

LGBTQ2+ National Monument

Vision



Note on development: This Vision was created through a collaborative stakeholder engagement process organized by the LGBT Purge Fund in the fall of 2019. The process engaged over 150 people, including LGBT Purge survivors and others, who contributed their experience and expertise in history, activism, community organizing and advocacy, law, politics, design, arts, writing and teaching. Two-Spirit Indigenous, First Nation, Inuit and Métis individuals also contributed to the development of this Vision through parallel and on-going Indigenous Circle activities.

Between the 1950s and mid-1990s, LGBT* members of the Canadian Armed Forces, the RCMP and the federal public service were systematically discriminated against, harassed and often fired as a matter of policy and sanctioned practice. In what came to be known as the “LGBT Purge”, people were followed, interrogated, arrested, abused and traumatized.

The LGBT Purge was implemented at the highest levels of the Government of Canada and was carried out with callous disregard for the dignity, privacy and humanity of its targets. The Canadian government's LGBT Purge continued for over forty years.

Through time, many brave survivors made efforts to secure apologies, gain recognition, win compensation and change Canadian law. In 2016, survivors of the Purge launched a nation-wide class action lawsuit against the Canadian government. The ground-breaking settlement, reached in 2018, included funds earmarked specifically to “memorialize the historical discrimination against LGBTQ2+ Canadians, including with respect to the LGBT Purge” (Final Settlement Agreement, 2018). Building a national monument is legally mandated as part of this agreement.

An LGBTQ2+ National Monument will be built in the National Capital Region to recognize the generations of LGBTQ2+ people who have been persecuted, abused, dismissed and marginalized in Canada because of who they desire and how they identify. It will acknowledge the colonial roots of discrimination against gender and sexual minorities on this unceded land. LGBTQ2+ people have suffered indignities perpetrated by the Canadian state on its people. An estimated 9,000 lives were devastated by the Purge alone. The monument must memorialize this historic abuse and recognize that the struggle isn't over.

While recognizing enduring injury and injustice, the LGBTQ2+ National Monument will educate, memorialize, celebrate and inspire. It will be guided by principles of inclusion, indigeneity, visibility and timelessness. It vows to never forget. Never again.

** Though it was not called the “LGBT Purge” at the time, the former Federal Government policy was directed at and had an impact primarily on LGBT persons. The term was chosen during the class action to describe the policy and events as it was fairly accurate, inoffensive and intelligible in both official languages. While recognizing the limitations of the acronym LGBT, the LGBT Purge Fund has decided to continue to use it in the interests of consistency, clarity and stability of nomenclature.*

1. The Objectives of the Monument

The monument will educate.

The stories of LGBTQ2+ people in Canada have been silenced for too long. In particular, this monument must educate the public about the LGBT Purge: a shameful episode in Canadian history with on-going reverberations. For more than one hundred years, governments in Canada have oppressed sexual and gender minorities with their laws. Our governments vigorously opposed our efforts to secure our rights through the courts and to stand up in resistance. While many contributed to this pursuit for justice and an end to the purge, we particularly acknowledge the brave litigants and their lawyers, and indeed the many courageous judges, who pursued full and equal protections under the law, including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

By encouraging a deep understanding of history and injustice, the monument will compel visitors to recognize that liberty, human rights and basic freedoms were, and are still, at risk. Whether directly affected or not, the monument will feel relevant and moving to all those who hold these values dear. The stark history of LGBTQ2+ experiences will challenge prevailing views of Canada as entirely welcoming and inclusive.

The monument will provide a dynamic setting of teaching and learning for visitors young and old. It will shed light on a dark chapter in Canada's recent past and also highlight galvanizing moments of resistance and achievement. Instead of an institutional or legislative history, the educational component will stress achievements of the LGBTQ2+ community, which has struggled and advocated for change through time. This is a people's history. Laws have transformed and attitudes have shifted because of our community's courage, tenacity and activism, and our ongoing willingness to challenge state oppression through our courts. The monument must communicate that, although significant advances have been made, the struggle for full equality continues and that apparent progress may be fragile.

Education is about:

- Truth
- Understanding
- Discovery
- Ceremony
- Exposure
- Contesting
- Recognition
- Awareness
- Knowledge
- Storytelling

The monument will memorialize.

