

Foregrounds:
Mapping Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual History in Fredericton, 1969-1992

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis documents the history of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community in Fredericton between 1969 and 1992, with particular reference to the places where that community gathered, socialized, and organized towards political goals. Before 1980, gay men and lesbians in Fredericton had no separate public gathering places, socializing primarily in private homes, straight bars, or cruising areas. From 1980-1985, gay and lesbian social organizations hosted dances, meetings, and other events that claimed public spaces for homosexuals. When a gay bar opened in 1985, volunteers turned their attention from hosting social events to lobbying for province-wide human rights reform. Throughout this history, Fredericton's queer social spaces have been transient, dynamic, and mobile, much like the local queer population that created them.

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INTRODUCTION

A spurious piece of local oral tradition claims that Fredericton has the second highest gay and lesbian population per capita in North America (the first, of course, being San Francisco). Although no source can be found to substantiate this claim, it has circulated since at least the 1970s and continues to be mentioned in current conversations about gay, lesbian, and bisexual life in Fredericton.¹ Crucially, the statistic is usually prefaced by “Did you know...?” or another indication that the information to follow will surprise the listener. Inaccurate or not, this kind of speech reflects a firmly held belief that Fredericton's population is disproportionately, *unexpectedly* gay. In a small city, with a reputation for conservatism, no identifiable gay neighbourhoods, and few gay-targeted events or organizations, the rumour of a statistically significant homosexual population leads to the question, “If there are so many gay people in Fredericton, where are they?”

In previous decades, as now, the question “Where are the gays?” was of vital interest to newcomers to any gay and lesbian community. Gay travel guides, premised on this very question, amassed information to direct visitors towards the local queer scene in most popular destinations. In the 1960s and '70s era of gay liberation, helplines and community centres arose to help newly “out” gays and lesbians find and access spaces where they might meet other people like themselves. In major cities, gay villages

¹ Said to originate from a “recent study,” no reference for this statistical claim is ever cited. Examples of its appearance in print can be found in various places online, for instance in “InQueery: The Gayest City in North America?,” *FQ* (blog), November 14, 2010, frederictonqueery.wordpress.com/2010/11/14/inqueery-the-gayest-city-in-north-america/; and Jai, “Fredericton Celebrates Gay Pride: Why It’s a Big Deal,” *The Gaily: A New Gay Agenda* (blog), August 4, 2011, thegaily.ca/societyculture/fredericton-celebrates-pride-why-its-a-big-deal/.

provided a sanctuary of presumed safety and acceptance for gays and lesbians who felt under constant threat of violence or discrimination from heterosexual society. It is no surprise, then, that queer historians have been perennially concerned with the questions of geography and spatiality in gay and lesbian communities. Historians re-frame the question: “Where *were* the gays?”

The answer is seldom simple. The complications are most pointedly demonstrated by one of the earliest examples of queer mapping in Canada – an RCMP surveillance map of homosexuals in Ottawa, compiled in 1963. As Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile describe, a red dot was assigned to the residence of every known homosexual, but the map eventually became so crowded with red dots as to be totally useless.² It is now commonly accepted that gay, lesbian, and bisexual people can be found anywhere, and to a great extent co-inhabit the exact same spaces as heterosexuals. In Fredericton, where there simply isn't much space to be parceled out among diverse groups, the maps of queer and heteronormative history are decidedly overlapping and entangled. How, then, should we think of historical queer space in Fredericton? And what does this analysis tell us about the history and development of the city's gay, lesbian, and bisexual community?

This thesis documents the history of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community in Fredericton between 1969 and 1992, with particular reference to the places where members of that community gathered, socialized, and organized towards political goals. It charts the evolution of spatial practices among Fredericton's gay, lesbian, and bisexual community over two decades of rapid transformation in the position of homosexuals within Canadian society. It draws upon a commonly-invoked image within queer urban

² Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 159.

studies, the existence of both queer and straight maps simultaneously in one city, to seek out the landmarks that would define such a map of Fredericton. This research opens up the possibilities for queer history in Fredericton, an understudied area for scholarship in general and history in particular. Given the importance of gay history for Fredericton as the putative nexus of queer community-building, it also makes a key contribution to the body of knowledge about both Atlantic Canadian and Canadian queer history. It helps us de-centre the Canadian queer history narrative, moving the focus from the major metropolises of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver.

History of Gay and Lesbian Spaces in Fredericton

In 1969, the Canadian federal government decriminalized certain homosexual acts between men over the age of 21. This small shift in the legal status of gay men reflected a larger shift in attitudes towards homosexuality in Canadian culture. That same summer, the riots at the Stonewall Inn in New York City touched off an unprecedented period of militant activism in the United States calling for “gay liberation.” In the decades that followed, gays and lesbians across North America created visible communities based on shared sexual identity, often with separate gay-oriented or gay-controlled social institutions and commercial businesses. These communities sometimes took on a significant geographic dimension, as in the case of New York’s Greenwich Village, San Francisco’s Castro neighbourhood, Montreal’s gay thoroughfare of Rue Ste-Catherine Est, or Toronto’s gay village centred on the Church-Wellesley intersection. This thesis documents the creation of such a community in Fredericton, New Brunswick, with particular reference to the geographic spaces it did (and did not) occupy. It covers the

years between 1969 and another significant legal change – the inclusion of sexual orientation in New Brunswick’s Human Rights Code in 1992. During the intervening two decades, gays and lesbians in Fredericton operated in a legal liminal zone where their activities were not necessarily criminalized, but still frequently subject to overt discrimination. This state of affairs had significant bearing on the gay and lesbian community’s ability to occupy and claim public space.

In tracing the history of this period, I identify three significant phases in the organization of gay and lesbian public space. In the first phase (1969-1980), gays and lesbians socialized primarily at parties in private homes, or else by frequenting nominally straight bars that tolerated a discreet homosexual clientele. Gay men had the option of cruising the stretch of downtown riverside park called the Green, which became a gay hotspot after nightfall. Lesbians, meanwhile, were known to socialize through the framework of recreational team sports, especially softball. A large number of gay and lesbian Frederictonians chose to confine their same-sex socializing to trips out of town; they travelled to Moncton, Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, or the New England states in order to visit gay bars and resorts or participate in Pride festivities. One formal organization, Gay Friends of Fredericton (GFF), was established in 1974 to organize social events for gay men, but the group was small and short-lived.

In the second phase (1980-1985), the gay and lesbian social scene was dominated by the activities of Fredericton Lesbians and Gays (FLAG), an organization formed in late 1979. In addition to holding meetings at the Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship building and running a telephone line out of a member’s home, FLAG regularly rented church halls and community centres as venues for gay and lesbian dances. These events

brought together local gays and lesbians (and a few straight allies), as well as drawing in visitors from across New Brunswick and northern Maine. On multiple occasions, FLAG was banned from renting a dance venue because of the sexual orientation (and perceived political agenda) of its membership. Though the group filed complaints with the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission, the absence of sexual orientation from the province's human rights legislation prevented the nominally sympathetic Commission from finding in FLAG's favour. Concurrently, FLAG's efforts to participate in a regional gay and lesbian movement led to the increased use of the University of New Brunswick campus as a site for conferences and meetings among gay and lesbian organizations from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Maine.

In the third phase (1985-1992), the community's focus shifted from organizing social space to organizing political activity. The opening of Fredericton's first gay bar, Dance Trax, in 1985 reduced the need or capacity for FLAG-organized dances, leaving FLAG volunteers free to turn their energies towards political activism. Former FLAG members were instrumental in establishing AIDS New Brunswick in 1987 to spearhead the local response to the AIDS crisis, as well as the New Brunswick Coalition for Human Rights Reform in 1988 to lobby for provincial legislation protecting gays, lesbians, and bisexuals from discrimination. The political debate over rights reform, in 1991 and 1992, coincided with a rise of gay-friendly media and student activity on the University of New Brunswick campus. Together, these diverse and dispersed activities claimed new spaces for the gay and lesbian community within government, non-profit, and academic sites.

Methodology

I have explored Fredericton's gay and lesbian past by analyzing archival documents and media coverage in gay-oriented newspapers and periodicals, and by collecting oral history through interviews with five self-identified gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals who lived in Fredericton between 1969 and 1992. The oral history component was augmented by audio recordings of seven additional interviews with former Fredericton residents, conducted in 1993 by gay activist Tom Warner as background research for his eventual monograph *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada*.³ Though little of Warner's material on Fredericton appeared in his book, his interviews have proved an invaluable resource for this study.

Print documentation on the historical gay and lesbian community in Fredericton is scarce. A small collection of papers pertaining to the doings of FLAG is held at the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives in Toronto; a similar collection forms part of the Nova Scotia Public Archives' holdings on the history of Atlantic Canadian gay and lesbian organizations. Further documents still exist in the hands of former FLAG members – some of whom have been quite dedicated and assiduous collectors – but retrieving these private collections from their geographically scattered owners is not a small project. For this thesis, I have relied on the materials available in public archives.

Media coverage was similarly challenging to locate. New Brunswick seldom figured largely in national or regional gay media, and the province produced few substantial gay or lesbian publications of its own. A strong gay media presence specific to Fredericton did not develop until the early 1990s, at the end of the period I examined.

³ Tom Warner, *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

Nonetheless, local issues did occasionally make headlines elsewhere. My research included a thorough reading of *The Body Politic*, Canada's national gay liberation periodical, for references to New Brunswick or Fredericton throughout its entire publication run from 1971 to 1987. I also conducted a similar systematic search of *The Gaezette*, the newsletter/magazine published by the Gay Alliance for Equality in Halifax, up to 1993. These two gay-oriented periodicals provided a solid basis for the purposes of this thesis, but no doubt further sources exist. A complete review of gay and straight-oriented media coverage of gay and lesbian issues in New Brunswick, at both the regional and national level, would be a fruitful area for future research in this important field.

To fill in information gaps left by the documentary and media record, and to mine the rich community memory of gay and lesbian Frederictonians, oral history has formed the backbone of the research presented here. Between September 2014 and March 2015, I conducted five detailed interviews with individuals who had responded to an advertisement or were referred by mutual contacts. Combined with seven recorded interviews supplied by Tom Warner from his 1993 oral history project, I used a total of twelve interviews in this research. The Warner interviews were one-on-one, except for a joint interview he recorded with two participants, Hal Hinds and Hank Williams; the same Hank Williams also contributed a second interview to this project, conducted by me in 2015. Though Warner's interviews differed from mine in scope and topic of focus – he questioned participants on coming out, activism, gender politics, and the effects of AIDS, while I asked more specifically about locations and social activities – both sets of interviews were similar in approach, using a few set questions to spark a conversation

that was then allowed to flow freely. Queer oral historians have frequently employed this technique in the struggle for balance between a desire to uncover a factual account of reality and the acknowledgement that reality itself is discursively produced.⁴

The selection of participants has determined the narrative that is presented here. The call for participants in my set of interviews specified that I sought individuals who lived in Fredericton for any length of time between 1960 and 2000, and who self-identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual during that time.⁵ These criteria, particularly those pertaining to identity labels, were deliberately crafted to explore a particular type of historical experience, that of people who felt they belonged to the social categories of gay, lesbian, or bisexual that were in popular use during the late twentieth century. The result is a partial and specific history. It addresses the histories of these populations alone, and focuses on community-building and location of social activities, not on same-sex desire and practices more broadly defined.

Interview Participants

Because the interviews have been so instrumental to the construction of this historical narrative, the personal backgrounds of the participants are worth discussing. I offer here a brief biographical sketch of each. (All interview participants agreed to be identified by name.) Of particular note is the geographic mobility evidenced by their biographies: all but three moved to Fredericton as adults, and only one was resident in the city for virtually the entire time period under study. In some ways, this mobility reflects

⁴ Nan Alamilla Boyd, "Who Is the Subject? Queer Theory Meets Oral History," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17, no. 2 (May 2008): 181.

⁵ How Warner recruited his interviewees is unknown, but all participants recounted a "coming out" story that positioned them as gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

the challenges that local Frederictonians faced in coming out, from which recent arrivals were sometimes insulated. Moreover, the transience of the local gay, lesbian, and bisexual community mirrors the constantly shifting, temporary nature of queer social spaces in Fredericton.

Allison Brewer (interviewed by Tom Warner in 1993) grew up in Hampton, New Brunswick, and came to Fredericton in the late 1970s as a young adult. She came out into the lesbian community there in 1979, at a time when no gay or lesbian organizations existed. She became one of the founding members of FLAG before leaving Fredericton to attend university in Halifax from 1980-84. Upon returning to Fredericton, she worked as a civil servant with the provincial government, and became a parent with her long-term female partner; this was her personal situation when Warner interviewed her.⁶ Though she is now well known for having been one of the first openly lesbian politicians in Canada in her role as leader of the New Brunswick New Democratic Party (NDP) from 2005-2007, her interview predated her political career.⁷

Brian Ellison was born in the 1950s in Saint John but raised by adoptive parents in Fredericton. He came out at the age of 14 during a summer spent working in Halifax.⁸ As a teenager, he navigated the largely underground gay social scene in 1960s-era Fredericton by word of mouth, attending private parties and sometimes frequenting cruising areas. After completing high school in 1971, Ellison left Fredericton for Toronto,

⁶ Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner, audio cassette, July 29, 1993, Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, Toronto.

⁷ Joanna Everitt and Michael Camp, "Changing the Game Changes the Frame: The Media's Use of Lesbian Stereotypes in Leadership versus Election Campaigns," *Canadian Political Science Review* 3, no. 3 (2009): 24-39.

⁸ Brian Ellison, interview with Conor Falvey, November 26, 2014.

where he had cultivated long-distance connections with gay people he had met through Theatre New Brunswick and other artistic outlets. In Toronto, he found himself living among a sizeable community of displaced gay Atlantic Canadians. Ellison himself rarely returned to Fredericton except to deal with family affairs, and his observations of the city after 1972 are as a visitor rather than a resident. He has been deeply involved in AIDS activism since the early years of the epidemic.⁹

Hal (Harold) Hinds, a native of Massachusetts, came out first in Paris, France, during a Vietnam-era tour with the US army. Later, he pursued graduate studies in botany, married a woman, and relocated to a farm outside Fredericton. He continued to have affairs with men during this time, before finally separating from his wife, moving into Fredericton proper, and immersing himself in the gay community there in the mid-1970s. He was employed at the University of New Brunswick as a biology professor and eventually as curator of the university's herbarium, two facets of a lengthy teaching and publishing career as a highly regarded botanist and conservationist. He was diagnosed with HIV in 1988, and died in 2001.¹⁰

John Markidis belonged to a Saint John family of Greek heritage; he began his gay social life in 1978, at the age of thirteen, when by happenstance he encountered a gay man cruising outside the Saint John public library. Shortly thereafter, he discovered and embraced a more cosmopolitan gay scene during a summer spent in Mykonos, Greece. In 1983, Markidis spearheaded the formation of Saint John's first gay social organization,

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner, audio cassette, July 29, 1993, Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives; Michael Riordon, *Eating Fire: Family Life on the Queer Side* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2001), 49–51; Eugene Campbell, "Hal Hinds Remembered," *FQ* (blog), July 30, 2011, frederictonqueery.wordpress.com/2011/07/30/hal-hinds-remembered/.

Lesbians and Gaymen Organization of Saint John (LAGO-SJ), despite the fact that he was under the legal drinking age and therefore could not attend the dances he organized. After high school, Markidis (like the other gay men of his age that he knew in Saint John) moved to Toronto, but did not stay long. He lived and worked in Fredericton from 1987 to 1989, before finally relocating to Halifax.¹¹

Madeline McDaniel self-identified in their interview as pansexual and “non-binary or genderqueer.”¹² Simply put, pansexuality differs from bisexuality by acknowledging the existence of more than two genders, as well as the possibility of choosing sexual partners based on considerations other than gender. “Genderqueer” refers to McDaniel’s own gender identity, which cannot be categorized as either male or female. McDaniel was born in Boisetown, New Brunswick, in 1977 and lived in Fredericton for the following twenty years. Throughout the early 1990s, McDaniel regularly fled the unwelcoming environment in Fredericton High School to frequent the nearby university campus, where McDaniel attended meetings of the student gay and lesbian group and volunteered at the queer-friendly campus radio-station, CHSR-FM. McDaniel left the city to attend university in 1997.¹³

Claude Olivier was born and raised in Ontario, and came out in 1981 while attending graduate school in Edmonton. He became involved in gay activism after being fired from his job at a group home for youth in northern Alberta due to his sexual orientation. He relocated to Montreal and trained to be a social worker, specializing in

¹¹ John Markidis, interview with Tom Warner, audio cassette, July 25, 1993, Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives.

¹² At McDaniel’s request, I have used the gender-neutral singular “they” pronoun to refer to McDaniel throughout this thesis.

¹³ Madeline McDaniel, interview with Conor Falvey, November 12, 2014.

issues related to HIV and AIDS. His subsequent job search brought him to Fredericton in 1988, when he was hired as one of the first staff members at the newly-formed AIDS New Brunswick. Shortly thereafter he also became president and spokesperson for the New Brunswick Coalition for Human Rights Reform, organizing the campaign to include sexual orientation in provincial human rights legislation.¹⁴

Adrian Park, originally from northwest Britain, immigrated to Canada in 1988. Despite knowing he was gay from a young age, he did not come out until around 1984, when he was 30 years old and pursuing a Ph.D. at the University of Glasgow. He was involved in the gay social and political scene in Scotland before moving to Fredericton to join the geology department at the University of New Brunswick. In the early 1990s, he took over writing the university newspaper's regular column on gay issues; he also co-launched a gay-themed radio show, *Fruit Cocktail*, on the campus radio station, which continued until late in the decade.¹⁵

Carla Rasmussen grew up in Cape Breton and Montreal, before attending the University of New Brunswick from 1973-1977. She has been a Fredericton resident ever since. After graduation, she shared an apartment with three other women, two of whom proved to be a lesbian couple. It was they who introduced her to Fredericton's lesbian social scene, primarily through their involvement in women's softball. Rasmussen first became romantically involved with a woman in 1979; her close friends knew her sexual orientation but she did not publicize it widely. Nor did she identify as a lesbian, rather as a woman who loved women, without restriction by any particular label. She worked at

¹⁴ Claude Olivier, interview with Tom Warner, audio cassette, July 29, 1993, Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives.

¹⁵ Adrian Park, interview with Tom Warner, audio cassette, July 29, 1993, Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives.

the university for 37 years, in an environment she described as “open-minded” and non-discriminatory. She now has a wife, with whom she co-parents several children.¹⁶

Ron Totten was born in 1958 in Saint John, and identified as gay from the age of 16. When FLAG began operating a phone line in Fredericton, Totten took advantage of their services, despite not living in the city. In the early 1980s, he sometimes took weekend trips to Fredericton in order to attend dances organized by FLAG. Eventually he moved to Fredericton in 1985 to work for the provincial government in the health sector. He became involved in AIDS activism when his partner was diagnosed as HIV-positive, one of the earliest cases reported in the province. Totten was an active volunteer with both AIDS New Brunswick and the New Brunswick Coalition for Human Rights Reform.¹⁷

Anthony Wallace came from the rural border community of Tobique Narrows, New Brunswick. His introduction to gay community happened from 1978-1980, when he lived in Halifax and shared an apartment with one of that city’s prominent gay activists, Robin Metcalfe. Wallace first became aware of FLAG and similar organizations forming in New Brunswick by reading about them in Metcalfe’s issues of *The Body Politic*. He returned to New Brunswick in 1980 and became involved in the cross-border gay group Northern Lambda Nord, and eventually with FLAG as well. He settled in Fredericton in 1986 and has remained since then.¹⁸

¹⁶ Carla Rasmussen, interview with Conor Falvey, October 17, 2014.

¹⁷ Ron Totten, interview with Tom Warner, audio cassette, July 29, 1993, Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives.

¹⁸ Anthony Wallace, interview with Conor Falvey, February 2, 2015.

Hank Williams, Jr., was raised in Alabama alongside a twin brother who was also gay. Seeking to define himself against his sibling, Williams initially embraced a straight lifestyle, and married a woman from Saint John whom he met while attending graduate school in Maine. They moved to Fredericton in 1972 and divorced in 1983, whereupon Williams began his coming out process by contacting Hal Hinds in order to become a FLAG volunteer. He also came out in his professional life as a public schoolteacher. Williams was interviewed by both Tom Warner in 1993 (alongside Hal Hinds) and by myself in 2015.¹⁹

Francis Young came out as a teenager in Moncton in 1972, at the urging of a supportive mental health professional. In the 1980s, while living in Fredericton, he contacted FLAG through their phone line, attended a meeting, and eventually became an active volunteer. When FLAG collapsed due to poor attendance, Young pushed hardest for the transformation of FLAG's remnants into the New Brunswick Coalition for Human Rights Reform. He was an active part of that organization's campaign for legislative reform in the early 1990s.²⁰

These twelve interview participants form a snapshot of what one of them, Hal Hinds, called the "transient population" of gay, lesbian, and bisexual Frederictonians. The majority were born and raised outside Fredericton, moving to the city as young adults either for professional or academic reasons. Four respondents worked for the University of New Brunswick, either as faculty or staff. Four others worked in other areas of the public sector in Fredericton, two of these for the provincial government. This

¹⁹ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

²⁰ Francis Young, interview with Tom Warner, audio cassette, July 29, 1993, Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives.

breakdown accords with Francis Young's statement that "basically the two large employers are the university and the provincial government,"²¹ and Ron Totten's observation that "most people move to Fredericton... 'cause it's the capital, and a university city."²² The draw of the civil service and the university had a determining influence on Fredericton's gay and lesbian community, because both of those large employers provided relative job security, in the form of unions and tenure systems, thus minimizing the professional risks of coming out. At the same time, individuals who moved to Fredericton could theoretically be out in local circles without confronting the complications of coming out to their families; this was seldom an option for local Frederictonians.²³ Because of these factors, the most active and visible leaders of the gay and lesbian community in Fredericton tended to be educated, white-collar workers who hailed from elsewhere (or, as Totten disparagingly described them, "out-of-towners who swoop in with their degrees."²⁴)

The diverse geographic origins of interview respondents are examples of how places *beyond* or *outside* of Fredericton influenced the development of the gay and lesbian community within the city. The other illustration of this phenomenon is the prevalence of travel in respondents' accounts of their social lives. Francis Young put it simply: "We travel here. It's nothing, like ten or twelve hours [of driving]."²⁵ Adrian Park concurred that living in Fredericton necessitated coming to terms with "the idea of

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ron Totten, interview with Tom Warner.

²³ Carla Rasmussen, interview with Conor Falvey; Claude Olivier, interview with Tom Warner.

²⁴ Ron Totten, interview with Tom Warner.

²⁵ Francis Young, interview with Tom Warner.

driving 200 kilometres for a night out.”²⁶ Traffic between Fredericton and Saint John was constant; Carla Rasmussen travelled to Toronto and Montreal so frequently that she went years without dating anyone from Fredericton at all; and Anthony Wallace thought so little of attending gay events in the United States that he bicycled across the Maine-New Brunswick border without carrying any ID.²⁷ Respondents described individual or group trips to other cities as significant social opportunities in which many Fredericton gays and lesbians partook. This was particularly true before 1980, when a lack of local organizations or gathering places necessitated out-of-province travel in order to find a gay bar, bathhouse, or Pride parade. In effect, the queer spaces of Saint John, Moncton, Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Maine, and Massachusetts were as much a part of the queer landscape for Frederictonians as any local gay bar or cruising spot. As Valerie Korinek might have predicted, the mobility of Fredericton’s gay and lesbian population belied the city’s perceived remoteness.²⁸

There is a beautiful symmetry, and perhaps a more straightforward sociological linkage, between the transience of Fredericton’s gay and lesbian population and the transience of its gay spaces. Gays, lesbians, and bisexuals came and went from the city, just as their gathering places came and went within it. Gay geography in late twentieth-century Fredericton was defined not by an established “gaybourhood,” but by more temporary settings: gay corners of straight bars, parks that transformed after dark, ever-shifting dance venues rented for the night only. This temporariness, a form of co-

²⁶ Adrian Park, interview with Tom Warner.

²⁷ Carla Rasmussen, interview with Conor Falvey; Anthony Wallace, interview with Conor Falvey.

²⁸ Valerie Korinek, “‘We’re the Girls of the Pansy Parade’: Historicizing Winnipeg’s Queer Subcultures, 1930s-1970s,” *Social History/Histoire Sociale* 45, no. 89 (2012): 120–123.

existence between straight and gay populations, renders gay space a nebulous concept even in the memory of those that crafted it. Asked to reflect on significant landmarks or sites of gay memory within the city, one respondent stated: “I don’t think of a location, because it is the whole city... it’s the city as a whole, the location, the place where you met the woman you’re with or the people you’re with, but there’s no particular locations.”²⁹ A landscape of temporary gay spaces, in which the whole city is at times implicated in gay space by virtue of containing gay people, is comprehensible only by taking Doreen Massey’s view of space as never fixed, never finished, and always containing multiple meanings.³⁰

Queer Space and Community Development

Benedict Anderson described nations as imagined communities, “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”³¹ This notion is as applicable to the so-called gay and lesbian community as any other grouping: most (if not all) gays and lesbians in Fredericton conceived of themselves as members in a larger collectivity of people “like them.” Kath Weston has termed this the “gay imaginary.”³² But for some purposes, such as securing physical safety or enacting the highly embodied experience of sexual desire, the imaginary was not enough. As Weston pointed out, when rural gays and lesbians migrated to the city “on

²⁹ Carla Rasmussen, interview with Conor Falvey.

³⁰ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2005), 9.

³¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 3rd ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

³² Kath Weston, “Get Thee to a Big City: Sexual Imaginary and the Great Gay Migration,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 2, no. 3 (1995): 257.

a quest for community in Benedict Anderson's sense of the term,"³³ they were pursuing not just an idea but an actual place where they could physically encounter other gays and lesbians, find sexual partners, and in so doing strengthen their sense of belonging to the gay imaginary. In order to further develop the imagined community, it was necessary to reify it, albeit partially, by emplacing it.

