

Steel Town Pride a Breast Fest?

Hamilton Pride stays intimate and rolls out the wagons.

“We’re a little more exposed”

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Will this be the year of the bare-breasted lesbian at Hamilton Pride? “It probably won’t be me, because sunburned nipples really suck,” says Lyla Miklos, Chair of Hamilton’s 6th annual Pride festival.

While Ms. Miklos did admit to going topless at last year’s Toronto Pride, she’s pretty sure there’s never been any breasts or asses bared at Hamilton marches.

“That’s a Toronto phenomenon,” says Ms. Miklos, who notes that at Hamilton Pride “we’re a little more exposed.” Unlike Toronto, she points out, there are not a million queers and their supporters packing Yonge Street as the floats stream by. “It’s more like the occasional passerby cheering on the 200 or so marchers.”

According to Ms. Miklos, Hamilton is happy to keep things small and grassroots. About 3000 people attended last year’s festivities. And there’s no push to turn the modest march into a parade.

“At this time in our queer history in Hamilton, a march suits our needs just fine,” says Miklos. “We don’t all have to be Toronto Pride.”

There are practical reasons for keeping to a march. The permit for a parade is a lot more expensive, says Ms. Miklos who also feels Hamilton’s march accomplishes things that a parade of a million cannot.

“Toronto Pride is overwhelmingly huge. It’s hard to connect on a personal level. At a smaller event it’s easier to connect person to person.”

And, she adds, that with all the glitter and glitz of Toronto Pride, it’s easy to lose sight of the big picture. “We’re looking too much through rose-coloured glasses. There’s still a lot of rights denied to us. There’s still [queer] people kicked out of their homes, who lose their jobs, or are ostracized from their families.”

Ms. Miklos says Hamilton doesn’t want to forget the political roots of Pride, but organizers hope to spice things up a bit this year.

But because the city doesn’t allow motorized vehicles as part of march (as opposed to a parade), organizers will be rolling out wagons. “I’d use pussy power to drive the wagon,” says Miklos.

Ribbons will be awarded for most inventive use of a wagon. Ms. Miklos is crossing her fingers and praying people will get into it. “We hope they aren’t all apathetic and say: Whatever, just be happy we showed up.” She’d like to see something that plays with the steel city’s image. “Maybe rainbow smoke coming out of smoke pipes. And have lots of Tiger Cats to offset the phallic symbols.”