

Mamie & Tessa & friends & me



When I was this old, my dad was the plumber in our town. Near the ocean, there were many cottages where people from all over came for the summer.

When they weren't there, the electricity and water were shut off, but of course they wanted the cottages ready to live in when they got there. So this is what my father and I did in the spring: we got the cottages ready.



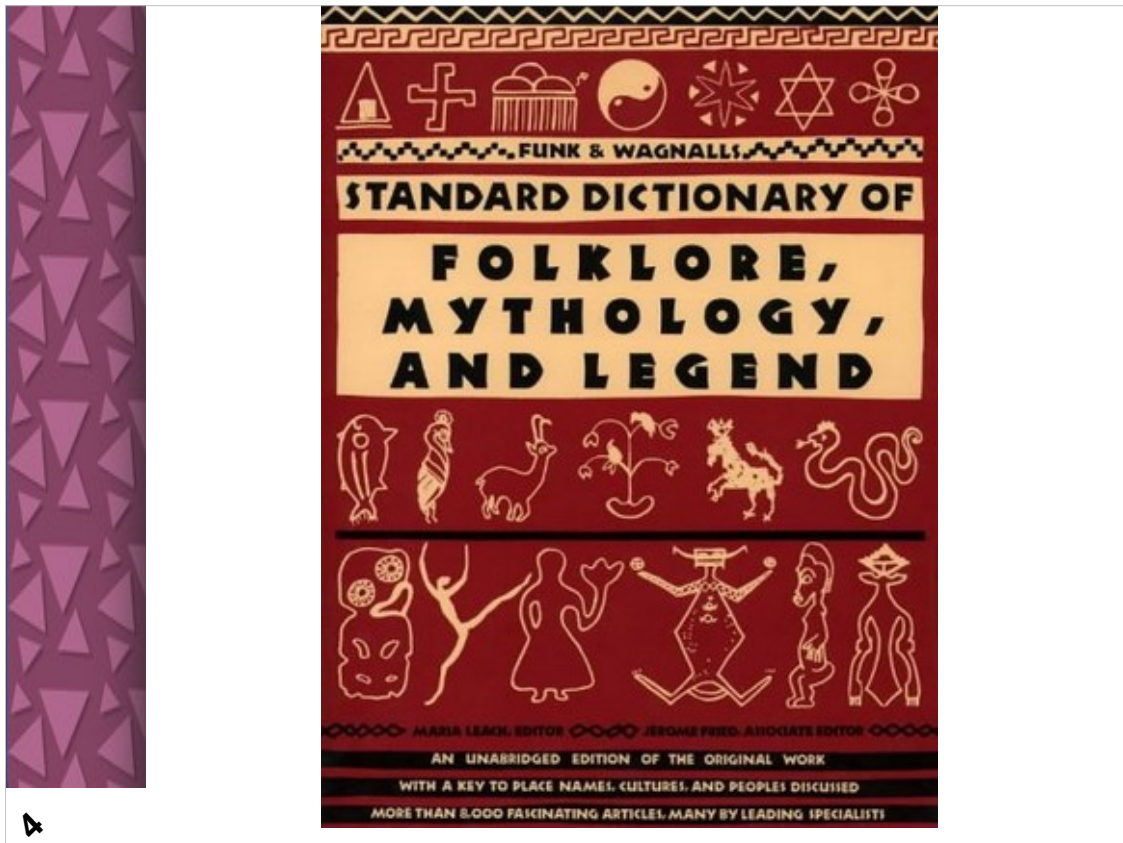
↪ My Dad and Me

This is my dad and me and our truck. I was his helper.

Four of the homes were owned by a group of women in a place with a funny name, called Coffinscroft. My parents got to be friends with them, and the friends of my parents were all called aunt and uncle. So in this group, I had Aunt Marion and Aunt Maria and especially



Aunt Mamie and Aunt Tessa. Aunt Mamie and Tessa — you almost always used their names together, lived together in one of the houses. They and the other aunts were all writers, publishers, researchers and artists and to me they were the smartest and funnest people I'd ever met. I spent a lot of time with them. Mamie and Tessa taught me about all kinds of literature and art. Aunt Marion taught me about Mi'kmag culture and legends, sometimes called Glooskap Stories. If you don't know them, they are wonderful to read and especially to have read to you. Aunt Maria taught me about North American folklore and stories: she had written this book:



In Aunt Maria's book, there is a story about a man who helps a ghost who is in trouble, and then the happy ghost helps him. After it was published, a rock band was looking at her book and picked their name from it! The story and the rock band are called The Grateful Dead.