Claiming space was necessary not only socially, but also politically. Gay liberation ideology held that becoming visible, and claiming territory in which to be visible, were necessary precursors to achieving freedom or equality for gays and lesbians.³⁴ This is reflected in the history of Fredericton, where invisibility and lack of social space for gays and lesbians both stymied and inspired political action. Fredericton's earliest gay organizations were primarily concerned with creating opportunities for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people to gather and meet each other. The pursuit of this goal fully occupied the attention and energies of Fredericton's numerically small group of dedicated gay and lesbian organizers, preventing much additional political activism from unfolding. Nor could effective activism take place until more than a handful of gays and lesbians in Fredericton felt comfortable enough with visibility to append their names to petitions, appear at demonstrations, or submit to media interviews. It was not until social spaces transferred into the commercial realm, with the opening of a gay bar in 1985, that local activists could mount serious campaigns in support of gay and lesbian rights.

Yet it is also true that the claiming of gay and lesbian social spaces in Fredericton was in itself a political act, and a risk. For decades, invisibility and discretion allowed

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 138–139.

gays and lesbians to move and congregate safely in the city, without attracting attention or presenting an overt threat to heterosexual norms. As Michael Bronski wrote of the first emergence of gay neighbourhoods, “As long as gay people were circumspect – and not very visible – they were not harassed...The existence of a semipublic, half-acknowledged gay community existing in close proximity to heterosexuals mitigated the hostility gay people faced.”³⁵ Whereas gays and lesbians could socialize freely in Fredericton's straight bars as long as they weren't overly flamboyant, several community centres instituted an outright ban on gay social activities after FLAG began renting venues for its bimonthly dances. In contesting this discrimination, FLAG came up against the legal reality that gays and lesbians enjoyed no formal protection under New Brunswick's pre-1992 human rights legislation. The numerous instances in which FLAG filed unsuccessful complaints with the Human Rights Commission highlighted the need for legislative reform, which FLAG members eventually pursued and achieved in the early 1990s. Claiming social space was a vital part of developing the gay and lesbian community in Fredericton so that political change could be pursued, but it was also an aspect of that political change.

Spatializing Queer History in Fredericton

A map of Fredericton's historical queer spaces would not present a recognizable image. Instead of a concentration of queer activity in one locale, the historical map of Fredericton would display more scattered sites. In queer urban studies, this arrangement is more commonly associated with a pre-1950 era in which most homosexuals navigated the queer social world in secrecy, evading persecution by creating a map of meeting

³⁵ Michael Bronski, *The Pleasure Principle: Sex, Backlash, and the Struggle for Gay Freedom* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 193–194.

places both discrete and discreet.³⁶ In a recent sociological overview of the development of gay neighbourhoods in American cities, Amin Ghaziani designated this spatial and temporal paradigm as the “closet” phase, followed in most major cities by a “coming out” in the 1970s, when gay bars and community institutions began to flourish.³⁷ While this narrative arc may reflect conventional wisdom on the development of gay enclaves, it is clearly not workable for the study of Fredericton's past. It encourages us to judge Fredericton as backward, trapped in a metaphorical closet while queer communities elsewhere “came out” into their own territories. Instead, I assert that Fredericton's history exposes the limitations of a “gaybourhood” framework for understanding queer urban spaces, and underlines the need for queer geographical thinking that adequately incorporates the histories of rural and small town Canada alongside those of the metropolises.

Ultimately, we must think of queer space in Fredericton not as something permanent and continuous, but as something transient, delineated by time as well as location. This approach requires not so much acknowledging the validity of temporary spaces, but acknowledging the temporariness of all spaces. It is rooted in recent geographical theories of space as more than an empty container for the material world, but instead a dynamic, relational entity, constantly in process, never fixed or stable, and always imbued with multiple meanings. Geographer Doreen Massey has provided the most succinct and provocative statement of this theory, defining space as “a simultaneity

³⁶ Amin Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gaybourhood?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 12–15; George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 1–33.

³⁷ Amin Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gaybourhood?*, 15–16.

of stories-so-far.”³⁸ She asserts that space and multiplicity are, by definition, co-constitutive: if space is relational, this relationality is only possible through the existence of multiple “others.” Space, then, is “the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity.”³⁹ It only makes sense to acknowledge the possibility of multiple maps, multiple understandings of a given place. By considering queer space in Fredericton through this lens, it is possible to identify a map of gay, lesbian, and bisexual history existing simultaneously with the more obvious heteronormative landscape of the city.

A secondary concern of this thesis is establishing the importance of mobility and migration to the spatial existence of gay, lesbian, and bisexual residents of Fredericton. Though the goal of my research was to examine spaces *within* Fredericton, references to travel and migration arose so frequently in interviews and archival sources that their significance is not possible to ignore. (A similar challenge faced Kath Weston when she interviewed gay migrants to San Francisco, only to discover their life stories were inextricably tied up in the places from which they originated.)⁴⁰ The transience of the gay and lesbian population mirrored the scattered, temporary nature of their spaces. An unknown (but likely large) number of gay, lesbian, and bisexual Frederictonians migrated to other cities, pursuing the anonymity and opportunities of urban living – another iteration of the well-documented phenomenon Weston dubbed “the great gay migration,” away from peripheral rural areas into the urban core. Yet the gay migration, in Fredericton's case, was by no means one-way. All but two of the interview participants originated in communities outside the immediate vicinity of Fredericton, or lived a large

³⁸ Doreen Massey, *For Space*, 12.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁰ Kath Weston, “Get Thee to a Big City,” 254–255.

portion of their lives elsewhere before moving to the city for work, post-secondary education, or to be with romantic partners. Korinek has made similar observations about cities in the Canadian Prairies; often perceived as sites of departure only, they are actually destinations for gays and lesbians from the surrounding area as well as former residents who return to visit or live.⁴¹

Altogether, these observations require a map of queer space in Fredericton that defies familiar forms of visualization. No top-down, two-dimensional map can capture the temporal shifts and contingencies of queer spaces like monthly dances or nighttime cruising parks. Likewise, no map strictly bounded by the city limits would contain all the spaces that shaped Fredericton's gay and lesbian community. The landscape and landmarks documented here are, in the plainest sense, *queer*; they trouble and complicate pre-existing assumptions. They are also a vital and overlooked part of Fredericton's history, one that is not reflected in dominant interpretations of the city's heritage landscape. This thesis attempts to bring Fredericton's queer history, and its dynamic, transitory map, to the foreground.

Outline of the Thesis

Following a discussion in Chapter 1 of the literature around oral history methods, spatial history, and lesbian and gay social history in Atlantic Canada, the thesis further explores each of the three phases I have identified in the queer spatial history of Fredericton, in roughly chronological order.

⁴¹ Valerie Korinek, "'We're the Girls of the Pansy Parade'," 122.

Chapter 2 reveals the places and options for gay and lesbian socializing in Fredericton from 1969-1980, the years between the federal decriminalization of homosexual acts and the formation of FLAG, which was Fredericton's first significant social organization for both gays and lesbians. These were years in which gay and lesbian socializing took place primarily at private parties, in public cruising areas, and within informally designated sections of otherwise "straight" bars.

Chapter 3 examines the years from 1980-1985, a period of intense social activity, much of it organized by FLAG. This chapter describes the formation of the organization; the locations in which it held gay/lesbian dances and other events; and the political and legal conflicts that arose surrounding FLAG's right to rent and occupy community gathering spaces, such as church halls and school rooms. The chapter also briefly touches on social activity by lesbians organized outside of FLAG, chiefly in the form of recreational softball teams.

Finally, Chapter 4 describes the period of transition that followed the opening of Fredericton's first gay bar, Dance Trax, in 1985. As the city's gay/lesbian social scene reoriented around the bar, community energy that was previously devoted to staging social events was diverted towards activism and lobbying, with particular focus on the interlocking issues of AIDS and human rights legislation reform. Consequently, the relevant spaces for the gay/lesbian community became commercial, medical, and governmental in character. This chapter also briefly explores how activity by students, faculty, and media outlets on the University of New Brunswick campus began to establish explicitly welcoming spaces for gay/lesbians in the early 1990s.

CHAPTER 1

Theory & Historiography

Mapping the gay, lesbian, and bisexual history of Fredericton requires a grounding in three overlapping fields of research: queer history, oral history methods, and spatial history. In this chapter, I present an overview of the literature on each, as it has pertained to my own research and theorization of Fredericton's historical queer spaces. Queer history is a broad and ever-growing field to which a plurality of perspectives and disciplines contribute. Oral history is one of the most prevalent methodologies within queer history, due to the scarcity of written sources, but also to an impulse to foreground the construction of subjectivity and personal identity in discussions of what it has meant to be queer in the past. Collecting oral accounts of queer lives and spaces in Fredericton was critical to constructing a history of the city's gay, lesbian, and bisexual community. Finally, spatial history examines the uses and production of space over time, finding insights into historical events by considering their geographical aspects and the ways in which place influences, and responds to, social behaviour. While the research topic was spatialized at the outset by my decision to focus on Fredericton and exclude other places, I chose to embrace the methodology of spatial history precisely because the spatial dimensions of Fredericton's queer history appeared vague at first glance, and therefore in need of further examination.

Queer History

Queer history emerged as an academic field in the 1970s, abetted by the gay liberation movement and second-wave feminism. In previous decades, academic interest

in gays and lesbians had been predominantly medico-psychological, and less frequently sociological.¹ Much like the practice of oral history, increased interest in dissident sexualities was an aspect of the new social history and its emphasis on studying the past(s) of marginalized groups. A major impetus for the practice of queer history was a desire to restore the suppressed voices of queer people to history, an attempt in part to undo some of the work of rendering same-sex desire invisible. Accordingly, the earliest queer historians were not professors, but rather gay liberation activists engaged in a political struggle against heterosexism, which could potentially benefit from historical evidence of homosexuality's continuous existence in human society.

Much of the earliest original research into queer history, not just in Canada but anywhere, appeared in the pages *The Body Politic*, a gay liberation periodical produced in Toronto from 1971 to 1987. A key publication both nationally and internationally, *The Body Politic* published articles on queer history long before such work gained enough legitimacy to appear in peer-reviewed journals. The magazine carried early writings by historians such as John d'Emilio, Allan Bérubé, and Jonathan Ned Katz, who were establishing queer history as a viable academic specialty in North America.² The Pink Triangle editorial collective that produced *The Body Politic* also established the Canadian Gay Liberation Movement Archives (now known as the CLGA) in Toronto in 1973, one

¹ Maurice Leznoff's thesis on the gay male subculture of Montreal, published in 1954, is often cited as the earliest sociological treatment of homosexuality in Canada). See Maurice Leznoff, "The Homosexual in Urban Society" (MA thesis, McGill University, 1954).

² Steven Maynard, "In Search of Sodom North: The Writing of Gay and Lesbian History in English Canada, 1970-1990," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 21, no. 1/2 (Spring 1994): 120-122.

of several archival projects launched in the 1970s to gather evidence of the queer past and to preserve the materials being produced by the burgeoning gay liberation movement.³

Queer history gained ground slightly more rapidly in the United States than in Canada; hence, American scholarship has exercised great influence on Canadian historians. Among the earliest significant monographs of queer social history was John d'Emilio's *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* (1983), which aimed to provide a comprehensive survey of homophile activism in the United States.⁴ In Canada, that distinction is most often accorded to sociologist Gary Kinsman, whose monograph *The Regulation of Desire* (1987) charted the social construction of the modern homosexual identity from a Canadian perspective, as well as giving Kinsman's personal account of gay liberation activism in Canada.⁵ Inspired by the surge of gay community organizing that followed the Toronto bathhouse raids in 1981, Kinsman's work was both theoretically informed and unapologetically *engagé*, as well as explicitly Marxist in its account of industrial capitalism's role in defining the modern homosexual identity. In a similar vein, another Canadian sociologist, Barry D. Adam, published *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement* that same year.⁶ Both Kinsman and Adam demonstrate the motivations driving most early Canadian queer historians – a desire to record and analyze the origins of gay and lesbian activism, and potentially to further its impact.

³ Ibid., 118–119.

⁴ John d'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998).

⁵ Gary Kinsman, *The Regulation of Desire: Sexuality in Canada* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1987).

⁶ Barry D. Adam, *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1987).

Since then, numerous other scholars have taken up the task of chronicling the history of gay and lesbian activism and political engagement, particularly in the form of human rights discourse and campaigns for legal equality. Miriam Smith wrote the first definitive Canadian work on gay and lesbian demands for human rights, *Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada* (1999).⁷ Since then, sociologist Dominique Clément has integrated the known history of gay and lesbian demands for equality into a national history of “Canada’s rights revolution,” recognizing the gay and lesbian movement as one of many radical social movements that emerged in Canada in the mid-twentieth century.⁸ More recently, Tom Warner has continued in the vein of Kinsman and Adam by combining historical research into gay and lesbian activist organizations with his own personal experience as a member and leader on the front lines of the movement. Perhaps not surprisingly, Warner unapologetically portrays Canadian queer activist history as a story of progress and triumph over adversity, although he emphasizes the disjuncture that occurred in the movement from the late 1970s onwards, between “assimilationist” equality-seekers and radical gay liberationists who advocated changing society as a whole.⁹

Since its early activist impulses, queer history has been influenced by postmodern questions of discursive identity. The theorization of queer history owes much to the work of Michel Foucault. In *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1* (first published in English in 1976), Foucault articulated key insights into the constructed nature of sexuality. He

⁷ Miriam Smith, *Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada: Social Movements and Equality-Seeking, 1971-1995* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

⁸ Dominique Clément, *Canada’s Rights Revolution: Social Movements and Social Change, 1937-82* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

⁹ Tom Warner, *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada*.

argued that sexuality was not a natural and essential biological phenomenon, but rather a discursive formation that was culturally constructed and historically contingent.¹⁰ The concept that one's erotic desires and behaviour form a basis for one's identity, or categorize an individual as one of certain sexual *types*, is a modern phenomenon. Therefore historians must seek to understand how sex and desire were organized in the past, rather than simply look for "homosexuals" as understood today. Foucault's insight, though at odds with the early activist impulse to insist that homosexuals had always been present in society, has been the basis for much of queer theory's dialogue with history. Subsequent queer historians have elaborated how the concept of the "homosexual," and its opposite, the "heterosexual," are products of our own time, and cannot be transposed onto other historical eras.

While Foucault's theories of discourse have been highly influential, more materialist social historians, such as Gary Kinsman and Steven Maynard, have argued that too much focus on discursive deconstruction risks obscuring the voices of actual queer people all over again. Too much emphasis on dominant discourses, such as medical or judicial opinion, risks ignoring the avenues of resistance and escape pursued by gay men and lesbians in their everyday lives.¹¹ While it is important to understand how subjectivity and sexuality are discursively constructed, the "lived experience" that radical social historians sought to capture retains its value. Maynard, in particular, argues that queer historians are still called "to understand how people lived out their discursively

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

¹¹ Steven Maynard, "Respect Your Elders, Know Your Past: History and the Queer Theorists," *Radical History Review* 75 (Fall 1999): 61–65.

constructed identities.”¹² Between the discursive and materialist poles of this debate lies a wide terrain of scholarship committed to understanding experience alongside, rather than instead of, critical discourse analysis. My own research belongs in this territory. In the current context of postmodern deconstructions of identity and its politics, the focus of this thesis on self-defined gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals is more akin to early works of social history than contemporary queer studies.

One challenge common to all historians of sexuality, myself included, is the complexity and contested nature of terminology, including the word “queer” itself. In academic and activist circles in the 21st century, the word has been used as an umbrella term, aiming to encompass the variety of sexual identities professed now and in the past that have not complied with normative heterosexuality. The term is thus an oppositional one: queerness is the opposite of heteronormativity, or indeed whatever is “at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant.”¹³ As a result, its usage can be extremely broad.

I have opted not to use the term “queer” extensively in discussing my findings on the history of Fredericton’s gay, lesbian, and bisexual community for several reasons. First and foremost, this thesis does not deal with everything under the queer umbrella, but rather concentrates on a handful of particular sexual identities – gay, lesbian, and bisexual – understood not as universal identity categories, but as historically specific labels that carried particular social meanings between 1969 and 1992. While informative within its parameters, this narrow focus excludes many aspects of same-sex desire and behaviour that a broader queer perspective might include. Notably absent are the voices

¹² Ibid., 65.

¹³ David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1995), 62.

of those who sought same-sex relations without professing a gay or lesbian identity; those who were tentative or uncertain about adopting such an identity; those with unactualized same-sex desires; those whose sexual object choice was not determined by gender, or those without sexual desires of any kind; those for whom fluidity of sexual orientation or gender identity prevented a simplistic designation as homosexual, heterosexual, or even bisexual; those from diverse cultural backgrounds and value systems who were not assimilated into dominant (white Canadian) categories of sexual identity; and those who were excluded from gay and lesbian “community” based on race, gender, class, ability, or any of the numerous dimensions of oppression operating within Canadian society during this period.

The reasons for these omissions were, above all, practical ones. Operating in a near void of primary sources, it was simply not possible within the scope of this thesis to conduct a more theoretically open-ended investigation into queer history in Fredericton. However, I hold that an elementary outline of gay and lesbian social history in Fredericton constitutes a necessary first step in uncovering the city’s queer past. Hopefully the challenging work of expanding this history outside a narrow, historically specific gay and lesbian identity will be taken up by future researchers.

An additional reason for avoiding the term “queer” is that it is highly politicized language, with etymological roots as a term of insult and a tool of violence. Although “queer” is widely used in academic and activist circles as a benign catch-all term for non-normative sexual identities, this is a recent development; until the 1980s, “queer” was

predominantly used as a derogatory slur against homosexuals.¹⁴ My interview respondents were not recruited or interviewed with specific reference to the term “queer,” and only one respondent used it to describe themselves. In light of these considerations, the unilateral application of the term “queer” to interview respondents after the fact did not seem in keeping with the spirit of shared authority that the oral history process was meant to respect.¹⁵

Queer Space

The role of place and public space in gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities has been a perennial topic of concern to queer historians. Numerous studies have elucidated the history, culture, and landscape of gay enclaves within cities, as well as other significant settings for queer social life, most notably gay bars and areas used for cruising or public sex. Without question, the most influential urban study has been George Chauncey’s *Gay New York*, which reconstructed the geography of gay male culture in New York City before 1940. Chauncey described a shadowy alternative map of New York’s semi-public gay spaces, from rooming houses to public lavatories to early gay bars, largely hidden from straight eyes so as to maintain a semblance of safety in invisibility. He employs metaphors of maps and mapmaking, describing the creation of the gay male social world as “constructing a gay map of the city.”¹⁶ He conceives of New

¹⁴ For a detailed history of the term’s evolution, see Robin Brontsema, “A Queer Revolution: Reconceptualizing the Debate Over Linguistic Reclamation,” *Colorado Research in Linguistics* 17, no. 1 (2004), www.colorado.edu/ling/CRIL/Volume17_Issue1/.

¹⁵ Steven High, “Sharing Authority: An Introduction,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 12–34.

¹⁶ George Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 189.

York as having many maps, layered and intersecting, each created by and belonging to a particular subculture – for instance, immigrants, gay men, and street gangs, to name a few. In creating their own map of the city, gay men had to consciously navigate the potentially dangerous intersections of those maps.¹⁷ The framing of my own research with the language, if not the visualizations, of mapmaking is a direct echo of Chauncey's discursive choices.

Since Chauncey, numerous studies have followed on virtually every major North American city. In Canadian scholarship, Catherine Jean Nash has charted the formation of Toronto's gay village,¹⁸ while Stephen Maynard has produced extensive work on that city's history of public sex between gay men, with particular reference to police surveillance and judicial punishment of this behaviour.¹⁹ Elsewhere, Line Chamberland has chronicled the history of lesbian bars in Montréal,²⁰ while Ross Higgins has described how that city's cruising spots (especially parks) served as early incubators of community among gay men.²¹ Together, Chamberland and Higgins have further detailed how gays

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Catherine Jean Nash, "Toronto's Gay Village (1969-1982): Plotting the Politics of Gay Identity," *Canadian Geographer* 50, no. 1 (2006): 1–16.

¹⁹ Steven Maynard, "Through a Hole in the Lavatory Wall: Homosexual Subcultures, Police Surveillance, and the Dialectics of Discovery, Toronto, 1890-1930," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5, no. 2 (1994): 207–42; Steven Maynard, "'Horrible Temptations': Sex, Men, and Working-Class Male Youth in Urban Ontario, 1890-1935," *Canadian Historical Review* 78, no. 2 (1997): 191–236.

²⁰ Line Chamberland, "Remembering Lesbian Bars: Montreal, 1955-1975," *Journal of Homosexuality* 25, no. 3 (1993): 231–69.

²¹ Ross Higgins, "Baths, Bushes, and Belonging: Public Sex and Gay Community in Pre-Stonewall Montreal," in *Public Sex/Gay Space* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 187–203.

and lesbians in mid-century Montréal utilized tabloid newspapers, with their lurid stories of rumoured gay meeting places, to locate an underground community.²²

For the history of women who have sex with women – an activity which less frequently occupied public spaces like parks or lavatories in any significant way – the study of gay bars has been especially significant. Among the earliest studies of explicitly lesbian history in Canada was Elise Chenier’s research on lesbian bars and the working-class culture they supported in 1940s Toronto.²³ Chenier’s work offers an example of the spacialization of social deviancy: in fact as well as discourse, the city’s lesbian bar culture shared space with sex work, organized crime, and racialized immigrants. Such research demonstrates how understanding geographies of queer spaces, namely those locations in which gay men and lesbians could gather and socialize, is key to understanding the shared histories of queer community-building and the development of the cityscape. Building on Chenier’s work, Cameron Duder has documented the social lives of middle-class lesbians across Canada from 1900-1960, emphasizing the importance of private parties and personal networks for women who were unwilling or unable to participate in lesbian bar culture.²⁴

Less plentiful even than works of lesbian history are studies of gay life in rural communities and Canadian regions beyond Ontario and Quebec. Oral historian Michael Riordan has produced two volumes of queer life stories collected from across Canada,

²² Line Chamberland and Ross Higgins, “Mixed Messages: Lesbians, Gay Men and the Yellow Press in Quebec and Ontario During the 1950s and 1960s,” in *The Challenge of Modernity: A Reader on Post-Confederation Canada*, ed. Ian McKay (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992), 422–31.

²³ Elise Chenier, “Rethinking Class in Lesbian Bar Culture: Living ‘The Gay Life’ in Toronto, 1955-1965,” *Left History* 9, no. 2 (2004): 85–118.

²⁴ Cameron Duder, *Awfully Devoted Women: Lesbian Lives in Canada, 1900-1960* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).

including one devoted specifically to rural gays and lesbians.²⁵ A handful of Riordan's informants lived in New Brunswick, including the ubiquitous Hal Hinds, who also contributed an interview to this thesis.²⁶ Meanwhile, Valerie Korinek has done important work articulating the regional dimensions of Canadian queer historiography, through her research on gay and lesbian activist history in Saskatchewan and other western provinces. She observes that most queer historical research deals with Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, and southern Ontario.²⁷ This means that any supposedly national portrait of queer history inevitably elides the particularities of the West, the Prairies, Atlantic Canada, the North, and countless rural communities. Korinek's work also provides specific insight into the dynamics of queer life in small urban cities within largely rural regions – a description that fits Fredericton as well as it does Saskatoon and Winnipeg. In particular, she challenges the unquestioned acceptance of the “Great Gay Migration,” a historical movement of rural gays and lesbians into large urban centres first described by Kath Weston. In response to Weston, Korinek notes that smaller urban centres like Saskatoon and Winnipeg occupy a middle ground between rurality and metropole; they are regional hubs, metropolitan in a local sense despite being peripheral on a national scale.²⁸ This observation is highly applicable to the Atlantic Canadian context. Like Korinek's prairie cities, Fredericton is not just a staging ground for migration out of the region, but also a magnet for migration from the surrounding area.

²⁵ Michael Riordan, *Out Our Way: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Country* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1996).

²⁶ Ross Higgins, “Baths, Bushes, and Belonging: Public Sex and Gay Community in Pre-Stonewall Montreal”; Steven Maynard, “Through a Hole in the Lavatory Wall: Homosexual Subcultures, Police Surveillance, and the Dialectics of Discovery, Toronto, 1890-1930.”

²⁷ Valerie Korinek, “‘We’re the Girls of the Pansy Parade,’” 122.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 120.

While Korinek has ably championed the Prairies, professional historians have largely neglected the queer history of the Atlantic Provinces. A telling indicator of this phenomenon is the geographic distribution of queer archives in Canada. Regional and local queer archives exist across the country, but there are none east of Quebec. References to Atlantic Canada within national histories predominantly deal with Halifax, considered by many to be a regional metropole. The only significant study of queer activism in a Maritime community is the catalogue essay that accompanied *OUT! Gay and Lesbian Vernacular*, a 1997 exhibition on gay visual culture at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax. The essay is considered the definitive social history of gay and lesbian Halifax, although its author, local activist Robin Metcalfe, stresses that the essay was never intended to serve such a crucial historiographical purpose.²⁹ More recently, political scientist Joanna Everitt has compiled a preliminary survey of queer activism in Atlantic Canada.³⁰

Virtually no academic research exists on New Brunswick's queer history, apart from one legal article analyzing a buggery trial in Saint John in 1806.³¹ This is despite New Brunswick's wealth of logging camps and seaports, the kinds of sites that have attracted the attention of queer historians elsewhere.³² Political studies of gay, lesbian,

²⁹ Robin Metcalfe, "Queer Looking, Queer Acting: Lesbian and Gay Vernacular," in *Out: Queer Looking, Queer Acting Revisited* (Halifax: Khyber Centre for the Arts, 2014).

³⁰ Joanna Everitt, "Mobilization on the Periphery: LGBT Activism and Success in Atlantic Canada," in *Queer Mobilizations: Social Movement Activism and Canadian Public Policy*, ed. Manon Tremblay (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 125–42.

³¹ Lorna Hutchinson, "Buggery Trials in Saint John, 1806: The Case of John M. Smith," *UNB Law Journal* 40 (1991): 129–48.