The monument will memorialize and confront discrimination against LGBTQ2+ people in Canada, the LGBT Purge and the colonial origins of this intolerance. Suicide, HIV, fear, depression, addiction, disownment, criminalization, rejection, isolation, erasure... the social, physical and psychological impacts of discrimination against the LGBTQ2+ community have been felt through generations. It has profoundly impacted survivors and their families, broadly defined. The effects of wider homophobia are deep and insidious. The monument must acknowledge enduring stories of pain and those that were never fully

told. It will convey outrage that these practices took place in Canada and that so many still suffer. Space must be provided to reflect, to rage and to heal.

The monument must signal that coming to terms with discrimination and these inhumane experiences is an evolving process. This memorialization will never be complete. Similarly, the monument will recognize that discrimination against gender and sexual minorities continues. Like the fight for equality, the monument must not feel finished, but be living, growing and expanding. Memorialization is about:

- Pain
- Invisibility
- Sorrow
- Anger
- Silence/being silenced
- Rage
- Injustice
- Fear
- Bigotry
- Stigma
- Erasure
- Isolation
- Helplessness
- Betrayal

The monument will celebrate.

The monument must hail the triumphs – large and small – of LGBTQ2+ community organizations, activists, artists, lawyers, politicians and allies whose steadfast commitment has led the fight for LGBTQ2+ equality in Canada. It will celebrate both action and inaction, including those who actively resisted and refused to cooperate in the Government's Purge campaign. Each advance is attributable to individual audacity, a spirit of collaboration and kinship despite difference. The monument will honour and celebrate the multiplicity of LGBTQ2+ lives, identities, struggles and successes. It will be a living, thriving, inviting space that celebrates resistance to oppression – past and present – and the resilience necessary to face adversity.

Celebration is about:

- Joy
- Dignity
- Fierceness
- Peace
- Community
- Justice
- Equality
- Healing
- Resilience
- Resistance
- Love
- Respect
- Honour
- Kinship
- Desire

The monument will inspire.

The monument will inspire hope, acceptance, strength and action. It will embolden young people to embrace their authentic selves and stand up for the rights and dignity of themselves, their friends and all LGBTQ2+ people in Canada and throughout the world. The monument will inject power into ongoing struggles on personal, national and international levels.

Thanks to grassroots community advocacy, persuasive critics, courageous litigants and dedicated lawyers, Canada was the first country in the world to provide substantial compensation for the harm inflicted on its own people through decades of state-sponsored discrimination. Canada has not only agreed to compensate the living, it has agreed to honour the memory of the deceased victims with a substantial fund to acknowledge the suffering of those who did not live to see justice served. The monument is one of a number of reconciliation and memorialization measures made possible by this fund. The monument will inspire further reconciliation and redress, both within Canada and internationally.

The stories of LGBTQ2+ people are equally engaging, healing and empowering. The monument must make a place for storytelling and create a platform for these evolving narratives. By providing a space for dialogue, the monument will become a beacon of hope and change for the future.

Inspiration is about:

- Hope
- Optimism
- Power
- Empowerment
- Self-acceptance
- Strength
- Courage
- Beauty
- Activism

2. Guiding Principles

Four principles will guide the design and visitor experience of the monument:

Inclusion

The LGBTQ2+ community is multiple. Two-Spirit, trans, intersex, lesbian, bi-sexual, queer, gay, questioning, non-binary, polyamorous, HIV-positive... this monument must reflect the community's colourful spectrum of sexual and gender identities and expressions and its wide range of lived experience. It must also recognize that these lived experiences intersect with a wealth of other identities subject to oppressive systems based on gender, race, class and ability, among others. Being a woman, disabled, or a person of colour, for example, has compounded the discrimination faced by LGBTQ2+ people in Canada. This complexity of difference and experience must be acknowledged in the monument.

Functionally, the monument must be inviting and inclusive. It must welcome all physical, emotional and intellectual engagement. The monument must be an experiential space for all LGBTQ2+ people to belong and to gather together to commemorate achievements, celebrate events and imagine the future. It must be universally accessible, attractive and engaging to people of all ages and abilities.

Inclusion is about:

- Embracing
- Accessibility
- Unity
- Welcoming
- Belonging
- Acceptance
- Delight

Indigeneity

Colonialism dramatically transformed perceptions and treatment of Two-Spirit and LGBTQ First Nations, Inuit and Métis people and, consequently, how they expressed and experienced their sexuality. The intersections between discrimination against gender and sexual minorities and institutionalized racism against Canada's Indigenous people is pernicious, poisonous and ongoing. The importation of this intolerance and its painful legacy must be foundational to the monument's message. The monument must tell this story and invite reconciliation both with people outside the LGBTQ2+ community and those within in. It must also make space – and hope – for building new relationships that challenge the past.