Then we moved away and I didn't see them for a long time. But when I was planning a trip to New York City, my mom suggested that I visit Aunt Mamie and Tessa and of course I wanted to and I got their address. She said, "They live in Greenwich Village. At 14 Christopher Street. They've lived there together since 1929."



To the adults : Greenwich Village. Together since 1929.
the penny dropped.

My boyfriend and I went to visit them. We stood on the roof of 14 Christopher Street and Aunt Mamie pointed around to where famous people like Truman Capote and Gertrude Stein and Alan Ginsberg and William Burroughs had lived.

That was all a very long time ago and for a long time, until last summer I wondered if I had dreamed many of these fantastic memories. So I went back to Coffinscroft with a voice recorder and talked to all the oldest people I could find about Aunts Mamie and Tessa and Maria and Marion and got them to tell stories. And they said, yes, all of those things happened just as I remembered them, and they told me a whole bunch more stories.



So from these aunties I learned a whole bunch about books and art and storytelling and the value of preserving stories, and also learned that my parents thought it was important to have all kinds of friends, and the more different from you your friends are, the better life you have.



A Historic Friendship: the Gay Alliance for Equality and the Unitarian Universalist Church

Daniel MacKay
UUCH
2022-10-23



October 24, 1972:

4. NEW BUSINESS

- a. ...
- b. ...
- c. ...
- d. ...
- e. ...

f. Fred [Reverend Gillis] reported that there has been a request for the use of our building for lectures, discussions, etcetera, by a gay social group.

MOTION: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX


That the group be permitted to use the church building without payment Wednesday nights.

CARRIED: 5/2

Fred Gillis will discuss this in his sermon next Sunday.

⌘ What are we celebrating?

(just read this)



"At a time when every other organized religion barely considered us human, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Halifax welcomed us through these doors." -- me

So here's a timeline.



11

So, I have to stop and say, I didn't do any of this research about this anniversary. All of the credit goes to someone who prefers to be not acknowledged, so I'll apologize in advance.

Sorry for putting you in the spotlight

Thank you, Doug!



👉 Thank you, Doug!

It's your long time member, Doug Fevens.

Doug has a LONG history of activism in the province and the city, much of which is documented in his Halifax Rainbow Encyclopedia page.

One of the funnest thing he did was in the late 1990s. New Glasgow / Westville had a surpassingly homophobic member of parliament named Roseanne Skokes – of course all of you are too young to remember her.

The Q community rallied in a variety of ways against her, and Doug's contribution was this button.

Thank you, Doug!



👍 Thank you, Doug!

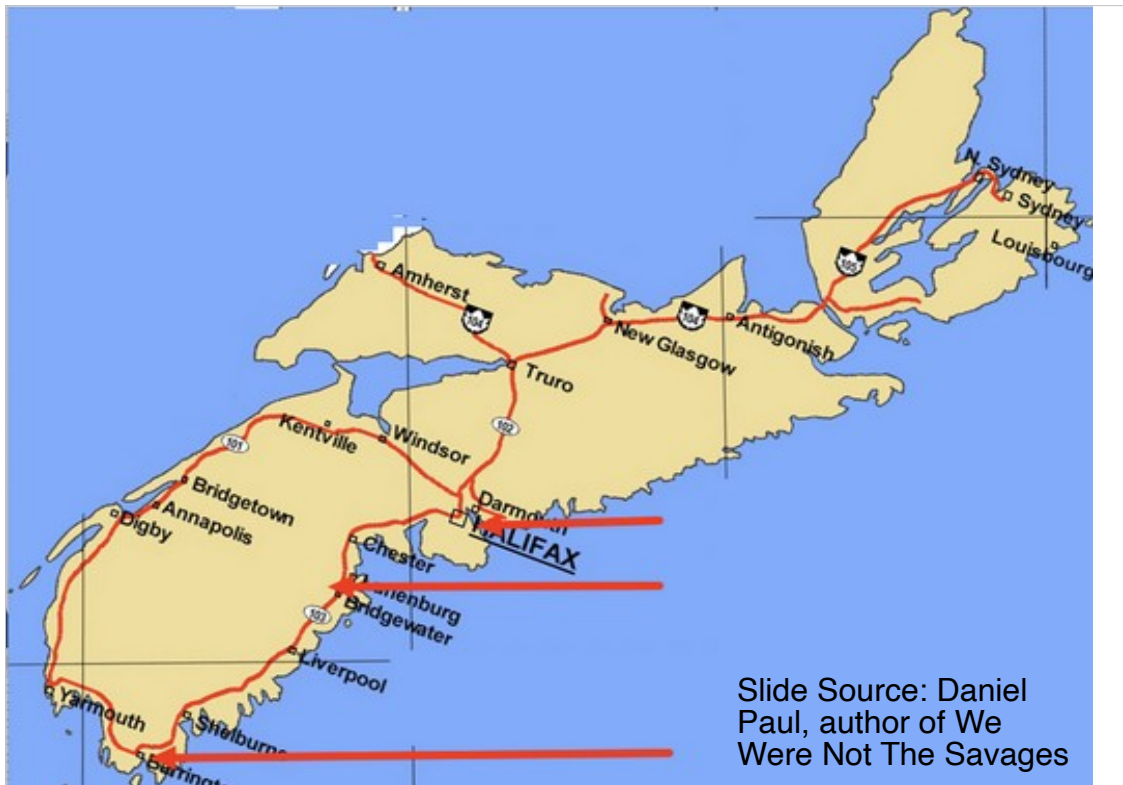
Doug says he only printed a few of but they had a HUGE impact.

