

**HOMOPHOBIA, HETEROSEXISM AND  
HOW IT CAN HURT THE FIGHT AGAINST THE  
ABUSE OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**CORNWALL PUBLIC INQUIRY  
PHASE 2 POLICY ROUNDTABLE  
OCTOBER 1, 2008  
7:00 – 9:00 P.M.**

Colleen Parrish opened the evening by welcoming the attendees and those watching at home by web-cast, and introducing herself as the moderator for this evening's session. She explained that this workshop is one in a continuing series of workshops as part of Phase 2 of the Cornwall Public Inquiry. Phase 2 is future-oriented; it focuses on healing and reconciliation.

She laid out the ground rules for the evening, stating she will try to have the evening move along as planned, calling upon any counsel who may wish to ask questions of any panelist or make comments. If those in the gallery have questions, they should flag down Patrick Lechasseur and he will take down their question in writing and give it to the moderator. All questions must be asked into one of the microphones so that it is picked up on the web-cast. Colleen also advised the audience that French headsets were available for anyone requiring translation of the evening's proceedings.

She then introduced the three panelists for the evening.

**Dr. Michael Seto** is a consulting psychologist at the Royal Ottawa Health Group and an Associate Professor at the University of Toronto. He has specialized in understanding sexual abuse issues, including pedophilia, and has written and lectured extensively in this field. He is a graduate of Queen's University and the University of British Columbia.

**Professor Bruce Ryder** is an Associate Professor at Osgoode Hall Law School, and a graduate of Columbia University School of Law, the University of Toronto Law School, and the University of Western Ontario. Professor Ryder has also been the Director of the Centre for Public Law and Public Policy and Editor-in-Chief of the Osgoode Hall Journal. He teaches and writes in the area of constitutional law and equality rights, including diversity of family forms. He has won several awards for his contributions as a teacher.

**Ms. Janet Handy** is a member of the Advisory Panel at the Cornwall Public Inquiry. She is Executive Director at The Gatehouse, an innovative Toronto organization that is a child abuse investigation and support site. The Gatehouse also provides support to adult survivors and professional training. Jan is a graduate of the Ontario Institute for Studies on Education, has a Master's of Divinity from Trinity College, University of Toronto, and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Wilfred Laurier. With a long history of community development work, she brings some hands-on experience to the table today.

Colleen then turned the session over to Dr. Seto.

**DR. MICHAEL SETO**

Dr. Seto opened by thanking the audience for coming, and offering some background on pedophilia and sexual offenders, promising to address the connection – if there is one – between pedophilia and homosexuality.

He started by defining the term “pedophilia” as a sexual preference for pre-pubescent children. Pre-pubescent children are young children, who have not developed sexually at all. While it is illegal to have sex with 13 year olds, that is not pedophilia, as most 13 year olds have begun their sexual development.

He stressed that “pedophilia” is not synonymous with “child molester” or “sex offender”. Child molesters and sex offenders are not always pedophiles, and there are pedophiles who have no history of sexual contact with children. Some sex offenders prefer to have sex with adults, but will offend against children as well.

He then gave several reasons explaining why non-pedophiles would seek sex with children. The first reason is “disinhibition” – a lack of inhibition caused by alcohol, drug use, or dementia. Another reason is the pursuit of immediate sexual gratification without concern for the harm caused, for example, as seen with psychopaths. The third reason is that the offender is “hypersexual”, and is engaging in sexually compulsive behaviour. The fourth reason for non-pedophiles to engage in sex with children is that they have a lack of suitable adult options – for example, they may be developmentally delayed or socially isolated, and it is easier for them to have sex with children than to find an adult sexual partner.

Dr. Seto then offered the following statistics. Pedophilia is rare in the general population, with less than 5% of the population. Most pedophiles are male, in the range of 90 to 95%. Pedophiles are more likely to have boy victims than are non-pedophile offenders. There is an association between being a pedophile and targeting boys. Approximately 20 to 30% of sex offenders against children victimize boys.

Approximately 2-4% of adult men are gay. Gay men can be defined as men who sexually prefer adult men. Straight men are defined as men who sexually prefer adult women. Pedophiles are defined as persons who sexually prefer pre-pubescent children.

Pedophiles are not the same as homosexuals, regardless of whether they choose boy or girl victims. Pedophiles have a sexual preference for children. Homosexual men have a sexual preference for other adult men, not for children.

There is no evidence that gay men are any different in the risk they pose to children than straight men.

