C but the side effects are hard to tolerate and only about 50% of people who complete treatment actually clear the virus. People who get a "cure" may be reinfected at a later time if they are exposed to the virus again.

Studies looking into sexual risk factors for hepatitis C in HIV-positive gay men show that infections tend to occur in guys who report frequent unprotected anal sex (including group sex, rough sex, or prolonged sex) and fisting. In other words, sex activities that are more likely to cause bleeding in the ass and where the blood of an infected person may be passed to other partners. This might happen, for example, in a threesome where two bottoms are sharing the same top. If one of the bottoms has hep C, traces of his blood may be passed into the ass of the other bottom when the top passes back and forth between the two men. The same thing can happen when guys share sex toys or fists.

There are still many unanswered questions about how hepatitis C is spread during sex and who is vulnerable but the take home message is that putting anything into your ass that has someone else's blood on it means there is a risk for hep C infection.

For more information, see Frank Talk at www.checkhimout.ca

MWP REPORT

CONTINUED FROM COVER



In January we held our sixth Creating Connections, and once again it was packed. Recently, there have been two exciting developments firstly Creating Connections has become the subject of a documentary currently being filmed. This program has become wildly successful beyond the coalition's imagination!

Our Meditations on Sex Group is an ongoing bi-weekly gaggle of queer men who are interested in exploring all things related to the role of sex and sexuality in our lives from a holistic and spiritual angle. We have hosted traditional radical faerie heart circles, participated in life drawing and dynamic meditation, blessed ours and each others' bodies, and kept an ongoing dialogue about what it means to be masculine, queer and sexual in this day and age.

This spring, keep your eyes open for our bar outreach team. We'll be heading out to chat with folks and to encourage them to think about STI and HIV testing at both the new and older gay venues in Victoria.

This year marks the fourth year of the Campbell River Walk Away from Homophobia on May 17. The fantastic Y4D (youth for diversity team) will be sharing the stage with the amazing Vancouver-based recording artist Kate Reid! So mark your calendars and come out and join us.

There is a ton to look forward to and get involved in this spring and summer. Please send me an email at captain.snowdon@avi.org to get involved. I wish you all the best on your adventures in the sun.

calendar

events on vancouver island

CAMPBELL RIVER PRIDE

This fabulous discussion and support group has changed its meetings to the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month. Location: call Leanne for more details 250-830-0787. CR Pride is the lead organizer for the Annual Walk Away from Homophobia.

COMOX VALLEY

We're called IC Pride (Island Central Pride). Our intention is to pick up where Alex and Bill left off and keep the flow and communication lines open. There are many events in the works, and we want to maintain a way for our Community to find out about them. P-FLAG hosts and promotes the Pride Picnic every Labor Day Weekend. 2010 will mark their 10th year. Individuals have organized hikes, kayaking, past dances and more. The Chat and Chew runs once a month and the women have their Potluck/Dances. We'd like to work with everyone and build on the hard work already done.

The Comox Valley and surrounding area is a great place to live. Our Community is growing. People are moving here and they're wondering where we are, and how to find their way in... tap into what's going on.

The IC Pride mission statement is to unite the Comox Valley Pride community, be Visible and celebrate diversity. We're really excited.

We've set up a blog site. There you can find out more about what we've got planned for 2010. www.islandcentralpride.blogspot.com.

COMOX VALLEY CHAT & CHEW

A gathering for lgbt folk in the Comox Valley. Third Thursday of every month.

Chat, eat, meet new folks, find out what is happening around the island! Location: The Grotto - 477 5th Street, Courtenay

VANCOUVER ISLAND RAINBOW ASSOCIATION (NANAIMO)

As for the VIRA plans for this year we're off to a pretty good start. On January 21st we held a coffee night at the Starbucks at the University Mall, it was well attended, everyone had a good time and we're looking forward to hosting more of them as the year progresses.

We are also working with the Men's Wellness Centre and the Gay Straight Alliance to co-ordinate a youth group here in Nanaimo. This should be an exciting program for the younger members of our community.

The Pride week plans are well under way, we've booked the lower shelter at Bowen Park for our Pride Picnic on June 20, 2010, with the Flag Raising on June 21, a bowling night in the middle of the week and the Pride Dance will be held at the Pleasant Valley Hall on the 26th of June.

So that's what's happening in Nanaimo. info@nanaimopride.org

VICTORIA MEN'S COFFEE NIGHT

This weekly coffee & chat group has been going for over 5 years. New folks are always welcome! Come on out and meet some down to earth regular guys and find out what is going on around Victoria. Captain.Snowdon@avi.org for more info.

QUEER YOUTH DROP-IN (VICTORIA)

New drop-in space for LGBTQAI youth
Wednesdays 6-8
[info at spccyouth@gmail.com](mailto:info@spccyouth@gmail.com)

NEW SOCIAL GROUP FOR QUEER CHRISTIANS

In the past, there has been great misunderstanding between the Christian community and the gay and lesbian community. This has led to much abuse, both ways, so that it has been difficult to be "out" as a lesbian in the Christian community or as a Christian in the gay and lesbian community.

The United Church is working to break down the barriers and has a network of supportive, Affirming &/or inclusive congregations. In the past, it has supported and worked with other groups to bring about the legalization of same-sex marriages. The Victoria Presbytery of the United Church's latest initiative to support the Queer community is a new group in Victoria called Queer Victoria Christians (QVC).

Please let anyone you know who may be interested that Queer Victoria Christians, is meeting at First Met United, February 12 and March 19, at 7:00 PM. For further information: e-mail QVC@shaw.ca or call 250-544-8312.

SOUTH ISLAND PRIDE COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Centre is a community resource providing support, health and social services, and public education for the well being of people of all genders, gender identities, and sexualities, and their allies in the Capital Regional District of British Columbia.

Additionally, the Centre is committed to building pride, civic engagement and Community participation within a safe and supportive environment while fostering self-determination and acceptance of diversity within the larger community. It provides a home for the birth, nurture, and celebration of our organizations and cultures.

The Centre welcomes and values all people regardless of race, religion, sex, national or ethnic origin, marital status, family status, colour, age, different abilities, sexual orientation, gender identity, or economic status. info@southislandpridecentre.ca

VICTORIA PRIDE SOCIETY

The Victoria Pride Society's mission is based on empowerment. We empower those who are - or think they might be - gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, two-spirited, intersex, friends and allies. Victoria Pride fosters learning and empowerment through social celebration and networking. We strive to create a better public understanding of our community's history, courage, diversity and future.

Victoria Pride is pleased to announce that our Pride 2010 celebrations will take place from June 27 - July 4. Please visit our website for updates www.victoriapridesociety.org



SHINE (29-31 May 2010 | Nanaimo BC)

SHINE is a gay and queer men's health and wellness gathering taking place in Nanaimo from May 29 - 31.

Location: Best Western Dorchester Hotel

Contact: captain.snowdon@avi.org if you'd like to volunteer or participate.

shine

29-31 MAY 2010 | NANAIMO BC