³² For example, in Steven Maynard, "Rough Work and Rugged Men: The Social Construction of Masculinity in Working Class History," *Labour/Le Travail* 23 (1989): 159–69; Peter Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs: Constructing and Controlling Homosexuality in the Pacific Northwest*

bisexual, and transgender elected officials have occasionally dealt with New Brunswick, largely because of Allison Brewer's recent leadership of the provincial NDP.³³ However, the unconfirmed sexual orientation of former premier Richard Hatfield remains a perennial topic of speculation. Assumed by most to have been gay, Hatfield never publicly spoke about his sexuality. The most famous historical insinuation of Hatfield's homosexuality came from Liberal leader Joseph Daigle, who in a campaign speech referred to Hatfield as "a faded pansy."³⁴ Discussion of Hatfield is nigh inevitable in casual conversation of queer history in New Brunswick, partly due to the allure of sensationalism but also because awareness of alternative topics is extremely low. The gaps in the literature surrounding New Brunswick's queer history demand to be addressed.

Part of the reason for New Brunswick's absence from the historical discussion is the scarcity of source material from which to construct such a history. Written documents on gay, lesbian, and bisexual life in the province are few. In their absence, oral history is the most promising methodology for recovering the region's queer past.

Oral History

Since the early 1970s, oral history has enjoyed a renaissance among professional historians. As Paul Thompson pointed out in his important analysis of oral history, *The Voice of the Past* (1978), oral testimony is actually the oldest form of historical evidence.

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Paul Baker and Jo Stanley, *Hello Sailor! The Hidden History of Gay Life at Sea* (London: Pearson Education, 2003).

³³ Joanna Everitt and Michael Camp, "Changing the Game Changes the Frame."

³⁴ Robin Hardy, "Faded Pansies and Second-Hand Roses," *The Body Politic*, November 1978: 14.

Interviews formed the basis of most written accounts of the past, particularly journalism and court transcripts.³⁵ In the broad sweep of history, the documentary sensibility that privileges written sources is primarily a modern European phenomenon, coincident with an increase in literacy and the ease of producing written records. The lifespan of an oral tradition, such as those practiced by Canadian First Peoples, typically exceeds that of a widely accepted written history, which is subject to frequent revision.³⁶ Nonetheless, until the late twentieth century, professional historians often regarded oral history with skepticism, as an overly subjective research process that produced few reliable facts about the past.

The renaissance in oral history had its roots in the desire of social historians to write “history from below,” turning away from political and economic grand narratives to focus on the social conditions and life experiences of oppressed groups.³⁷ For social historians eager to restore the voices of labourers, women, and other oppressed classes to the historical record, oral testimony was often the only available source of information about the past. Individuals from marginalized sectors of society have historically been unlikely to leave behind written records, either because they lack the means to produce them or because their documents are not considered worthy of preservation. Similarly, oral history can help recover the details of everyday life – often the information record-keepers judge to be least significant and most dispensable. As a result, many early

³⁵ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

³⁶ Julie Cruikshank, “Notes and Comments: Oral Tradition and Oral history—Reviewing Some Issues,” *Canadian Historical Review* 75, no. 3 (September 1994): 403–18.

³⁷ Alistair Thomson, “Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History,” *The Oral History Review* 34, no. 1 (2007): 51–53.

practitioners valued oral history for its radical possibilities, its potential to disrupt historical metanarratives by giving voice to those previously silenced. Paul Thompson articulated this objective when he wrote, “All history depends ultimately upon its social purpose.”³⁸

As oral history became more widely used during the 1970s, its practitioners defended their methodology from numerous critiques, most notably from positivist scholars who doubted oral history’s ability to produce reliable, factually accurate accounts of the past.³⁹ The interview process relies on the recollection and self-description of participants, neither of which is an objective process. Memories are often unreliable, mutable, and molded by culture, while oral narratives are consciously constructed in variable ways depending on the speaker’s goals and circumstances. Early proponents of oral history, such as Paul Thompson, Luisa Passerini, and Michael Frisch, responded to this criticism by noting that written documents are not necessarily objective or free of factual errors.⁴⁰ Further, factually inaccurate data from an interview can nonetheless constitute a form of evidence about narrators’ understanding of the past. In *The Death of Luigi Trastulli* (1990), an oral history of labour protests in post-fascist Italy, Alessandro Portelli found that narrators systematically conflated events at two separate protests, separated by years and seemingly unrelated. Portelli argued that narrators’ mistakes regarding dates of past events revealed the meaning they ascribed to those

³⁸ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 1.

³⁹ Alistair Thomson, “Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History,” 53–57.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

events, and the alternative narrative they desired to create for them.⁴¹ In this case, it became apparent that what appeared to be separate, unrelated events to outside observers were so linked as to be inseparable in the minds of Portelli's narrators – a significant insight into how they interpreted the history through which they had lived. While oral historians verify interview data against official records and other accounts, much is to be gained by analyzing an oral testimony for symbolic meanings, as one might a literary text, paying attention not only to what is said (and not said), but the way in which it is said and structured.

Indeed, adhering too rigorously to the pursuit of “scientific objectivity” in oral history would disempower interview participants by implying that the researcher holds the authority to determine truth, while requiring that he or she remain detached from those being interviewed.⁴² Such detachment discourages researchers from committing themselves to politically engaged scholarship or sharing authority with their narrators. Increasingly since the 1980s, oral historians influenced by postmodernism have argued that the subjective nature of oral history is not a weakness but a strength.

The concept of shared authority is at the heart of most contemporary oral history practice. Michael Frisch, writing in 1990, coined the term “shared authority” to acknowledge that oral history is not produced by a single author, but must be created collaboratively.⁴³ Interviewing is an inherently collaborative exercise, involving the input

⁴¹ Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 1–29.

⁴² Valerie Yow, ““Do I Like Them Too Much?”: Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-Versa,” *The Oral History Review* 24, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 55–79.

⁴³ Michael Frisch, “Introduction,” in *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), xx.

of at minimum two individuals – the researcher seeking information, and the narrator providing their account of the past. Shared authority implies that participants in historical events, by choosing when and how to tell their own stories, take an active role in the production of history, rather than merely serving as objects of study. Ideally a shared authority approach to oral history works against the perpetuation of uneven power relations between professional academics and community members. It may also help to erode social barriers between their respective realms. Since Frisch’s original usage, the term “shared authority” has been expanded by Steven High and others to encompass not just the dialogic nature of the interview, but also a broader commitment to engage community members in all stages of the research process.⁴⁴

In the case of my research, individuals whom I interviewed were given considerable leeway to set the terms of the discussion. Although I brought a set of prepared questions into each discussion, respondents often provided observations that moved the conversation in another direction. In one case, a respondent rejected the interview format entirely in favour of recounting stories as they came to mind.⁴⁵ Nor did I always withhold my own comments in the interest of maintaining a façade of detachment from the discussion. In this manner, the interviews themselves were a collaborative enterprise.

Ultimately, the collaborative input of interview respondents shifted my approach to the topic away from an initial interest in heritage, public memory, and memorialization of queer historical places, because respondents considered that topic to be of secondary interest or remote from their own ways of thinking about the past. The question designed

⁴⁴ Steven High, “Sharing Authority,” 13.

⁴⁵ Anthony Wallace, interview with Conor Falvey.

to spark discussion of place and memory asked respondents where they would go in Fredericton to spark memories of their lives within the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community – in other words, what literal locations would best facilitate a metaphorical “trip down memory lane”. While Madeline McDaniel readily identified the UNB campus as the critical site for memory, the other respondents were not able to articulate a clear response to the question. In similar research situations, archaeologist Marie Louise Stig Sørensen, who uses oral history to study people’s attitudes to heritage and the past, has found value in embracing the position that there are no mistaken responses; instead the interviewer must remain open to respondents’ alternative interpretations of the question.⁴⁶ In my case, rather than pushing the issue, I allowed respondent’s indefinable discomfort with some underlying premise of the “memory lane” question to lead me away from that line of inquiry. Instead, the interviews became more focused on straightforwardly capturing the details of queer social life in Fredericton, as respondents recollected it.

Queer Oral History

Oral history has been an integral method in the study of queer history since before its inception as a respectable academic research topic in the 1980s. Community historians, anxious to preserve the history of queer communities and the gay liberation movement, conducted grassroots oral history projects from the late 1970s onward.⁴⁷ Foundational works in North American gay men’s history, most notably John d’Emilio’s *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* (1983) and Allan Bérubé’s *Coming Out Under Fire* (1990),

⁴⁶ Marie Louise Stig Sørensen, “Between the Lines and in the Margins: Interviewing People about Attitudes to Heritage and Identity,” in *Heritage Studies: Methods and Approaches*, ed. John Carman and Marie Louise Stig Sørensen (London: Routledge, 2009), 170–171.

⁴⁷ Steven Maynard, “In Search of Sodom North,” 117–132.

relied heavily on interviews conducted by the authors.⁴⁸ Later, Madeline Davis and Elizabeth Kennedy applied similar methods in their landmark study of lesbian communities in Buffalo, New York.⁴⁹ These early works provided the makings of a template for countless subsequent queer histories. By 1990, Canadian oral historians such as Elise Chenier, Cameron Duder, and Michael Riordan were producing similar studies, while numerous queer historians in Canada (including myself) have relied on interviews previously assembled by projects such as the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (CLGA) or Lesbians Making History (LMH).⁵⁰

Because gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals have been marginalized and persecuted throughout much of modern Western history, they have frequently lived lives of secrecy, leaving behind little evidence of their non-normative sexuality. Writings on same-sex desire have often been censored. Before the advent of concerted gay rights movements in the late twentieth century, most written evidence pertaining to non-normative sexuality was found either in medical writings or criminal records, offering a limited view of the lived experiences of sexual minorities. These factors mean that oral history is frequently the only available source of historical evidence of queer lives. Oral history research conducted through shared authority can benefit queer participants by adding their voices to conventional historical accounts, by recognizing their authority to

⁴⁸ John d’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*; Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: History of Gay Men and Women in World War I* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990).

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁵⁰ Elise Chenier, “Hidden from History: Preserving Lesbian Oral History in Canada,” *Archivaria* 68 (Fall 2009): 254–255.

speaking about the past as they lived it, and by confirming that they are historical subjects whose experiences “count” as legitimate history.

However, critical studies of gender and sexuality have posed challenges to the practice of oral history, as well as queer history more broadly. Building on the theories of Michel Foucault, queer theorists remind us that sex and sexuality are socially constructed and historically contingent. The concept of sexual identities, such as homosexual and heterosexual, is a peculiar feature of modern Western constructions of sexuality and cannot be generalized to all eras of history. Identity labels such as “gay” and “lesbian” are historically contingent, constantly evolving, and often imperfect reflections of the multilayered identities that individuals possess. Over-reliance on these identity categories may constrain the testimony of participants in an oral history interview, as well as silence or exclude potential participants who do not construct their subjectivity in relation to these categories. In her work interviewing self-identified gay men and lesbians in San Francisco, Nan Alamilla Boyd found that explicitly identifying her research as gay/lesbian history served to narrow the range and structure of the narratives she heard. Participants felt compelled to establish their bona fides as authentic gay or lesbian subjects, and at times self-censored to ensure their testimony was not detrimental to a gay/lesbian political agenda.⁵¹

Queer oral historians continue to seek ways to transcend such constraints. One alternative methodology, used by John Howard in his oral history *Men Like That* (1999), is to seek interview participants based on a description of same-sex behaviour rather than

⁵¹ Nan Alamilla Boyd, “Who Is the Subject?,” 187–189.

a particular sexual identity (i.e. “men who have sex with men” rather than “gay men”).⁵² For this thesis, I opted instead to simply embrace the constraints of identity labels, recognizing that the oral histories I collected recount a very specific kind of experience within the broader history of same-sex desire and practices in Fredericton. This choice achieves my principal aim of establishing the bedrock of a literature on queer experience in New Brunswick to which future researchers may add further information and analysis.

Spatial History

The third component of the literature presented here is spatial history. This term refers to a broad selection of “scholarship that examines human experience of social and physical space.”⁵³ It is an approach that seeks not only to describe the spatial aspects of the past, but also to historicize spatial practices and understandings of space. Spatial history is, above all, a praxis – not just a theoretical disposition but “a means of doing research.”⁵⁴ Aspects of spatial relations – such as proximity, linkage, density or clustering of sites, and movement over time – can be revealed through mapping. American historian Richard White makes the case that spatial history “generates questions that might otherwise go unasked, it reveals historical relations that might otherwise go unnoticed, and it undermines, or substantiates, stories upon which we build our own versions of the past.”⁵⁵ Unsurprisingly, the field has long been closely associated with the use and

⁵² John Howard, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

⁵³ Anne Kelly Knowles, “GIS and History,” in *Placing History: How Maps, Spatial Data and GIS Are Changing Historical Scholarship*, ed. Anne Kelly Knowles and Amy Hillier (ESRI, 2008), 4.

⁵⁴ Richard White, “What Is Spatial History?” (Stanford University, 2010), Spatial History Lab, standford.edu/group/spatialhistory.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

production of historical maps, as well as other, less traditional visual representations of spaces and their correlated data. If anything, the advent of digital technologies has intensified this interdisciplinary bond. At present, digital databases and mapping tools such as geographic information systems (GIS) represent the new frontier – and arguably the central preoccupation – of spatial history as a field.⁵⁶

Since the early 1990s, historians have spoken of the onset of a “spatial turn” within the field, so named in homage to the “cultural turn” of the preceding decade. Contrasting the present era of “simultaneity” and “juxtaposition” with the chronologically-obsessed nineteenth century, Michel Foucault suggested that “[t]he present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space.”⁵⁷ Though historians have previously considered place as an important factor in analyzing the past, history after the spatial turn is characterized by a more critical, constructivist theorization of space, largely thanks to the influence of Henri Lefebvre. In his foundational work *The Production of Space* (1974), Lefebvre posited that space was socially produced, that it could have multiple overlapping and conflicting sets of social meanings, and that scholars should be critically concerned with the process whereby space and its meaning(s) were constructed.⁵⁸ In this mode, “absolute space” – the physical dimensions of the world we inhabit – is of less concern than “spatial practice,” the conceptual division of that world into places and pathways between them.⁵⁹ Building on both Foucault and Lefebvre,

⁵⁶ Anne Kelly Knowles, “GIS and History,” 2.

⁵⁷ Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias,” trans. Jay Mizkowiec, *Architecture / Mouvement / Continuité* 5 (October 1984): 1.

⁵⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson Smith (Wiley, 1992).

⁵⁹ See Richard White, “What is Spatial History?” for a review of a selection of Lefebvre’s concepts and their relevance to the current practice of spatial history.

Doreen Massey notes that spatial thinking necessarily foregrounds multiplicity and simultaneity; space and spatial practice are never fixed, never finished, and always imbued with multiple meanings.⁶⁰ By viewing space through this lens, it becomes possible to conceptualize the kind of dynamic map of temporary spaces that would represent gay and lesbian spatial history in Fredericton. Spatializing the city's queer history in this way reveals information that oral history may not, simply because space is often taken for granted in everyday life and in personal narratives, commonly represented as stable or fixed, if only for simplicity's sake. It is not until oral histories are geographically located (mapped) that additional insights into the instability of space are revealed.

Defending the possibility of the existence of queer space for the purposes of studying visual culture, art historian Christopher Reed argued that queerness is not immanent in a given space, but rather *imminent*, "ready to take place."⁶¹ Since "no space is totally queer or completely unqueerable," any point on the map can be interpreted to some extent through a queer lens (though some points may lend themselves to that interpretation more immediately than others).⁶² Queer space is, then, not only a question of location but of time, an event as much as a setting for events. My designation of historical queer spaces in Fredericton as transient, shifting across both absolute space and time, reflects this theoretical disposition to see space and its interpretation as occurrences, or more accurately as dynamic, ongoing processes.

⁶⁰ Doreen Massey, *For Space*, 9.

⁶¹ Christopher Reed, "Imminent Domain: Queer Space in the Built Environment," *Art Journal* 55, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 64.

⁶² *Ibid.*

Rather than existing in a continuous, discrete portion of the map, gay space in Fredericton has always been dispersed and temporary, appearing and reappearing in small units of space (bars, community halls, a certain government office, a given stretch of parkland) in different temporal contexts. For example, the space of the Kinsmen Centre in Nashwaaksis became a queer space on weekends when FLAG hosted dances there; the Cosmopolitan Club was always a little queer, but most noticeably in one corner and overwhelmingly so on Thursdays; and the bank of the Saint John River was a popular cruising spot for gay men, but only after dark. These spaces were impermanent, contingent and, generally speaking, precarious. While not atypical for a small urban centre or small town, the history of such a gay and lesbian landscape differs markedly from the more commonly discussed history of gay neighbourhoods or ghettos in large cities.

In his recent book *There Goes the Gaybourhood?*, sociologist Amin Ghaziani has provided a concise summary of the development of gay and lesbian enclaves in North American cities. Ghaziani posits three phases in the history of North American gay neighbourhoods in the twentieth century. Reusing a narrative arc so often applied in queer studies, Ghaziani breaks this history into “closet,” “coming out,” and “post-gay” periods.⁶³ The closet period lasted until World War II, and was characterized by scattered gay places, not unlike those seen in Fredericton much more recently. Take, for instance, the bars, rooming houses, public toilets, etc., of pre-war New York, where gay men met each other in secrecy. The coming out period, from the post-war years until the 1990s, witnessed a rise in gay territorialization, with gays and lesbians visibly claiming and

⁶³ Amin Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gaybourhood?*, 8.

defending public spaces where they could participate in a shared culture and manifest their collective economic and political power. To this era belongs the Great Gay Migration described by Weston, fuelled by the dream of finding the imagined community. In the currently unfolding “post-gay” period, however, the centrality of sexual orientation to identity (collective or otherwise) is falling out of vogue, and traditional gay neighbourhoods may be threatened as a result.⁶⁴

In Fredericton, gay public spaces have always most closely resembled those of the closet period. A semblance of coming out took place in the 1980s, as a succession of gay bars came into being and gay community organizations (most notably FLAG) began organizing more visible social and political events; yet these efforts proved fleeting. By the mid-1990s, spatially speaking, Fredericton was about as “post-gay” as anywhere else. Taking Ghaziani’s periodization as a rubric, one might be tempted to see Fredericton as “behind,” stranded in the closet period while gay spaces in larger cities grew and evolved – a stagnant history of one phase only.

This temptation must be resisted. For one thing, Ghaziani’s model is crafted from the histories of large metropolises – Chicago, New York, San Francisco, Toronto – to which Fredericton does not compare in population or demographics. (Population does not necessarily dictate gay history, though: gay residents of Saint John, New Brunswick, spent years resenting less populous Fredericton for having a more actively organized gay community.)⁶⁵ For another, placing Fredericton as “behind” or “ahead” implies that only one possible historical trajectory exists, a singular narrative of inevitable gay progress. That homogenizing approach is unhelpfully reductive. Rather, where Fredericton

⁶⁴ Ibid., 8–9.

⁶⁵ John Markidis, interview with Tom Warner.

diverges from the metropolitan narrative, let it serve as a reminder that a multiplicity of historical trajectories exists.

CHAPTER 2

Gay & Lesbian Spaces in Fredericton in the 1970s

One day in the late 1970s, not long after he left his marriage and moved to Fredericton, Hal Hinds learned that his friend Keith Sly was planning to move to Toronto to write for *The Body Politic*. Sly was the driving force behind the city's first (at that time only) social organization for gay men, Gay Friends of Fredericton. In Sly's possession was a key to the group's post office box, which required a new caretaker. Hinds, still new to Fredericton's gay community, initially expressed no interest in the role; the key passed instead to another man, who soon after decided he was not prepared for organizational leadership. From him, the key finally passed to Hinds, along with the responsibility of ensuring there was a viable gay organization in Fredericton. Ultimately, Hinds fulfilled that responsibility by initiating the founding of Fredericton Lesbians and Gays in 1979.

The key serves as an apt metaphor for several aspects of the spatial organization of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community in Fredericton during the 1970s. Gay Friends of Fredericton's post office box was the only stable spatial aspect of the small, disorganized group. Like the gay and lesbian community at large, Gay Friends of Fredericton had no designated space of their own. Anyone seeking their address would be referred to an unidentifiable box among many in the not-particularly-queer space of a Canada Post outlet. Gays and lesbians at this time lived in similar dimensions, gathering and socializing discreetly within a landscape of heteronormative spaces. Their nimble, non-territorial spatial practices helped them (within limits) to avoid excessive violence or hostility from straight society.

In order to write about gay and lesbian history in Fredericton, it is necessary to suggest a tentative periodization that reflects local (as opposed to national or international) timelines. In both Canadian and American queer historiography, the year 1969 serves as a helpful benchmark, but for differing reasons: in the United States, it was the year of the Stonewall Riots, later commemorated as the start of the modern gay rights movement, while in Canada, it was the year of (partial) legalization of homosexual relations.¹

Dominique Clément has noted that the gay rights movement was “another example of a social movement dramatically coming to life in the 1970s,” alongside women’s liberation, the student movement, and others that had emerged during the previous decade.²

Subsequently, the queer appropriation of public space intensified, though it had existed previously in various locations and forms. In the early 1970s, gay and lesbian presence in public space manifested in the practice of political demonstrations, like parades and pickets; the increased prevalence of gay-targeted commercial spaces such as bars, bathhouses, and bookstores; and the emergence of gay and lesbian community organizations that created queer spaces by hosting events or opening drop-in centres.³ This was the spatial “coming out” period described by Amin Ghaziani, when gay and lesbian visibility on public streets reached new levels.⁴ However, there is considerable regional variation in any timeline of queer social and political activity. In Fredericton, many of the place-making activities observed in other, larger cities in the 1970s did not begin occurring in any widespread fashion until the following decade.

¹ Kathleen A. Lahey, *Are We “Persons” Yet? Law and Sexuality in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 7.

² Dominique Clément, *Canada’s Rights Revolution*, 31.

³ Tom Warner, *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada*, 61–62.

⁴ Amin Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gaybourhood?*, 15.

I proposed to periodize the history of Fredericton's queer public spaces around the key date of 1980, the year in which Fredericton Lesbians and Gays (FLAG) began holding public dances.⁵ FLAG was the first gay and lesbian social organization of any significant duration in Fredericton, and its public meetings and dances were transformative for the queer community for many reasons (which will be discussed in Chapter 3). Simply put, before FLAG dances, there was very little public space open to gay men and lesbians in Fredericton that was not either grudgingly shared with heterosexuals or heavily policed by them. Therefore, this chapter discusses some of the queer spaces that were available to gay and lesbian Frederictonians between 1969 and 1980.

Source material on this period is scarce. Some media coverage of gay happenings in Fredericton appeared throughout the 1970s in the national periodical *The Body Politic*, as well as the newsletter printed under various titles by Halifax's gay liberation organization Gay Alliance for Equality (GAE). However, my research for this chapter draws heavily on interviews with four respondents who had first-hand memories of Fredericton in the 1970s. The prism of their experiences reflects a great degree of consistency among the shared stories as well with as print information derived from community circulars and other materials. Additionally, I made use of what I will term "queer lore," referring to information shared by interview respondents who came to Fredericton after 1980 but possess received knowledge about the preceding decade imparted to them by older individuals. Oral tradition of this type, passed from person to person, is an acknowledged part of underground gay and lesbian culture, and an

⁵ FLAG was founded in 1979, with its first public meeting taking place on December 5. The first dance was not held until January 20, 1980.

important survival strategy. According to cultural critic Michael Bronski, “The invisible map was gradually revealed to gay men new to the city by those who already knew its landscape.”⁶

In 1973, a helpful item appearing in the GAE newsletter outlined the spatial dimensions of the city’s queer social life. Anyone seeking to meet gay people in Fredericton was encouraged to visit three locations: the River Room in the Lord Beaverbrook hotel; the Cosmopolitan Club on King Street; and “The Green,” a stretch of parkland along the Saint John River that was well-known as a cruising area.⁷ However, the article lamented the non-existence of exclusively queer public space in Fredericton: “The local scene is composed of attending half straight half gay bars and clubs and of private parties.”⁸ This lack of queer public space coexisted with a culture of intercity travel. “Weekend entertainments are exclusively made up of trips to Toronto and Montreal,” the article stated, noting that although Fredericton had “few sexual outlets, (as compared to larger cities,” it was “close enough to major cities for emotional release.”⁹ Rather than run the risks associated with creating gay or lesbian public spaces within their own city, Fredericton residents could and did take advantage of such spaces in other communities. Thus, this chapter will discuss the three public locations referenced in the GAE newsletter article, as well as the private parties that are mentioned. It underscores the importance of lesbian socializing conducted through women’s softball teams. Finally,

⁶ Michael Bronski, *The Pleasure Principle*, 191.

⁷ Clyde Richards, “Gay Life in Fredericton,” *GAE Monitor*, September 1973.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

it will describe the city's first foray into queer organizing in the form of Gay Friends of Fredericton, a short-lived predecessor of FLAG.

Straight Bars, Gay Clientele

Two downtown straight bars, the Cosmopolitan Club and the River Room, served as the most significant commercial public spaces for gay and lesbian socializing. The proprietors and straight clientele accepted the presence of gay and lesbian patrons, provided the homosexuals gave no outward appearance of difference from the heterosexuals. Sharing straight spaces according to this “live and let live” mentality minimized the occurrence of the kinds of violence, harassment, and policing directed at gay bars elsewhere.

The Cosmopolitan Club (also called Club Cosmopolitan) was located at 546 King Street, in a two-storey complex in central downtown Fredericton.¹⁰ The establishment was straight-owned, but gay men and lesbians were tacitly welcomed as paying customers, provided they were not too flamboyant or obviously homosexual in dress or appearance.¹¹ Anthony Wallace recalls that the bar, which operated as a restaurant during the day, had a “kind of a rustic atmosphere, a lot of beams; it was kind of spread out, you could walk around, go upstairs...There may have been a billiards room up on that second floor there too.” There was also “a pretty big dance floor,” a small section of which was

¹⁰ Anthony Wallace, interview with Conor Falvey.

