# Stewards Training

# Defending Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Members Against Homophobia in the Workplace

# Time: 3 hours

Overview of Module

Learning Objectives

* Define homophobia and heterosexism
* Explore homophobia as a social construct, not just a “fear” or “phobia”
* Review the history of GLB struggles
* Explore the use of language to empower or disempower
* Identify gains made by unions for GLB members/communities
* Identify the legal protections for GLB individuals and members
* Establish the role of the steward in addressing GLB issues in the workplace/union

**Handouts:**

* GLB Comments that Offend
* Gay Lesbian Bisexual Historical Timeline
* Defining Homophobia and Heterosexism

**Optional Activity:**

This activity may replace activity 3 – or by lengthening the workshop include it as an additional activity – **Walk in My Shoes** visualization.

**Before the session:**

* prepare flipcharts, prepare handouts
* cut history timeline events
1. **How homophobia plays out in our workplaces and union (30 minutes)**

Welcome participants to the **Defending Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Members against Homophobia in the Workplace** workshop.

**Review module objectives**

This module will address the following:
[have prepared on a flip chart]

* Define homophobia and heterosexism
* Review the history of GLB struggles
* Explore the use of language to empower or disempower
* Identify gains made by unions for GLB members/communities
* Identify the legal protections for GLB individuals and members
* Establish the role of the steward in addressing GLB issues in the workplace/union

Note: The Stewards training series has a course specific to Trans issues entitled ***Defending Trans Members’ Rights in the Workplace***. For that reason this course deals specifically with homophobia. Also note and list the other equality workshops listed in the Steward series.

Say that we will do an opening introductory round by having you state your **name**, **where they work**, **their local, and answer one of the following:** [have these posted on flipchart]

* **When I see \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I know there is homophobia in my workplace.**
* **When I hear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I know there is homophobia in my workplace.**
* **When I feel \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I know there is homophobia in my workplace.**

Record/summarize some of the responses on flipchart.

Once the round is complete say that these examples show us that homophobia is alive in our workplaces and union. It is important as stewards that we can recognize homophobia and work to stop it in our workplaces and union

If any of the following examples do not come up, you may want to reference them as well:

* Name calling
* Stereotyping
* Using words that hurt i.e. – “fag”, “dyke”, “that’s so gay”
* Discrimination in the form of refusal of service, denial of an opportunity
* Deliberate exclusion or avoidance
* Ridiculing
* Refusing to acknowledge family
* Physical threats or attacks
* Teasing or taunting

Say that we just talked about examples of homophobia.

Ask:

***What might bi-phobia look like? Would it be the same as homophobia? How might it differ?***

[examples to include]

* Often straights and gays and lesbians alike negate bisexuality referring to them as fence-sittings or not willing to make a decision
* Some may see bisexuality as a phase
* Some see bisexuality as a trend
* Some may see bisexual as hyper sexual
* People may refuse to accept the notion of bisexuality – insisting that there are sexuality binaries, that is you’re either one way or the other
* They may be ignored, demonized, rendered invisible
* Their orientation may be branded as invalid, immoral or irrelevant
* There may be an erasure of their experience

Say that we’re going to do a short checking in exercise. As I make the following statements indicate agreement by raising your hand if you agree (only choose 3 or 4 of the statements, there are “facts” following each statement which may help facilitate discussion.)

[Choose any or all of the following statements.]

* ***Over the last three decades significant gains have been made in the area of human rights pertaining to Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual people.***
(True – most obvious is the inclusion of sexual orientation in human rights codes; also, considerable gains including things like shared benefits, legally recognized partnerships, and most recently equal marriage right)
* ***The labour movement has played an important role in the fight for fairness, dignity and equality of our GLB sisters and brothers.***
(True – GLB issues have been at the fore of much of labour’s human rights work over the past decades, in the absence of human rights protections in the laws, unions began to negotiate these rights into the collective agreements, in time the laws have caught up)
* ***Homophobia and heterosexism are real and persist. People’s lives are being negatively affected by these.***(True – presumptions of heterosexuality persist in many domains of society, including the union. This can be hurtful to individuals on a number of levels. Homophobia exists resulting in both covert and overt forms of hate and discrimination. We see this play out from verbal slurs all the way to physical violence. Churches can still refuse to perform same sex marriages should they choose.)
* ***GLB people now enjoy most of the same rights and legal protections as any other citizen.***(True – the human rights laws have make it illegal to discriminate against someone based on their sexual orientation; same sex marriage was the last big legal barrier to overcome, which is now law in Canada. Churches can legally still refuse to perform same sex unions under the freedom of religion part of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms).
* ***Lesbians and gays are not able to adopt children.***(False – Adoption by gays and lesbians is legal in all provinces and territories. Nor can they have their children removed from their custody as was once the case.)
* ***More and more people in the public domain are “coming out” which indicates a culture shift has taken place.***(True – Even in professional sports, the last bastion of non-out. Mark Tewksbury was one of the first Canadians to come out. The 2014 Winter Olympics were coined the “gayest Olympics ever” due to the sheer number of out athletes. Politically, Kathleen Wynne is Canada's first out Premier. Tim Cook of Apple recently came out. Examples are everywhere.)
* ***Homosexuality was never considered a mental disorder.***(False – It was included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM3) well into the 70s. In one generation we’ve gone from homosexuality being a mental illness to it being identified as a human rights issue requiring legal intervention.)
* ***Homophobia is simply a fear.***(False – We know that any phobia stems from fear, but homophobia also involves a reaction to a changing social reality that is accepting of gays and lesbians; there is a social context in which religions and teachings have traditionally been opposed to homosexuality. Many will hold on to these beliefs and act out with homophobic beliefs and attitudes.)
* ***How many of you know an openly gay person?***

