



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Pride North of 55 Launched at Legislative Building**

**(Winnipeg, MB; May 1, 2014)** – For the first time in Manitoba history, Pride festivities will take place above the 55<sup>th</sup> parallel. Pride North of 55 officially launched their festival theme – Colours of Pride - at the Manitoba Legislature for their first annual Pride Festival, set to take place June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014 in Thompson, MB. In attendance were Chair of Pride North of 55 Michelle Smook, President of Pride Winnipeg Jonathan Niemczak, MLA for St. Vital Nancy Allan, and MLA for Thompson Steve Ashton.

The first Pride North of 55 Festival will be held in MacLean Park and will be free to the public to attend. It will feature a ceremonious Pride flag raising, picnic and other fun activities with an official dance party to cap off the night.

After attending the 2013 Pride Winnipeg Festival, Michelle Smook became driven to advocate for a Pride event in the north. With the resource support of Pride Winnipeg through Community Liaison Director Jason Douglas, Smook was able to form a committee to organize the first northern Pride festival.

“After receiving overwhelming community support it really gave us the confidence to push forward and plan a successful Pride event,” says Smook. Events such as Pride provide a safe space for those identifying as LGBTTTQ\* to celebrate their identities without fear of judgement.

“The struggle for equality has been long and difficult for LGBTTTQ\* folks and today there is so much to celebrate,” said Nancy Allan, MLA for St. Vital. “But we must not forget that there are still many people, particularly the young, who face discrimination because of their sexual identities. It’s important that we don’t give up the fight to ensure all Manitobans, regardless of sexual identity, feel safe and welcome anywhere in our province.”

“This is a momentous event for LGBTTTQ\* in the north who have waited years for their chance to celebrate Pride with friends and families,” Says Steve Ashton, MLA for Thompson. “I congratulate everyone involved in planning the Pride events in Thompson and wish them all the best on this historic day. We will be with you in Thompson with unity and pride.”

**Pride Winnipeg** – The Pride of the Prairies – is one of the largest celebrations between Toronto and Vancouver of LGBTTTQ\* (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and two-spirited, intersex, and queer/questioning) people and their allies, supporters and friends. Our mission is to affirm the lives of everyone by generating and participating in events that celebrate the history, culture, spirit and pride of people within the Winnipeg community. We invite everyone from far and wide to join our welcoming city and celebrate Pride in Winnipeg – the heart of the continent.

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