¹¹ Ibid.; Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

frequently staked out by gay customers.¹² A space just off the dance floor, sometimes referred to as “the library,” became a *de facto* gay-only zone on Thursday nights.¹³

Existing both queerly and covertly in “the Cosmo” entailed maintaining a pretense of heterosexuality, in order to preserve access to an implicitly heteronormative social space. A safe veneer of “straightness” could be achieved through cooperation between gay men and lesbians. Allison Brewer recalls:

Women could dance together. You couldn’t dance close, or anything like that; they could dance together, as long as it didn’t look to intimate. But the men couldn’t dance together, and so they would dance with the women. So [laughs] we would kind of dance together as two couples...I don’t suppose we were probably fooling anyone, but at least we didn’t get thrown out.¹⁴

The mask of heteronormativity was not perfect, nor was it always assiduously maintained. Altercations sometimes occurred between gay and straight patrons of the bar, including the occasional physical attack by straight men who suspected they were being cruised.¹⁵ Nonetheless, the Cosmopolitan Club retained its cachet as the principal gay hangout in downtown Fredericton until the city’s first explicitly gay bar was opened on Westmorland Street in 1985.¹⁶

The River Room, a popular drinking establishment for both gay and straight Frederictonians, was the restaurant and lounge of the Lord Beaverbrook Hotel on Queen Street. As its name implies, the hotel, built in 1946, is one of numerous Fredericton

¹² Anthony Wallace, interview with Conor Falvey.

¹³ Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Anthony Wallace, interview with Conor Falvey.

¹⁶ Ibid.

edifices funded and established by Max Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook.¹⁷ It stands adjacent to two other significant examples, the Beaverbrook Art Gallery and the Fredericton Playhouse, in the shadow of the provincial legislature. In his biography of New Brunswick writer David Adams Richards, literary scholar Tony Tremblay notes that in 1969 the hotel's River Room was "the only late-night watering hole in the city."¹⁸ Leaving aside distinctions of sexual orientation, the bar attracted a wide variety of patrons, from students to politicians. Like the hotel itself, the River Room was relatively upscale; jackets and ties were mandatory.¹⁹

As in the Cosmopolitan Club, a rapport based on discretion existed between the bar's straight managers and their homosexual clientele. Brian Ellison, who snuck into the River Room while still underage with help from older gay men, remembers: "It took me a while to figure it out, but I got a sense that there was cooperation, very underground, not spoken as long as you kept the peace."²⁰ As with the similarly mixed Cosmopolitan Club, guests judged to be too flamboyant or obviously homosexual were not welcome. This, in turn, ensured an environment in which closeted homosexuals could mingle without fear of revealing themselves.²¹ For those who found the River Room too confined, however, the nearby Green offered a more lively space.

¹⁷ A.R. Clark, *History of the Lord Beaverbrook Hotel* (Fredericton: Lord Beaverbrook Hotel, 1989).

¹⁸ Michael Anthony Tremblay, *David Adams Richards of the Miramichi: A Biographical Introduction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 105.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Brian Ellison, interview with Conor Falvey.

²¹ Ibid.

The Green

In its most specific usage, the term “The Green” refers to a section of public park in downtown Fredericton, on the south bank of the Saint John River, stretching alongside Queen Street/Waterloo Row between the Beaverbrook Art Gallery and the former CN Railway bridge (converted to a pedestrian walkway in 1997).²² There are numerous similar park spaces on both sides of the river; however, the Green is the most centrally located. It is close to the downtown core, across from the provincial legislature, and (save for the intervening Beaverbrook Art Gallery) adjacent to the hotel that houses the River Room. While cruising no doubt took place in other parks around Fredericton, the downtown section of the Green was the busiest and best-known locale for this activity. The most detailed account of queer activity on the Green comes from my interview with Brian Ellison, who cruised there as a young adult before he left Fredericton in 1972. Anthony Wallace and Carla Rasmussen were able to convey information about the Green that they had accumulated from others who had frequented the park.

Urban parks have often been associated with public sex, particularly same-sex encounters between men.²³ Until the late 20th century, legal and social sanctions against homosexual relationships often prevented men from accessing private space outside the home (such as hotel rooms) for such encounters. Likewise, the scrutiny of disapproving landlords, relatives, or opposite-sex spouses could render the home off-limits for same-

²² The term “the Green” can sometimes be used in a looser sense, but these more precise boundaries of the gay male cruising zone were specified in interviews with Brian Ellison and Hank Williams.

²³ For historical analysis of public sex in parks, see Ross Higgins, “Baths, Bushes, and Belonging”; Steven Maynard, “Through a Hole in the Lavatory Wall.”

sex activity.²⁴ For covert assignations, parks had numerous advantages over other common cruising spaces, such as streets or public washrooms. Parks can offer a number of isolated spots, the additional cover of trees and shrubs, and plenty of possible escape routes if caught.²⁵ If questioned, there could be several plausible alternative explanations for one's presence in the space. For instance, Ellison remembers seeing gay men cruise on the Green while also reading books, like any other presumably straight park-goer.²⁶

When and how the Green became associated with gay male cruising is unclear; but evidence indicates it was a well-established cruising area in the 1970s, and has remained one long after. Its existence as a queer space had a temporal as well as a spatial aspect. While gay men might be present at any time of day, the cruising "action" occurred primarily at night, sometimes facilitated by alcohol or drugs. Those wishing to avoid detection circulated close to the riverbank, as far as possible from the gaze of pedestrians or drivers on Queen Street/Waterloo Row.²⁷

Of all queer public spaces, covert or otherwise, the Green had the greatest reputation for danger. In interviews, it was typically the first or only location mentioned when respondents were asked to name unsafe places for visibly queer individuals; two respondents described specific instances of violence they remembered taking place in the park in the 1970s.²⁸ For Ellison, the fear of harassment and violence was constant: "I was always living in fear that I would get caught in a park with a man...it was always a

²⁴ George Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 201–202.

²⁵ Ross Higgins, "Baths, Bushes, and Belonging."

²⁶ Brian Ellison, interview with Conor Falvey.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Carla Rasmussen, interview with Conor Falvey; Anthony Wallace, interview with Conor Falvey.

fear.”²⁹ Threats came from the police who tried to regulate public decency in the park, as well as from ordinary citizens who knew the Green’s reputation as a cruising area:

I do remember the police raiding the park continuously...So, that probably thwarted my activities in the park...And queer-bashers, that seemed to dominate...I often wondered if the queer-bashers and police weren’t working together at that time.³⁰

Whether or not such collusion actually existed, Ellison’s narrative suggests that fear of harassment by police and “queer-bashers” was sufficiently omnipresent that distinguishing between the perpetrators was no longer meaningful to him.

To protect (or at least reassure) himself, Ellison would walk the Green during daylight, learning the landscape so that he could navigate quickly at night – a strategy he also applied to the surrounding downtown neighbourhoods.³¹ For a gay man under threat, an intimate knowledge of the city’s topography, its safe and unsafe geographical zones, was not merely a convenience but a vital mechanism of self-defense.

Private Parties

When public space is at a premium, gay and lesbian people have often relied on the private space of people’s homes as their primary venue for socializing, and private communications (word-of-mouth) among networks of friends as a means to discover and contact each other. Most interview respondents recalled socializing in private homes as one (if not the most) important method of connecting with the gay and lesbian community in Fredericton. Private gatherings, such as dinner parties or potlucks, had

²⁹ Brian Ellison, interview with Conor Falvey.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

special significance in Fredericton's queer social life before the 1970s because of the relative lack of alternatives. In a city with no formal queer organizations and no dedicated gay bars, opportunities for gay men and lesbians to gather safely in public or commercial spaces were rare and sometimes risky. House parties presented less risk of being publicly identified, or "outed," as homosexual.

The popularity and cultural significance of private parties has often been noted in gay and lesbian histories of other cities, usually contrasted with the gay bar culture that developed in Canada and the United States in the mid-twentieth century. Allan Bérubé describes complex subcultures of gay men's private parties that prevailed in American cities between the First and Second World Wars, particularly in small towns with no commercial gay culture.³² Urban studies in the United States emphasize the importance of private parties for Black gay men and lesbians, and presumably other racialized groups, who were not always able to access or feel comfortable within designated queer spaces such as gay bars.³³ In a study of Canadian lesbians in the early twentieth century, Cameron Duder has found that private parties were the preferred social outlet for many lower-middle class Canadian lesbians, as an alternative to a predominantly lower-class bar culture that was perceived as dangerous or seedy.³⁴

In Fredericton, private parties served similar functions: they provided a social outlet in a small city with few commercial alternatives, they offered those in the closet

³² Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*, 111–112.

³³ A recent example of historical writing on this subject is Geeny Beemyn, *A Queer Capital: A History of Gay Life in Washington, D.C.* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 108–110; Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community*, 114–130.

³⁴ Cameron Duder, *Awfully Devoted Women*.

some insulation from the fear of discovery, and they were accessible to the kinds of people (the young, the flamboyant, the publicly affectionate) who might be threatened or turned away at the Cosmopolitan Club or the River Room. For instance, on the party scene from 1970-72, Brian Ellison was able to connect with “people that were really kind of outcast from mainstream Fredericton society, so they were either extremely flamboyant, or some were drag people” – all while being under the legal drinking age himself.³⁵

House parties in Fredericton were often gender-mixed, although gay men and lesbians held their own separate parties as well. According to Allison Brewer: “There were some women’s parties, of course, and the men had men’s parties, but we partied a lot together in those days, and danced together a lot.”³⁶ Brian likewise attended parties with “mostly men, but women as well. I guess I was lucky in meeting people. There was a schoolteacher that had a house on Brunswick Street, and he had lots of parties...He was known mainly for gay men parties, but there was [sic] women who came...”³⁷

For Carla Rasmussen, parties thrown in her own apartment by her roommates served as an important introduction to the lesbian community and a social underground that was distinct from that of gay men. “[I] graduated from university in ’77 and I moved into an apartment with three other women. Two women had one room and my friend from university and I had another.”³⁸ Carla later became aware that the two women in the

³⁵ Brian Ellison, interview with Conor Falvey.

³⁶ Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

³⁷ Brian Ellison, interview with Conor Falvey.

³⁸ Carla Rasmussen, interview with Conor Falvey.

other room were a lesbian couple. They also played on a local women's softball team, and would sometimes host parties for their teammates:

I remember the softball team would come over after they played a game, and they'd all be there drinking beer and chatting and so on, and [pause] I realized then that all of these—majority of these women were lesbians.³⁹

For Carla, it was not the sport itself but rather the associated house parties that helped her initially connect with a wider lesbian community in the city.

While house parties matched the needs of the gay and lesbian community in many respects, heavy reliance on them as a social venue also had drawbacks. In spatial terms, parties in people's homes were restricted by the size of the venue. Once various gay and lesbian organizations began holding for-profit dances in public venues around Fredericton after 1980, attendance often numbered in the hundreds.⁴⁰ To host similar numbers, a house party would require nothing short of a mansion. There was also the potential that over time, the party scene might begin to seem boring or restrictive, encompassing the same people, places, and types of activities with little variation. Allison Brewer describes feeling such sentiments in the late 1970s:

We seemed—what we seemed to be doing was getting together and drinking and dancing and then going home with one another. But there didn't seem to be any—we didn't seem to be having any other fun together. And it was just—Especially among people who wanted to stop drinking, there was a lot of concern that there weren't any places to go.⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

⁴¹ Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

Ultimately, the desire for a more differentiated social scene – including organized activities, such as picnics and outdoor excursions that did not revolve around alcohol – contributed significantly to the early support for FLAG’s formation in 1979.⁴²

Over the years, a house party circuit developed throughout the province. Ellison remembers attending house parties with gay men and lesbians “that came from either– either Saint John or Moncton, and came into Fredericton for the parties. In those days, I kind of remember people would travel all the way from Moncton or Saint John to do house parties, and to Fredericton.”⁴³ In effect, Fredericton served as a regional hub that drew in gay and lesbian people from across the province, increasing the constituency served by Fredericton’s queer-targeted social activities beyond the population of the city itself. Yet it is unlikely that the flow of people between New Brunswick’s three major cities was one-way. The social scene in Saint John in the 1970s similarly revolved around house parties (supplemented by a gay presence in otherwise straight bars and taverns, as in Fredericton).⁴⁴ Without having examined primary sources on gay social life in Moncton, I hypothesize from chance remarks in interviews that a similar dynamic prevailed there. In addition to hosting out-of-town visitors at their parties, Frederictonian gays and lesbians probably traveled to attend house parties in Saint John and Moncton, and possibly other communities in the province. It is unclear whether any one city was central in the house party circuit, although one interview respondent suggested that Moncton’s large underground gay and lesbian community was the province’s social hub

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Brian Ellison, interview with Conor Falvey.

⁴⁴ John Markidis, interview with Tom Warner.

until the founding of FLAG in 1979.⁴⁵ Whatever its specific dimensions, the provincial party circuit served in a limited way to connect New Brunswick's various small, scattered gay and lesbian populations to each other.

Women's Softball

Lesbian folksinger Alix Dobkin observed, "Softball is the single greatest organizing force in lesbian society."⁴⁶ As the story of Carla's roommates and their after-game parties suggests, recreational organized sports provided an important social outlet for lesbians in Fredericton – none more so than women's softball, which multiple interview respondents identified as the most important network for lesbian socializing before (and for some time after) the emergence of FLAG and subsequent lesbian-specific organizations. The two lesbians whose interview narratives are used in this study described the significance of softball from first- and second-hand experience, while gay male interview respondents indicated an outsider's awareness of the lesbian presence in softball (it was typically the only form of exclusively lesbian socializing of which they were aware). Though gay men doubtless participated in athletic activities, team sports did not have the same kind of centrality to gay male social life as softball did for lesbians.⁴⁷

Given the scarcity of firsthand accounts from softball players, it has been difficult to determine how lesbian softball culture operated in Fredericton, and how precisely it may have evolved and changed over time. One thing that can be said about softball with

⁴⁵ Anthony Wallace, interview with Conor Falvey.

⁴⁶ James Thomas Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones: Queering Space in the Stonewall South* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 178.

⁴⁷ Anthony Wallace, interview with Conor Falvey.

relative certainty is that it was a seasonal activity. Allison Brewer noted in her interview that “the community [lesbians] did have was through ball games; a lot of the women play softball. And they were noticing that there would be this really tight group during the summer, and then during the winter everything would just kind of fall off.”⁴⁸ Part of the intensity of summer activity was likely due to the arrival of visiting teams in town, some of whose members were also lesbians. Socializing occurred both on and off the ball field. Carla Rasmussen remembers that in addition to gathering at players’ homes, “they used to have dances after their softball tournaments at the Beaverbrook. You know, people from PEI and everywhere around the Maritimes, and they were lesbians, that was their forum or their way to gather, I guess.”⁴⁹

Carla’s interpretation was that the “majority” of the softball players affiliated with her roommates were lesbians, but perhaps not all. There is no evidence that any of Fredericton’s softball teams in the 1970s was exclusively lesbian (although one such team existed by the end of the following decade, according to Allison Brewer).⁵⁰ Therefore the venues of women’s softball culture must have been zones of gay-straight co-existence, not unlike the “half gay half straight bars” mentioned in the GAE Monitor. Thus far, it has not been possible to identify which athletic facilities within the city these women might have used; any softball diamond is a likely candidate. Yet even though its spatial dimensions are vague, women’s softball must be acknowledged as an important occupation of public space by lesbians in Fredericton, as well as a vital social networking tool.

⁴⁸ Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

⁴⁹ Carla Rasmussen, interview with Conor Falvey.

⁵⁰ Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

Gay Friends of Fredericton (GFF)

The city's earliest known formal organization for homosexuals was Gay Friends of Fredericton (GFF), formed in 1974 as a vehicle for gay men to meet each other and socialize.⁵¹ This first stirring of institutional organization within Fredericton's gay and lesbian community left behind little evidence of their spatial aspect, perhaps, as we shall see, by design. Yet public records show a listing for GFF in *The Body Politic*, which initially stated the group's mailing address as 386 Saunders Street, a residential building in downtown Fredericton;⁵² later this address was replaced by a more anonymous post office box.

In addition to facilitating meetings and parties for gay men, GFF made some efforts to participate in political organizing and coalition-building on a national stage. The major queer rights issue of the moment was the Trudeau government's proposal to reform the Immigration Act, which had officially barred homosexual immigrants from entering the country since 1952.⁵³ When the government convened a Special Joint Parliamentary Committee to hold public hearings on the 1975 Green Paper on immigration, Gay Friends of Fredericton was among fifteen gay and lesbian organizations nationally that submitted briefs encouraging the government to repeal the discriminatory provisions of the Immigration Act, in which effort they were ultimately

⁵¹ Tom Warner, *Never Going Back*, 89.

⁵² "The Community Page," *The Body Politic*, December 1974: 4.

⁵³ Nicole LaViolette, "Coming Out to Canada: The Immigration of Same-Sex Couples Under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act," *McGill Law Journal/Revue de droit de McGill* 49, no. 4 (1994): 969–1003.

successful.⁵⁴ The group also sent delegates to the National Gay Rights Conference in Ottawa in June 1975, where members of Canada's burgeoning gay liberation movement strategized militant protest around issues such as the separate age of consent for homosexual and heterosexual relations.⁵⁵

Despite these forays into activism, however, GFF was primarily a social group, with a small membership and little formal organization.⁵⁶ As a result, it attracted criticism for its haphazard activities. In a report for *The Body Politic* in May 1979, four unnamed gay or lesbian Fredericton residents dismissed the organization outright.⁵⁷ "Gay Friends of Fredericton, an early attempt at organization, is entirely non-functional; it doesn't answer inquiries from women, and has done nothing, either socially or politically, to bring gays together."⁵⁸ Instead, the anonymous authors continued to rely on informal gatherings among their personal networks to "keep up with current affairs in the movement"; they also undertook to give presentations on gay and lesbian liberation to classes at the University of New Brunswick.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Brian Mossop, "Gay Community Effects Concerted Effort to Protest Failures of Immigration Paper," *The Body Politic*, August 1975: 5; "Parliamentary Committee Recommends End to Gay Exclusion," *The Body Politic*, February 1976: 3-4.

⁵⁵ Ken Popert, "Third National Conference Launches Gay Rights Coalition," *The Body Politic*, October 1975: 3-4.

⁵⁶ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

⁵⁷ Despite referring to themselves as "The group without a name in Fredericton," the authors clearly stated that one among them was an NDP candidate in a Fredericton riding during the most recent provincial election. This was probably Margo Dunn, a UNB professor at the time, who ran unsuccessfully for the NDP in Fredericton South in 1978. As a feminist and lesbian activist, Margo Dunn is primarily associated with the history of Vancouver, where she owned the well-known feminist bookstore Ariel Books. A helpful timeline of Dunn's career is available through the SFU Archives and Records Management Department Online Finding Aids, Margo Dunn fonds, <http://www.sfu.ca/archives2/>.

⁵⁸ "Regional Report," *The Body Politic*, May 1979: 15.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

In all likelihood, GFF appeared “non-functional” because it had become non-existent. After April 1979, it was no longer listed in *The Body Politic*’s regular roundup of Canadian gay and lesbian organizations. Essentially, the group was defunct; its de facto founder, Keith Sly, had decamped to Toronto in 1977 to join Pink Triangle Press, the collective that published *The Body Politic*.⁶⁰ Hal Hinds, who knew Sly personally but was not deeply involved in Gay Friends of Fredericton, recalls Sly’s departure:

I met Keith and talked with him, and he said he was leaving Fredericton, and he wanted to know what he should do with the key to the post office box. And at that time, I wasn’t willing to accept it, so he gave it to...another local chap [who then] decided he didn’t know what to do with it, didn’t want to take care of it, so he gave it to me.⁶¹

At the close of the decade, the need for a gay organization in Fredericton had not diminished; in fact, the opposite may have been true. With no local source of information, gay and lesbian Frederictonians often turned to their closest well-known alternative, the Halifax-based phone line run by the Gay Alliance for Equality. At a loss, the “Gayline” director, Anthony Trask, sent a plaintive letter to the orphaned GFF post office box, requesting “ANY information about gays in your area (e.g. cruising places, times, best days, bars, etc.)”⁶² Clearly Gay Friends of Fredericton had left behind a void in the gay and lesbian community that a successor organization could fill.

⁶⁰ “The Body Politic Collective: Members, 1971-1987,” in *Inventory of the Records of The Body Politic & Pink Triangle Press* (Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, 1996), www.clga.ca.

⁶¹ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

⁶² Anthony Trask to Gay Friends of Fredericton, December 11, 1978, Gay Alliance for Equality fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

Conclusion

The 1970s had largely been a decade of underground socializing for gays, lesbians, and bisexuals in Fredericton, founded on private gatherings, out-of-town travel, and grudging coexistence in shared public spaces with heterosexuals. Operating from a semi-invisible map in this way may have reduced the hostility faced by the gay and lesbian community by presenting a minimal target.⁶³ Gay Friends of Fredericton's reliance on a post office box, rather than a fixed street address, no doubt reflected this mentality. It provided safety through invisibility within straight spaces, much like the masked gay and lesbian scene operating within the heteronormative space of the Cosmopolitan Club and the River Room. The lack of fixed spatial dimensions also made the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community better able to deal with the mobility of its members. Had GFF continued to rely on a residential address as its official headquarters, the departure of Keith Sly, and presumably others, would have constituted a much greater threat to the group's existence. Instead, the post office box key was able to pass from person to person, weathering departures until it arrived in the hands of someone with the means and inclination to assume the leadership role attached to the object. As it happened, the key passed to Hinds at a propitious moment, when the use of shared gay and straight spaces no longer fully satisfied the community's needs. By 1979, individuals like Hal Hinds, Allison Brewer, and others were prepared to enact more organized efforts to secure more visible and less precarious social spaces for gay, lesbian, and bisexual Frederictonians.

⁶³ Michael Bronski, *The Pleasure Principle*, 194.

CHAPTER 3

Placemaking by Gay & Lesbian Social Organizations, 1980-85

In the first half of the 1980s, the social scene for gay men and lesbians in Fredericton reoriented to focus on a key organization, Fredericton Lesbians and Gays (FLAG), and the popular dances it held. In addition to private house parties, cruising areas such as the Green, and mixed bars such as the Cosmopolitan and the River Room, FLAG dances added a new category of territory to the queer map of Fredericton: temporary space in public meeting places, rented from other community organizations or businesses. FLAG dances and meetings took place in church halls, university buildings, and volunteer-run community centres. For the duration of FLAG events, these spaces became gay and lesbian spaces.

As FLAG increasingly staked a claim for gay men and lesbians to these public spaces, they encountered institutional discrimination from some renters who refused, or hesitated, to do business with an organization of homosexuals. Thus, the queer spaces claimed and created by FLAG occasionally became sites of open conflict between straight and gay cultures, in a way that shared spaces like mixed bars seldom had. Yet by virtue of being temporary, nomadic, and somewhat clandestine, FLAG's social events did not elicit the kind of violent reaction that was experienced on the Green (and would at times be directed at Fredericton's first gay bar, later in the decade).

This chapter will present the history of FLAG's founding, the establishment of the FLAG Line, and the organization's first meetings. It will discuss at length the dances that

FLAG held throughout the early 1980s, as well as the regional gay and lesbian conferences the group helped to organize and host in Fredericton.

Fredericton Lesbians and Gays (FLAG)

In 1979, a successor organization to Gay Friends of Fredericton (GFF) emerged. Called Fredericton Lesbians and Gays, or simply FLAG, the goals enshrined in its constitution were lofty:

To participate in the changing of societal attitudes about homosexuality...To help out gay brothers and sisters divest themselves of negative attitudes about being gay...To encourage exchanges between gay people of various backgrounds...To study and analyze the social problems which we face, in order to understand and combat prejudice...To work towards protective legislation and constitutional rights for the gay minority.⁶⁴

Whether or not it achieved these goals, FLAG proved a far more durable social and political organization than its predecessor, GFF; and its contribution to gay and lesbian placemaking in Fredericton was consequently far greater.

While political discontent and social boredom were distal causes for the founding of FLAG, the proximate cause was dissatisfaction with GFF and the vacuum left by that organization's collapse. A lack of formal resources for gay and lesbian people in Fredericton had created opportunities for unscrupulous behaviour within the queer community itself. Hal Hinds became aware of rumours that a local man, with a reputation in the gay community for promiscuous interest in very young men, was placing advertisements in *The Brunswickan* under what Hinds deemed to be false pretenses:

It was about that time [1977], also, that in the newspaper was appearing these ads – this is the university newspaper – ads for, “Gay? Would you like to meet

⁶⁴ Fredericton Lesbians and Gays, “Constitution,” September 24, 1979, Gay Alliance for Equality fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

someone?” or “Would you like to talk to someone?” A little note that sounded very innocuous. And this was put in there by [redacted], who used it as a dating service, and a lot of us felt that this was misusing that publication and...just was not a good ethical practice. Especially since, apparently, he’d drive by and look at people and if he didn’t like them he’d continue driving, driving on. Anyway, I know that a lot of people came out at the hands of [redacted]. He showed them the ropes, as it were.⁶⁵

Feeling that this behaviour was improper (or “maybe the rest of us were jealous”⁶⁶), Hinds gathered several likeminded individuals to discuss the possibility of starting a proper gay organization, one that would constitute something other than “a dating service.” Subsequent FLAG members Allison Brewer and Ron Totten also remember the suspicious *Brunswickan* advertisements as a major impetus behind the decision to organize.⁶⁷

Like the key to the Gay Friends of Fredericton post office box, the task of kick-starting a new gay and lesbian organization had fallen into the hands of Hal Hinds. In 1979, Hinds was teaching botany at UNB and serving as curator of the university’s herbarium; he had recently separated from his wife and begun living openly as a gay man.⁶⁸ By his own admission, he was also a serial initiator of community-based endeavours: “Often I’m involved in getting things started. After a while I drop out because I’m not interested in keeping them going, the nitty-gritty of keeping things going. But I like to make sure things are happening.”⁶⁹ On October 10, 1979, Hinds convened a gathering of roughly half a dozen gay men in the living room of a house on Aberdeen

⁶⁵ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner; Ron Totten, interview with Tom Warner.