Say that you are going to read a series of comments which reflect homophobic attitudes that are often reflected in our workplaces and in our social interactions.

Ask participants to reflect on their own workplaces and on their own attitudes as you read out the comments. Encourage participants to be honest themselves recognizing that it is relatively easy to internalize these stereotypes and attitudes.

Read **some of** the following and pause after you read each bullet.

* Gay people make me nervous.
* Gay people deserve what they get.
* People can’t help it if they are gay – it’s a sickness
* Maybe the right person just hasn’t come along yet and that’s why this person is gay
* It’s not my business what people do in the privacy of their homes, but I shouldn’t be subjected to it in public
* I don’t dislike gay people, I just don’t like what they do
* It’s OK for me to tell a gay joke – some of my best friends are gay
* Oh come on – it’s just a joke!
* I’m fine with lesbians, but I really can’t tolerate gay men
* I sometimes make derogatory comments like “faggot” or “queer” to people I suspect are gay. If they can put it out there, why can’t I.
* Homosexual people should not be allowed to work with children.
* Homosexuality is immoral.
* I fear homosexual persons will make sexual advances towards me.
* I avoid gay individuals – it’s my prerogative.
* I would hit a gay person for coming onto me – it’s offensive.

Ask participants to find a partner to reflect on the statement for the next 5 minutes.

Post the following questions for them to use in their discussion:

***What do you think is the impact of these attitudes on people from the GLB communities?***

***What would happen in our workplaces if these attitudes were allowed to remain unchecked?***

***What would happen in our union if these attitudes were allowed to remain unchecked?***

***How might attitudes like this affect how we represent members as Stewards?***

After 5 minutes regroup and say that some of these attitudes may not seem so bad while others are obviously very problematic. Regardless, **all** of these statements reflect homophobic attitudes.

Say that because of exposure to a constant barrage of attitude, stereotypes and homophobic images and messages, it is almost impossible for any of us NOT to have internalized some homophobia.

Note: Let participants know that the PSAC Policy on Sexual Orientation is currently under review.

Say that as union representatives, our role is to represent ALL of our members. Our union has a policy on homophobia which as representatives, we are bound to honour and uphold. This may mean doing some self- reflection and being proactive to eliminate our own homophobia and address the homophobia in our workplaces.

1. **THE SEXUALITY LIBERATION TIMELINE (exercise) (30 minutes)**

Using butcher paper with a horizontal line drawn down the center demarcate at the far left “before 1900” and demarcate at the right “2013 / now” and place a few markers in between “1920, 1940, 1960, 1980, 2000”

Invite participants to get together in pairs or small groups of three (*to encourage an exchange and discussion – especially for those who are least knowledgeable about the historical struggle around GLB issues*), and take 5-10 minutes to talk about what they know about the historical struggle of gay, lesbian and bisexual issues.

Here are some speaking points to provide background and context – share any or all of these:

* Legislation and human rights codes, along with union-negotiated gains have vastly improved the lives of many. In Canada we are one of a few jurisdictions globally that allows for same-sex marriage or “equal marriage” as it’s been coined – signifying it as an equality right.
* Over the same period of time we’ve seen considerable changes in public attitude. A lot of the fights for equality over the years have helped others to understand the discrimination experienced by GLB communities; more and more people became empathetic to this experience, eventually moving towards acceptance and away from fear.
* There still remains a stubborn minority who persist in their resistance to GLB equal rights. We know that deeply held beliefs do not change quickly or easily for some. We need only look at racism to see this sad reality.
* The fact that so few people in the spotlight, be they professional athletes, politicians, industry leaders, actors, etc., are out is an indication that the fear of public reprisal is very real.
* Only a generation ago many people would not have personal contact with “out” GLB people.
* Homophobia is a socially constructed phenomena resulting from the perceived threats that is brings to socials status quo, gender roles, etc. This prejudice was created through the construction of domination through law.
* Just as women’s inequality was legally structured in the past, homosexuality was legally stigmatized; it bumped up against the norm of the man as bread-winner, the family-man, etc. Well gay men were criminally punished, lesbians were hospitalized, given hysterectomies, lobotomized, had their children taken away and/or were medicated.
* Prior to and through most of the 20th century psychology viewed homosexuality in terms of pathology. Delisting from the DSM occurred in 1973.

