

1981 EDMONTON BATHHOUSE RIOTS

(20–30 minute session)

Grade: 5 to 8

Learning Outcomes & Lesson Focus

Students will:

- Identify what the 1981 Edmonton Bathhouse Raids were and its significance to Pride
- Identify and recognize what the Pisces Spa was

Lesson Focus

As a result of the learning activities within this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify what the 1981 Edmonton Bathhouse Raids were
- Identify why the Pisces Spa was targeted
- Recognize the impact and significance that the raid had on Pride



Resources

Lesson Materials/Supplies

- Internet access for students to research history and events

Audiovisual

- “40 years after Edmonton’s Pisces bathhouse raid” clip
<https://globalnews.ca/video/7906799/40-years-after-edmontons-pisces-bathhouse-raid>
- Video clip followed by information on the riot and aftermath
<https://citymuseumedmonton.ca/2021/05/18/the-pisces-bathhouse-raid-igniting-four-decades-of-activism/>

Print/Publications

- Links to Alberta Curriculum - Grade K to Grade 9 - Health and Life Skills—Human Sexuality Education
https://www.learnalberta.ca/content/mychil dslearning/grade5_healthlifeskills.html
- *** CPHS Pride organization resources, if available, can be the primary resource for any research being completed by the students



1981 EDMONTON BATHHOUSE RAIDS

Grade: 5 to 8

(20-30 minute session)

Notes to Teacher

The use of the term Pride, even outside the context of Gay Pride or the GSRD (LGBTQ2+) communities, is sensitive due to its connection with religious or other beliefs. It will likely be necessary to acknowledge that there are both positive and negative connotations to the term pride.

It might be necessary to provide lead-in knowledge to the students which introduces that discrimination and harm has taken place based on who people “love” or “are attracted to”.

Treat the topic of sexuality and gender roles with sensitivity, always showing consideration for others. Encourage students to respect differences and to celebrate the rights and feelings of others, keeping in mind that not all families/cultures value the same things. To neutralize the topic or make it less personal, choose stories or books about how social and cultural influences affect sexuality and gender roles. It is important to allow students to form their own opinions about what kinds of messages the media convey to youth.

Acronyms

- LGBTQ2+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, 2-Spirit
- GSRD: Gender, Sexual, and Relationship Diversity
- There are many versions of acronyms for this community with letters being added, removed, or reordered based on who is being represented and how. There is no perfect or authorized version for use in education, rather, being aware of any local cultural sensitivities can assist in utilizing culturally competent language.

The discussion of the events behind the Edmonton Bathhouse Raids may be sensitive and raise negative emotions and feelings. The topic of “bathhouses” may be sensitive to students and will have to be treated with caution. It may be necessary to discuss these emotions and address the issues that the Toronto Bathhouse Raids posed, not just legally but also emotionally/morally. It may also be necessary to preface the video clip by discussing some of the sensitive scenes that students will see/hear. The “contributions” and “significance” of the Edmonton Bathhouse Raids might not always appear positive but served as a catalyst for positive change. Sensitivity will be needed in navigating discussion on these topics

Suggestions for Instruction

- Begin with a sensitive and open discussion around what bathhouses were/are
- Explain to students what the “Pisces Health Spa” was— a gay bathhouse in the prairies.
- Beginning in February 1981, pairs of young undercover police detectives — nine in total — were posing as members of Pisces Spa, spending weekend nights mingling, watching, and making copious, detailed notes concerning the activities of the men who gathered there. by the time the Pisces was raided in May 1981, dozens of raids had occurred across Canada between 1969 and 1981, resulting in hundreds of arrests. It’s important to view the 1981 raids in that context, as the Pisces raid was far from the first. That year was different, however, because it had the distinction of being the year that the Canadian queer community began to resist.
- Forty members of the Edmonton Police service, six RCMP officers, and two crown attorneys stormed the Pisces Health Spa, a bathhouse used by gay men, on May 30, 1981, at around 1:30 AM. In the raid, 56 men were arrested and charged while an additional six men, owners and employees, were charged with being keepers of a common bawdy house.



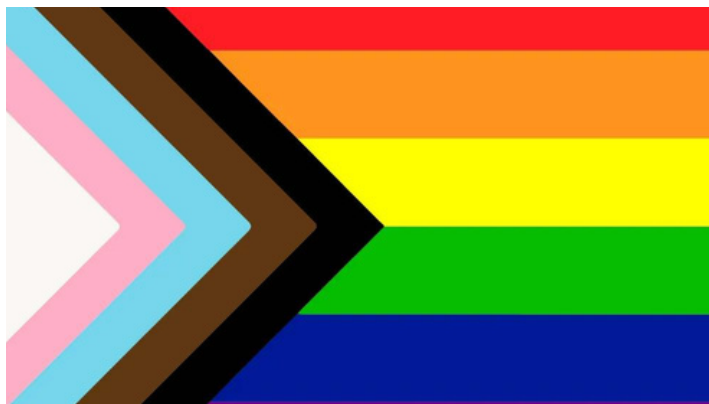
1981 EDMONTON BATHHOUSE RIOT

Grade: 5 to 8

(20-30 minute session)

Suggestions for Instruction

- the Edmonton raid had two Crown Prosecutors present, surveying the arrests. Everything about the raid had been arranged beforehand in great detail, including having staff ready at the courthouse for an extremely unusual middle-of-the-night arraignment. The men were filed out of the spa and into vans and police cruisers and driven to the courthouse, where a few were pulled aside and questioned, and no one was allowed counsel. It was close to daybreak when the 56 found-ins finally made their way out of the courthouse.
- The members of the gay community stepped forward in solidarity. Both Flashback and Edmonton's other principal gay bar, The Roost, offered space for the found-ins to meet and plan their legal strategies. A group of lawyers met the men at the bars to talk them through their options
- As the trials proceeded through the summer months, it became apparent that instead of forcing the gay community to retreat into the shadows, the perceived overreach of the arrests had emboldened the community to resist. Not only was there a protest in front of city hall to draw attention to the injustice, but real outcry came from the frustrated community.
- Explain to students that this event led to the formation of Edmonton Pride: After the raid and court cases, what remained was a sense of frustration and outrage that would become a prominent characteristic of the Edmonton gay community. In June 1982, the city's first Pride events began. There was no parade, but several small events grouped together to honour the theme "Gay Pride Through Unity" attracted 250 people. These events grew into Gay and Lesbian Awareness Week around 1984. It would be a decade after the raid before the first Pride Protest/Parade would take place, infamously featuring people with bags over their heads to protect their identities. Official support finally arrived in 1993 when Mayor Jan Reimer proclaimed Gay and Lesbian Pride Day
- Pull up a map of Edmonton on the internet to show students where the Pisces Health Spa was located



1981 EDMONTON BATHHOUSE RIOTS

(20-30 minute session)

Grade: 5 to 8

Suggestions for Assessment

Observation

Teacher Assessment: Checklist Observe whether the student is able to identify what the 1981 Edmonton Bathhouse Raids were and its significance to Pride and GSRD rights in Canada

Yes

No

Paper and Pencil Task

Teacher Assessment: Inventory Have students write a 250 - 500 word critique/reflection of the event, ensuring that they demonstrate their understanding of why the coordination of the raid was so malicious and targeted. Students can include why they think this event was the catalyst for Edmonton Pride and draw parallels to other important historical moments.