⁶⁸ Michael Riordon, *Eating Fire: Family Life on the Queer Side* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2001): 49-51; Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

⁶⁹ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

Street, which he was minding for a colleague on sabbatical. Together, the group laid out their vision for FLAG.⁷⁰

From the beginning, FLAG was closely modeled on the Gay Alliance for Equality (GAE) in Halifax.⁷¹ Founded in 1973, in the first wave of gay liberation organizing, the GAE was the oldest and largest gay and lesbian organization in Atlantic Canada.⁷² In fact, it was the only gay and lesbian organization in an Atlantic Canadian city at the time FLAG was formed. Like the GAE, FLAG planned to host social events (such as dances) to fund its other activities, notably a phone line staffed by gay and lesbian volunteers. This organizational model was a popular choice for small-city and rural gay and lesbian organizations, which began to appear in large numbers across Canada in the late 1970s.⁷³ It had been notably successful in Halifax, where proceeds from dances at the Turret, a GAE-owned bar, bankrolled a wide variety of community activities and made the GAE financially self-sustaining.⁷⁴

Immediately, FLAG notified GAE of their formation, and asked the Nova Scotian organization for whatever assistance they could provide.⁷⁵ A delegation of FLAG

⁷⁰ Details about FLAG's first official meeting come from "Growing," *The Body Politic*, November 1979: 15; Philip Salmon to GAE, October 12, 1979, Gay Alliance for Equality fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia; Robin Day, "FLAG in Review," November 1980, Gay Alliance for Equality fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia; and Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview by Tom Warner.

⁷¹ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

⁷² Joanna Everitt, "Mobilization on the Periphery."

⁷³ Tom Warner, *Never Going Back*, 165–173.

⁷⁴ Robin Metcalfe, "Queer Looking, Queer Acting," 29–30.

⁷⁵ Philip Salmon to GAE, October 12, 1979.

members attended an Atlantic Gay Conference in Halifax in November 1979.⁷⁶ There they received a preliminary education in replicating the GAE's success:

They gave us kind of a quick crash course in how to organize a gay organization. And this was very useful, you know: how to set up your treasury, how to set up your administration, how to do a newsletter, how to do a dance, get your license, all these nitty-gritty things. And that was very useful.⁷⁷

Most importantly, the GAE provided money to install a phone line in Hal Hinds' home, and offered to cover the phone bill for the first six months.⁷⁸

The FLAG Line

Originally, the phone line was the centrepiece of FLAG's organizing. "Gaylines" were common services offered by gay and lesbian organizations during this period. In a pre-digital era, accessing information by telephone from one's own home offered greater anonymity than showing one's face at a gay drop-in centre or social gathering. It was especially useful to organizations in rural areas, such as New Brunswick, populated by numerous geographically dispersed pockets of gay men and lesbians in need of services. The FLAG Line, as it became known, fielded calls from across New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and occasionally as far afield as Montreal and Toronto. Though certainly cheaper and easier than operating a full-time office or gay community centre, the phone line was neither simple nor inexpensive. The line itself cost \$100 to install, and ran up charges of

⁷⁶ Ibid.; Robin Metcalfe, "Conference Focuses on Communication," *The Body Politic*, January 1980: 15.

⁷⁷ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

⁷⁸ Robin Day to GAE, March 16, 1980, Gay Alliance for Equality fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

\$60-\$100 per month.⁷⁹ A small cadre of volunteers staffed the phone in irregular shifts, relying on a costly answering machine to take calls in their absence. Volunteers on the phones had little to no training. Allison Brewer, one of the earliest FLAG Line volunteers, also did a stint on the Halifax Gayline, and was able to compare the two experiences:

[In Fredericton] I was doing counseling for people who were just coming out, and I was just coming out myself, and really didn't have any expertise or training, at all, at that time...[In Halifax] we did Gayline training, so [laughs] I learned how to counsel people, or at least took some training in that direction. We had times we were open and times we were closed, and that was really well respected, where it was a little more haphazard in Fredericton.⁸⁰

Despite a lack of resources, once it was listed in the phone book (under the discreetly non-descriptive heading "FLAG"), the phone line became the most direct way for newly out and newly arrived Frederictonians to make contact with the gay and lesbian community.

A phone line, which exists primarily as electrical signals, does not immediately lend itself to spatial analysis; yet the FLAG Line influenced the geography of gay and lesbian communities from two perspectives. From the perspective of the caller, the phone line effectively de-spatialized contact with the gay community: an individual could place a call from anywhere they chose, without being corralled towards a location designated for gay and lesbian activities, such as a drop-in site. This created an option to preserve the benefits of safety-in-invisibility offered by underground socializing, with its tentative spatial claims. From FLAG's perspective, however, the phone line had a very real spatial

⁷⁹ Chris Shepherd to David Underhill, May 20, 1980, Gay Alliance for Equality fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia; Stephen Dopp to Clyde Richards, January 24, 1980, Gay Alliance for Equality fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia; NBTel monthly usage bill, May 24, 1980, Gay Alliance for Equality fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

⁸⁰ Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

context: it was a landline installed in someone's home. Staffing the FLAG Line required volunteers to be physically present at the phone's location, which probably affected who could staff the phone lines (volunteers who lived or worked within easy distance) and when they could take shifts (when the homeowner was present, probably in the evening). Furthermore, moving the landline to another location, which did occur over the course of its existence, presented real costs to the organization.⁸¹ Clearly, the phone line can indeed be thought of in spatial terms as a geographically fixed resource requiring maintenance and service from onsite volunteers drawn from a proximate community – one which FLAG created.

FLAG General Meetings

On December 5, 1979, FLAG held its first public general meeting. It was not advertised except through word-of-mouth, yet roughly 30 people showed up.⁸² Those in attendance discussed the structure of the proposed organization, as well as the activities it should organize. An initial steering committee of six men and two women was formed, as well as a social committee to plan the group's first dance, to be held in the new year.⁸³ Donations were collected, enough for the organization to open a chequing account.⁸⁴

For this first meeting, FLAG rented a room in the Unitarian Fellowship building, which was then located at 749 Charlotte Street, in a central residential neighbourhood on

⁸¹ Chris Shepherd to David Underhill, June 20, 1980, Gay Alliance for Equality fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

⁸² Robin Day, "FLAG in Review"; Philip Salmon to GAE, October 12, 1979.

⁸³ Philip Salmon to GAE, October 12, 1979.

⁸⁴ Robin Day, "FLAG in Review."

the city's south side.⁸⁵ Unlike other renters – and other religious institutions – with whom FLAG dealt in its early years, the Unitarians were decidedly supportive of gay and lesbian organizing. Unitarian Universalism was among the most affirming mainstream religious denominations for gay men and lesbians in 1970s. The Unitarian Universalist General Assembly had adopted an explicit position of combatting discrimination against homosexuals and bisexuals in 1970, years before other Christian and Jewish denominations followed suit.⁸⁶ Nor was it unusual to find gay and lesbian groups meeting in Unitarian spaces. The Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), a dissident Christian sect for gay men and lesbians, frequently shared Unitarian facilities in cities across North America, including in Halifax (and later in Fredericton as well).⁸⁷

FLAG continued to make use of the Unitarian Fellowship for their meetings, which happened monthly. As many as 30 men and women attended the meetings, where participants would arrange their chairs in a circle, introduce themselves to the extent they felt comfortable, take refreshments, and engage in discussion of FLAG's planned activities and financial situation.⁸⁸ Guest speakers were sometimes invited to present to the group on issues related to gay liberation, and discussion and debate would follow. Over time, FLAG made semi-permanent changes to the space; for instance, members contributed handmade furniture. Hinds recalled:

⁸⁵ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner; Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

⁸⁶ Mark Oppenheimer, "'The Inherent Worth and Dignity': Gay Unitarians and the Birth of Sexual Tolerance in Liberal Religion," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 7, no. 1 (July 1996): 82.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 95; Hank Williams, interview with Conor Falvey, January 29, 2015.

⁸⁸ Hank Williams, interview with Conor Falvey.

We had also a library, and a couple of the lesbians had made this bookcase that sort of opened up and had all these shelves, and it closed and locked and had wheels on it. And we kept this in the back hall, and during the meetings we'd roll it out and open it up. People could borrow books or magazines.⁸⁹

Outside of general meetings, FLAG members could serve on numerous sub-committees struck in order to organize dances, plan other social outings, and publish a newsletter. By far, the dance committee attracted the most interest. "Most of our effort went into those dances," Hal Hinds estimated.⁹⁰

FLAG Dances

The first FLAG dance was held the night of January 20, 1980, at Club 565 on Prospect Street.⁹¹ The venue was a nightclub – "a failed teen disco"⁹² whose gratitude for the rental business outweighed any qualms they might have had about the sexual orientation of the renters.⁹³ Dancers paid a \$2 cover fee, 75 cents for drinks, and were encouraged to make additional donations to cover FLAG's costs for the evening. Despite being privately organized, the dance was not an amateur affair: FLAG hired professional DJs, a paid bartender, and a security guard for the door.⁹⁴ An estimated 65 to 70 people attended, still short of the 100 people for which organizers had planned. Roughly a third of those attendees were women.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Philip Salmon, "We Did It, A Sucess [sic]," *Have You Heard?*, February 1980.

⁹² Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

⁹³ Hank Williams, interview with Conor Falvey.

⁹⁴ Philip Salmon, "We Did It, A Sucess"; Stephen Dopp to Clyde Richards, January 24, 1980.

⁹⁵ Stephen Dopp to Clyde Richards, January 24, 1980; Philip Salmon, "We Did It, A Sucess." This estimate coincides with Brewer's recollection (revisited later in the chapter) that FLAG dances were generally one-third female.

Declaring the dance a success, FLAG member Phillip Salmon submitted a jubilant announcement to *Have You Heard?*, the regional newsletter published by the GAE in Halifax. “The evening was completely hassle-free and a celebration atmosphere prevailed.” However, in his estimation, the event had suffered a crucial drawback: “Our only negative attitudes came from the closet people scared about being seen, scared about their jobs, scared about the media, the usual paranoia and self-hate.”⁹⁶ Privately, FLAG executive member Stephen Dopp lamented the “‘paranoia factor’ of Fredericton gays” as an obstacle to the continued success of such dances.⁹⁷ On the other hand, the dance enjoyed welcome support from certain straight Frederictonians, who approved of FLAG’s efforts. Salmon noted, “[W]e even had our own ‘FLAG HAG’ t-shirt girl bopping around.” He also coyly suggested that closeted New Brunswick notables had attended the dance.⁹⁸

Club 565 served as the venue for many of the weekly Saturday night dances FLAG held throughout 1980; however, it was not the only site for these gatherings. Because FLAG had to rent space for their events, their choice of location was dictated by the availability of rental venues. As a result, the dances were nomadic, taking place in a variety of locations that offered bookings for public events. Aside from Club 565 and the Unitarian Fellowship (evidently not fit for dances, as none were ever held there),⁹⁹ the selection of rentable spaces consisted mainly of halls run by religious institutions, schools, or community groups – not all of whom were willing to rent to a group of homosexuals.

⁹⁶ Philip Salmon, “We Did It, A Success.”

⁹⁷ Stephen Dopp to Clyde Richards, January 24, 1980.

⁹⁸ Philip Salmon, “We Did It, A Success.”

⁹⁹ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

A challenge arose in the spring of 1980, when FLAG held several dances in the Monsignor Boyd Family Centre, attached to St. Dunstan's Catholic Church, at 120 Regent Street in downtown Fredericton. While the Catholic Church's doctrinal condemnation of homosexuality would seem to prohibit such an arrangement, in this case doctrine had been superseded by personal connections; the person in charge of booking rentals for the Family Centre was gay.¹⁰⁰ The arrangement did not last long. Allison Brewer described the outcome: "I think we had two or three dances there, and then the Bishop found out what was happening. So we arrived one Saturday night to find the doors barred [laughs] and the Bishop not available."¹⁰¹ FLAG was banned from church premises and the booker was fired. Alleging discrimination, FLAG complained to the provincial Human Rights Commission; but as sexual orientation was not yet protected under New Brunswick's human rights legislation, the Commission's hands were tied.¹⁰²

Another, more protracted, conflict over rental space emerged in January 1981, when the Sainte-Anne Community Centre (at 715 Priestman Street) denied FLAG's request to rent space for social functions. Once more, a personal connection was at work: a FLAG member sat on the Community Centre's board of directors. And once more, this connection was not sufficient to insulate FLAG from discrimination. *The Body Politic* reported that "some board members were opposed [to the rental request] because, among other reasons, the Centre was also being used by a local school."¹⁰³ Unable to resolve the

¹⁰⁰ The Catholic Church's position that homosexuality was inherently sinful was outlined in 1975. See Cardinal Franjo Seper, "Persona Humana: Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics" (Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1975).

¹⁰¹ Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

¹⁰² "Catholic Church Kicks FLAG Out," *Have You Heard?*, May 1980.

¹⁰³ Robert Trow, "Centre Refuses Space, Group Files Complaint," *The Body Politic*, August 1981: 10.

conflict privately, FLAG filed another formal complaint to the Human Rights Commission. At the outset, FLAG received support in principle from the Commission's chairman, Noël Kinsella, although they were still hamstrung by the province's lack of legislated protections for gays and lesbians. "[S]ince the New Brunswick Code does not include sexual orientation, the Commission would have to argue that gays were covered under the term 'sex,' a strategy that has been unsuccessful in other jurisdictions."¹⁰⁴ However, this particular legal battleground had not been without victories for the Canadian gay liberation movement. Two years earlier, the *Association pour des droits des gai(e)s du Québec* (ADGQ) in Montréal had received a favourable ruling from the Quebec Superior Court in its case against a Catholic school that had refused to rent its facilities to them.¹⁰⁵ There was reason to hope (or at least strive) for a similar victory elsewhere.

However, the ADGQ's success would not be replicated in New Brunswick. Eventually, Kinsella himself admitted that "there is nothing in provincial or federal law to prevent discriminating against the organization" – and furthermore agreed that the Community Centre was acting reasonably by seeking to protect schoolchildren from FLAG's presence.¹⁰⁶ FLAG members were infuriated, and accused the Commission of "abdicating its moral responsibility" by instructing the Ste-Anne Community Centre on how to discriminate legally.¹⁰⁷ It took several more years before the issue was resolved

¹⁰⁴ Robert Trow, "Centre Refuses Space, Group Files Complaint."

¹⁰⁵ Miriam Smith, *Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada*, 56–58; Kathleen A. Lahey, *Are We "Persons" Yet?*, 19.

¹⁰⁶ Robert Trow, "Keeping Out Homos: Rights Body Tells How," *The Body Politic*, September 1981: 15.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

outside the legal system. By 1985, the Ste-Anne Community Centre had rescinded its objections, and FLAG held a number of dances there.¹⁰⁸

From 1980-1983, dances were held periodically on the University of New Brunswick campus, no doubt because Hal Hinds and other FLAG members were on the faculty there.¹⁰⁹ One dance in 1980 was held in the Tartan Room in the UNB Alumni Memorial Building, the former student centre that was undergoing extensive refurbishment at the time – not unlike the gay and lesbian social scene to which it briefly played host. Fittingly, the building’s memorial plaque dedicated the space to a purpose not dissimilar from FLAG’s: “It is a place where students, faculty, graduates and friends may gather together in fellowship and understanding.”¹¹⁰ Unfortunately, symbolism aside, the university campus did not prove a tenable venue for FLAG affairs in the long term; discretion and safety were difficult to ensure in university spaces. Hank Williams attended the last regular FLAG dance held on campus in 1983, and remembers feeling ill at ease:

It was in a room in the SUB [Student Union Building], and it was very small... Well, I remember getting out of the car and walking towards the SUB, and there was something going on in one of the rooms upstairs at the SUB, because I heard all these very masculine voices, yelling. And I thought, “Oh my God, I just know they know where I’m going.” So I sort of sauntered down the hall and went downstairs quickly, and asked, [whispers] “Could you tell me how to get to Room 127?” And I was afraid he was going to have to say, “Repeat that, please” [laughs].¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Carla Rasmussen, interview with Conor Falvey; Hank Williams, interview with Conor Falvey.

¹⁰⁹ Ron Totten, interview with Tom Warner; Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

¹¹⁰ Quoted from a visual inspection, 2015.

¹¹¹ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

Williams' emphasis on the masculinity of the voices in the SUB speaks to several anxieties. The most obvious is the fear of heteronormative policing or homophobic violence from other men, should Williams be identified as gay. That fear manifested, however, as a reluctance to be observed seeking out a clearly designated gay space. While claiming public space for gay and lesbian activities honoured the gay liberation ideals of "coming out" and living visibly, it also offered a concrete target for those opposed to a public gay presence, and – in the minds of some – amplified the sense of danger associated with gay socializing.

In 1983, FLAG relocated its dances from the university to the Kinsmen Centre, located at 141 School Street in Nashwaaksis, a neighbourhood on the north side of the Saint John River. This was FLAG's most permanent dance venue; they continued to rent the hall regularly for several years, and it was the primary location remembered by interview respondents. Hank Williams, who served on the dance committee, claimed that all dances from 1983-1985, with one or two exceptions, were held in the Kinsmen Centre.¹¹² Anthony Wallace also attended some dances at the Kinsmen Centre, though he moved to Halifax shortly after FLAG began renting the hall.¹¹³ Similarly, Ron Totten remembers that most FLAG dances he attended in the early 1980s were held in the Kinsmen Centre, "because I remember dancing on carpet for the first time in my life."¹¹⁴

The hall was owned by the Kinsmen Club of Nashwaaksis, a branch of Kin Canada, a Canada-wide volunteer service organization. The rental arrangement came about because the presidents of the two organizations, FLAG and the Nashwaaksis

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Anthony Wallace, interview with Conor Falvey.

¹¹⁴ Ron Totten, interview with Tom Warner.

Kinsmen, were acquaintances. The Kinsmen were experiencing financial difficulties, leaving them badly in need of rental income. FLAG were deemed to be acceptable renters, though perhaps not unconditionally. Williams remembers feeling pressure to keep the space clean, cause no damage, and ensure dance attendees were well-behaved, so as not to provide the Kinsmen with any excuse to evict FLAG, as the Catholic Church had done.¹¹⁵ There were close calls: at one point, Williams remembers being summoned to deal with a rowdy contingent of lesbians from Moncton, who were seen brawling in the parking lot of the Kinsmen Centre hours before the dance began. On another occasion, when a washroom sink was ripped from the wall, FLAG organizers had one member – a professional plumber – purchase and install a new sink overnight, so that FLAG would not be blamed for the damage.¹¹⁶

There is every indication that this rental relationship proved satisfactory to both FLAG and the Kinsmen, and at no point necessitated the invocation of the Human Rights Code. However, the anecdotes above suggest that previous incidences of discrimination over rental space had left FLAG members, particularly dance organizers, feeling vulnerable. It is telling that Hank Williams remembers making particular efforts to be “well-behaved” in order to avoid provoking a negative reaction from the Kinsmen Club. Whether or not FLAG was ever truly at risk of eviction is less significant here than their members’ internalized fear that they might lose access to their dance venue at any moment. Through its dances, FLAG had succeeded in producing temporary yet persistently recurring public space for an active gay and lesbian social scene in Fredericton, yet the legal fact remained that they occupied such spaces at the discretion of

¹¹⁵ Hank Williams, interview with Conor Falvey.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.; Anthony Wallace, interview with Conor Falvey.

the buildings' owners. The result was an unacknowledged tension between the countercultural drive of gay liberation and the pressure to conform to dominant norms of social behaviour – by definition, one cannot be simultaneously “queer” and “well-behaved.” It is perhaps fortunate that this tension was never exacerbated by any actual incidence of discrimination on the part of the Kinsmen Club.

With dances no longer taking place in a nightclub, where the necessary amenities were already present, the labour involved in organizing these FLAG dances increased. Tasks were divided among numerous FLAG volunteers, who provided their own sound equipment, opened and cleaned the hall, staffed the door, and ran the bar.¹¹⁷ Liquor was purchased up front by members of the dance committee, based on the acquisition of a “special event” liquor license. Occasionally, FLAG skirted the province’s liquor regulations. For instance, the maximum number of liquor licenses permitted to FLAG in a year was insufficient for the number of dances they held; therefore, a creative solution was required. As described by Hank Williams:

I think one of the funnier stories about the dances was, [a female FLAG member] looked after the bar, so she looked after getting all of the liquor licenses. But for some reason because of the system, I guess the licenses all were renewed in May, but for whatever reason we didn’t get enough to go, to cover from March to May, so she always had to go down and put in for a liquor license for “Fredericton Lads and Lasses.” We were a square dance club [laughs].¹¹⁸

Such deceptions were not unique to Fredericton – when licensed gay and lesbian dances began taking place in Saint John in 1983, organizers often claimed their “special events” were weddings or other family events.¹¹⁹ A more pressing obstacle was that, technically,

¹¹⁷ Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner; Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner; Hank Williams, interview with Conor Falvey.

¹¹⁸ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

¹¹⁹ John Markidis, interview with Tom Warner.

FLAG was not permitted to charge for admission to its licensed events. After a snap inspection by a liquor board official nearly revealed that FLAG regularly violated this provision, the \$2 cover charge was re-framed as a strongly encouraged donation.¹²⁰

By the time of their relocation to the north side of the river, FLAG dances had become the mainstay of Fredericton's gay and lesbian social scene. Initially held monthly, by the end of 1980 they had evolved into a weekly affair, generally unfolding on Friday or Saturday evenings. At the peak of their popularity, during the first half of the 1980s, the dances sometimes attracted crowds of up to 300 people. "In this area, that's a big crowd," Hal Hinds joked in his interview.¹²¹

A significant number of dance attendees were from out of town. Generally, interview respondents agreed that gay men and lesbians traveled from all over the region to attend FLAG dances, contributing to a sense that these weekend parties were momentous occasions. According to Hinds, "They'd come down, way down from the northern peninsula, Lamecque, and people from Moncton, Saint John. This was the place to come to FLAG dances. And from various back roads in between. It was a great happening."¹²² Visitors also came north from the United States for the dances. "If people from Maine knew there was going to be a dance, you know, they would make a weekend of it," said Williams.¹²³ In 1980, before he relocated to Fredericton, Anthony Wallace often traveled to FLAG dances from his parents' home near Perth-Andover:

¹²⁰ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner; Hank Williams, interview with Conor Falvey.

¹²¹ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

I used to hitchhike down to Fredericton to be able to go to the FLAG dances...and then a friend of mine had a place for me to stay...At the FLAG dances, you'd get people from Burnt Church, and it was more of an event, kind of...Because there was not much else for those of us who wanted a common ground, people made an effort to get here from Moncton or upriver or downriver, wherever. It was more exciting.¹²⁴

Out-of-town visitors may have been spurred by a desire to maintain anonymity within their own communities by attending gay events elsewhere, the potential entertainment of a weekend getaway, or simply a lack of local alternatives. Certainly, for a number of years, FLAG dances were “the only game in town,” as Hal Hinds put it – meaning to say that the dances were unique in the province.¹²⁵

However, due to their popularity, FLAG dances soon inspired fledgling gay and lesbian organizations in other New Brunswick communities to host similar events. In particular, FLAG's success caused some introspection within the gay and lesbian community in Saint John. Despite having nearly twice Fredericton's population in 1981, Saint John had no gay and lesbian organization of its own until 1983, nearly four years after FLAG was formed. John Markidis, who spearheaded the founding of Lesbians and Gaymen Organization of Saint John (LAGO-SJ), claims that traveling to Fredericton for gay entertainment, such as parties or dances, was normative behaviour in the port city, especially among older homosexuals who feared being outed to their Saint John-based social circles: “Gay people who were afraid of straights seeing them would often go to Fredericton dances but not Saint John.”¹²⁶ This behaviour was not restricted to the older generation. Ron Totten, who lived in Saint John until 1985, would sometimes drive to

¹²⁴ Anthony Wallace, interview with Conor Falvey.

¹²⁵ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

¹²⁶ John Markidis, interview with Tom Warner.

Fredericton and rent a hotel room for the night in order to attend FLAG dances – a huge expense for a low-income youth working two part-time jobs. Totten was unaware that a lesbian couple in Saint John held dance parties in their basement until a FLAG volunteer told him.¹²⁷ Seeing the extent to which Saint John's gay and lesbian social life revolved around travel to other cities, John Markidis resolved to found an organization similar to FLAG. At a public meeting on April 9, 1983, he and other young gay men "basically got up in front of the group and talked to them about what was happening in Fredericton, and people in Saint John getting tired of driving to Fredericton on a Saturday evening for a dance, or driving to Moncton, or wherever things were going on."¹²⁸ The organization founded at that meeting, LAGO-SJ, went on to organize dances in rented community centres, much as FLAG had – though the Saint John dances took place at different times of the month than those in Fredericton, so people could attend both.¹²⁹

The popularity of FLAG dances as regional events, even when other communities had local alternatives available, indicates that spaces in Fredericton must be conceptualized not just as part of a local gay and lesbian heritage, but a regional one as well. In fact, Fredericton served as an important venue for other events, such as conferences and retreats, that were explicitly designed to be regional in scope, during a period when gay and lesbian organizations in the Atlantic Provinces and northern New England were particularly focused on developing stronger networks of cooperation among themselves.

¹²⁷ Ron Totten, interview with Tom Warner.

¹²⁸ John Markidis, interview with Tom Warner.

¹²⁹ Ron Totten, interview with Tom Warner.

Atlantic Gay & Lesbian Conferences

Conferences were an important social opportunity for gays and lesbians in the Atlantic Canadian region, and community building was often an explicit focus of the proceedings. During its early years, FLAG organized and hosted several conferences in Fredericton, drawing together gay men, lesbians, and their umbrella organizations from across the Maritimes. The Fredericton conferences were not conceived by FLAG, but rather contributed to a broader effort to build partnerships among gay and lesbian organizations in the Atlantic region.¹³⁰

The first Atlantic Gay and Lesbian Conference was held in Halifax in 1977, with the theme of “Gay Community Uniting Against Oppression.”¹³¹ A second conference followed in November 1979; it was at this gathering that FLAG’s founders determined to build a Fredericton-based organization in GAE’s image. A year later, FLAG represented New Brunswick at the third conference in Halifax, alongside Northern Lambda Nord (NLN), a newly formed bilingual, cross-border organization for rural gay men and lesbians living in New Brunswick and northern Maine.¹³²

With two new gay and lesbian organizations operating in New Brunswick, it was time for the conferences, and other activities designated as “Atlantic,” to expand beyond the regional hub of Halifax. In January 1981, FLAG organized a weekend gathering in Fredericton for members of GAE and NLN. A handful of the region’s gay and lesbian

¹³⁰ Anthony Wallace, interview with Conor Falvey; Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner; Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

¹³¹ “We Are Everywhere – Atlantic Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Conference,” *Gazette*, August 1993.