Write on the timeline **events or instances that they are aware of that are pivotal in the building social consciousness about GLB struggles**. Assure them that they don’t have to know the exact date or details of the event, but to identify to the best of their abilities. They may want to use some creativity in listing these events (pictures, symbols, etc.)

(option to have them write their individual entries on a large post-it note then place them on the time line)

Review and discuss the postings.

Use this list to augment some of **the key events** if they are missing:

* Pre-1900 – In the 1800s many countries enacted legislation against same sex fornication (anal penetration), thus criminalizing these acts. Many countries still criminalize homosexuality (punishable by death: Sudan, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iran. Criminalized in national law: Guyana, Libera, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Angola, Namibia, Zambia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Oman, Egypt, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Trinidad and Tobago, Belize, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga.
* In 1868 the terms homosexual and heterosexual were coined by a writer (not a doctor), Karl Maria Kertbeny, used in a letter to Karl Heinrich Ulrichs a pioneering sex reformer. “Homosexual” was first publicly used in 1869 in a petition against the German law criminalizing “unnatural fornication”. The term was appropriated and later used in the medical community as a way of naming, condemning, and asserting their own proprietary rights over groups of [mostly] men. “Heterosexual” and “homosexual” become a specific way of socially ordering gender and eroticism. Hence the sexual “norms” and the sexual “perverts” became entrenched.
* 1903 – First recorded raid on a gay bathhouse in New York City.
* 1913 – The word “faggot” referring to gays first appears in print in Portland Oregon.
* 1933 – The National Socialist German Workers Party bans homosexual groups and sends homosexual to concentration camps.
* 1938 – The word “gay” is used in film for the first time to reference homosexuality.
* 1942 – Creation of the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) in the US began to create all sorts of concern and speculation about women’s sexuality and the potential breakdown of heterosexual norms and sexuality morality; that WAC would attract women who were already “sexually deviant”. Indeed lesbians thrived in the WAC and established their own code of communication!
Post World War II - The aggressive harassment of lesbians and gays was connected to this glorification of the nuclear family and domestic sphere. Homophobia became a way of reinstituting male dominance and strict gender roles that had been disrupted by the war.
* 1950s-1960s – RCMP kept tabs and records of individuals that frequented gay bars.
* 1963 – The Directorate of Security and Intelligence’s A-3 Unit of the RCMP was charged with removing homosexuals from government and law enforcement.
* 1964 – Canada’s first gay-positive organization is formed: “ASK Newsletter” in Vancouver and “Gay” published in Toronto.
* 1967 – Pierre Elliot Trudeau, Justice Minister – “there’s no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation”, as he defended the legislation to decriminalize homosexuality; brought in sweeping changes to Canada’s legal fabric pertaining to abortion, homosexuality, divorce, etc. It was in 1969 the Omnibus legislation was used to decriminalize homosexuality, allow for contraception, and partially decriminalize abortion; this was a social shift away from viewing sex for procreation.
* 1969 – Stonewall Riots in Greenwich Village NYC – Police raided a gay bar, drag queens fought back, was a lightning rod for gay liberation; one of its offspring is the Pride parades of today.
* 1970 – the first gay liberation march occurs in New York City; this is the genesis of Pride celebrations
* 1973 – Delisting of homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-II.
* 1976 – Police crackdown on gay bars in Montreal’s Stanley Street gay village to “clean up” the city in advance of the Olympics.
* 1977 – Gay activist Harvey Milk is elected as city-county supervisor for San Francisco; he is assassinated in 1978.
* 1981 – Toronto Bathhouse raids – resulted in some 3000 protesters converging on Yonge and Wellesley streets in Toronto to protest the police raids of four bathhouses on February 5, 1981. Those inside the bathes were subject to excessive mistreatment by the authorities who claimed that the raids were the result of a six month undercover operation into alleged prostitution and indecent acts. This event marked a turning point for Toronto’s gay community. 1993 – Pink Triangle Press is launched with Capital Xtra (Ottawa) and Xtra! West (Vancouver)
* 1982 – Charter of Rights and Freedoms included in the constitution – affording the same rights to all Canadians; Section 15 came into force in 1985; Rights under section 15 include racial equality, sexual equality, mental disability, and physical disability. Under the Human Rights Act the "enumerated" grounds of prohibited discrimination (race, sex, etc.) are only examples instead of a comprehensive list. The grounds "sex" and "disability" and “sexual orientation” have been interpreted to include trans sexuality and HIV/AIDS
Since the 1985 coming into force of Section 15 of the Charter, gays and lesbians have achieved an astonishing range of judicially-made rights gains in most policy areas, including immigration, housing, employment, health benefits, adoption, pensions, finances, hate crimes and, most recently, marriage.
* 1988 – Svend Robinson, NDP, first Member of Parliament to come out.
* 1990s – 2000s Annual Pride Parades become economic drivers in many large urban centres.
* In 1992, Chris Morrissey filed a suit in Federal Court against the Government of Canada alleging discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, family, and gender. After much negotiating, Bridget, her partner, was made a permanent resident of Canada. Not one day was spent in court. They had succeeded, but the law remained the same. The publicity surrounding the case brought together other Canadians who were experiencing the same difficulty. They formed LEGIT: Canadian Immigration for Same-Sex Partners. In 2002, after ten years of advocacy work, the law was changed to include same-sex partners in the family class.
* 1992 – Department of National Defence abandons its policy on denying military service to gays and lesbians after being challenged through the courts by Michelle Douglas, a lesbian who had been dismissed from her Special Investigations Unit post in 1989.
* 1995 – Ontario laws change to allow gay and lesbian couples to adopt.
* Egan v. Canada (1995) – equality rights case where two long term male partners (James Egan and John Norris Nesbit) won a battle for spousal benefits in of Old Age Security; the decision recognized that sexual orientation was implicitly included in section 15 as an "analogous ground" and is therefore a prohibited ground of discrimination.
* Vriend v. Alberta (1998) – a teacher dismissed because of his sexual orientation won his case arguing that his equality rights under the Charter were denied because the Alberta Human Rights Act omitted sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination.
* 1998 – Glen Murray is elected Mayor of Winnipeg, North America’s first openly gay mayor.
* *Little Sisters Book and Art Emporium v. Canada* (2000) – Customs had been targeting gay and lesbian books stating they were “obscene”; Little Sisters won their argument based on the fact that the law (Section 1 of the Charter) was being applied in a discriminatory manner.
* 2002 – the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations now allows common law and conjugal partners to sponsor their partners, this includes same-sex partners
* In 2005, NDP MP Bill Siksay introduced a bill in the House of Commons to explicitly add *gender identity and expression* as prohibited grounds of discrimination in the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. He reintroduced the bill in 2006. In May 2009 he introduced it again, with additional provisions to add gender identity and expression to the hate crimes provisions of the *Criminal Code*. In February 2011, it passed third reading in the House of Commons with support from all parties, but was not considered in the Senate before Parliament was dissolved for the 41st Canadian federal election. Bill C-279 was introduced in the 41st Canadian Parliament by the NDP. The Bill passed second reading on June 6, 2012 and was adopted in March of 2013. In February, 2015, the Senate introduced amendments to the Bill which forced it back to Parliament for their consideration which did not occur before the House adjourned for its summer break. The Bill will die on the order paper due to the election in the fall of 2015.
* 2005 – Canada becomes the fourth country in the world to legalize same sex marriage, “equal marriage”.
* 2005 – André Boisclair – the first openly gay man to win the leadership of a political party (Parti Québécois).
* 2013 – Kathleen Wynne, Liberal Ontario Premier, first openly gay premier.
* 2013 – Changes to Canada’s Immigration Act will make it more difficult for some GLBT refugee claimants to seek asylum if they come from countries the Government is deeming “safe”.