Dr. Seto then moved on to the impact of linking homosexuality and pedophilia, stating that it unfairly stigmatizes gay men by linking them to pedophilia and to sexual offences

against children, even in the face of evidence which shows there is no link between gay men and an increased risk to children. He also stated that there is no link between childhood sexual abuse and later sexual orientation – childhood sexual abuse does not “make” you gay, any more than it makes you straight.

He pointed out that because of misinformation or social attitudes, many male victims feel embarrassed about having engaged in sexual acts with a man, which reduces the chance of them reporting the abuse and seeking help for it. This is a real concern for our society, because being a victim of sexual abuse increases the likelihood of negative outcomes. Sexual abuse where there is no help given can lead to mental health issues including depression, addictive behaviours, problems with relationships and sexual functioning, and criminal behaviours including sexual offending.

It is important that we overcome this stigma in order that victims of childhood sexual abuse are not embarrassed to come forward to report their abuse and seek help.

Dr. Seto then turned the floor over to Ms. Jan Handy.

#### **MS. JAN HANDY**

Ms. Handy opened her address by stating she will be speaking from the community-based perspective, and addressing the topic of how we as a society think about sexuality.

She told the audience that our society is full of internalized homophobia – we have all been taught that homosexuality is wrong. The source of this isn't important, because the social message is clear: “Don't be homosexual”. And the other side of that is, “I hope that isn't me”. Even gays and lesbians going through the coming out process are afraid of being gay, because who would wish that on anyone?

Jan asked the audience to think about what homophobia sounds like. She then gave several examples:

- “I don't mind if my son plays with dolls, so long as they are action figures and he isn't queer.”
- “Homosexuality is an act against God, and the cure is to ask God for help to resist temptation.”
- “I don't agree with your lifestyle.”
- “All homosexuals are pedophiles.”

She commented that our society equates being gay for men as being weak: “Good heterosexual boys go to war, become policemen, are the men of the house, and can play hockey. A gay man can't do this, because he is just a female in disguise.”

Jan pointed out that women in our society have come further in equality than any openly gay male – reminding the audience of the “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy towards homosexuals in the U.S. military.

Our society says “You’ve come a long way, baby” to women, and we have adjusted to and accepted this change. Jan asked the audience, why we are not able to do this with openly gay men?

Jan advised that there are three factors in our society that make it difficult to be gay and abused:

1. We don’t teach boys to be secure in their sexuality. In our society, men must be conquerors. If you are a victim, you are not a conqueror. This tells boys not to report abuse, as it is a sign of weakness.
2. Gays and lesbians are not visible unless they are open about their sexuality.
3. If a man is openly gay, other men may believe that it will reduce their masculinity through association

Jan then went on to speak about the common homophobic sentiments expressed in our society.

*“Homosexuality is an act against God, the spiritual cure is to resist with the help of God”.*

She commented: “In our society, we were all taught that sex is a temptation. Boys were taught to pursue, girls were taught to get captured. In this scenario, the male is honourable and the girl is a virgin. This is the only honourable scenario, everything else is temptation.”

Ms. Handy’s view is that it upsets our social formula when “a male chases and a male gets caught, or when a female chases and a female gets caught.” This threatens our view of society. It threatens what we have been taught is “normal” in a society – a family made up of a father, a mother, and children. What this doesn’t address, of course, is how homosexuals came from these heterosexual father/mother/children families. “When we cannot make something fit our understanding, we dump all our fears into it.”

*“I don’t agree with your lifestyle”.*

This common sentiment presumes that homosexuality is a lifestyle, “like having two cars and a cottage.” If it’s true, then heterosexuality as well is just a “lifestyle”. But in our society, a union between a man and a woman is never viewed as just a “lifestyle”. Jan joked with the audience how wonderful it was that now in Canada homosexuals can be as

miserable in their marriages as heterosexuals. She pointed out that linking sex acts to a lifestyle doesn't reflect the reality – which is that people are living in couples as a family.

*“All homosexuals are potential pedophiles”.*

Jan advised that this is the most hurtful statement of all. Abusers clearly come from both the homosexual and heterosexual communities. We would never presume that all heterosexuals are potential pedophiles. Our society needs to find blame, and there must be a culprit to blame, so we turn to someone who doesn't belong – in this case homosexuals. We do this because we can't face the unthinkable – which is that the family is the arena in which most sexual abuse takes place.

Jan then asked the question: “What about males who are afraid of their sexual orientation because they were abused as children?” She pointed out that we need to focus on the power imbalance in abuse – regardless of the gender. Whether these predators are homosexual or heterosexual, they are all using power over these minors. For male victims, the question of sexual orientation is a red herring – it is all about the power imbalance. Sexual predators will use any hook to get the child to comply and do what the predator wants and to ensure secrecy. Examples that Jan gave are: “a child is made to assume responsibility for their body's automatic response to stimulation, the child is told they are gay, the child is told this is God's will, the child is told it is a sin to disobey the Rabbi, the child is told their mother is not a good enough sex partner for their abuser.” These are all forms of ensuring compliance – all distortions of normal boundaries.