¹³² “Conference Conference Conference!! Conference Conference Conference!!,” *Have You Heard?*, October 1980; *Have You Heard?*, November 1980; Robin Day, “FLAG in Review.”

activists met in the Loring-Bailey science building (where Hinds worked in the herbarium) on the University of New Brunswick campus, to form a new coalition called the Atlantic Gay Association (AGA).¹³³ According to Hinds: “We thought, you know, safety in numbers. If we all got together in Atlantic Canada and used our collective might, we would get things done.”¹³⁴

The new association saw an immediate opportunity to take public action, on an issue of perennial political concern in New Brunswick: the quality and content of the province’s newspapers. The media landscape in New Brunswick was altogether dominated by the Irving family, who owned the majority of the province’s English-language daily newspapers, including those published in Fredericton, Saint John, and Moncton.¹³⁵ Many of the Irving-owned dailies, including *The Daily Gleaner* in Fredericton, maintained a policy of refusing to print advertisements from gay organizations. FLAG’s predecessor, Gay Friends of Fredericton, had confronted the *Gleaner* on the subject, only to be told that the Irving-owned publication (like its counterparts in Saint John and Moncton) was “a family newspaper,” and therefore could not print “that kind of stuff.”¹³⁶ Northern Lambda Nord also confronted the issue of censorship in print advertising, as did the GAE in Halifax.¹³⁷ Significantly, the Vancouver gay liberation group GATE had filed a human rights complaint in 1974 against *The*

¹³³ Barry Heath, “Weekend in Fredericton,” *Have You Heard?*, February 1981.

¹³⁴ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

¹³⁵ For a concise history of the Irving family’s acquisition of New Brunswick’s major newspapers, see Julian Walker, “The Once and Future New Brunswick Free Press,” *Journal of New Brunswick Studies* 1 (2010), <http://w3.stu.ca/stu/sites/jnbs>.

¹³⁶ “New Brunswick Paper Cartel Closes Ads to Gays,” *The Body Politic*, August 1975: 6.

¹³⁷ Philip Fotheringham, “Rural Outreach: ‘What? Gay People Here?’,” *The Body Politic*, April 1982: 11; “CBC Bans Gay Announcements,” *The Body Politic*, June 1976: 5–6.

Vancouver Sun for refusing to print their advertisements; the high-profile case was eventually heard by the Supreme Court of Canada, which ruled that newspapers had the right to refuse advertisements according to their own policies.¹³⁸ However, under sustained pressure from GATE, the *Sun* capitulated and began printing the group's ads in 1980. This informal victory suggested that, regardless of the legal precedents, activists could still effect change in the newsroom.

Among possible tactics, the AGA considered making a submission to the Royal Commission on Newspapers (the Kent Commission), whose mandate to study monopoly ownership in the newspaper industry entailed close scrutiny of New Brunswick and the Irving family.¹³⁹ In February 1981, the AGA issued a statement condemning New Brunswick's newspapers for "refusing to print news related to the Atlantic gay community."¹⁴⁰ Unfortunately, in seeking public attention for their cause, the AGA was a victim of the very discrimination they decried: their complaints received little coverage. Only *The Moncton Times* ran a brief piece on the AGA's statement. Ultimately, the AGA achieved little success with this issue. *The Daily Gleaner* continued to refuse FLAG's advertisements well into the 1990s.¹⁴¹

After the formation of the AGA, FLAG offered to host more Atlantic Gay & Lesbian Conferences in Fredericton.¹⁴² One conference on the theme of community

¹³⁸ Miriam Smith, *Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada*, 53–55.

¹³⁹ For an overview of the Kent Commission's mandate and findings (including those with respect to the Irving newspapers), see Joseph Jackson, "Newspaper Ownership in Canada: An Overview of the Davey Committee and Kent Commission Studies" (Government of Canada – Library of Parliament, Political and Social Affairs Division, 1999), publications.gc.ca.

¹⁴⁰ "Gays Will Seek Funds," *Moncton Times*, February 14, 1981, 7.

¹⁴¹ Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

¹⁴² Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

building was held at UNB's MacLaggan Hall in 1981, and another on "living gay" at Tilley Hall in 1983. But the energy for annual conferencing was waning. Despite importing prominent gay author Don Clark as keynote speaker, the 1983 conference drew only half the anticipated attendance. No follow-up conference was organized for another ten years.¹⁴³ The AGA was doomed to a similar quiet death: "We worked to try and form an Atlantic organization...and it never really amounted to much....it never really worked very well."¹⁴⁴ Beyond its sabre-rattling regarding media coverage in 1981, little more was heard from the AGA (soon renamed the ALGA, or Atlantic Lesbian and Gay Association), and it disappeared in 1985.¹⁴⁵

Lesbian Community in the 1980s

FLAG activities were by no means the extent of lesbian social life in Fredericton during this time. In fact, despite the "L" in its acronym, FLAG was always a male-dominated organization. In a 1980 letter to the Clyde Richards of the GAE, Stephen Dopp enthused about the gender makeup of FLAG's first dance: "And the lesbians! Lesbians I never knew of!"¹⁴⁶ He considered the abundant presence of lesbians a highlight of the evening; yet his surprise at their existence captures the ignorance that many male FLAG members had regarding the particular needs and concerns of lesbians in Fredericton.

¹⁴³ "We Are Everywhere – Atlantic Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Conference"; Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

¹⁴⁴ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

¹⁴⁵ After November 1985, the Atlantic Lesbian and Gay Association is no longer mentioned in *The Body Politic's* listing of organizations.

¹⁴⁶ Stephen Dopp to Clyde Richards, January 24, 1980.

In its initial months of existence, FLAG was almost exclusively a male project. Eventually, several lesbians were brought on board, including Allison Brewer and her partner, as well as two or three others. In Brewer's words:

I got a call one time from Hal Hinds...asking me if I would like to become part of what was going to be Fredericton's first gay organization. And it sounded great, so my partner and I went off to this meeting. And the men had already done a fair amount of groundwork at that point, it seemed. And they laughed, that the only reason they had invited the women was because they wanted— Their first name was Fredericton Area Gays, but they didn't want to be called FAG, so they invited the women and they became Fredericton Lesbians and Gays.¹⁴⁷

The FAG acronym was a running joke within the organization; at one point it was even printed in *The Body Politic*, attributed to Hinds.¹⁴⁸ It could be read as a lighthearted acknowledgement that lesbians were integral to FLAG's existence, yet the joke simultaneously implied that lesbians were merely an afterthought, included to save the group from embarrassment.

Certainly, women were always a minority in FLAG. Brewer estimated that attendance at FLAG dances achieved a respectable gender mix, but never gender parity: "More men, for sure. Maybe a third, women. Might be that high. Wouldn't be any more than a third."¹⁴⁹ Reflecting on events before his arrival to Fredericton in 1987, Claude Olivier said of FLAG's gender politics, "certainly New Brunswick has not experienced the overt kind of confrontations that have occurred elsewhere. There hasn't been any of that."¹⁵⁰ Yet, in FLAG's first year of operation, volunteer Robin Day expressed a fear that

¹⁴⁷ Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

¹⁴⁸ Robin Metcalfe, "Conference Focuses on Communication."

¹⁴⁹ Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

¹⁵⁰ Claude Olivier, interview with Tom Warner.

FLAG would experience increasing tension between men and women.¹⁵¹ Indeed, during her absence from Fredericton from 1981-84, Brewer heard rumours that FLAG “split up” over their internal gender divide; but other sources are silent on this matter.¹⁵²

Some of these fears were grounded in the larger context of a growing schism between gay men and lesbians within gay liberation activism. By the late 1970s, lesbians increasingly formed their own breakaway organizations to conduct social and political activities apart from gay men, on their own terms.¹⁵³ In some cases, pre-existing organizations that had incorporated both men and women were subjected to considerable upheaval. In Halifax, the GAE endured several years of clashes between male and female members over the extent to which the spaces of the Turret, a gay bar and community centre, were designed and regulated primarily for the benefit of gay men.¹⁵⁴ This was, in all likelihood, the “overt kind of confrontation” to which Claude Olivier referred in his interview.

Outside their participation in FLAG, lesbians in Fredericton continued to hold separate social gatherings for women. Softball provided the centrepiece for this socializing, as it had in the 1970s, with teams often throwing parties or dances after games. For a time, beginning in the 1980s, an invitational women’s softball tournament was held in Fredericton every Labour Day weekend in September, gathering women (mainly lesbians) together from across the Maritimes.¹⁵⁵ Carla Rasmussen remembers that

¹⁵¹ Robin Day, “FLAG in Review.”

¹⁵² Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

¹⁵³ Becki Ross, “The House That Jill Built: Lesbian Feminist Organizing in Toronto, 1976-1980,” *Feminist Review* 35 (Summer 1990): 75–76; Tom Warner, *Never Going Back*, 175–182.

¹⁵⁴ Tom Warner, *Never Going Back*, 177.

¹⁵⁵ Carla Rasmussen, interview with Conor Falvey; Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

softball players would rent space at the Beaverbrook Hotel on Queen Street for their post-game celebrations.¹⁵⁶ Eventually, an unofficial lesbian-only softball team formed in Fredericton. “There’s a lesbian softball team that plays in the women’s recreational league here: the dyke team,” stated Brewer. “I play on a team, but I don’t play on that one!...You’d have to be blind not to know.”¹⁵⁷

Although there was no highly organized lesbian counterweight to FLAG, lesbians in Fredericton did host their own dances, outside of recreational sports culture. For an unknown period in the early 1980s, women’s dances were held every two months, roughly, in the basement of St. Charbel Maronite Church, at 299 Argyle Street (closer to the university than to the downtown core). It is unknown whether St. Charbel authorities knew they were renting their basement to lesbians, but they apparently did not raise any objections. The dances were popular: “There’d be about 30 people. Some would come from Saint John for the dances. So you’d meet people there.”¹⁵⁸ For Rasmussen, these dances were not only a useful way to meet other women with same-sex attractions, but also led to discovering such attractions in women she’d met elsewhere:

I remember I went to one and I looked across the room at a woman and went, “You!” and she went, “You!” She had been in McLeod House with me when I lived there at university, and still someone who I’m friends with today, but it was like, “Okay, I always thought that...” So I met people that way.¹⁵⁹

For lesbians, just as for gay men, dances like these provided opportunities for a gentle coming-out into a community of likeminded people.

¹⁵⁶ Carla Rasmussen, interview with Conor Falvey.

¹⁵⁷ Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

¹⁵⁸ Carla Rasmussen, interview with Conor Falvey.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

Still, many of Fredericton's lesbians had not shed the desire to remain closeted. As a result, attempts at more formal organizing within the lesbian community proved abortive. Rasmussen remembers numerous failed efforts, including one meeting at which a professional banker stated that "even to come over to this meeting, to her, was just too much, because in the banking community, if anyone found out, she'd lose her job."¹⁶⁰ If gay male professionals feared that the discovery of their homosexuality might jeopardize their careers, this could be even truer for lesbian professionals, who already faced career barriers due to their gender. Those willing to be public about their sexual orientation contented themselves with involvement in FLAG.

Conclusion

As appropriation of public space by FLAG, and other gay and lesbian entities, became more widespread in the 1980s, their claims to that space became more politicized. As FLAG meetings, dances, and other social functions created more and more temporary gay and lesbian spaces, those spaces became targets of negative attention and backlash from certain pockets of the broader community. FLAG confronted outright discrimination in its attempts to rent space for dances, which pushed the organization away from its primary goal of facilitating gay and lesbian socializing, and towards a more activist stance. Throughout this process, FLAG continued to actively position Fredericton as a site for gay and lesbian political activism on a regional level.

FLAG's activities took place across many kinds of spaces: private homes, the university campus, nightclubs, churches, and rented community centres. Though FLAG

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

events may have constituted discrete gay and lesbian universes unto themselves, they did not take place in locations that were permanently defined as gay and lesbian spaces, such as a gay bar or gay village. Instead, they took place in locations that also existed for the broader, heterosexual community. In some cases, as with the Monsignor Boyd Family Centre and the Kinsmen Centre, FLAG's ability to rent dance venues (however short-lived) depended on personal relationships with the community groups and businesses from which it rented, or the individuals employed there. With Club 565 and the Kinsmen Centre, FLAG's interests were furthered by the rented venue's financial need for paying customers of any sexual orientation. These examples demonstrate the futility of conceptualizing gay and lesbian space in Fredericton in isolation from other kinds of space during this period. The spatial coexistence of homosexual and heterosexual social activities, already familiar from the mixed bar scene of the 1970s, persisted into the 1980s in many forms. The most significant challenge to this spatial regime finally arrived in 1985, when Fredericton's first official gay bar opened.

CHAPTER 4

From Social Space to Rights Reform, 1985-1992

When Fredericton's first commercial gay space opened, it had an immediate impact on the landscape of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community. The temporary rented spaces of the FLAG dances were no longer crucial in the way they had been. Furthermore, the gay bar's opening allowed – and required – FLAG to shift its attention away from organizing dances, which were no longer lucrative or well-attended. Much of the community energy previously dedicated to creating gay and lesbian social space could now be devoted to pursuing reforms to New Brunswick's human rights legislation, among other political causes. The creation of AIDS New Brunswick and the New Brunswick Coalition for Human Rights Reform opened up new spaces in government and non-profit realms for the gay and lesbian community. Meanwhile, concerted organizing on the UNB campus in the early 1990s led to the creation of a social group for gay and lesbian students, as well as a far greater presence for gay and lesbian issues in student-run media – a crucial counterweight to the homophobic and serophobic¹ editorial positions of Fredericton's major newspaper, *The Daily Gleaner*.

Dance Trax

Few institutions are as closely associated with the development of gay and lesbian public space as gay bars. In many large urban centres in the United States and Canada, bars targeting an exclusively gay or lesbian clientele became firmly established during

¹ *Serophobia* refers to the negative stigmatization of people with HIV or AIDS.

the years following World War II.² In much-studied cities like Toronto, New York, or San Francisco, gay bars not only provided a place for gays and lesbians to meet and socialize (and sometimes have sex on the premises), but also prompted the development of activist movements in response to the harassment and violence the bars and their patrons attracted. Police harassment of homosexuals in the 1950s and '60s was often concentrated on gay bars, which were controlled through liquor and hygiene regulations, as well as periodic raids and mass arrests. The most notorious example of gay and lesbian response to the policing of bars is the wave of rioting and activist organizing that followed the police raid on the Stonewall Inn in New York City in 1969, an event that has come to symbolize the launch of a militant gay rights movement in North America.³ Ironically, the gay liberation philosophy so closely associated with Stonewall fostered a desire to reduce the significance of gay bars – commercial spaces that were frequently owned and operated by heterosexual “outsiders” – in favour of community centres or similar social spaces that were built and run by gays and lesbians themselves.⁴

In Fredericton, the arrival of a gay bar in 1985 appeared not as the precursor to visible gay and lesbian community, but as a symbolic culmination of its development. In previous decades, gay bars could only be considered an out-of-town (and out-of-province) entertainment for Frederictonians, only present in cities with a gay scene large and vibrant enough to support such a commercial venture. As gay bars became more widespread and less controversial in places like Toronto and Montreal, their absence in

² Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*, 113.

³ The campaign of police harassment against New York gay bars that triggered the Stonewall riot is detailed in David Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked the Gay Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004).

⁴ Tom Warner, *Never Going Back*, 90.

smaller centres like Fredericton and Saint John came to be seen by locals as an indication of inferiority. Such an attitude is reflected in the phrasing employed by John Markidis to subtly denigrate Saint John by referring to other cities, “where they actually have gay bars up and running.”⁵ Similarly, Carla Rasmussen lamented a lack of social options in Fredericton compared to her original hometown of Montreal:

Like in Montreal in the ‘80s, ‘90s...some great bars there, down around St-Catherine East, St-Laurent East, you know, the whole gay district. A friend of mine lives in Chicago, and he talks about the gay village and the lesbian village. Yeah. And you’re in Fredericton going, “Really.” [laughs]⁶

The gay and lesbian community in Fredericton developed without a gay bar, and had to establish their own social spaces (albeit temporary ones) in the form of community-organized dances, long before the option of a gay bar became commercially viable. In fact, when a gay bar finally opened, it had an immediate detrimental effect on the city's existing gay and lesbian institutions. However, much like the mid-century gay bars had done elsewhere, Fredericton’s gay bar contributed to an intensification of political activism in the city, by relieving local activists of the burden of securing gay and lesbian social spaces first and foremost.

The first gay bar in Fredericton opened in July 1985.⁷ It was not the first gay bar in New Brunswick; that distinction was claimed two years earlier by a short-lived straight-owned bar in Saint John called Jay Jay’s.⁸ Nonetheless, the opening of Dance Trax in Fredericton was considered a landmark development in local gay and lesbian history. Dance Trax stood at the corner of Westmorland and Queen Streets, near the

⁵ John Markidis, interview with Tom Warner.

⁶ Carla Rasmussen, interview with Conor Falvey.

⁷ “In the News,” *Gazette*, May 1986.

⁸ John Markidis, interview with Tom Warner.

recently completed Westmorland Bridge, on a block shared with several small shops. The bar occupied two storeys; the bottom floor housed the bar itself, tables, and various games, while the dance floor was upstairs.⁹ Pre-dating the enactment of public smoking bylaws, it was a quintessential smoke-filled bar; Hank Williams remembered smelling of cigarette smoke for hours or days after a night at Dance Trax. He referred to the establishment in his interview as, “the old club,” with evident nostalgia, describing a space of camaraderie, wherein “everyone knew each other.”¹⁰

The bar quickly became “a popular rendez-vous for Fredericton’s gay men and women.”¹¹ Particularly during its first year of operation, Dance Trax was “high-energy” and popular, with some exuberant gay patrons attending several nights a week.¹² In his interview with Tom Warner, Ron Totten read an excerpt from his personal diary, dated July 1986: “‘Another drunken brawl happened at Dance Trax.’ It was rough when it first opened, but after a year it calmed down.”¹³ By contrast, Hank Williams remembers no violence between the patrons at Dance Trax; rather the chief source of threat came from outside the bar.¹⁴

Like the Green, which over the decades had acquired a reputation as a gay gathering place, Dance Trax presented a concrete, spatially-fixed target for homophobic violence, vandalism, and threats. Scarcity of documents makes it difficult to quantify this kind of anti-gay activity, or measure its intensity in comparison with other gay and

⁹ Hank Williams, interview with Conor Falvey; Anthony Wallace, interview with Conor Falvey.

¹⁰ Hank Williams, interview with Conor Falvey.

¹¹ “In the News.”

¹² Ron Totten, interview with Tom Warner.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Hank Williams, interview with Conor Falvey.

lesbian gathering places within Fredericton, or gay bars elsewhere. Nonetheless, interview respondents who otherwise characterized Fredericton as peaceful, polite, and safe did recall incidents of harassment or violence during discussions of Dance Trax, suggesting the bar disproportionately attracted such attention. Again, this is not unlike the Green, which was pinpointed as a dangerous location by multiple respondents who did not perceive Fredericton as dangerous in general.

However, respondents' anecdotes of gay-bashing from Dance Trax emphasized that the attacks did little actual damage. Hank Williams remembered one incident in which a heavy object was lobbed against the glass front door of Dance Trax, presumably with the intention of breaking it, but was repelled with no ill effects; the bar's façade had been built to withstand such abuse.¹⁵ Anthony Wallace, who told stories of resistance to gay-bashers on the Green, had a similar anecdote for Dance Trax: "There used to be a bit of a problem: thugs would hang out, waiting to bash people on their way out...And one night, these guys attacked some guys coming out, and they got attacked back and took off running. They didn't think there'd be a fight."¹⁶ These two anecdotes from Williams and Wallace suggest an attitude of expectation and preparedness for gay-bashing, and a willingness by bar owners and patrons to act in self-defense when necessary. More significantly, the descriptions of these two incidents each convey a sense of victory over (or invincibility from) outside aggression, and an association in memory between the space of the bar and the ability of the gay and lesbian community to withstand and overcome harassment.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Anthony Wallace, interview with Conor Falvey.

It is conceivable that Dance Trax might have been subject to greater vandalism and harassment, were it not located on the diagonally opposite street corner from the Fredericton City Police Station. The proximity of the gay bar to the station reflected a significant alteration in the relationship between the police force and Fredericton's gays and lesbians. In the 1970s, Brian Ellison had equated the police with the gay-bashers who harassed men on the Green at night; by the mid-'80s, the police station's proximity to the gay bar was considered positive by some. According to Carla Rasmussen, "I know when we used to go there, I guess because we were near the police station, we felt safe."¹⁷ It must not be assumed that relations between police and Dance Trax patrons had become entirely free of fear and tension; however, their peaceful coexistence at the Westmorland-Queen intersection demonstrated the extent to which fear of state-sanctioned persecution had diminished in gay and lesbian culture.¹⁸

The owners and managers of Dance Trax made an effort to integrate their business into the broader gay and lesbian community, and to serve as an entertainment hub for gays and lesbians across the region.¹⁹ The bar served as a venue for a variety of queer events, from theme nights and drag shows to fundraisers for other gay and lesbian organizations. The bar also sold copies of the *Gaezette*, an Atlantic Canadian newsletter published twice monthly out of Halifax.²⁰ The desire to participate in a regional network of gay and lesbian organizations was often explicit. "Dance Trax is as much for non-

¹⁷ Carla Rasmussen, interview with Conor Falvey.

¹⁸ After Dance Trax closed its doors in 1991, the successor bar, Kurt's Dance Warehouse, was located even closer to the police station, in the adjacent lot.

¹⁹ Steve Knight to GAE Executive Committee, March 20, 1986, Gay Alliance for Equality fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

²⁰ As indicated in the *Gaezette*'s inside-cover listing of newsstands that carried the publication from 1985-1991.

Frederictonians as it is for the locals,” wrote manager Steve Knight in a letter to the GAE in Halifax, offering to reserve a block of tickets for Haligonians who might travel to attend the Mr. and Ms. Gay Maritimes drag pageant in 1986.²¹ Closer to home, the bar attracted frequent visitors from elsewhere in New Brunswick – especially Saint John, where the gay bar had closed and the primary gay and lesbian organization, LAGO-SJ, had dwindled out of existence.²²

It seemed increasingly likely that FLAG would follow LAGO-SJ into obsolescence. In offering a permanent social space to gays and lesbians from Fredericton and beyond, Dance Trax supplanted the FLAG dances. For five years, FLAG had organized weekly or twice-monthly dances for gays and lesbians in rented community halls (at the time Dance Trax opened, the dances were taking place in the hard-won space of the Ste-Anne Community Centre).²³ Shortly after the bar opened, turnout at the dances began to decline. Apart from representing a significant spatial shift for Fredericton’s gay and lesbian social scene, this change had an immediate impact of FLAG’s ability to function. The dances had been the group’s major source of revenue. Though it was not a for-profit business like Dance Trax, FLAG was constrained by similar principles: without clientele, there was no income. John Markidis, who moved to Fredericton from Saint John around the time that Dance Trax opened, recognized the phenomenon from his days organizing LAGO-SJ, whose dance attendance had been severely undercut by the opening of Jay Jay’s bar.

²¹ Steve Knight to GAE Executive Committee, March 20, 1986.

²² John Markidis, interview with Tom Warner.

²³ Hank Williams, interview with Conor Falvey; Carla Rasmussen, interview with Conor Falvey.

In this community [Fredericton] that I'd known probably for six or seven years, they had dances every other weekend and picnics in the summertime, and skating in the wintertime, or all kinds of social events going on, suddenly when this bar opened up, the same thing happened in Fredericton. There was a place to go. There were still the hardcore people that were involved in the political organization that stayed with it, but now that this bar was opened up, there wasn't a need for the social organization.²⁴

With membership and revenue dwindling, the dances ceased. FLAG's "hardcore people" kept the group afloat and continued to operate the FLAG Line, but soon Fredericton's flagship gay social organization had all but collapsed. When Adrian Park arrived in Fredericton and joined FLAG in 1988, he found an organization that "was going through a sort of identity crisis" because "we had a bar, and that was the centre of everything that went on in town."²⁵ According to Hank Williams: "I remember, it seemed like by December of '87, we were getting the same six people out to a FLAG meeting...it just sort of went comatose."²⁶

The dedication of a core group of members allowed FLAG to persist in a smaller form. Gradually, the organization began to reassess itself in order to resolve its "identity crisis." Relieved of the burden of responsibility for coordinating Fredericton's major gay and lesbian social outlet, FLAG members found they had the time and energy to dedicate to other, more overtly political causes. In the late 1980s, there were two interrelated issues attracting the attention of gay and lesbian activists in New Brunswick: the effects of the ever-growing AIDS crisis, and the possibility of adding protection for gays and lesbians to the provincial Human Rights Code. With the bar providing for the social needs of the community, FLAG and its members were free to address these other causes.

²⁴ John Markidis, interview with Tom Warner.

²⁵ Adrian Park, interview with Tom Warner.

²⁶ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

AIDS New Brunswick

Over the course of the 1980s, the social and political response to the AIDS epidemic became an issue of paramount importance to gay and lesbian communities and the institutions they had built. The first case of AIDS in Canada was reported in March 1982, a year after the disease was first identified among a group of gay men in the United States.²⁷ No cases were reported in New Brunswick until December 1985, making it among the last provinces (except Newfoundland and PEI) to report an official diagnosis.²⁸ But residents of New Brunswick nonetheless experienced the uncertainty, fear, and concern that characterized the early years of the epidemic. Since AIDS disproportionately affected gay men at first, it became strongly associated with male homosexuality in public discourse. Existing attitudes of homophobia combined with fear of contagion to produce powerful and damaging social stigma against people with AIDS.²⁹ Combatting this stigma, protecting the rights of people with AIDS, and ensuring the government and medical industry responded to their needs, became urgent priorities among gay and lesbian activists in Canada.