Ask:

***What are some gains that have been achieved by PSAC and other unions through contract negotiations and other forums?***

[examples might include:]

* Wins for GLB at the bargaining table
* Negotiate collective agreements to protect and to provide equal access to all benefits for our lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGB) members and their families.
* We organize conferences and workshops to advance issues of concern to our LGB members and to develop strategies to move the equality struggle forward.
* We lobby governments and organize campaigns to win changes to human rights legislation, for equal benefits and for equal marriage.
* Pride Committees in the regions
* National Pride conference
* Participate in regional pride events
* Participants will have some local examples
* The freedom from discrimination in hiring and promotion
* The right to equal benefits for same sex partners and for their children
* The right to the same bereavement leave, family leave and parental leave days as other workers
* The same right to pension benefits for same-sex partners
* The right to a safe and harassment-free workplace
* Legal recognition of marriage between same-sex partners

Say that unions have played an important leadership role in all of these fights. Based on the above you can see how in many ways formal equality has been achieved but real “substantive” equality is still a work in progress.

There are still many myths and prejudices about GLB communities. Unions have played a role in changing the social context for GLB individuals and communities by bringing their issues to the bargaining table and achieving equality there and thus being a driving force for changes to many laws that now protect all GLB communities.

1. **DEFINING HOMOPHOBIA AND HETEROSEXISM (20 minutes)**

To work effectively in representing members against homophobia and being able to identify the effects of heterosexism, we need to first define these concepts.

[brainstorm in group or break into pairs/small clusters to discuss the following:] (5 minutes)

Ask:

***When you hear the word homophobia what does that mean to you?***

***When you hear the word heterosexism what does that mean to you?***

Distribute **Defining Homophobia and Heterosexism** handout.

Note that these are definitions that may help us understand what the person experiences as a target of homophobia. And also what acts of homophobia might look like.

Homophobia – a fear, negative attitude or feeling – especially of contempt, prejudice, or fear – or dislike of GLB people. It is often based on a misleading generalized belief and may manifest in hate-speech, acts of discrimination, violence or insults. It is also the fear of feelings of love for members of one’s own sex and therefore hatred of these feelings in others.

Heterosexism – the belief that heterosexuality is the only normal and proper expression of sexuality. This includes an automatic assumption that people are heterosexual. It may manifest in the belief that heterosexual people are entitled to certain benefits and opportunities that are denied to GLB people. The belief that heterosexual is more “natural” than homosexual.

