

SPECTRUM

Pride by Raphael

Substance Abuse: Seeing Homosexuality and Bisexuality Through Chemical-coloured Glasses

As a homosexual or bisexual person, we face many problems in our lives that in some ways are specific to our population. At the same time, we face problems that can be found among our heterosexual counterparts. One of these problems stems from the issues

concerning substance abuse. Substance abuse, is the overuse of alcohol and/or other drugs for a number of possible purposes. Many health care professionals have researched alcohol and drug use among various populations. The results appear to indicate a substantial amount of substance abuse among the homosexual and bisexual population than in the heterosexual population. Apart from regular features of substance abuse that can be found among the

general population there are some characteristics of substance abuse that may be specific to the homosexual and bisexual population.

One characteristic of substance abuse, appears to be the importance of bars (especially gay and bisexual oriented establishments) and other settings that serve alcohol and may also be ideal places to acquire other drugs. We face constant discrimination and stigmatization within our lives, and lack a number of support networks and organizations that would help decrease the need to remain "hidden". For some people, this forces them to rely on bars and other establishments where they can be themselves without fear of

discrimination, hatred and intolerance. This may increase the risk of problems with alcohol and/or other drugs. Similarly, the number of individuals found within these settings may contribute to heavy peer pressure and models of high alcohol consumption and other drug use. Young gay or bisexual men and women may perceive substance abuse as part of the homosexual/bisexual subculture from their older peers and associates, resulting in alcoholism and/or drug abuse.

When it comes to negative social perceptions, the stigmatization and discrimination that we face, often places incredible stress on our lives. The conflicts we encounter in coming out, denying our sexual orientation or just living as gay or bisexual people, can take its toll. For some, the only way they can cope with the stress, is through substance abuse. However, it should be noted that many of the other types of drugs (recreational and otherwise) are

often used to "enhance" certain behaviours that gay and bisexual men and women participate in; for instance the use of "poppers" (a stimulant) during sex. Therefore, substance abuse is not limited to a coping mechanism; it may also be a means of getting the constant "high" that enhances certain behaviours.

What are the concerns with substance abuse and homosexuals and bisexuals? For one thing, the drugs distort cognitive processes and senses, leading to disorientation, incapacitation and/or loss of physiological control (See Jay/Jane. See Jay's/Jane's World. See Jay's/Jane's World Become Confused And Distorted). As a result of the drugs' distortion of one's perceptions and mental faculties, the effects may lead to high risk behaviours, such as drunk driving or risky sexual behaviours. We need to acknowledge that substance abuse is a problem within our community, and that support and help exists to deal with these issues.

Forest Breeze

Overharvesting on Private Woodlots

by Geoff Peters

The issue of over harvesting of wood on private woodlots in New Brunswick is something that is growing to serious proportions, and at completely unchecked levels. Unlike crown lands, private landowners do not have to conform to any regulations pertaining to how much wood they can cut off of one lot per year. Nor are there any regulations relating to wildlife management areas, or areas which must be set aside for environmental reasons. The only set of rules a private landowner or wood contractor must adhere to are the watercourse regulations - regulating culvert and bridge installation, buffer zones around watercourses, etc. On the other hand, crown land policy is very detailed as to what you can and can't do or harvest. There are very stringent regulations that must be examined before even a stick of wood is cut.

Companies have to produce a long term sustainable management plan, revised every five years, to illustrate that they are in for a long term commitment, and not wanton destruction of New Brunswick's resource as David Coon and the New Brunswick Conservation Council love to portray. There is also regulation to ensure wildlife habitat is recognized and set aside, as well as environmentally protected areas and "special" aesthetic areas. Private ground has none of the above, but perhaps it shouldn't anyway. How could the government dictate to a landowner what he/she may do with their land? If an individual has paid taxes on a piece of land, and legally owns it, where in the constitution does the government have the right to tell you what you can and can't do with your private property? Far be it from smart, I believe that if a landowner wants to stumpage their entire lot with no thought of the future value of the land, that should be their decision alone - not bound by regulations.

However, going back to the original problem, over harvesting comes into the picture. If companies like J.D. Irving are expected to negotiate contracts with private landowner organizations, they need to know they can depend on that

supply for a long period in the future.

At the rate private landowners were cutting early in 1995, there wouldn't be a second rotation of the land base for another eighty years - a lengthy gap in time to try and find some wood to keep the pulp mill running. It definitely is a problem, with no projection of being solved, as there has been no official

tracking of all wood cut on private woodlots, where it is going, or estimates of the beginnings of a sustainable harvest plan for the future. I believe the first step woodlot owners need to take is to start tracking their annual harvest as a group, to see of what proportions the problem is, and then possibly work towards some kind of a sustainable harvest level, or the unemployment rate and number of families on welfare will become a huge problem - one that can't be fixed by call centres.

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