
Challenges Faced By LGBTQ And Same-Sex Families In Canada

On July 20, 2005, Same sex marriage became legal in Canada. Certainly, the nation has come a long way from that, most recent being the acceptance of a more inclusive definition of a legal family. This can be highlighted through the increase in percentage of same-sex couples who had children living with them, which rose from 8.6% in 2001 to 12.0% in 2016 (Statistics Canada).

Although there has been major advancement in development of LGBTQ rights and status in Canada, there are still major issues that affect the experiences of these families in Canada.

One of the major issues faced by the families is the perception of their child/ren to be underdeveloped when compared to heterosexual families. Although, research has been conducted by various researchers like Crowl et al (2008) who stated that his results show that “there were no differences found between children raised by heterosexual and same-sex parents.” There is still a considerable lack of research in this area which leads to a disadvantage on the LGBTQ and same-sex family’s side, as they have to constantly prove, that their parenting is as effective as any other hetero -sexual family out there.

Additionally, certain forms and legal applications to this day, include one father’s and one mother’s name option. This forces the family into deciding which role does each partner identify with. However, if the family chooses to be transparent and represent their actual family structure, their chances of facing homophobic insults, loss of jobs, housing and legal aid increases. Regardless of the situation occurring or not, the anxiety created is enough to frighten the family.

Moreover, to avoid facing these situations, the families tend to hide their family status and manage to represent, one individual as the legal parent and the other as a mere companion or a friend. They decide to live that way until the child is fully grown. However, this puts them under major stress as the other partner is deprived from emotional care towards the child, not allowed to visit social events etc.

On the other hand, even after facing various obstacles, these families are flourishing. As a society, we must look after the fact that each and every member is cared for and protected under all circumstances.

As a community, we must advocate for the increase in their acceptance and visibility. Families who see themselves represented in school materials, plays and brochures are more likely to feel positive about their environment and feel more open to express themselves.

Furthermore, at a national level we must aim to increase mental health awareness amongst the LGBTQ community. There are various ways by which we can promote mental wellbeing.

1. We can increase support from not only family and friends but also at the workplace
2. By providing positive responses to individuals who come out.

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3. We can hold community building sessions, where individuals can mingle with LGBTQ individuals and help spread more acceptance.

Lastly, children of LGBTQ and same-sex couples face increasing discrimination due to the lack of knowledge and acceptance amongst children. One of the most effective ways to fight this is through the help of educators at school. Parents are not the only agents of socialization anymore. Children tend to get more socialized at school and therefore, the teachers play an important role in their development. They can achieve this by:

1. Creating a safe space in the classroom, where homophobic comments and ideologies are unacceptable. This will help the students of such families to feel more accepted and safer at school and avoid being bullied.
2. Secondly, the teachers should create a more LGBTQ inclusive environment at school. This can be performed by creating certain associations and clubs, where children feel safe to express their thoughts and help them increase their social support.

Overall, LGBTQ and same-sex families face major discrimination and obstacles in almost every aspect of their life, be it legally or socially. From having to hide their identities, facing judgements from the counterpart families and being bullied at school level. However, as a society, we can strive to support them by eliminating these obstacles. Be it through inclusion at the community level, spreading awareness at the national level or being actively involved as an educator at the local level; we can help create a more safe and inclusive environment for every individual out there.