Thank you, Doug!



👉 Thank you, Doug!

In fact the Wayves cover for April 1997 was that design and logo.

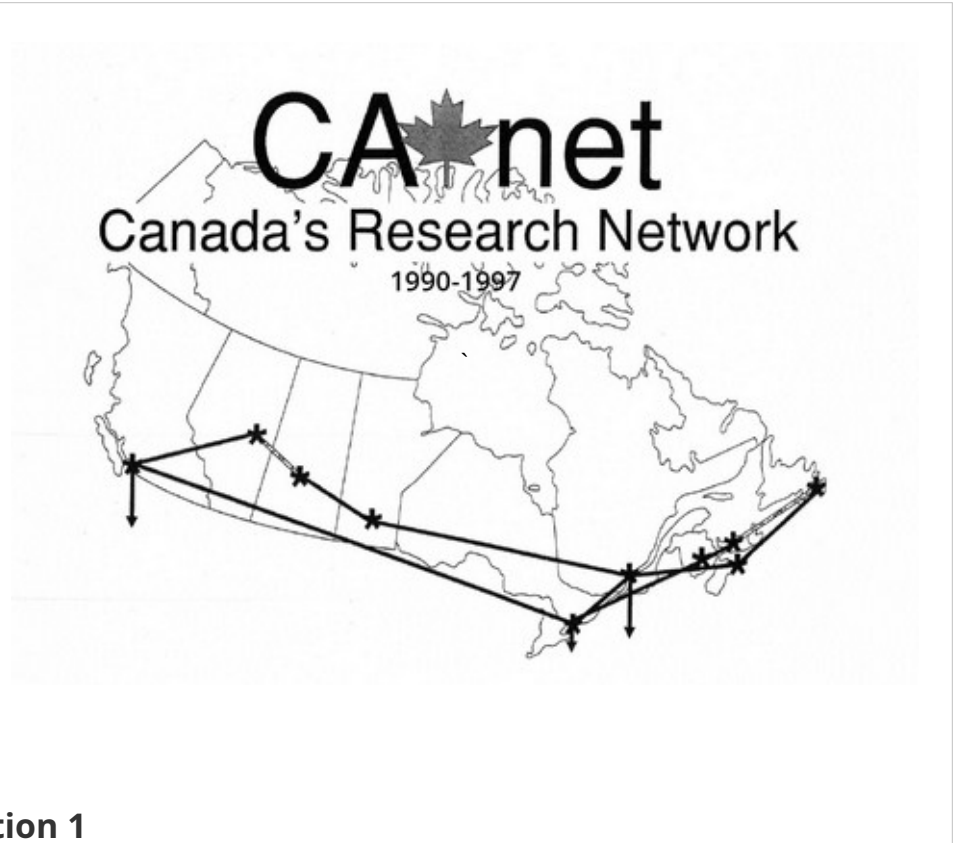


Slide Source: Daniel Paul, author of We Were Not The Savages

Doing History Here

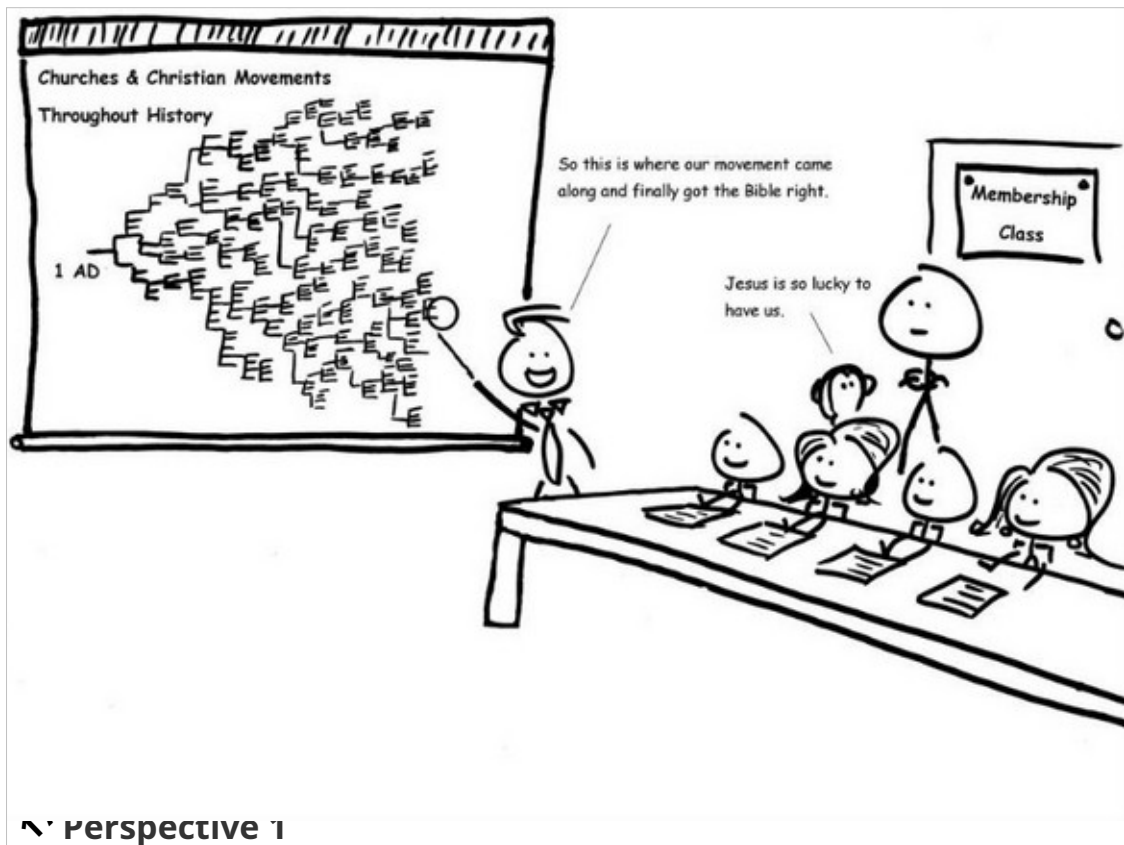
So about me:

I was born on the tippy southern tip of Nova Scotia in the early 1960s, moved with my family to Bridgewater, then to Halifax in 1981.



