

Pride 2014: Levelling the playing field

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The struggles and triumphs of the LGBTQ community over the past 60 years were poignantly highlighted at the 17th annual Pride Week celebration at Osgoode Hall June 17.

Hosted by the Law Society in partnership with the [Ontario Bar Association's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Section \(SOGIC\)](#), this year's event was underscored by the World Pride celebration taking place in Toronto this June — the first time the international celebration is taking place in North America.

In kicking off the celebration, Treasurer Thomas G. Conway said, “This week, as guests from around the world flock to Toronto as it plays host to World Pride, we will celebrate our diversity and the achievements we have made.

“However, progress, or rather the lack thereof, is pervasive around the world... Hard-fought battles have been won in Canada on the shoulders of those who refused to be silent and would not accept oppression or the threat of violence.

“The LGBTQ community marches forward—ever stronger—and now we must march for the global community and be even more forceful in calling for LGBTQ rights abroad.”

More than 200 people gathered to hear keynote speaker and renowned author/playwright/actor and CBC host Ann-Marie MacDonald speak. Guests also watched the documentary she narrated, *How We Got Gay*—a powerful film that considers decades of struggle for LGBT rights.

MacDonald read an excerpt from her new about-to-be-published novel, *Adult Onset*.

She also spoke candidly about her own parent's reaction to her coming out and about their change of attitude over the years to acceptance and support.

Although significant progress has been made in advancing the rights of the LGBTQ community, it's critical not to forget the hard-fought struggles of the past, she said.

“We have to level the playing field... What matters most is not who is ‘over’ the rainbow, but who is ‘underneath’ it.”

Fellow panellists and lawyers Angela Swan, Ashu Ismail and moderator Zahra Dhanani also shared details of their own coming out experiences.

“The future is a lot less dark than we think,” Swan said.

The program was followed by a reception featuring addresses from OBA President Pascale Daigneault, and OBA SOGIC Chair Paul Saguil.

Lively jazz music was provided by [The Milestones Trio](#).