



# PURPLE

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## PURPLE Nominees



VANCOUVER  
**PRIDE**  
SOCIETY

**Purple - Spirit (Youth) The award recognizes an outstanding youth who embodies the Spirit of Pride. This award is intended to highlight the work of young people to promote Vancouver's LGBTQ community and create stronger, equal, communities.**

### **Andrea Pothiboon**

Andrea is a proud member of the LGBTQ community and has brought a very powerful message to the greater community. In 2012, Andrea created a short film with two other amazing women. This film chronicled her personal experience hiding her sexuality. This film has run in the Reel Youth Film Festival, Vancouver International Film Festival and Reel2Reel Youth Film Festival, where it won Best Original Screenplay. This film has resonated with many and they have all been touched by the haunting message. Her film was personal and incredibly intimate but she has pushed her fears aside and shared her story with the world. This film has been included in the Out in Schools program, an outreach program for youth. Andrea also shared her film with her classmates in her Senior Leadership/Human Services class. She displayed enough courage and faith in herself and her classmates to share her sexuality and past mistakes. It was particularly important to note that there are nearly no "out" members in her classes and school. She talked about the loneliness and solitary feeling of being different. She shared her internalized isolation in a very personal way. Andrea has never hesitated to take other opportunities in school to talk about issues in the LGBTQ community. In 2012, she delivered a speech about the discrimination of the Transgender and Transsexual communities in her English Honours class. In her law class, she completed an equality rights project on gay rights, the history in Canada, the world and areas to move forwards in. She strongly believes in equity among all races, religions, sexualities and genders. She is outspoken about her beliefs but she also does her best to make people comfortable with their own or others' sexualities. She tries to help people love themselves as they are and wants for other people to respect all identities and differences. An important factor about Andrea is her unwavering determination to educate and inform others about minorities. She has struggled personally and the film that has garnered so much interest was very personal. Despite her own reservations, she shares her story with hundreds because she knows that the message is greater than the individual. Regardless of how exposed this has made her, she continues to spread it throughout the community.

## **Jen Sung**

My name is Jen Sung, Program Coordinator of Out in Schools. Growing up as a young queer immigrant in Vancouver brought with it its fair share of challenges. Yet, through the ever growing, ever evolving work towards equality, I have found my own sense of joy, creativity and Pride that animates the spirit of the queer community. Owing to the work of queer activists both past and present our community now stands as accepted and celebrated in much of contemporary society. Yet I recognize that there is still so much more to do. With immense gratitude, this work is now being taken up by young people like myself who are creating a more fluid and open future for everyone through our own form of activism, visibility and art.

As the Out in Schools Program Coordinator 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.

As a young queer woman of colour I know how important it is to have visible role models to help guide and inspire. This past year I was featured on the cover of The Georgia Straight's Pride edition and 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 the proud and 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.

I have found that beyond the initial struggles of identity and societal ignorance there is a great power and beauty in being young and queer. Life beyond the threshold of fear and shame in the presence of others like us create powerful connections and beautiful expressions of art and (queer) activism. I am proud beyond words to be who I am: young, queer and completely myself.

## **Cory Oskam**

Cory is a 16 year-old hockey player from East Vancouver who loves his friends, his family, and playing sports. Cory was also born female, but has been gender non-conforming since he was 2.

At the age of 9 Cory began taking hormone blockers to halt female puberty, and at the age of 14 began taking testosterone. On Cory's sixteenth birthday he got to celebrate by skating on the ice with his namesake, Canuck Cory Schneider. Simultaneously he outed himself to his entire hockey team who didn't know about his sex assigned at birth. As an advocate on issues of homophobia, transphobia, bullying, intersectional violence, and discrimination in schools, Cory is a role model in the community and remarkably grounded for a teenager.