16 Vocation 1

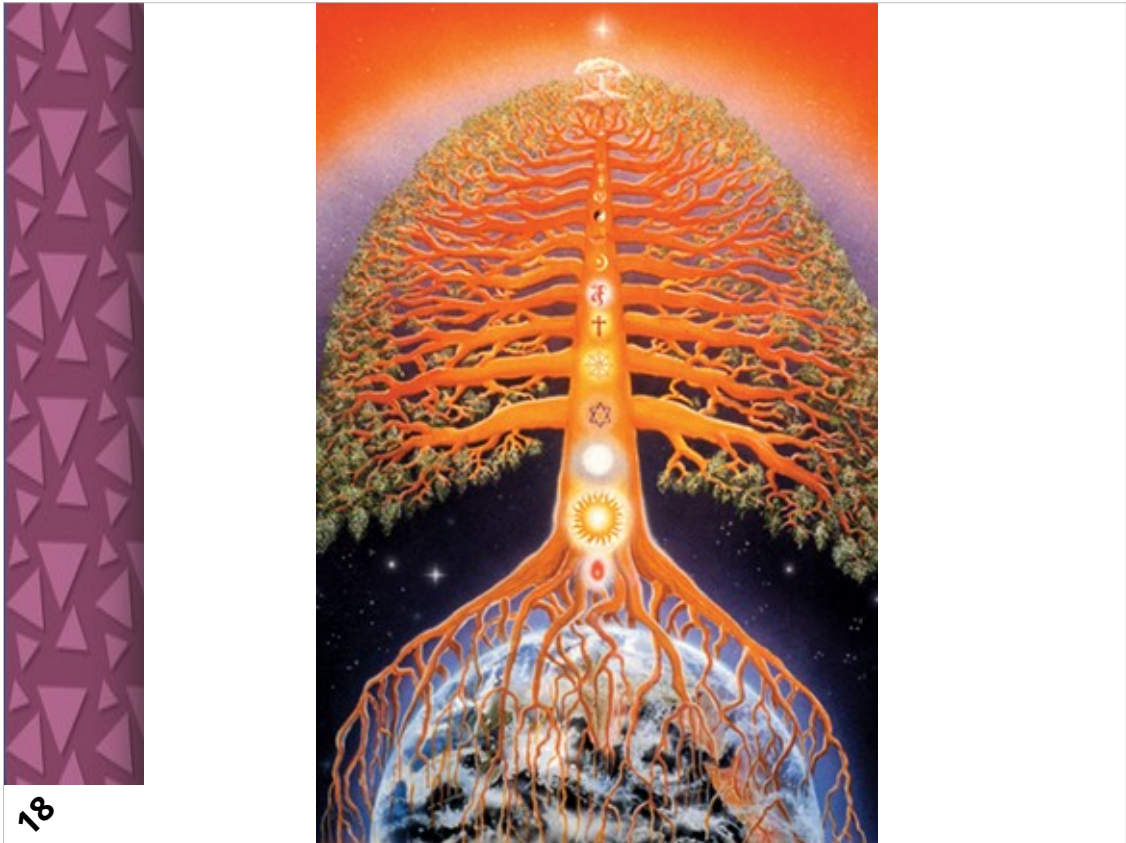
- The thing I'm most proud of being part of.



I was raised ecumenical. We all sort of thought our mom was Catholic; I was baptized Anglican, we visited many churches.