Say:

Often GLB people are asked when they decided to become gay/lesbian/bisexual:

Ask participants to reflect on this question:

***When did you decide to be straight?***

Ask**:**

***What do you think is the impact of asking this question to someone?***

Take a couple of comments from participants about how they respond to this question.

Answers should consider:

* In this question there is an assumption that you don’t have to do anything to be heterosexual but that you have to **decide** to be homosexual. Heterosexuality is considered the default and thus there is an expectation that people are heterosexual unless they indicate otherwise. The impact of this supposition can be to make gay/lesbian/bi folks feel apart from the rest of society. The supposition is, that if you are not heterosexual, you are not “normal”, thus opening the door for all kinds of negativity about being gay/lesbian or bi.

Say:

Often people speculate that someone is homosexual because of a bad heterosexual experience. Yet we would never consider someone being heterosexual because of a bad homosexual experience, would we?

Ask:

***Why is this important to be aware of?***

Responses might include:

* The hierarchical heterosexist way of conceptualizing sexual orientation creates opportunities for homophobic remarks and actions to go unnoticed or unchecked.
* By actively or tacitly buying-in to this hierarchy you may be inclined to go along with arguments against equality rights – such things as equal (same-sex) marriage, or support for initiatives like US military’s “don’t ask don’t tell” policy. Even making statements to the effect of “I don’t care if you’re gay so long as you keep it in the bedroom.”
* Even though people may not perceive themselves as homophobic they may be inadvertently telling lesbians, gay, bisexual and trans people to disappear.
* One final consideration is that heterosexism has a polarizing effect on sexuality – people are viewed in two camps: heterosexual and homosexual. However we know that human sexuality is more fluid.
* Heterosexism prepared the foundation upon which prejudice against GLB people begins.

Ask:

***Why is there a presumption of heterosexuality?***

* It maintains the sexual status quo
* It keeps women separate and subordinate to men

Ask:

***What is at stake if the role of heterosexuality is weakened?***

* It will erode the traditional family model
* It will erode the religious family model
1. **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LANGUAGE – HURTFUL WORDS (30 minutes)**

Say that in this session, we are going to build on the previous discussions about attitudes by looking a little closer at the kind of language that discriminates against GLB peoples.

**“You’re so gay”**

**“That’s so gay”**[write these statements on a flip chart]

Ask:

***When you read these or hear these statements, what effect do they have on you? On GLB people? On society? On our union?****(Take only one or two comments for each question as this conversation reinforces what has already been explored).*

Discussion Notes:

* There is homophobia in our modern dialogue. Abusive homophobic language is directed at GLB people or those thought to be GLB. However homophobic language is also used to refer to something or someone inferior. Statements like “What a lezzie!” and “They are so gay!” are used as an insult but without referring to actual or perceived sexual orientation.
* While language of this nature is often dismissed as harmless banter because of lack of intent to cause harm, these statements and terms liken being gay to something that is bad, wrong or inferior.
* Homophobic language is often used without thinking and largely goes unnoticed or unchecked. As we noted in our previous exercise, this can create a culture of homophobia which seriously impacts people’s sense of belonging, self-esteem and ability to achieve their goals.
* It’s good to remember that within GLB community(ies) that some language appropriation and use of terminologies within their communities is not in and of itself a bad thing. The words “gay” “queer” “fag” used within is not the same as it being used by those from outside the communities.

Say that when meeting with and representing GLB members consider the following:

* It is important that you don’t offend or discriminate by using language that offends.
* Not all GLB individuals use the same terminology – using the word “queer” will raise the ire of many, ask what language the individual uses/prefers; this is a way of building respect and trust.
* Just because someone is “out” don’t make assumptions about language. Ask. This is a way to build respect and trust

Say that language has power. It is the main way we communicate messages and information. What messages do we want to communicate?

The messages we receive about GLB people are often overwhelmingly negative and enforces the notion that this is an acceptable form of discrimination. When homophobic comments are ignored in our union, our workplaces, our homes and society at large, we are enforcing discrimination.

Challenging homophobic comments takes guts. Challenging people’s negative attitudes and their language is important.

**Role Play**

[Note to Facilitator: For the role play you may want to use examples that came out of the initial exercise “when I hear…”, “when I feel….”, “when I see…” because these examples may be more real to the participants]

This activity is designed as a role play but you may want to use the Stop theatre technique instead.

Group participants into small groups of 3 or 4. One participant will play a steward and the others are members having a conversation. The steward will overhear the conversation and will intervene in a constructive way. It’s okay for “members” to push-back. Refer them to the Conversation Themes that you have previously recorded on flipchart.

Those who are in the members role will take a minute to decide how to role play their topic (2-3 minutes), then begin the role play and let the steward intervene. Have them change roles and themes a few times so that all/most get a chance to play the role of steward.

Conversation theme #1

**The group of members is having a conversation and repeatedly use the term “that’s so gay”.**

Interventions might be:

* “What do you mean by “that’s so gay”?
* “What are you intending to achieve by using the word gay?”
* “What do you mean by gay?”