Society needs to address some misconceptions and spread the messages that being gay does not make you an abuser – and being abused does not make you gay.

Jan stressed, “We need to face our fears – the fears implanted by our abusers.” Speaking personally, Jan advised that her abuser was a married Anglican priest with seven children, who abused both boys and girls. There is no one scenario for abuse, but all the scenarios have the same elements of coercion.

Jan concluded: “For survivors, abuse is an eclipse of the sun. When it's over, you are left behind in the eclipse, and everyone else moves into the sun. You are irreparably changed. Every day you must choose between life and death. We spend a lifetime searching for our souls.”

Colleen Parrish thanked Jan for her remarks, and reminded the audience that abuse isn't something that happens to someone else, it is something that affects all of us in society.

Colleen then handed the floor to Professor Bruce Ryder.

## **PROFESSOR BRUCE RYDER**

Professor Ryder thanked the audience for coming, and explained that he is a lawyer and a professor of law, teaching a legal course in regulating sexual behaviour. The ultimate goal of this is to protect children from abuse.

Professor Ryder pointed out that this is an area that is rife with misunderstanding. In his view, a better way to frame tonight's topic would be "Heterosexism and how it may affect the Fight against Child Abuse."

He told the audience that "heterosexism" is a better term than "homophobia", as we live in a heterosexist culture and that all of us in some ways are heterosexist – that we believe heterosexuality is superior to other sexualities. In addition, the "fight against pedophilia" is better referred to as the "fight against childhood sexual abuse". It is important to note that not all pedophiles abuse children, and not all sex abusers are pedophiles.

In fact, he noted, it is important that our society find ways to reach out to those pedophiles who are not offending against children, and to enable them to seek treatment and continue to resist offending.

"Heterosexism" can manifest itself as homophobia and, in the extreme, to "gay bashing", but it can also be much more subtle. Heterosexism creates a hierarchy of sexual value between heterosexuals and homosexuals – with positive attributes being associated with the dominant group (heterosexuals) and negative attributes being associated with the subordinate group (homosexuals). In this viewpoint, heterosexuality is seen as normal, and homosexuality is seen as deviant and therefore dangerous.

He pointed out two prevailing and dangerous myths in our society: (1) that homosexuals are more dangerous to children, and (2) that heterosexuals are not likely to offend against children.

Both these myths are false, and are dangerous if we accept them in our attempts to eradicate child sexual abuse.

Professor Ryder noted that heterosexism is pervasive in our society, and is held by all persons and all institutions, including the justice institutions. We are only just beginning as a society to confront this stereotype. Its pervasiveness is evident in schools, where children learn these beliefs at a very early age. "You fag" and "That's so gay" are very common insults heard on the playground.

Up until the 1980s in Canada, many sexual offences in criminal law used terms relating to a specific gender or a specific marital status, and up until the 1960s related to particular sex acts targeting gay men. Over the past 40 years, society has moved to a more inclusive view. Criminal law is involved now in regulating relationships, not

regulating sexual acts. For example, the focus on good vs. bad sex acts has shifted, and the primary role for Canadian criminal law now is to prevent violent and exploitative acts. The focus is now on public/private, child/adult and consensual/coerced sexual behaviours.

However, society has not focused nearly as much on pedophilia itself. It is important to realize that a sexual preference for children may or may not be acted upon. Pedophilia needs to be separated from sexual abuse. We need to be able to treat pedophiles to enable them to keep from acting upon their preferences.

Professor Ryder discussed how heterosexism has negative effects on the prevention of child sex abuse. “The stereotype of gay men as abusers is a huge barrier to preventing child abuse in our society. Keeping gay men from being baseball coaches or boy scout leaders is terribly misguided, and does nothing to solve the problem.”

Heterosexism is also damaging because male victims of male offenders are reluctant to disclose abuse in a timely fashion. The victims are afraid of the stigma and stereotypes. They feel shame about their abuse, and are ashamed to disclose. This may be a factor in the cycle of abuse – abused boys often have homophobic feelings, yet may also be attracted to homosexual acts.

Survivors need a better understanding of their sexual orientation and their abuse.