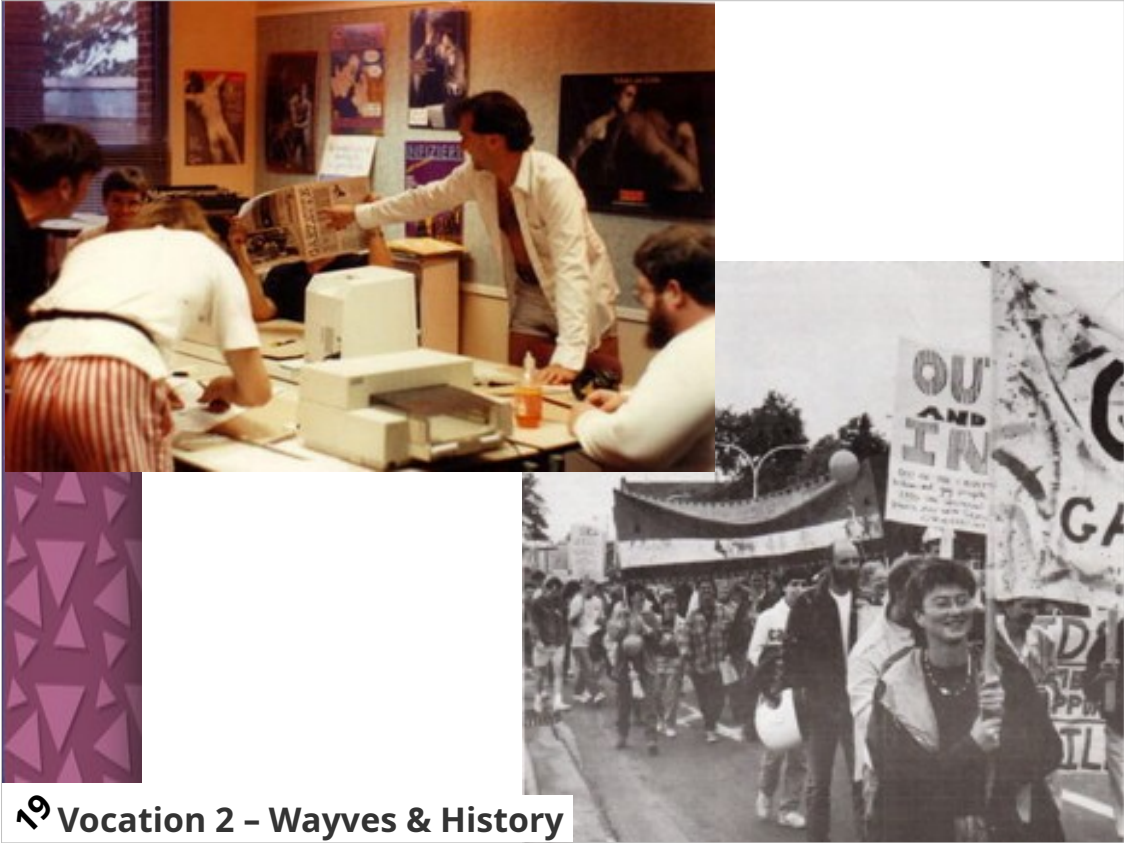
I find almost any kind of spiritual experience quite fulfilling so I spend a lot of time in a lot of different places – the mosque, the synagogue, the catholics, the protestants, the quakers, the wiccans.