The experience of the AIDS epidemic in New Brunswick was strongly influenced by its geographic remoteness and rurality. The first diagnosis of AIDS in New Brunswick came later than in other provinces, and the mortality rate from AIDS remained

²⁷ Ron de Burger, "Canada," in *Encyclopedia of AIDS: A Social, Political, Cultural, and Scientific Record of the Epidemic*, edited by Raymond A. Smith (Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1998), 148.

²⁸ Ken Popert, "Stats," *The Body Politic*, December 1985: 20.

²⁹ Randy Shilts, *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic* (San Francisco: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 322.

consistently lower in Atlantic Canada and the Prairies – the country’s most predominantly rural regions – than in more urbanized areas.³⁰ Initially, AIDS was perceived by many in rural areas as a hazard of urban living, a crisis contained in North America’s large gay enclaves. As Tom Warner framed it in conducting his interviews, “In a lot of communities, at least in the first few years of AIDS, it was, ‘It doesn’t really affect us here, that’s something that’s in communities in New York, Toronto, San Francisco,’ that sort of thing.”³¹ By the mid-1980s, there was a growing sense that the “arrival” of AIDS in rural areas and small towns was only a matter of time. In December 1984, a member of LAGO-SJ in Saint John wrote worriedly in the group’s newsletter of the first appearance of AIDS in Maine: “While Portland, Maine, seems to us to be far away, it really is not that far and we find that cases of AIDS are getting closer to us all the time...we have every right to be concerned.”³² This concern was realized the following year when the first case of AIDS in New Brunswick was reported.

Behind its apprehensive tone, the LAGO-SJ notice made an important point: for epidemiological purposes, the geographic distance between New Brunswick and Maine was illusory. Portland and other seemingly distant urban centres were “really...not that far” from New Brunswick when one considers the flow of people between them. Frequent travel to and from other gay recreational hotspots was a longstanding tradition of Fredericton’s gay and lesbian community. Recalling an acquaintance who contracted

³⁰ Lindsay M. Belvedere, Caroline L. Miller, and Robert S. Hogg, “Shifting Sands: Changing Regional and Gender-Specific Patterns of HIV/AIDS Mortality in Canada, 1987 to 2008,” *Canadian Journal of Public Health / Revue Canadienne de Santé Publique* 103, no. 3 (June 2012): 203.

³¹ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

³² “Notice,” *The Lighthouse*, December 1984: 7.

HIV, Carla Rasmussen provides an example of how such travel may have facilitated the eventual arrival of HIV to the city:

Actually, a colleague of mine died of AIDS...He died in the '80s, I guess...I remember one time he went down to Florida, to Key West, which was I think a very popular spot with gay men at the time. And then he came back, and then he was sick, or whatever [pause] and then he went off to Ottawa, and he didn't really talk about what he had, but I knew what the symptoms were, and yeah, he had AIDS, I knew that.³³

Carla's story serves as another indication that aspects of Fredericton's gay and lesbian history cannot be meaningfully spatialized in terms of absolute distance, but are better understood in terms of what Richard White calls "relational space" or "non-linear measures" such as time and cost of travel.³⁴ These, as well as cultural factors (e.g., the draw of a gay hotspot), can render a location such as Key West, Florida, functionally "closer" to Fredericton than absolute distance would suggest. No matter how remote it might appear on a map, Fredericton was not isolated in practice – certainly not enough to be bypassed by the AIDS epidemic.

Accurate data on AIDS in Fredericton is particularly difficult to collate, partly because little research has been done in the region, but also because of the secrecy that so often surrounds a diagnosis.³⁵ A particularly telling remark came from Allison Brewer: "I assume I've had friends who died of AIDS, but it seems to be one of those things, I hear about it afterwards. I don't hear anyone *has* AIDS, I hear that they've died of AIDS."³⁶

When Claude Olivier first arrived in 1988, the topic of AIDS was "hush-hush" and

³³ Carla Rasmussen, interview with Conor Falvey.

³⁴ Richard White, "What Is Spatial History?"

³⁵ At least one respondent, Hal Hinds, later died of AIDS-related illness, though he did not disclose or discuss his HIV status in his interview. Another respondent, Brian Ellison, disclosed that he was HIV-positive in his interview.

³⁶ Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

“taboo”; this came as a shock to him after living for several years in Montreal, where the higher prevalence of HIV infection made it an inescapable part of daily life and conversation.³⁷ The taboo persisted, even as some of the numerous former Fredericton residents who had moved away began returning to live their remaining days at home. Brian Ellison, who spent the 1980s living in Toronto alongside numerous displaced New Brunswickers, keenly recalls the silence around their circumstances: “There were a lot of people that, during the AIDS epidemic, returned to Fredericton to die. And whether they were ever honoured for what they went through, I have no way of knowing.”³⁸

While its sociological effects have not yet been fully gauged, the emotional impact of AIDS on Fredericton is best summed up by Ron Totten. Ron’s partner (“my soul mate”) was among the first people to be diagnosed with AIDS in New Brunswick, and the first to publicly discuss his diagnosis; he died in 1990. For his public support of his partner, Totten was subjected to “consequences” in his professional and personal life. In Totten’s words, the impact of AIDs on Fredericton was “devastation with a silence.”³⁹

To combat that silence, in 1985 several Fredericton activists and health workers formed AIDS New Brunswick, the province’s first organization dedicated to educating the public about HIV/AIDS and supporting those who had contracted the virus. Like FLAG before it, AIDS New Brunswick came into being around Hal Hinds’ kitchen

³⁷ Claude Olivier, interview with Tom Warner.

³⁸ Brian Ellison, interview with Conor Falvey.

³⁹ Ron Totten, interview with Tom Warner.

table.⁴⁰ Hinds had been contacted by a local gay man who felt New Brunswick ought to have its own AIDS service organization:

[He] gave me a call, saying, “Why isn’t anyone doing anything about AIDS here in Fredericton? You know, there really should be something happening.” And since I’d been involved in FLAG and so forth, he thought I could help with something. So I thought about it and I called some medical people and called some other people around town that I knew would possibly be interested. And we got together at my home, again, and talked about an organization, an AIDS organization. And that was the beginning of AIDS New Brunswick.⁴¹

Among the medical professionals with whom Hinds connected was Grace Getty, a public health nurse who had recently completed graduate research on the health issues facing gay men. In the course of her work, Getty had become aware that HIV/AIDS had been placed on the communicable disease registry, with the requirement that patients’ names be reported to the government. This covert decision by the public health department countermanded an earlier promise that patients testing positive for HIV would only be identified by number, to preserve their confidentiality.⁴² Stigma surrounding the disease was high, and the personal risks associated with disclosure of an HIV-positive status were great. No legislation yet existed in New Brunswick to criminalize discrimination against gays and lesbians. Being identified as homosexual, let alone HIV-positive (in the public perception, these two conditions were often synonymous), could result in perfectly legal eviction or loss of employment. With no guarantee of anonymity, gay men were reluctant to be tested for HIV, which in turn stymied efforts to halt the spread of the virus.⁴³

⁴⁰ Nicholas Doyle, “AIDS New Brunswick: 25 Years Serving the Community” (AIDS New Brunswick/Public Health Agency of Canada, 2011), www.aidsnb.com: 5.

⁴¹ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

⁴² Nicholas Doyle, “AIDS New Brunswick,” 4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 6–8.

This was the issue around which AIDS New Brunswick first rallied. With no anonymous testing available in New Brunswick, volunteers ferried people by car into Maine to be tested – a new and somber incarnation of the traditional traffic of gay men and women across the international border.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, AIDS New Brunswick's leadership dedicated the organization to political advocacy on behalf of people living with HIV/AIDS. According to Getty, "From the very beginning we were an advocacy group that were there to kind of hold the government's feet to the fire."⁴⁵ By 1988, AIDS New Brunswick had incorporated; it received federal funding, hired a professional staff, and operated a phone line.⁴⁶ The transformation of the small advocacy group into a professionalized non-profit organization was reflected in its office location within the former Victoria Health Centre, a decommissioned hospital that had been refurbished to provide rent-free office space to non-governmental health agencies and community groups.⁴⁷ Like the gay bar, the AIDS New Brunswick office was another significant spatial milestone for Fredericton: a formally constituted gay and lesbian advocacy organization now occupied permanent space in a publicly-owned building in the city, on an equal footing with other non-profits.

The activist leanings of AIDS New Brunswick were a radical departure from the kind of socially-focused activity undertaken by FLAG, and were indicative of the disposition that would guide gay and lesbian organizing in Fredericton throughout the late 1980s. In New Brunswick, AIDS activism and human rights reform were tightly

⁴⁴ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 11–13.

⁴⁷ "Mega Rent for AIDS NB," *Gazette*, September 1991: 22.

entwined. The desire for an AIDS advocacy organization in the province had arisen from fear among gay men that they were vulnerable to state-sanctioned discrimination.

Considering the possibility of pursuing legislative reform, Francis Young felt that the AIDS crisis lent a sense of urgency to his endeavours:

I thought that the community might disappear with AIDS, at least as far as the men are concerned...that they would not be there, or that they would have no energy or the focus, the ability to focus on gay rights as an issue; that if we wanted to do it, we had to do it now, because later on it might be too late.⁴⁸

With such powerful motivation, Young became a driving force behind the campaign to reform New Brunswick's Human Rights Code, for the benefit of gays and lesbians as well as people living with AIDS.

Queer Spaces at the University of New Brunswick

As the province prepared for a debate on human rights reform, newly confident gay and lesbian institutions began to appear throughout Fredericton, addressing different needs and appropriating diverse spaces. The campus of the University of New Brunswick once more became a significant location of gay and lesbian organizing. A student named James Gill established the first formal group for queer students in Fredericton, the Gay and Lesbian Association of UNB (GALA-UNB), in 1989.⁴⁹ It soon expanded to serve the adjacent Saint Thomas University as well.⁵⁰ In UNB's Student Union Building, the former site of early FLAG dances, the university's two major student media outlets, *The Brunswickan* and the CHSR FM radio station, became queer-friendly counterweights to

⁴⁸ Francis Young, interview with Tom Warner.

⁴⁹ *The Brunswickan* 123, no. 1 (September 1989): 12. The group UNB-GALA was later renamed Spectrum.

⁵⁰ James Gill, "Coming Out of the Closet," *Gazette*, February 1990.

the Fredericton *Daily Gleaner*. Beginning in 1990, the *Brunswickan* printed a regular column on gay and lesbian issues; originally written by James Gill of GALA-UNB, it was later taken over Adrian Park, a professor in UNB's Department of Geology.⁵¹ Park also co-launched a regular radio program on CHSR, *Fruit Cocktail*, in 1990. Focused on arts, culture, and current affairs from a gay perspective, *Fruit Cocktail* ran eventually spawned a lesbian-oriented sister program, *Dos Lesbos*, on the same station.⁵² Response to CHSR's queer-friendly programming was largely positive. "I think in the three years we've been on the air, we've actually had two abusive phone calls...No hate mail, at all," Park told Tom Warner in 1993.⁵³

The rise of organized gay and lesbian social activity at UNB did not only affect the university's students and faculty. For one interview respondent, Madeline McDaniel, the UNB campus was a choice destination even before they left high school, because it offered the city's only accepting and affirming spaces for gay and lesbian youth. (Gay bars, like Dance Trax and its successors, were not always feasible options for those under the legal drinking age, although some Fredericton bars admitted underage patrons provided they did not attempt to purchase alcohol.)⁵⁴ In McDaniel's case, they were drawn to campus by the chance to volunteer at the radio station:

I discovered around the age of 14 or 15 that if you really, really hated being in high school, you were only about a 15-minute walk away from UNB and CHSR [laughs]...and the queen of CHSR [i.e., the station manager] was a lesbian, and

⁵¹ Adrian Park, interview with Tom Warner.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Madeline McDaniel, interview with Conor Falvey.

therefore there was actually a bit of status associated with being queer there, and so it was a good place to sort of be yourself and discover who you were.⁵⁵

McDaniel also attended some UNB-GALA meetings throughout the early 1990s, along with one or two other high school students who were accepted despite their age. However, the environment of UNB-GALA was not altogether understanding of the bisexual identity McDaniel professed at the time.⁵⁶

The image presented in McDaniel's account – that of a young Frederictonian gravitating to the UNB campus for the safety and social opportunities it offered to gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth – contrasts with descriptions of the campus provided in other interviews. On the whole, opinions are mixed regarding UNB's historical role as a space (or rather, collection of spaces) for gays and lesbians. Older interview respondents who were unaffiliated with the university tended to describe the campus in terms of its unsuitability for gay and lesbian social activities.⁵⁷ In particular, Allison Brewer was adamant that "it's not felt the university's a very safe place. FLAG has held dances there, but lots of the students won't come."⁵⁸ However, those interview respondents who were employed by the university – Hal Hinds, Carla Rasmussen, and Adrian Park – had more favourable accounts of on-campus experiences. To some degree, all three were open about their sexual orientation with their colleagues and superiors, and all reported that UNB offered a workplace largely free from discrimination and harassment. In the 1980s, long before provincial human rights protection was in place, Hinds and Rasmussen were

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner; Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

⁵⁸ Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

able to bring their same-sex partners to staff and faculty functions without qualms.⁵⁹ The diversity of opinion regarding the university within this small sample of interview respondents hints at the complexity of the campus as a space, the variety of spatial practices that converge there, and the difference in experience between students, university employees, and community members.

New Brunswick Coalition for Human Rights Reform

The spread of the AIDS epidemic to New Brunswick, the rise of queer-friendly media alternatives, and the promotion of a gay and lesbian student culture all facilitated successful advocacy for legislative reform in the province. Yet more directly influential was the collapse of FLAG. In 1987, as FLAG struggled to redefine itself in light of the success of Dance Trax, some of its members detected that “there was a momentum and opportunity in New Brunswick to do something in relation to a sexual orientation amendment.”⁶⁰ Human rights reform had long been a stated goal of FLAG, but never the subject of much concrete organizing. Now, with FLAG’s social event planning functions made redundant by the gay bar, the organization’s most committed members found they had time and energy to spare for other projects. The human rights committee decided to actively pursue an amendment to the provincial Human Rights Code. In January 1988, the New Brunswick Coalition for Human Rights Reform was created by FLAG members. Francis Young characterized the new group as an outgrowth of the FLAG human rights

⁵⁹ Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner; Carla Rasmussen, interview with Conor Falvey.

⁶⁰ Francis Young, interview with Tom Warner.

committee; Hank Williams described it as FLAG under a new name.⁶¹ Though the Coalition's founders expressed a willingness in principle to address human rights reform in a broad sense, in practice they would spend the next four years focused on achieving legislative protection for gay, lesbian, and bisexual New Brunswickers.⁶²

The political conditions for human rights reform in New Brunswick were more favourable in 1988 than ever before. Sexual orientation had been added to the human rights code in Ontario in 1986, and to those of Manitoba and the Yukon the following year. Members the New Brunswick Coalition for Human Rights Reform felt those precedents from other provinces were necessary before a serious campaign could succeed in New Brunswick, given that "New Brunswick isn't usually way out in front of the pack when it comes to [pause] anything, frankly."⁶³ Meanwhile, within New Brunswick, the 1987 provincial election brought Frank McKenna's Liberals to power with every seat in the legislature. During the campaign, McKenna had made statements that suggested a willingness to consider human rights reform during his term as premier, which gave hope to gay and lesbian activists.⁶⁴ Just as significant was the departure of Richard Hatfield from the premier's office after seventeen years. Among other personal scandals, Hatfield had weathered years of speculation about his sexual orientation; his desire to downplay those rumours was seen as an obstacle to lobbying the Hatfield government on behalf of gays and lesbians. Allison Brewer remembers that, in the early years of FLAG, at least one member had made a habit of mailing news clippings and letters to Hatfield, hoping to

⁶¹ Ibid.; Hal Hinds and Hank Williams, interview with Tom Warner.

⁶² Francis Young, interview with Tom Warner.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ "NB Rights Reform Imminent," *Gaezette*, November 1991: 15.

garner some sympathy, “but that actually didn’t ever happen.”⁶⁵ After McKenna became premier, Francis Young noted, “we also had a premier who wasn’t a closeted homosexual [laughs], so that made it easier too. I never really felt that there was any point in going ahead with a sexual orientation amendment while the premier could be that vulnerable.”⁶⁶ With no official opposition in the legislature, McKenna was the opposite of vulnerable as premier. It was a crucial opportunity to push aggressively for reform.

Though the initial drive behind the Coalition’s founding came from Francis Young and Hal Hinds, long-term leadership of the lobbying campaign fell to Claude Olivier, a social worker employed by AIDS New Brunswick. After attending Coalition meetings sporadically for a year, Olivier was approached in 1989 for the role of Coalition president. The nomination took him by surprise:

It was kind of flattering, but I couldn’t really understand it, because I thought it would make more sense to have someone who’d been living in the province longer. They would probably have more credibility with both the gay and lesbian communities as well as, you know, just politicians and media, et cetera. In any case, I decided to accept that nomination, and found out later that I was the only nomination. In fact, there was some fear that the organization would fold, or at least kind of be mothballed, because they couldn’t find anyone willing to be the chair or president of that group.⁶⁷

The only choice for president proved to be the right choice. Olivier had personal experience with the failures of Canadian human rights legislation. While living and working as a social worker in Alberta in the early 1980s, his identity as a gay man had cost him his job. The incident politicized him, and he was well versed in the gaps in Canadian human rights legislation when he took the helm of the Coalition. In his own

⁶⁵ Allison Brewer, interview with Tom Warner.

⁶⁶ Francis Young, interview with Tom Warner.

⁶⁷ Claude Olivier, interview with Tom Warner.

estimation, Oliver “didn’t really see much risk in my being a public figure” for the gay rights movement in New Brunswick; he had a secure job with a gay-friendly employer, and no family in the area from whom he might wish to hide his sexual orientation. No difficult “coming out” was required: because he worked for an AIDS service organization, “people already assumed I was gay” from his earliest days in Fredericton.⁶⁸

Claude Olivier’s story is an example of how Fredericton’s gay and lesbian community and politics were shaped by migration into the city. While locals might be intimidated by the prospect of coming out to their home community and relatives, individuals like Olivier who migrated to Fredericton simply had fewer local connections to alienate. The greatest risks were professional: until the Coalition achieved its goals, it was legal for employers to fire, or refuse to hire, gay and lesbian employees.

Despite beginning its existence as a precarious offshoot of FLAG, the New Brunswick Coalition for Human Rights Reform soon expanded into an incorporated organization in its own right, with members representing the whole province in both official languages. Though it aspired to be provincial in scope, meetings seldom took place outside of Fredericton, for practical reasons: as the capital city, home to both the legislature and numerous government offices, it was the most convenient location to enact the lobbying process.⁶⁹ Most Coalition members were nominal participants only, signing briefs and petitions to create the impression of broad public support for Coalition proposals. This was particularly true of the gay and lesbian community groups in the Coalition. The landscape of gay organizations in New Brunswick at the time was

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Francis Young, interview with Tom Warner; Claude Olivier, interview with Tom Warner.

“dismal”.⁷⁰ FLAG was not the only such group to have crumbled in the late 1980s; Saint John and Moncton had boasted active organizations five years earlier, but both had become defunct.⁷¹ Some individual gay and lesbian activists contributed to Coalition efforts in the name of their former organizations. Fortunately, the Coalition secured support from roughly 40 organizations representing the broader community, among them the provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the New Brunswick Federation of Labour, the Maritime Conference of the United Church, and B’nai Brith Canada.⁷²

From the outset, the Coalition pushed for a wide-ranging review of the Human Rights Code. In 1989, the McKenna government appointed Charles Ferris, a lawyer in the provincial ombudsman’s office, to undertake this review.⁷³ The Coalition obtained federal funding for a separate survey on discrimination against gays and lesbians in New Brunswick, which formed the centrepiece of the Coalition’s submissions to Ferris. The survey’s findings powerfully illustrated the need for human rights protection for gays and lesbians. In response to a questionnaire, 80% of gay, lesbian, or bisexual New Brunswickers reported that they had been subjected to physical or verbal abuse due to their sexual orientation, while 50% reported instances of employment discrimination.⁷⁴

Also under consideration by Ferris was the problem of discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS. In this case, *The Daily Gleaner* unwittingly furthered the cause of reformers by printing an inflammatory editorial on July 3, 1990, that railed against public funding for treatment of “wanton homosexuals” who had contracted AIDS

⁷⁰ Claude Olivier, interview with Tom Warner.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Kevin Elliott, “Human Rights in New Brunswick: The Wait Is On,” *Gazette*, March 1991: 5.

⁷³ Kevin Elliott, “New Brunswick Human Rights: The Struggle Begins,” *Gazette*, January 1991.

⁷⁴ Kevin Elliott, “New Brunswick Joins the Club,” *Gazette*, June 1992.

through their own risky behaviour. The editorial stated that “a strong body of opinion believes that homosexual AIDS victims got exactly what they deserved,” before concluding that “AIDS has to be treated like the plague it is. If isolation is the answer, so be it.”⁷⁵ According to *The Daily Gleaner*, the spatial aspects of AIDS and its associated medical care were of paramount importance: people with HIV/AIDS (“the carriers”) ought to be physically removed from the proximity of the uninfected.

Unfortunately for the *Gleaner*, public opinion had largely shifted away from such extreme positions, and uproar ensued. “It got headlines across Canada [laughs],” noted Claude Olivier.⁷⁶ Among the numerous responses printed in the *Gleaner* in the following weeks was a stern letter from the federal Minister of Health, Perrin Beatty, protesting the editorial’s medical inaccuracy.⁷⁷ A more touching letter of protest came from Fredericton’s former mayor and MLA, J.W. “Bud” Bird, whose son had died of AIDS-related illness the previous year.⁷⁸ Though Claude Olivier estimated that “it might have been 50/50 in terms of who supported [the editorial] and who was against it,”⁷⁹ a cursory reading of the *Gleaner*’s opinion pages in the week after the editorial reveals only two letters of support, versus fourteen assailing the *Gleaner*’s position. That the supportive letters received disproportionate weight in Olivier’s memory may reveal the intensity of their emotional impact at the time.

Both AIDS New Brunswick and the New Brunswick Coalition for Human Rights Reform launched formal complaints against *The Daily Gleaner* with the Atlantic Press

⁷⁵ “The One Way to Stop AIDS,” *Daily Gleaner*, July 3, 1990.

⁷⁶ Claude Olivier, interview with Tom Warner.

⁷⁷ Perrin Beatty, “Text of Minister’s Letter,” *Daily Gleaner*, July 7, 1990.

⁷⁸ J.W. (Bud) Bird, MP, “MP Supports Recommendations,” *Daily Gleaner*, July 16, 1990.

⁷⁹ Claude Olivier, interview with Tom Warner.

Council, the publisher-run body in charge of regulating the print media in the Atlantic Provinces, without success.⁸⁰ However, the editorial and the ensuing backlash had provided a stark example of the stigma experienced on a regular basis by people living with HIV/AIDS in New Brunswick, as well as the need and willingness to formally entrench their human rights. Four months after the *Gleaner* editorial, Charles Ferris released his report under the aspirational title *Towards A World Family*. It contained 152 recommendations for reforms to New Brunswick's human rights laws, premised on the creation of a New Brunswick Charter of Human Rights. As the Coalition had hoped, Ferris recommended "that the *New Brunswick Charter* prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation," and "that consideration be given to including in the definition of 'disability' a reference to AIDS as a specific example of a physical disability."⁸¹

The lofty title, and the language used throughout the report, linked New Brunswick's potential for human rights progress to a global, rather than local or regional, spatial consciousness. Ferris wrote that the promotion of fundamental human rights "has been pursued by the world community, of which New Brunswick is a part...New Brunswickers are citizens of the World and must be assured of the same fundamental rights to which all members of the world community aspire."⁸² Implicit in this construction of New Brunswick as part of a rights-oriented "world community" was the linkage of political conservatism with isolation, remoteness, and disconnection from

⁸⁰ Adrian Park, interview with Tom Warner; Claude Olivier, interview with Tom Warner.

⁸¹ David Meagher, "Discrimination of Homosexuals: Report Released," *Daily Gleaner*, November 9, 1990.

⁸² Charles Ferris, "Towards a World Family" (Government of New Brunswick, 1990), gnb.ca/hrc-cdp.

other places. By claiming that the province could and must catch up to an evolving global human rights agenda, Ferris simultaneously rejected and reinforced the longstanding stereotype of New Brunswick as a geographically and culturally remote peripheral region – a region connected enough to the nebulous “world family” to claim place within it, but still too disconnected to have already done so.

The law amendments committee of the New Brunswick Legislature held public hearings on the Ferris Report over two days in early February 1991.⁸³ The process revealed very little opposition to the principle of protection for gays and lesbians. The committee heard presentations from over twenty individuals and organizations representing a variety of interests, including six presenters (among them the Coalition and AIDS New Brunswick) that argued explicitly in favour of a sexual orientation amendment.⁸⁴ “Despite the media attention it received when the report was released, a recommendation to prohibit discrimination against homosexuals caused surprisingly few sparks during the hearings.”⁸⁵ Opposition was voiced by a handful of MLAs on the committee, who maintained that “many New Brunswickers consider homosexual practices abnormal and unnatural.”⁸⁶ On the whole, the greatest division evidenced at these hearings was not between those for and against rights for gays and lesbians, but rather between those for and against the very idea of a New Brunswick Charter of Human Rights. The nascent Confederation of Regions (COR) Party disputed the need for any human rights reform – though the bulk of their hostility was trained on the Ferris

⁸³ Kevin Elliott, “Human Rights in New Brunswick.”