Professor Ryder outlined five strategies that our society needs to consider:

1. Finding ways to offer support to non-offending pedophiles so that they do not offend.
2. Increasing public education to children and youth – teach them how to distinguish between sex abuse and sincere affection, and teach positive attitudes towards sexuality in consensual relationships.
3. Supporting disclosure by children and youth.
4. Provide consistent therapy and counselling to survivors of abuse.
5. Finding effective means of accountability for perpetrators which includes – but is not limited to – criminal prosecutions. Criminal trials often turn into credibility contests, with the offender saying one thing and the victim saying another. There are no witnesses to the abuse. Criminal trials seldom result in convictions and a more likely to result in an acquittal and revictimization of the child. We need to find other forms of accountability that will discourage future sex abuse.

Professor Ryder then set out his recommended strategies to prevent child abuse:

- Effective strategies shouldn't be focused on gay men and pedophiles. Child sex offenders are primarily men, of all sexual orientations and backgrounds, and two-thirds of their victims are female.
- We need to offer support to pedophiles and potential offenders – and they need to be able to seek support in our society so they will not offend.
- We need to educate children and youth on the differences between sexual abuse and positive sexual experiences that are appropriate for their age and development, and those that are not.
- We need to make it easier for children to disclose sexual abuse.
- We need to develop mechanisms to hold the abusers accountable, without relying solely on the criminal law.

### **Discussion among Panellists**

Colleen Parrish then asked the panelists if they had any questions or comments on the ideas expressed by their fellow panelists.

Dr. Seto stressed the importance of a point made by Professor Ryder – our responsibility to the victims of child sexual abuse. Clearly we are more likely to be effective in treating them the earlier we intervene. He used the analogy of obesity – it is much easier to treat kids for obesity early, than to attempt to treat someone who has been obese for many years and now has all the health problems associated with that.

Dr. Seto also advised the audience that we currently have services available to treat offenders – those who have sexually abused children – but not for those who have not yet abused children – the non-offending pedophiles – who have not abused yet, but feel the urge to do so. “If we can help them maintain an offense-free way of life, then that will be far more positive for society – we can stop it from happening before there are victims.”

He noted that there is an organization in Berlin, Germany, that has obtained corporate funding for a public advertising campaign that asks, “Do you think you like children too much?” Pedophiles and non-offending pedophiles can contact that organization for assistance and treatment. We have very few resources currently available for these individuals, and we need to figure out a way for these individuals to access services in our society.

Jan Handy spoke up to say that at The Gatehouse where she has worked they have had a lot of men come forward to say, “I have these thoughts about children. I'm a victim myself, but I have these thoughts about children.” She said it is a big dilemma for them as a service provider, and it is a difficult policy issue.

All agreed that it is critical to focus on the science and not on the stereotypes.

## Questions from the Audience

Colleen Parrish then opened the floor up to questions from party counsel and from the audience at large.

Question from the Audience (in French): *Why is there so much difference between men and women when it comes to offending against children?*

Dr. Seto replied that there are number of factors which explain why men are more likely to be offenders. Males are more likely to be risk takers, are more likely to try new things, are more likely to fight, and more likely to be thrill seekers. Men are also more likely to pursue sex partners, are more likely to engage in casual sex, and are more likely to seek non-committed sex. With respect to why men are more likely to be pedophiles than women, he explained that there is a general pattern with a number of mental disorders that there is a greater incidence in men. It is believed to be related to the way in which male fetuses develop.

He also pointed out that approximately 90-95% of sex offenders in prisons are males. There are female sex offenders, but they are less likely to get reported, charged, or incarcerated, so there could be some under-reporting of female offenders.

Colleen Parrish gave the example of an older woman abusing a younger boy, and how that is often treated by society as if “the boy got lucky” rather than as an incident of sexual abuse. “The boy did not get lucky, he got abused. Men and boys are often embarrassed to admit that they have been abused by female perpetrators.”

Jan Handy noted that socialization and heterosexism demands that boys be conquerors, which leaves them no way to be a victim. Men who were abused by men or who were abused by women are equally afraid to talk about the abuse – because they have a sense that it makes them a “weak man”.

Professor Ryder also pointed out that we as a culture shape masculinity in a manner that leads men to dominate, and that there is also a tendency in male sexuality to assert itself in the domination of others. He noted, however, that this does not explain why some women become perpetrators, stating that remains “a puzzle”.

Question from the Audience: *We seem to have polarized our view of sex abusers – they are a predator lurking in the bushes or driving around in a van – and we teach our kids not to talk to strangers. Why don't we teach them they're more likely to be abused by their teacher, their coach or a family friend?*

Jan Handy answered, saying that we as a society are getting better. But we need to achieve a closer understanding that the abuser is most likely to be in the family setting – and we are still not willing to look at the family. We aren't willing to tell our children that the abuser might be within our family. Yet we also expect our children to unthinkingly obey adults in authority. We need to talk to kids about sexual abuse within

the family – the solution is to start talking about the realities of where the abuser resides. It is very difficult for us, because we have an overwhelming need to preserve the family.