And a year ago I got an email from a cousin in the Old country: "Your grandmothe was jewish, your mother was jewish, you and your brothers are jewish, everyone knows that."



... including the quite wonderful Brahma Kumaris, which uses this, best image ever, and has the most remarkable service experience that you will ever experience. And chai and ginger cookies after.

(explain image)



📍 Vocation 2 - Wayves & History

Anyway aside from my day job I got into publishing and history and archives. This is the layout of Wayves Magazine in the 1980s.

And this is the 1988 Pride March.



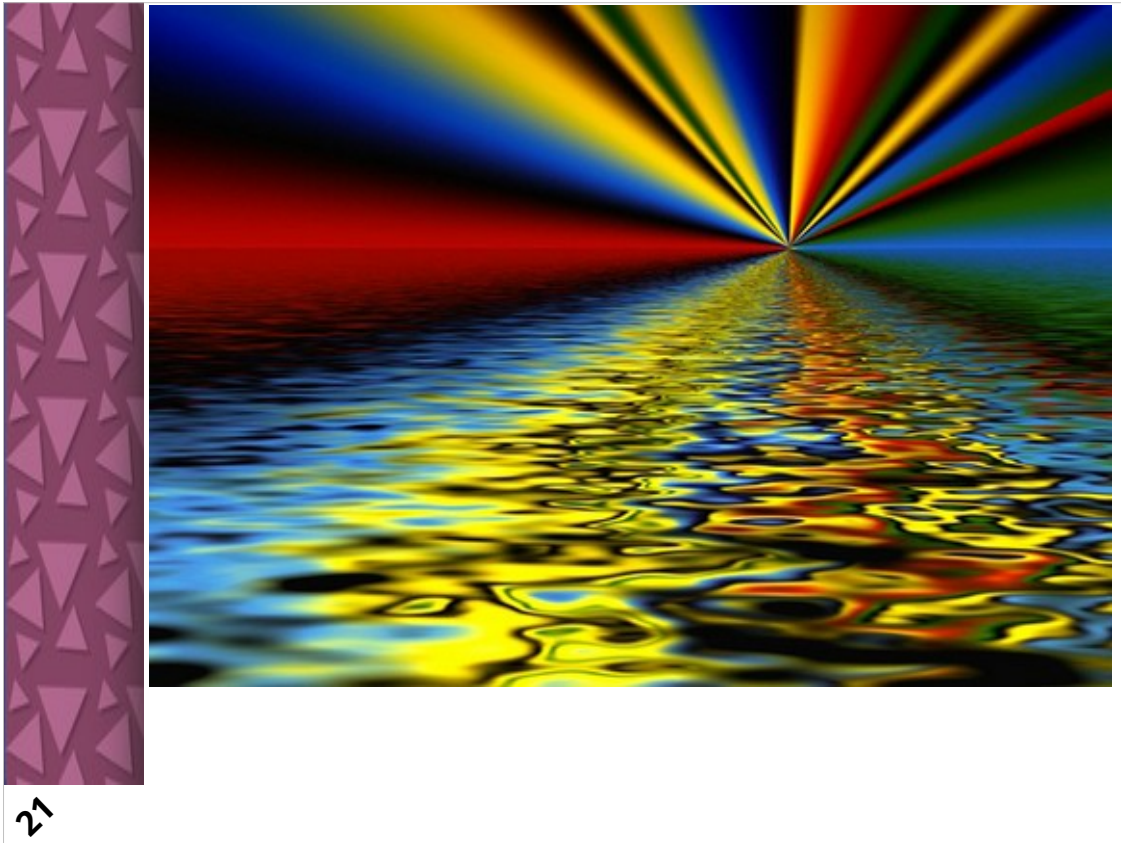
And then, people started giving me stuff – facts, stories, documents.

I have a pretty terrible memory so it is in my nature to keep records and document stuff so in 2000 I started putting it all on line and cross linking it.