⁸⁴ “Move on Human Rights Legislation Expeditiously,” *Daily Gleaner*, February 11, 1991.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Report's recommendations regarding language rights, rather than the sexual orientation question.⁸⁷

Ultimately, the greatest obstacle to immediate implementation of the Ferris Report was not ideological but logistical: a provincial election was approaching. Facing a difficult campaign after four years unencumbered by an official opposition, the McKenna government opted to shelve human rights reform until after the election in September 1991.⁸⁸ The post-election legislature was less homogenous, with the highly conservative COR claiming eight seats and forming the official opposition.⁸⁹ Nonetheless, the Liberals maintained their majority. It was enough. On April 30, 1992, newly appointed Labour Minister Vaughn Blaney introduced a bill to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation, stating, "This is not a question that challenges the morals of people. This is a human rights question."⁹⁰ The Coalition had lobbied the government "to kind of fine-tune what we wanted,"⁹¹ and were entirely satisfied with the language of the proposed amendment. Members of the opposition – and, indeed, some on the government side – were less enthusiastic. The *Gaezette* in Halifax, which had closely covered the Coalition's activities for three years, ran a detailed account of the "unpleasant" debate that unfolded in the legislature. "The [New Brunswick Coalition for Human Rights Reform] had as many as 20 people in the gallery watching what was supposed to be a

⁸⁷ Ibid.; Hank Williams, interview with Conor Falvey.

⁸⁸ Claude Olivier, interview with Tom Warner.

⁸⁹ Geoffrey Martin, "The Rise and Fall of the New Brunswick CoR Party, 1988-1995," *Canadian Parliamentary Review* 18, no. 3 (1995): 19.

⁹⁰ "NB Gets Human Rights!," *Gaezette*, May 1992.

⁹¹ Claude Olivier, interview with Tom Warner.

two-hour debate. It raged on into the night.”⁹² In its most surreal moment, recorded by the *Gazette* and recalled vividly by Hank Williams in his interview, COR member Greg Hargrove was heckled by Liberal MLAs who made sheep noises, in response to Hargrove’s assertion that the amendment would allow men to marry livestock.⁹³ Ultimately, the bill passed 34-8, and New Brunswick became the fifth province or territory in Canada to prohibit discrimination against gays and lesbians.⁹⁴

Quite apart from its legal and political ramifications, this legislative campaign and eventual victory brought Fredericton’s gays and lesbians into a closer relationship with the spaces of government. As *Gazette* contributor Kevin Elliott noted, supporters of gay and lesbians rights gathered, quite literally, in the gallery to witness the debate over the sexual orientation amendment. From the legislature itself to the government offices wherein the necessary campaigning took place, gays and lesbians and the discourses surrounding their place in New Brunswick were newly present in public spaces – “public” not just in the sense of visibility but in the sense of belonging to citizens.⁹⁵

Conclusion

With the opening of a gay bar in Fredericton, the emphasis of community building shifted from securing social space to enacting political reform. In effect, such reforms could not be achieved until a fixed, commercial social space for gays and lesbians was established to supplement, and ultimately substitute, the time-consuming activities related

⁹² Kevin Elliott, “New Brunswick Joins the Club.”

⁹³ Ibid.; Hank Williams, interview with Conor Falvey.

⁹⁴ Kevin Elliott, “New Brunswick Joins the Club.”

⁹⁵ Michael Bronski, *The Pleasure Principle*, 184.

to organizing social space. Nor could student-run gay and lesbian media develop on the UNB campus until a social organization had formed to provide safe space for gay, lesbian, and bisexual students to make social contact with each other. The equation, expressed by Bronski and others, that becoming visible must precede becoming *public*, achieving inclusion as a citizen, proved to be true in the case of Fredericton.⁹⁶

However, a truly adamant gay liberationist might also reject the trajectory of Fredericton's gay and lesbian social spaces as not directed towards liberation. The human rights discourse and equality-seeking agenda that powered campaigns for legislative reform, including that of New Brunswick, were deemed too assimilationist and insufficiently radical by many who were committed to gay liberation's ideals of revolutionizing straight society's attitudes to sexuality, pleasure, and privacy.⁹⁷ So, too, could the substitution of commercial space (a gay bar) for community-organized dances be considered an abdication of the gay liberation agenda for grassroots empowerment. However, while gays and lesbians in Fredericton organized community events to claim space briefly, they never legally possessed the spaces in question. Fredericton was not Halifax, where the Gay Alliance for Equality owned a building which it was able to run as a gay and lesbian bar and community centre.⁹⁸ With its limited resources, the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community in Fredericton was well served by the arrival of a commercial social alternative to FLAG dances.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Tom Warner, *Never Going Back*, 215–216.

⁹⁸ Robin Metcalfe, "Queer Looking, Queer Acting," 29–30.

CONCLUSION

Early in the research process, I was asked by a well-meaning interlocutor, “What is there to say about the history of gay, lesbian, and bisexual spaces in Fredericton?” I responded: “They existed.” It was a glib answer, perhaps, but an appropriate one.

Establishing the historical existence of such spaces, and cultivating a theoretical perspective that foregrounds them, presents a challenge to common perceptions of Fredericton’s past. The regional imbalance and urban bias in scholarship on queer history has created an impression that nothing of note in gay, lesbian, and bisexual history could have taken place in a small, relatively rural, Atlantic Canadian city. Yet the gay, lesbian, and bisexual population in Fredericton clearly has a rich history of community-building and political engagement, which has shaped and been shaped by the landscape of the city.

While the existence of a landscape of local gay, lesbian, and bisexual history is confounding for some, this was not the case for my research participants. At the end of each interview I conducted, I asked respondents why they were willing to participate in the research. I hoped that acquiring some idea of respondents’ motivations and attitude to the research would allow me to better situate and interpret their narratives, as well as allow respondents a chance for personal reflection. All five of my interviewees expressed, in varying terms, a belief that Fredericton’s gay, lesbian, and bisexual history was worthy of telling and recording, and that the need to do so was urgent. Anthony Wallace shared an anecdote:

When I did this with [a friend] a couple summers ago, we stayed up late talking one night about when we lived here, and that time, you know. And he said...you know, “We’ve got to write this down. This is important history, you know, we’ve

got to somehow preserve it or document it or something.” So, you know, he’s right.¹

Using similar terms, Carla Rasmussen said of the research, “What I really like is that it’s about *my* community...People forget, well, people don’t know the history...So, it’s good that the history, I guess, is being recorded, because there is a history and I think it’s important.”²

Statements like the above are inflected with a fear (albeit not expressed in these terms) that source material may disappear before it is properly archived. The passage of time can indeed be cruel to queer source material, especially when it reposes only in individual memories. People may relocate and fall out of touch with old places and friendship networks. Personal archives and memorabilia may be discarded. Memories may fade, or in the case of negative memories of abuse and trauma, be deliberately forgotten. And, as the latter decades of the 20th century become more distant, participants in those events begin to die. Already it has become challenging to locate individuals who are able and willing to speak of the gay and lesbian social world before 1960 at the earliest, as I found when seeking research participants for this project. It must be remembered, too, that the gay and lesbian community has experienced mortality in distinct ways. Brian Ellison spoke movingly about the loss of HIV-positive individuals with more knowledge of Atlantic Canadian queer history”

A tremendous amount of people have passed away, actually...And some very close, people I became very close to here in Toronto, who are no longer with us. And it’s, you know, they held more history of the East Coast than I, because some of them stayed longer into the ‘70s, but for sure all of them left...But they coveted more stories than I.³

¹ Anthony Wallace, interview with Conor Falvey.

² Carla Rasmussen, interview with Conor Falvey.

³ Brian Ellison, interview with Conor Falvey.

This represents a tremendous loss both in personal and archival terms. Clearly, the desire to inscribe queer lives into history, so rebelliously expressed at the onset of the gay liberation movement, remains prevalent today.

What, then, can be said about the recent history of gay, lesbian, and bisexual spaces in Fredericton? I have presented it here as a three-phase narrative. Until 1980, gay and lesbian socializing occurred primarily in private homes, at straight bars, and in known cruising zones. To some extent, these venues continued to play a role within the community after alternatives developed, but that role was less central. After the formation of FLAG in 1979, social activity shifted in large part to the community halls where dances were held, as well as meetings and conferences geared more towards activism and community building. The opening of a gay bar in 1985 shifted gay and lesbian socializing into commercial spaces, while allowing activists the time and energy to claim greater space for gays and lesbians within the non-profit and governmental spheres. Securing social spaces was the initial priority of the Fredericton's gay and lesbian organizations; though activism and political lobbying were objectives from the outset, they were pursued secondarily as resources allowed and circumstances required. Organizing distinct social spaces, whether at dances, bars, or conferences, often brought gays and lesbians into more open conflict with heterosexual society, but it also helped to build the necessary visibility to pursue formal political change. In displaying this progression, Fredericton's historical geography does not deviate greatly from the prototypical gay urban history, wherein the creation of safe, visible spaces for gays and lesbians facilitated the development of a community capable of advocating for itself.

Such comparisons only go so far, however. The metropolitan narrative of the development of the “gaybourhood,” so popular in queer geographical studies, is of limited applicability to Fredericton. Instead, it is necessary to understand the city’s queer landscape as one of transience, unstable and dynamic, like the local gay, lesbian, and bisexual community itself. Between 1969 and 1992, while the gay and lesbian population of New Brunswick lived in legal limbo between decriminalization and full human rights protection, Fredericton’s map of gay and lesbian spaces was similarly unstable and precarious. Like the gay and lesbian population itself, whose members came and went from the city on temporary visits or longer migrations, the social spaces claimed by gays and lesbians within the city were transient, hard to pinpoint or pin down. Their temporarity and mobility supported the creation of a dynamic landscape of queer spaces, constantly in process – as is true of all space, but strikingly evident in these specific spaces.

Speaking of Fredericton in terms of its dynamism runs counter to certain prevailing attitudes. Like the Prairie cities of which Valerie Korinek writes, Fredericton and other communities in New Brunswick are often discursively reduced to the stereotypes of rurality as backwardness, isolation, or stagnation.⁴ Yet Fredericton’s queer history reveals a city that functioned as a provincial and sometimes regional hub, attracting gay and lesbian individuals from both smaller and larger local communities, as well as other parts of Canada. Members of the local queer community came from all over, and traveled all over, visiting other cities to make use of distant queer spaces as well as local ones, or living and working outside Fredericton intermittently. The local population

⁴ Valerie Korinek, “‘We’re the Girls of the Pansy Parade’,” 170–171.

was constantly relocating and transforming, and the landscape with it, contrary to perceptions of stagnation or stasis. A comprehensive map of gay, lesbian, and bisexual Fredericton might include the routes by which these relocations took place – the actual spaces (highways, railways, airports) through which a transient population would most commonly shift. It would also ideally reflect the role that gay and lesbian spaces outside Fredericton itself played in the development of the local community.

This mapping of the landscape of gay, lesbian, and bisexual social spaces in Fredericton through oral history accounts constitutes a much-needed addition to the scant literature on queer history in Atlantic Canada. It challenges the current tendency to view the history of the Atlantic region as synonymous with that of Halifax. Though that city exerted a metropolitan influence throughout the Maritime Provinces, the smaller cities of New Brunswick clearly played an important role in the development of regional queer networks. Of New Brunswick's major cities, it was Fredericton that was usually the geographic centre of gay and lesbian organizing in the province, speaking for New Brunswick's queer population through FLAG, AIDS New Brunswick, and the New Brunswick Coalition for Human Rights Reform. The city's contributions to regional queer culture, and its complex relationship with other cities in Atlantic Canada and the New England states, must be recognized more widely.

Lastly, assembling and telling a queer story of Fredericton's past reveals an element of diversity and radicalism seldom detectable in representations of the city's history and heritage. Viewing the landscape of Fredericton through a more conventional historical lens would lead one past elegant Victorian houses, the graves of early Loyalist settlers, or the lingering fortress of a pre-Confederation British garrison. (Historical

walking tours organized by the municipal tourism office lead to exactly such locations.)⁵ Yet there are clearly a myriad of alternative sites, equally key to Fredericton's history and present-day character, which could populate a more diverse heritage map of the city. The locations are not necessarily evident to the casual glance. Many possible landmarks of gay and lesbian life – the original Dance Trax site, for instance, or Club Cosmopolitan – are gone, transformed into other buildings for other (commercial) uses.⁶ Yet it is possible to see the city not just as the legacy of old-world settlers, but the setting of a vibrant countercultural history. At times, the zones of these two historical maps intersect distinctly; after all, the same parks that gay men have cruised are decorated with monuments to the Loyalists and statues of Robbie Burns and Lord Beaverbrook.

Assembling a visualization that captures both the transience and the multitudinous linkages at work in the city's queer history is an ongoing task (like the process of claiming and creating the queer social spaces the map represents). The queer landscape of Fredericton in the late 20th century resists conventional mapping. It is, however, ripe for the application of digital methodologies. Future research would add to this study by deploying geographic information systems (GIS) and digital mapping techniques. These can facilitate the creation of dynamic maps that incorporate time as a dimension in ways that traditional static maps cannot. It is also possible to visually achieve the phenomenon of multiple layered maps, used metaphorically by Chauncey and myself, through the

⁵ The Fredericton Tourism website distributes information on heritage walking tours, with a clear bias towards the Garrison District, via its website, www.tourismfredericton.ca. A similar example of the prevailing approach to local landscape heritage in the Fredericton Heritage Trust's guidebook to the city's "historic landmarks," which applies that term almost exclusively to pre-Confederation heritage homes. John LeRoux and Peter Pacey, *Building Capital: A Guide to Fredericton's Historic Landmarks* (Fredericton: Fredericton Heritage Trust, 2004).

⁶ Carla Rasmussen, interview with Conor Falvey.

creation of a digital visualization. Since spatialization is itself “a means of doing research,”⁷ the mapping process can be expected to generate new data. The study of transient queer spaces in Fredericton adds another case study to a growing literature that considers temporary, dynamic, and unstable urban spaces while debating the interaction and representation of multiple maps of the city.

In the end, the instability of these spaces challenges the description of Fredericton’s queer landmarks as vanished or hidden. If the very queerness of these spaces was always temporary, always in process, then it is possible to conceive of their present-day failure to manifest traces of queer social life as merely a normal interregnum, one of innumerable periods of downtime in the ongoing process of queering a given space. Returning to the words of Christopher Reed, it might be more accurate to think of these queer spaces not as vanished and past, but as – once more, still – imminent.

⁷ Richard White, “What Is Spatial History?”

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APPENDIX I

Interview Guide

1. To begin, can you introduce yourself and tell me a bit about your personal background? (*Supplementary questions: When did you live in Fredericton? Probes: work, school, family in the city, living arrangements*)
2. What was your understanding of your sexuality at that time? (*Supplementary questions: Did you have any romantic or sexual relationships? Did others know about your sexuality? What terms/labels did you use to describe your sexuality, if any?*)
3. What was your overall impression of life for gay/lesbian/bisexual people in Fredericton? (*Supplementary: What were you expecting when you arrived?*)
4. How did you meet and socialize with other gay/lesbian/bisexual people? (*Probe for locations*)
5. What was your experience, if any, with clubs or organizations that dealt with the gay/lesbian/bisexual community? (*Probe for locations*) (*Supplementary: Were you involved in any activist organizations?*)
6. Were there places in Fredericton where you felt safe and comfortable as a gay/lesbian/bisexual person? Were there places where you felt particularly unsafe or uncomfortable?
7. Tell me about an event you experienced as a gay/lesbian/bisexual person in Fredericton/Saint John that is particularly memorable for you. (*Probe for locations*)
8. Are there locations in Fredericton that you think are important to the history of gay/lesbian/bisexual people? Why? (*Probes: Describe those places - sights, sounds, smells, feelings - as you remember them.*)
9. What locations in Fredericton are most important to your personal memory of your life here? (*Clarifying analogy: If you were taking a “trip down memory lane” to recall your time here, what places would you visit to spark memories?*) (*Probes: Describe those places - sights, sounds, smells, feelings - as you remember them.*)
10. Why did you decide to participate in this research project?
11. Are there any other observations you feel are relevant that have not been discussed?

APPENDIX II

Information Letter for Research Participants

[Letterhead]

[Date]

Dear [Name]:

RE: Research project -- Foregrounds: Mapping Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Heritage in Fredericton and Saint John

I am writing to ask for your help in my Master's thesis research project, *Foregrounds: Mapping Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Heritage in Fredericton and Saint John*. This project examines the experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals who lived in Fredericton and/or Saint John, New Brunswick, between 1960 and 2000, and particularly the places and landmarks that shaped those experiences. The goal of the project is to create a digital map of queer historic sites in the two cities.

As part of my research, I am collecting oral histories from members of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community in both cities. If you identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual and lived in Fredericton or Saint John during the period under study (1960-2000), I would like to invite you to participate in an oral interview, lasting approximately one hour.

In order to help you make an informed decision about whether or not to participate in this research, I have enclosed additional information on the project and its risks and benefits. Please find below a series of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that will explain the project and the interview process, as well as further information on confidentiality. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form as required by the University of New Brunswick Research Ethics Board.

If you are interested in participating in the project, or if you would like further information, please contact me at the address below.

Yours sincerely,

Conor Falvey

Graduate Student, Department of History

University of New Brunswick

120 Tilley Hall

9 Macaulay Lane, Fredericton, NB

E3B 5A3

Email: cfalvey@unb.ca

Telephone: 506-259-0248

Project Name: Foregrounds: Mapping Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Heritage in
Fredericton and Saint John

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why are these interviews being conducted?

These oral interviews are being conducted as part of my Master's degree program. The purpose of the project is to study the experiences of gay, lesbian, and bisexual (LGB) individuals who lived in Fredericton and/or Saint John, New Brunswick between 1960 and 2000. From these interviews, I hope to learn more about locations (buildings, neighbourhoods, landmarks, etc.) that have been significant to the history of the LGB community in these two cities. I will use this information to create a digital map of LGB historic sites.

I will also create an educational website about my research topic, which will include the map along with excerpts from the oral interviews, so that anyone interested in LGB history can hear stories told in the words and voices of people who actually lived them.

2. When and where will the study take place?

The study is based at the University of New Brunswick. If you reside in New Brunswick, you will be given the option to either conduct the interviews in your community in a location of your choosing, or over the telephone.

If you do not currently reside in New Brunswick, you may still conduct an interview via telephone. The interviews will be conducted between June 2014 and December 2014.

3. Who is being asked to take part?

I am seeking to interview individuals who:

(1) Lived in Fredericton or Saint John for any length of time between 1960 and 2000, and

(2) Considered themselves to be lesbian, gay, or bisexual at that time.

You may be interviewed regardless of whether you were "out of the closet" during the time in question. People of all gender identities and expressions are welcome to participate, provided they considered themselves to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual during the time period being studied. While this research does not focus on the experiences of transgender people as such, trans* and genderqueer people who meet the two requirements mentioned above are certainly welcomed and encouraged to participate.

You will be asked to participate in an individual interview lasting approximately one hour. During the interview, you and I will talk about your experiences living in Fredericton or Saint John as an LGB person, your social life, and the places you frequented. The interview will be digitally recorded and later transcribed on a computer. After the interviews are over, I will send you a copy of the transcript, and ask you if there is anything you would like to clarify, change, or omit.

If you choose to participate, you can decide to stop at any time, even after signing the consent form or during the interview. After the interview, if you decide you want to

withdraw your comments, I will destroy your interview recording and transcript. You may withdraw at any time until the final draft of the Master's thesis based on the interviews is submitted for evaluation.

With your permission, portions of the audio recording of your interview may be published on a website created for this project. You will be asked to indicate on the consent form whether you grant permission to publish any part of your recorded interview over the Internet. If you decide not to allow your interview recording to be published online, you may still agree to be interviewed for the Master's thesis only.

4. What are the risks and benefits of the study?

The study has very little risk. You will not be required to answer any questions you do not want to, and you may withdraw your participation at any time up to the point of MA submission.

During the interview, you will be asked to reflect on your life experiences. These types of reflections might cause a variety of emotional reactions, either positive or negative. You are not required to answer any questions that cause you emotional distress. Resources to help mitigate these potential risks, including contact information for counselling and support services, will be given to you before the interview, for you to access if you wish.

The study has great potential benefits to those within and outside the LGB community. Although New Brunswick has a rich and vibrant history of gay, lesbian, and bisexual residents, very little has been written about it. The results of this study will further the process of including LGB contributions in our understanding of New

Brunswick's past. Sharing your stories now is also a way of ensuring that LGB history, and your role in it, are preserved for the future.

5. Is the study confidential?

Your decision to participate in this study or not is voluntary and will be kept completely confidential. To protect confidentiality, the names of other persons you identify (e.g. friends, relatives, romantic partners, etc.) will be anonymized in the transcripts. No information will be released or printed that would disclose the identity of third parties discussed in the testimony.

If you wish, you may participate and have your own identity remain anonymous, given an alpha numerical code. Your testimony will never be used in a manner that could indirectly identify you or other individuals.

Because of the historical importance of this project, I would like to donate the interview transcripts and recordings to the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick (PANB) at the completion of the project. If you wish, the PANB can enforce a restriction period, meaning that no one can access your interview without your permission until after a period of time you specify. I will provide you with an official consent form from the PANB before your interview, on which you can specify a restriction period if you wish. If you agree to donate your interview to the Archives, you can choose (1) to include your interview recording and transcript with your identity, or (2) to include only an anonymized transcript of your interview.

You may also choose not to allow your interview to be donated to the PANB in any form. If you choose to exclude your interview entirely from the archives, you may still

participate in the research project, but your interview recording and transcript will be destroyed once the project is completed. As stated above, you may withdraw at any time up until the point of MA deposit and I will delete your interview recording and shred any hard copies of the transcribed interview.

In order to better educate the public about this important historical topic, I plan to create a website about this research, which will include excerpts from your interview transcript. In order to make the website more engaging, I would also like to use portions of the audio recording of your interview. On the consent form, you may choose to (1) include your recorded interview on the website, (2) exclude your recorded interview from the website, or (3) include a recording of your words read by another person so that you cannot be identified by your voice. If you decide to exclude the audio recording of your interview from the website, the written transcript may still be used.

7. Who will be in charge of the website?

I (Conor Falvey, the researcher) will create and manage the website. It will remain online after the completion of this Master's research project. As webmaster, I commit in good faith to continue to administer the website in a way that reflects the ethical guidelines of the Research Ethics Board, even after the research project itself is complete. After the Master's research project is complete and the thesis has been published, you will still be able to contact me should you have any ongoing concerns about the website or your participation in it.

8. How will I find out about the study's results?

I will make every effort to notify all interview participants about the project's progress and findings. Publications arising from this research (e.g., thesis, journal articles, media coverage) can be sent to you free of charge upon request. If you want any other information, you can contact me directly.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions or require more information about the study, please contact:

Principal Investigator – Conor Falvey, Graduate Student, Department of History

University of New Brunswick, 120 Tilley Hall

9 Macaulay Lane, Fredericton, NB

E3B 5A3

Email: cfalvey@unb.ca

Telephone: 506-259-0248

This project has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board of the University of New Brunswick and is on file as REB 2014-056. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, you may contact:

Research Ethics Board, Office of Research Services

Howard Douglas Hall, Suite 212, P.O. Box 4400

University of New Brunswick

Fredericton, NB E3B 5A3

Contact/Attn.: Renée Audet-Martel

Telephone: (506) 453-5189

APPENDIX III

Oral History Consent Form

Project Name: Foregrounds: Mapping Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Heritage in
Fredericton and Saint John

Principal Investigator:

Conor Falvey
Graduate Student, Department of History
University of New Brunswick
120 Tilley Hall
9 Macaulay Lane, Fredericton, NB, E3B 5A3
Email: cfalvey@unb.ca
Telephone: 506-259-0248

Please read the following questions and select the appropriate response.

I have received and read the information letter about the research being undertaken by
Conor Falvey, a graduate student at the University of New Brunswick.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about this research, or seek additional
information about this study from the researcher.

I understand that I may withdraw at any time, until the final draft of the Master's thesis
based on these interviews is submitted for evaluation.

I consent to participate in this project.

Yes _____ No _____

I agree to be contacted after my participation if the researcher needs to clarify anything from my interview. I understand that I may refuse any further participation.

Yes _____ No _____

I am willing to donate the transcript and/or audio recording of my interview to the Public Archives of New Brunswick. I understand that I must sign an additional consent form in order to complete this donation, and that I may specify certain additional restrictions at that time. My interview may be included:

_____ as a transcript and audio recording, with my identity

_____ only as a transcript, completely anonymized

_____ Do not include my interview in the archive; destroy the recording and transcript once research is complete

I consent to the publication of excerpts from my interview transcript on a website associated with this research project.

Yes _____ No _____

The audio recording of my interview may be published, in whole or in part, on a website associated with this research project:

_____ with my identity and voice

_____ completely anonymized (re-enacted by a voice actor)

_____ Do not publish recorded audio from my interview

I would like to have the following materials sent to me after my interview.

_____ a hard-copy transcript of my interview

_____ an audio CD of my interview

_____ digital copies of my interview and transcript

Please provide your mailing address and/or email address where you wish to receive the materials indicated above:

Participant Name

Participant Signature

Date

Consent form was explained and administered in person by:

Name

Date

Consent was obtained by the above person by telephone: yes ____ no ____

Declaration by Researcher:

I understand my responsibilities to research participants, as outlined in the information letter, and agree to fulfill them.

I will maintain the confidentiality of all research participants.

I will provide timely updates and information on the project to all participants who request it.

Signature - Conor Falvey

Date

CURRICULUM VITAE

Conor Falvey

EDUCATION:

University of Ottawa, Bachelor of Arts, English (2006-2010)

University of New Brunswick, Master of Arts, History (2013-2015)

PUBLICATIONS:

Conor Falvey, "Sock Magic: Lessons on Public History from the Diary of a Lumber
Camp Cook," *Officers' Quarters: Journal of the York-Sunbury Historical Society*,
Vol. 30, No. 1 (2013).

PRESENTATIONS:

Dr. Gregory S. Kealey & Conor Falvey, "Labour/Le Travail, 1976-2014," presentation at
the Labour/Le Travail Pecha Kucha, Simon Fraser University, November 15,
2014.

Conor Falvey, "LGBT History in Fredericton," guest lecture for the University of New
Brunswick History Society, November 14, 2014.

Conor Falvey & Jessi Taylor, "Feminist Ethics of Travel Blogging," presentation at
Women's Worlds Global Feminist Conference, Ottawa, July 6, 2011.