Conversation theme #2

**The group of members is having a conversation and is questioning whether one of their colleagues is a lesbian.**

Interventions might be:

* “In the union we respect everybody’s human rights so using language in a way which suggests that there is something wrong with gay people or being gay is unacceptable.”
* “What you said is homophobic. Why do you feel that it is acceptable to insult gay people?”
* “How would you feel if people treated you differently to other people?”

Conversation theme #3

**The group of members is having a conversation and is making comments about someone being queer. When the steward intervenes they challenge his/her intervention and ask if s/he is gay.**

Interventions might include:

* If you are gay/lesbian/bisexual and wish to affirm this, consider first if you have the support necessary to make such an affirmation positive. If you have, then do so.
* If you are not gay/lesbian/bisexual (or you are and you do not wish to share that information) it is better to respond with, “Would it matter if I were?” as it keeps the dialogue open and allows for positive discussion of the issues. “No, I’m not.” Closes the dialogue and is often heard (mistakenly) by someone with homophobic views as tacitly supporting their homophobia.

Conversation theme #4

**The group of members is having a conversation and are referring to how immoral it is that the union has negotiated and expanded the definition of family to extend benefits to same-sex couples and parents.**

Interventions might include:

* If people use religious reasons to back their motive for using homophobic language, it is important to reiterate that whilst they have the right to their faith; it is their responsibility to ensure that they do not impose on other’s rights to their beliefs, feelings and to their safety and equality.
* Include in your discussion that homophobia is a violation of human rights. Therefore, homophobia and homophobic bullying is also against the law.

After the roles plays are complete, say:

Stewards must be proactive in addressing homophobia. Make it clear that you do not find it acceptable to use the language in the themes we just explored.

Use of the word ‘gay’ to describe a person, event or object that people don’t like or find different, is homophobic and needs to be challenged.

The use of other words such as ‘queer’ or ‘faggot’ – even if used in normal discourse or banter – are homophobic and need to be challenged.

**Please note however that many in the GLB communities have proudly reclaimed “queer”, especially those who are younger.**

1. **the Law and GLB protections (15 minutes)**

Say that to defend GLB members adequately we must first know where their legal protections are enshrined.

Ask:

***Where are human rights protections for GLB******workers enshrined?***

Brainstorm list and record on flip chart.
List might include:

* Charter of Rights and Freedoms – defines human rights, and in particular equality rights, that the federal and provincial governments must absolutely respect
* Criminal Code – protects GLB people against hate crimes
* Human Rights Act – federal and provincial, include sexual orientation as one of the prohibited grounds of discrimination
* Canada Labour Code and provincial labour codes that enshrine the rights in negotiated collective agreements
* Provincial or Territorial Labour Relations Act – protect against discrimination in hiring and firing
* Civil Rights
* Collective Agreements – language negotiated that provides equality to all members, affects public policy and non-unionized workers and develop necessary links to social unionism

Say that GLB struggles for equality – both at the bargaining table and in the public arena – have resulted in what wins for GLB people? We have seen some of them reflected on our timeline (point some out).

Collective agreement language protecting the rights of our GLB members is negotiated in a number of our collective agreement clauses. A breech of any of these is grounds for a grievance.

On a flip chart write the clauses that they will need to refer to:

* Non-discrimination clauses – on the ground of sexual orientation
* Parental leave
* Compassionate Care leave
* Non-harassment clauses
* Family Related Responsibilities
* Bereavement
* Adoption leave

Say that not all issues will be specific to a breach of the collective agreement, they may be more conflictual/problem-solving in nature. Be creative in your problem solving. It may not require a grievance per se.

1. **No place for discrimination in the Union (20 minutes)**[the online participant will do a t/f question to start this exercise]

Say that as a Steward, it is your responsibility to defend our GLB members when they experience discrimination, but it is also your role to model non-discriminatory behaviour and to help create an environment within the union that is welcoming to ALL members.

In small groups of 3-4 have the participants address the following question:

***In a GLB inclusive workplace, what might that workplace look like?***[Encourage them to examine assumptions that we often make – people with kids are straight, someone who is married is married to an opposite sex partner, etc.]

After 5 minutes ask the small groups to discuss the following:

***Building on your conversation of what that workplace looks like, what can you do concretely as stewards to make that a reality?***[recognize that they may already be doing some, but encourage them to come up with more/others]

Find out if there is a Pride Committee or GLB group in your region – draw on the expertise and experience of these activists/members to assist you if you need it.