Currently almost 2000 articles – some of them a little silly

664,073 words as of Friday.

Goal: an article for every person, place thing and event of significance to the Q community in Nova Scotia – forever.



So I'm going to take you on a very VERY brief burn through spiritual traditions in Halifax.



📌 Almost immediately: Sparrow + GayLine

Sparrow: formed almost immediately after the creation of the community in 1972. Interdenominational, founded by Anglican and RC clergy.

Sadly we do not have an origin story on it. If you want to be a hero – here's some work for you! Get in touch!

1984-1985: Kinship for the Seventh Day Adventists

United Church designation Affirming. The quote I like the most is from Rabbi Isenberg at the Shaar: being open is allowing people to the dance. Being Affirming is inviting people to the dance.

- No Mormon "Affirmation" group that I know.
- 2000s: Bedford, St John's United, Shelburne, St Andrew's Truro
- 2010s: St Matthew's Hfx, Baddeck, Bridgewater, Cole Harbour Woodside, Grace, St James, Hilden/Old Barns, Kingston, Wilmot, West Side near Bridgewater (I think)



So also from 1980 the LGBT Alcoholics Anonymous group called Live And Let Live which met for forty years.

Out of many AA sayings my favourite is, "Religion is for people who are afraid of going to hell; spirituality is for people who have already been there."

Live And Let Live and their annual conference, held on the ... second? weekend in August in this building, coasted to a halt during COVID and has not restarted.



Graeme Ellis
Nov 27, 1953 – Sept 2, 1984



Frank Morton
Nov 1 1938 – Sept 27 1989

👉 1990s: lots of stuff + lots of dying

In the late 1980s and 1990s we were busy with a lot of things, but mostly, dying.

You're all too young to remember but at the time your diagnosis was a death sentence and you had a few weeks or a few months to make your peace.

Here are a couple of AIDS quilt panels from a couple of the first, very well known community members who passed away.



Catholics Churchmembers Assembled To Respond To AIDS



Morton House - November 4,
1988

 1988: Caras

- * some story needs to be told here about how quickly it came together
- * created Morton House
- * first minutes say, "Catholics Assembled..." and then it's crossed out to make "Churchmembers"

We'll see something from this Frank Morton later.



1980s: Shambhalans

When the Shambhalans moved here in the mid 1980s there were a lot of LGBT folk among them and there have been ... mostly men's groups I think, meeting on and off over the years




1991- 2011 Safe Harbour Metropolitan Community Church.

Met in many different locations - at last, at Veith House in the north end and... right here. Out of many memories, one favourite is of the musician, Miss Vicki, who due to her extremely long fingernails would only play in e-flat-major. Who plays piano here? who gets that?

Anyway in order to provide some variety, another regular would jump in before each hymn and hit the "transpose" button for another key.

This photo is in Bloomfield Center I think.

And the AIDS Coalition offices. The end of Safe Harbour MCC was rather unfortunate - with literally uncontrollable squabbling among baordmembres. A couple outside MCC ministers came in to help, and left saying it was unsalvagable.



1993 – 2004 The Wedding Chapel

1990s: Spiritual Science Fellowship (meets at the UU Church. One of the weirder spiritual experiences you'll ever had. (but not the weirdest, that's Brahma Kumaris.)

Both coordinated by the same person.

And, all along, quietly, the Quakers. They didn't make a big deal out of it.