Dr. Seto added that the human tendency is to make things that we are afraid of “out there” – it isn’t us, or people like us, it is “other people”, “them”. But the threat to our children is often within our family circle – our grandfather, our neighbour, our family friend.

Jan Handy suggested we could add to that list “our spouse”.

Professor Ryder reiterated that the need to properly educate our children is fundamental – but extremely challenging. We need to tell children what we know – who the perpetrators are, what they do, the situations where this may occur. This is far more useful information to give to children as opposed to warning them of the stereotypes of a scary man hiding in the bushes or in a van.

*Question from the Audience: Most pedophiles are drawn to male children rather than female children. Why?*

Dr. Seto answered that it is speculated that there are mechanisms in the brain that control sex preferences, and that there are prenatal influences that affect whether the person will prefer males or females. However, from society’s perspective it doesn’t matter if it is a boy victim or a girl victim – they are still both victims.

*Question from the Audience: Hazing seems to be used as an excuse to do things that would otherwise be illegal. Comments?*

Professor Ryder answered that hazing can range from “harmless shenanigans” to acts of ritualized degradation. In his opinion, criminal assaults should be prosecuted as such, regardless of where they occur.

*Question from the Audience: What do you suggest for a man who has been sexually abused and has spent his life in and out of jail – how do you suggest he pay for counselling?*

Jan Handy addressed this question, stating that until we as a society grapple with child abuse as a crime that affects many more people than just the victim, we will not be able to determine what the victim needs. We need to develop our care system to deal with the original story, not just treating the symptoms. She stated that \$15 billion per year in spent in Canada to respond to child abuse, and questioned whether we are targeting this money where we should.

*Question from the Audience: As a victim, I always thought my perpetrators were gay. But now I understand that gay individuals have sex with consenting adults. My problem is that pedophiles are deviants who will fashion any garment to fit their needs. They are*

*hiding in institutions, saying they are gay as an excuse for their behaviour, and then behaving as pedophiles.*

Jan Handy answered the question, telling the audience that there are services now available that currently were not available before. She also made the distinction between pedophiles who act on their urges, and pedophiles who do not. She questioned what society should best do to treat those men who were abused as children and who are currently imagining having sex with children. We need to keep them from doing this, but we don't yet know how to do that. There is a definite need for treatment in this area, and it is a very delicate area.

She reminded the audience, however, it is very important to remember that only a very small percentage of those who were abused become abusers themselves. Abuse does not "cause" people to become adult abusers.

*Question from the Audience: Have you seen success in communities where community education has targeted gay and lesbian youth? For example, Pink Triangle?*

Jan Handy answered by stating that in Toronto, Toronto Pride has a Youth Pride area – a safe place for youth to go. She stated that it is also important that the gay community deal with it's own stereotypes. She spoke about the need for gays and lesbians to be public. "We have done enough hiding, let's talk about this openly." But she acknowledged that is still just a fantasy. Heterosexism is still there in our society.

*Question from the Audience: How is it than incest takes place in a family, beginning at age two and continuing on through adolescence? Can this still be pedophilia, as it continues past puberty? Is there an explanation for this? Has there been any research done in this area?*

Dr. Seto responded, answering that pedophilia plays a role in some incest cases – not a lot, but some. Often incest offenders are psychopaths, are disinhibited by alcohol or drug use, are in dysfunctional family situations, and/or have attitudes that their children are property, and have a sense of entitlement – all of these factors play a role. Dr. Seto confessed that he also found this a puzzling phenomenon, and that research needs to be done in an effort to find an explanation. Because currently we know that this occurs, and it doesn't make sense based on definitions of pedophilia.

Jan Handy remarked that it is important to look at the whole family system for an explanation. Often in these cases the mother has been removed as an authority figure within the family.

During the course of the question and answer period, a number of people indicated that they appreciated having informative panels coming to the community, the willingness to address complex and sensitive issues and dispel harmful stereotypes.

Colleen Parrish closed the meeting but telling the audience that it is only by being willing to talk about these difficult issues that we are able to flag what we know, and what we still need to know so that we can make any necessary changes in society. She thanked the panelists for their presentations, and the audience for attending.

She noted that Dr. Seto's slide presentation would be posted along with the minutes of the meeting on the Cornwall Public Inquiry website.