



GREEN

GREEN Nominees



Green - Environment (Safe spaces) This award recognizes an outstanding individual whose work has promoted safer spaces in our schools, communities, and celebrations to ensure everyone can feel safe and be Proud.

Jen Sung

As someone who is a passionate advocate for the rights, experiences and voices of LGBTQ youth, I have the privilege of facilitating film-based presentations designed to confront and educate around bullying and homophobia/transphobia in the spaces youth inhabit. As a young person I bring my own experiences and perspectives into the presentations, allowing me to better connect with youth with visibility and Pride. This year, I brought that visibility and Pride at our first ever Northern BC tour and presented to young people in rural communities like Prince Rupert and Smithers, towns in need of more advocacy and education around LGBTQ inclusion and awareness.

This past year I was featured on the cover of *The Georgia Straight* as a role model for LGBTQ youth and was profiled in the article “Gay straight alliances help bridge the divide.” I am regularly invited to speak on panels and conferences around issues of safety, queer activism and social justice, and often work alongside members of city council and parks board in addressing these topics. In June 2012 I was asked to present on PechaKucha Night at the Vogue Theatre to discuss the philosophy behind the work I do as a performer, public speaker and queer-rights advocate. Through my personal storytelling I shared the struggles and challenges of growing up as a queer youth, as well as celebrating pride and the fun aspects of queerness! My love of Pride and celebration in my work as an activist is why I was invited to speak at City Hall for the 2012 Pride Launch.

Over the years and informing my present, I have worked with and alongside organizations like *Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW)*, *Asian Society for the Intervention of AIDS (ASIA)*, *Women Transforming Cities*, *Our City of Colours*, and Qmunity’s GAB Youth services—all centered around the theme of safety and inclusion for LGBTQ youth. When youth are given the opportunity to just BE, in an environment of love, acceptance and encouragement, they obtain the power to create meaningful changes within it. The boundless energy and fresh

perspectives of youth who feel safe and accepted, help motivate, breathe new life and inspire the queer community as it evolves into a brighter, more vibrant future.

All of these organizations and community involvement allow me to serve the community that I consider my chosen family, by helping create and strengthen safer, more inclusive spaces for all.

Maria Foster

I have been campaigning to create safe, caring and inclusive environments for members in our school communities who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two spirit, intersex, or who are questioning their sexual orientation and/or gender identity for over 10 years. In my current position as the Pride Mentor at the Vancouver School Board, I am grateful for the most challenging and rewarding job that I have ever had in a very progressive district! The VSB is one of 22 of the 60 public school districts in BC to have an LGBTQ policy and the only one that has a position with funding to support the policy. I collaborate with staff in a 150 schools with an overall population of 56,000 students to address and prevent all forms of harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression with passion and unabashed pride!

Specifically, I provide curriculum resources from Kindergarten to Grade 12 (Challenging Homophobia), websites (The Gender Spectrum), and DVD's (That's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in Schools) and I purchase hundreds of books for our school libraries including The Pirate Princess and Luna. I facilitate the popular Lunch and Learn series where I cater lunch and train staff. I fund workshops by GabYouth, Out in Schools and others.

Each year, I sponsor the Dare to Stand Out BC/Yukon Youth Conference that brings together 200-300 youth to the highest attended conference in Canada. I organize district campaigns for awareness days thru the 150 pride contacts located in each school by distributing information on the significance of the day, posters, lesson plans and activities. This year, thousands of students wore pink t-shirts when they participated in activities to celebrate our most successful Pink Day ever! Check out the video <http://ow.ly/m6FEz>!

Furthermore, for the International Day Against Homophobia, I invited ten QSA Club sponsors and ten students to attend the IDAH Qmunity Breakfast. There I was thanked in front of 500 people, in a very poignant moment, by one of the keynote speakers and my hero Cory Oskam, a

16 year old student who identifies as gender-fluid, whom I have had the honor of assisting with a transition, covered by The Province, for the past two years. My most rewarding work is in supporting families of gender variant children and I facilitate about 15 transitions yearly.

As a member of the Pride Advisory Committee, made up of organizations including Qmunity, YouthCo, and PLFAG. I participated in editing the current LGBTQ policy to include language to support the needs of gender non-conforming and transgender youth. When the BC School Sports Association created eligibility protocols for gender non-conforming youth to be able to participate in sports, I participated in a committee that wrote a letter to express our concerns. One goal has been to ensure that every high school has a Queer/Straight Alliance club. At the beginning of the year, there were 4 schools without a club. I found sponsors, attended club meetings and engaged the administration, teachers and support staff to assist in supporting the clubs. One administrator commented that it was due to my involvement with starting his QSA that he had the courage to come out to his students on the International Day Against Homophobia. When I successfully lobbied for the Pride Flag to be flown from the VSB flagpole for the first time, I cried as it was a very symbolic event for me.

I am grateful that my job is in alignment with my calling to a higher purpose which is a need to provide a safe environment, free from harassment and discrimination, while also promoting proactive strategies and guidelines to ensure that LGBTQ students, employees and families are welcomed and included in all aspects of education and school life and treated with respect and dignity...and I will continue to do this with passion and unabashed PRIDE!

Sylvia Machat

As Miss Pussy Liquor, I am the Founder and Creative Director of Genderfest, an all genders celebration of Pride that takes place in East Van.

Genderfest was founded to provide space for people who didn't fit into the narrow categories of "women's events" and "men's events" that were taking place around Pride. Genderfest creates a fun, safe, celebratory space for people who identify as trans*, genderqueer, or other variations of gender outside the man/woman binary. By creating a space where gender is flexible, Genderfest is also a fun, safe, celebratory space for people who want to celebrate queer Pride outside of

gay/lesbian spaces, which includes those who identify as queer, bisexual, two-spirited, curious or unsure, or allies. In short, Genderfest is a space for all the folks who've fit themselves into the "other" box during Pride and year round, when definitions have left them excluded from the larger gay community.

In 2012 Genderfest featured a Wellness Clinic picnic, an All Bodies Swim, a sTeam: all genders bathhouse night, and a dance party. This year's Genderfest has expanded to include a launch party, a conference, and a live show fundraiser for Saige Community Food Bank. The Conference focuses on programming that meets Genderfest's values (1. Celebrating gender diversity; 2. Anti-oppression; 3. Facilitating & contributing to queer communities). The ambition is to create space to bring together and educate members of our communities and those who love and support them.

In addition to my work with Genderfest, I also founded and coordinate the Buddy System, a combination community watch and harm reduction program that runs through the monthly drag king show Man Up. The program was started in response to a member of our community being raped after leaving an event and calls on attendees of the event to watch each other's backs for safety. The program keeps watch over the nights and focuses on handing out water and harm reduction supplies as well as being aware of who is in the club and what's happening through the night.

Prior to my work on Genderfest I created safe spaces for gender variant sexuality as part of the collective for sTeam: all genders bathhouse nights, challenged the notion of trademarking Pride with the SHAME: Party Without Pride dance parties, and worked for trans* inclusion as a member of the Vancouver Dyke March Board of Directors. Other community work I have done includes event organization for the Queer Arts Festival, fundraising for Out On Screen through the Out In Schools Lotto, and sitting on the Board of the now-defunct but much-beloved Youthquest!: Lesbian & Gay Youth Society.

It's my passion to help those who aren't being heard to be heard and to create space for those people in our communities who feel that there's no space for them. Too often in our queer

communities people who have been bullied or excluded turn to the same tactics to insulate themselves; it's my strategy to respond with an acceptance and inclusivity that in its love demands that we care for each other.