* Plug-in GLB members in your local to the group
* Foster a supportive allies environment in your local
* Hang Pride posters in your local
* Put up notices of GLB events
* Celebrate May 17 – Day Against Homophobia
* Create a Gay-Straight Alliance group (Egale had great resources)
* Feature movies related to GLB themes
* Have guest speakers
* Take a firm stand against prejudice as the best way to tackle it
* Educate ourselves about GLB issues. We must be proactive rather than waiting for GLB members to be victimized
* Listen to what our GLB members need/want from us
* Be allies which has the important side effect of giving confidence to any GLB members who are not yet 'out' that the union will stand up for them if necessary
* Fight for GLB members at the bargaining table and in our communities
* Uphold the principle of treating all members equally
* “Unpack” our own issues about gay, lesbian, and bi individuals as they may pose barriers to GLB members participating fully in their union

Ask:

**What additional work does the union need to do to quell this tide of homophobia?**

Answers might include:

* Locals can work with management to build an awareness training program on HR and equity issues
* Lobby for the addition of gender identity and gender expression to the Canadian Human Rights Act.
* Have more awareness building, sensitivity training, ideally using a number of different vehicles outside of the classroom, etc.
* Profile more out elected officials, ie, people don’t always know someone is gay unless they specifically talk about it (the Kathleen Wynne example of talking about it)
* Building stronger links with allies, GLB groups, etc.
* Encourage members to file harassment/HR grievances if they are being discriminated against
* PSAC can identify employers/managers/workplaces that need HR/equity training and do it jointly

Say that despite the great victories the union has made with respect to GLB issues, there are many battles still to be won.

Statistics Canada states that 16% of reported hate crimes in Canada are motivated by sexual orientation and are described as being the most violent compared to all other hate motivated offences.

And while gays and lesbians have managed to achieve legal equality, children are still suffering from alarming rates of homophobic bullying in schools.

69% of the homeless youth in Toronto right now are queer kids

Remember, homophobia still exists in the union just as it does in society.

1. **Wrap up (5 minutes)**

Ask and discuss:

**Has this discussion and these exercises achieved our workshop objectives?**

**Do you feel confident to represent a GBL member should they come to you with an issue? If not, what will you do to prepare yourself?**[ask for some examples]

Reiterate that GLB gains are very real and substantial. That as a society we’ve moved forward significantly in a relatively short period of time. Unions have played a pivotal role in this evolution as advocates for social justice.

Like all things, it is important that unions do not rest on their laurels; ongoing work for GLB members is important. We must continue to work towards a reality where all workers and members of society are treated equally and given the respect and dignity they deserve.

Handout

**Gay Lesbian Bisexual Comments that Offend**

* Gay people make me nervous.
* Gay people deserve what they get.
* People can’t help it if they are gay – it’s a sickness
* Maybe the right person just hasn’t come along yet and that’s why this person is gay
* It’s not my business what people do in the privacy of their homes, but I shouldn’t be subjected to it in public
* I don’t dislike gay people, I just don’t like what they do
* It’s OK for me to tell a gay joke – some of my best friends are gay
* Oh come on – it’s just a joke!
* I’m fine with lesbians, but I really can’t tolerate gay men
* I sometimes make derogatory comments like “faggot”, “dyke”, “Butch”, “Lezzies” or “queer” to people I suspect are gay. If they can put it out there, why can’t I.
* Homosexual people should not be allowed to work with children.
* Homosexuality is immoral.
* I fear homosexual persons will make sexual advances towards me.
* I avoid gay individuals – it’s my prerogative.
* I would hit a gay person for coming onto me – it’s offensive. [Handout]

**Defining Homophobia and Heterosexism**

**Homophobia**

A fear, negative attitude or feeling – especially of contempt, prejudice, or fear – or dislike of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. It is often based on a misleading generalized belief and may manifest in hate-speech, acts of discrimination, violence or insults. It is also the fear of feelings of love for members of one’s own sex and therefore hatred of these feelings in others.

**Heterosexism**

The belief that heterosexuality is the only normal and proper expression of sexuality. This includes an automatic assumption that people are heterosexual. It may manifest in the belief that heterosexual people are entitled to certain benefits and opportunities that are denied to GLBT people. The belief that heterosexual is more “natural” than homosexual.

**Print these and cut out on card stock in advance**

**Prior to 1900**

Most countries had enacted legislation to criminalize homosexuality.

**1868**

The terms “homosexual” and “heterosexual” are first introduced by a German writer, Karl Maria Kertbeny.

**1913**

The term “faggot” referring to gays first appears in print in Portland Oregon.

**1933**

The National Socialist German Workers Party bans homosexual groups and sends homosexual to concentration camps.

**1938**

The term “gay” is used in film referring to homosexuality.

**1942**

Creation of the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) in the US inadvertently provides an underground infrastructure for lesbians to network.

**1950s -60s**

RCMP kept tabs and records of individuals that frequented gay bars.

**1967**

Pierre Elliot Trudeau, then Justice Minister, states “there’s no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation.”

**1969**

Omnibus legislation is passed which decriminalizes homosexuality, allows for contraception and partially decriminalizes abortion. This is a significant shift in the legal and social fabric of Canada, a shift away from viewing sex solely for procreation.

The Stonewall Riots in Greenwich Village, New York City resulted when police stormed a gay bar. This became a lightning rod for gay liberation and the seed for Pride events in the future.

**1973**

Delisting of homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-II.

**1981**

Bathhouse raids in Toronto saw 3000 protesters in the streets. This signalled a turning point for gay activism in Toronto. Raids of this nature happened in other cities as well.

**1982**

Charter of Rights and Freedoms enacted, Section 15 comes into force in **1985** and includes rights for sexual equality. Human Rights legislation also now includes sexual orientation as a prohibited ground for discrimination.