The monument must acknowledge its placement on unceded Algonquin land. It will provide a safe and sacred space for reconciliation and for sharing, educating, healing and resistance. This space will strive

to break down isolation and loneliness while generating an experience of feeling loved, held and protected. The monument will make space for story-telling, community-building, Circle and Ceremony that many LGBTQ Indigenous people have been denied. The monument must also make space for those who are no longer here or who are not yet comfortable being seen.

The monument must respect Indigenous approaches to healing and recovery – approaches that will benefit all whose hearts are heavy with trauma and grief. Its design will respect and honour the traditions and practices of many communities without being reductive. The power of nature and of the land must be revered and leveraged to break down isolation and facilitate connection between people and among communities. The monument must recognize the healing energy of the nearby Ottawa River – a place where people can leave their sorrow and pain and let it travel on. The fluidity of water is also a powerful metaphor for Indigenous experiences of gender. The land should provide space to grow medicines including the four sacred medicines: sage, tobacco, sweet grass and cedar. Overall, the monument must reflect individual and community healing and generate love and compassion – for others, for ourselves and our extended families.

Indigeneity is about:

- Reconciliation
- Empathy
- Story-telling
- Compassion
- Education
- Community
- Endurance
- Family
- Unceded

Visibility

The monument must address the erasure of LGBTQ2+ people in Canada by making the community's struggle and presence visible, literally and figuratively. It will emphasize that LGBTQ2+ lives are to be lived visibly – safely, proudly, publicly and without fear. No more hiding. No more being hidden.

The monument itself must be visible in the immediate landscape and beyond. It must draw people from all over Canada to learn, reflect, celebrate, heal and be inspired. LGBTQ2+ discrimination must be laid bare. The monument must fully reveal forty years of surveillance, repression and state-sponsored discrimination through the LGBT Purge, in particular. Through that time, thousands of those committed to serving our country were erased. Erasure and silence were used as weapons. Exposing this story will shed light on our experience and prompt healing and reconciliation for all people in Canada.

The monument will reflect on the complexities of what it means to be (in)visible. The repression and isolation of LGBTQ2+ people has been exacerbated and made more complicated by Canada's geography. The monument will acknowledge the varied experiences of seclusion in remote communities, public spaces, in rural and urban contexts, in places of work and even in the home.

Visibility is about:

- Pride
- Living
- Thriving
- Legitimacy
- Safety
- Rising

Timelessness

The monument must be timeless in its function and design. It must be both a lasting monument and a living monument. Though it will speak to the past, the monument must create space for evolving narratives and continue to be relevant to those fighting for LGBTQ2+ rights and freedoms.

This timelessness acknowledges that successes and achievements should be celebrated but never taken for granted. The monument will have a lasting impact on visitors and remain a symbol of optimism during future struggles – both those apparent and yet unforeseen. The fight for LGBTQ2+ equality is ongoing.

Timelessness is about:

- Relevance
- Perseverance
- Persistence
- Vigilance

Addendum

In July 2020, the LGBT Purge Fund organized online meetings with the Monument Advisory Committee and Indigenous Circle participants. These meetings provided an opportunity to reflect on the Vision developed in late 2019 and to share thoughts about the Monument, especially in the context of the raw and important discussions happening about the role of monuments around the world.

Here are some key points from those meetings as they relate to the Vision:

- The Vision continues to resonate and remains relevant in relation to the current debates about monuments.
- The focus on equity, diversity and inclusion is increasingly important in light of these debates, as is the representation of people from LGBTQ2+, BIPOC, 2-Spirit and Algonquin communities.
- As outlined in the Vision – and now more than ever – the Monument must be living. It must be designed to evolve through time, to remain relevant and to be a place of continued dialogue. As part of this, it should create a place for sharing and story-telling.
- The ongoing systemic oppression on the part of institutions must be recognized in the Monument. As noted in the Vision, struggles remain; the journey of LGBTQ2+ people towards equality is not complete and will not be until the most marginalized members of the community are free from discrimination.
- Everyone who is involved in the development of this monument should be encouraged to explore anti-colonial ways of seeing and opportunities to explore their own biases.
- The Monument must not idolize individuals, but must explore a wide range of human experience.
- The Monument should create a space and place that all people can be – and feel – a part of.
- The Monument's design, and its approach to landscape, should consider 2-Spirit, Indigenous and especially Algonquin and Anishinaabe experience and culture.