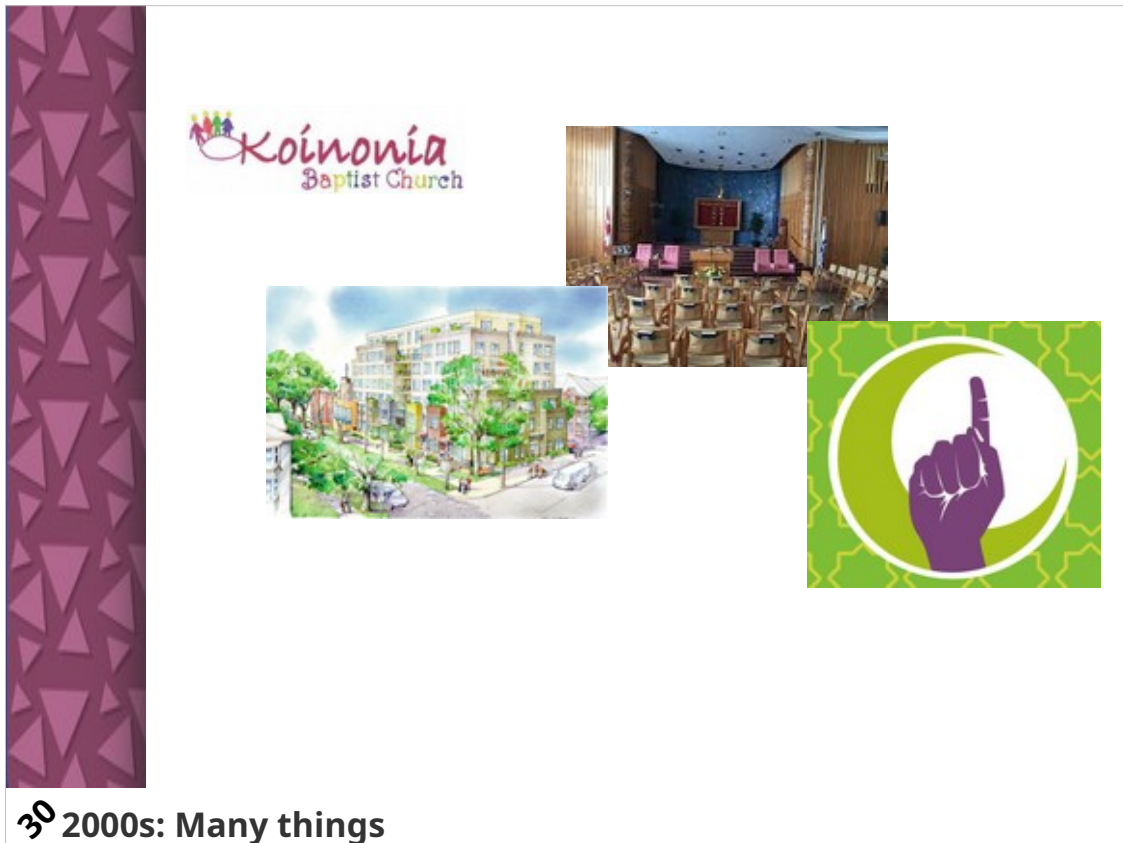
 Other 1990s



As of 2020 we have a very traditional high Anglican service called Worship With Pride currently hosted out of St Mark's in the north end, 2 minutes from my place.

And, shortly after, Queer Spirit Church which is held in the First Baptist Church space on Oxford.

We've had many interfaith services at pride Festivals which could always use more planning. The last one was planned at the last minute and was well done but badly promoted and poorly attended.

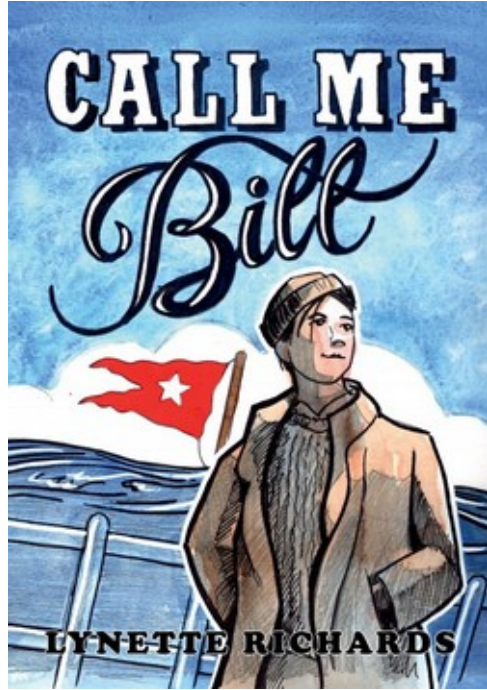


2002 - present : Koinonia Church – Baptist background

2007 – present: Shaar Shalom “Conservative” synagogue is extremely LGBT friendly. 2007 is when we heard about it - when Rabbi Ari Isenberg was there.

2010 SPIRIT Place: St John’s United own project the rebuild of the Windsor & Willow street space. Very sadly ill fated.

And, for a year or so, a Queer Mosque - meaning, a group of people meeting, not an actual building, called the Halifax Unity Mosque which is part of a network.



SS Atlantic

1873

Prospect

Lynette Richards

 Call Me Bill

Autopsies

Available at Venus Envy, Cape & Cowl, Open Book
Coffee Coles, and Wozzles



So you can see that there have been many many "birds of a feather" spiritual groups that met to for safety, away from the intolerant main groups of christians and others. But there never has been a separate Unitarian Universalist group.

Why is that? Yeah, you know.

Anyway, here we are – celebrating fifty years of friendship and growing together.

L'chaim! and thank you. We can do questions and discussion over cake