**1988**

Svend Robinson, NDP, first Member of Parliament to come out. Over the following decades more elected representatives do the same.

**1992**

Department of National Defence abandons its policy on denying military service to gays and lesbians after being challenged through the courts by Michelle Douglas, a lesbian who had been dismissed from her Special Investigations Unit post in 1989.

**1995**

Egan v. Canada. This equality rights case sees James Egan win spousal benefits for Old Age Security for his life partner John Norris Nesbit.

**1998**

Vriend v. Alberta. A teacher dismissed because of his sexual orientation won his case arguing that his equality rights under the Charter were denied because the Alberta Human Rights Act omitted sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination.

**2002**

The Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations now allows common law and conjugal partners to sponsor their partners, this includes same-sex partners.

**2005**

Canada becomes the fourth country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage. The term “equal-marriage” was coined by advocates.

**2013**

Kathleen Wynne, Liberal Ontario Premier, first openly gay premier.

**[hand out]**

**Gay Lesbian Bisexual Historical Timeline**

Note: These are only a few highlights and should in no way be viewed as the only relevant ones.

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**Walk in my shoes – Visualization**

**30 minutes**

**Materials:**

* “Walk in my shoes” in the facilitator notes

**Preparation:**

Before the workshop, practice reading the text for the reflection out loud a few times, in order to feel comfortable with the timing and the mood.

**How it’s done:**

Try to set the right mood by minimizing distractions, dimming the lights, and closing all windows and doors.

As a facilitator, be prepared for strong reactions. Some participants may feel angry after visualizing the scenario.

This activity is aimed at helping us understand what it is like to be gay, lesbian, and bisexual in this society.

Tell participants that you are going to read them a story.

Explain that, as you read, participants should visualize what you are describing.

Afterwards, we will talk about our reactions and thoughts.

Tell participants to close their eyes and make themselves as comfortable as possible.

Ask them to take a few deep breaths to relax and focus on the story you are about to read.

Read the “Walk in my shoes” script out loud, slowly, pausing between sections.

After reading the script, give participants a minute or two to re-focus. Then debrief – see discussion questions after the “Walk in my Shoes” text. The text begins on the next page.

**Walk in my shoes**

It is a beautiful spring morning as you wake up, take a shower, dress and sit down to your breakfast. You glance outside and enjoy the tulips and daffodils growing below. It is a workday, but it’s very different than you might have expected because you are a heterosexual person living in a gay world. You are the minority.

You don't feel any different and you wonder how your day will unfold. You glance at the morning newspaper and listen to the radio. It's almost time to go to work ... but wait ... a newspaper headline catches your eyes..."Straights to be granted equality rights, but no to marriage'. You shake your head, remembering how years ago your partner was once denied coverage under your benefits plan. Your eyes wander to advertising images ... two women models hold one another sensuously, displaying leather jackets on sale for half price.

The comics tell of funny mishaps in a family of two men and their two children. You wonder how your own father is doing. He hasn't spoken to you in 10 years, since you first told him you were straight.

You listen to the radio playing a hot new song about the love between two women and the distance that keeps them apart. A news report blames unchecked heterosexuality for a recent population explosion. You hear a car honking and grab your coat ... Your car pool has arrived and you leave for work.

Everyone in the car is talking about their same sex spouses or their latest same sex love interest. This is the norm. No one is surprised and the conversation continues. You want to share your own story but you can't - you are heterosexual. You are afraid of how your colleagues will react. You look outside the car window and see men together and women together, some walking hand-in-hand, some kissing each other goodbye.

You arrive at work and go to the coffee room. Someone has stuck a notice on the union bulletin board announcing the upcoming wedding of two women who work across the hall. There’s also a flyer for the union dance. Suppose you and your partner went to the dance. How would it feel to be the only straight couple there?

As you think about this, you overhear laughter as the latest heterosexual joke is shared. Then you overhear somebody make a remark about your sexual orientation to the new person in the office. Great, now she knows too, before you got a chance to speak to her.

You leave the coffee room and go to your desk with a knot in your stomach and feeling very alone. You wonder if you should have said something about that offensive joke, and the insulting remark. You think about whether it’s worth approaching the union about the poisonous work environment.

You look out the window at the bright sunny day outside, wondering how you’ll get through the rest of the day.

**THE END**

Next, debrief the visualization by asking the following questions:

* How did you feel as you visualized this scene?
* Were you surprised by any reactions you had to this visualization?
* Can you think of a time when you felt excluded for whatever reason? How did you feel?
* Does the scenario that I read represent an ideal world? Why or why not?

Points to cover:

* The norm for GLB people is invisibility and marginalization. Being GLB means living this scene 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
* Some media outlets have started to portray GLB people in a positive light; however, there is still a long way to go.
* Gay and lesbian relationships are not validated and supported. They do not have the same “social” rights as straight people (like holding hands in public).
* The text we just read creates a visualization for straight participants. Anyone in the room who is gay, lesbian or bisexual knows better than anyone about what that experience feels like.