

Happy Pride Month, Ambrozic! As we're sure you all know, the month of June is dedicated to celebrating the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, filled with nationwide parades and gatherings for members of the community and allies alike, but do you know the history? Just as with any other celebration, Canada has rich history regarding the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and their strive towards equal rights, though the past 50 years have been the most active.

In June 1969, protests against police discrimination and homophobia took place in New York City after a raid at the Stonewall Inn, those of which inspired movements worldwide.

In 1971, the first Canadian protests took place in Vancouver and outside Parliament in Ottawa demanding an end to discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community. Then, one year later, Toronto held its first ever pride celebration with a Picnic on the Toronto Islands. Pride week '73 was a gay rights event in cities nationwide; Vancouver, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Toronto, and Montreal, to name just a few. From 1974-81, police crackdowns on queer meeting places led to street protests demanding fair treatment--during which Gilbert Baker, a drag performer and Vietnam war veteran, created the rainbow flag that represents queer freedom.

In 1979, both Montreal and Vancouver hosted the first Canadian Pride Parades, Toronto, Winnipeg, Halifax, Ottawa, and Calgary following suit in the years that followed. In 1995, Barbara Hall became Toronto's first mayor to walk in the parade. Soon enough, parades were considered less of a protest and more of a celebration.

In 1996, sexual orientation was added to the Canadian Human Rights Act. In 2005, Canada became the fourth country in the world to legalize gay marriage. In 2006, Rainbow Railroad was established in Toronto, an organization that helps people escape the countries that persecute them for their sexual orientation. In 2015, Toronto introduced its first Pride Youth Ambassador, a queer kid or teen who gets to lead the parade. There have been four so far. On June 1st 2016, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau raised the pride flag in front of Parliament Hill for the first time.

Undoubtedly, we still have a long way to go and so much more has happened. Take a second to look a little more into the history, if you'd like, and educate yourself before you take part in all the fun!