



VANCOUVER
PRIDE
SOCIETY

2016-2017 Community Consultation Results

What are the barriers that keep you/your group from participating in VPS events?

What could Vancouver Pride Society do to reduce these barriers?

Background

The Vancouver Pride Society(VPS) has been organizing events to serve the Vancouver LGBTQ2+community for several decades. Over the years, decisions and oversights have been made which have wrongfully excluded community members from our events. Community members and activists have repeatedly raised these concerns with the VPS, and have reported frustration that their concerns were not heard. In the past, the VPS was run by a small team of seasonal staff which was centered around events planning. A new year-round staff team, committed to creating positive change and lowering barriers, was hired in April 2016. This increased the capacity of the VPS, allowing us to meaningfully engage with the community. In July 2016, work by queer and trans Black activists from Black Lives Matter - Toronto opened up space for a public, nation-wide discussion on racism, anti-blackness and exclusion at Pride events. They have done important work amplifying the voices and concerns that have been voiced but gone unheard in years past. The VPS would like to acknowledge the many groups and individuals who have been marginalized or ignored by VPS in the past, and have been willing to engage in community consultation with current staff.

Community Consultations

The VPS has been engaged in an ongoing consultation process with community members since Summer 2016. The information in this report has been collated from numerous phone calls and e-mails to our office, anonymous online surveys, monitored social media discussion, four community consultations with diverse groups, and multiple one-on-one meetings with community members. Consultation participants come from diverse age, ethnic, gender, faith, immigration status, sexual orientation, and ability groups from across the GVRD. VPS was fortunate to hear from over 320 community members combined. VPS has intentionally centered the experiences of those who have been marginalized at VPS events, or who experience access barriers, as opposed to those with more relatively more privilege in the community. One participant of the consultation put it very well when they said, "I'm fascinated that barriers are often a lack of something. For me it's really not about what culture VPS events is cultivating, contributing to, promoting, perpetuating; you're not responsible for each individual who accesses a space, and at the same time there is responsibility in how you/we hold it." We have conducted these consultations in the spirit of listening and acknowledging in order to better cultivate and co-create positive and inclusive events moving forward.

Not Just One Group

It has been reiterated throughout the consultation process concerns regarding police involvement, racism, and anti-blackness at VPS events have been concerns pre-dating the conversations which were made public by Black Lives Toronto chapters in Toronto and Vancouver. Black Lives Matter has received racist backlash in response to raising the discussion which is not condoned or supported by the VPS. We would like to both thank BLM for raising these concerns publicly, and definitively state that these concerns are echoed across the community and reflect the experiences of numerous people from varied backgrounds including, but not limited to, the Trans community, Deaf community, and QTBIPOC communities. As a community member pointed out “the response from the community makes POC uncomfortable, even if police issues are resolved, there is racism in the community.”

Themes

Much of the feedback we received was recurrent throughout the consultation process. We have attempted to group this feedback into themed categories, and have outlined the steps we will be taking to work on these issues. In some cases, we have done a poor job at communicating what supports we already have in place. We recognize that programs, accessible areas and financial support are not inclusive if we do not adequately advise the community about their existence. In other cases, we have added programming, funds, or policy changes in order to address recurrent problems. **This work will continue to take place throughout the summer and beyond as we realize these are not issues that will be resolved through one-time fixes.**

Corporate Pride

“Large corporations get the spotlight, most community groups get very little recognition”

Feedback

Members of the community have expressed their opposition to the commercialization of Vancouver Pride Society events, including sponsors marching in the parade and sponsor branding at our events. There is concern that large floats from corporate groups outnumber and/or overshadow LGBTQ2S+groups in the parade itself. Some have stated they have no desire for “acceptance by mainstream organizations” while others have expressed that support from businesses makes them feel proud of the strides forward made by the community. While some community members would like less corporate representation and others are okay with current levels, universally we heard that people would like more recognition and focus on community groups, including increased engagement with grassroots organizations outside of the parade, more space in the parade for community groups, and support to help community groups participate in the parade. Some respondents stated they would like no businesses or corporate sponsors, and a decrease in the size and scope of all events, sharing that “the booths at the pride festival don’t feel like they have much connection to the community,” and “corporate floats should not take up 90% of the parade.” Others said they would like vetting of corporate sponsors, stating it was frustrating that VPS “just lets in anyone with money” and that it is frustrating that “companies can march in the parade with no vetting.”

Strategies

1. The VPS Parade Working Group (PWG) is made up of the Executive Director, Events and volunteer community members. Historically, the PWG has discussed each application as a group to determine whether or not to accept an entry. For the 2017 Pride Parade, the PWG has formalized this process with the use of a scoring matrix. Each parade application is discussed and must meet a minimum score to be accepted into the parade. The emphasis for scoring is placed on:
 - a) what initiatives each particular organization has supported or created for the LGBTQ2+ community (either internally within their organization or in the community at large)
 - b) if the organization has policies and practices in place around diversity, inclusion and anti-discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression
 - c) what their organizational values are and how they align with the VPS values
2. For the 2017 Pride Parade, the PWG decided to reserve extra spaces in the parade for queer organizations and community groups until the parade entry deadline in June. The majority of queer community groups and organizations apply well before that deadline,

but once the parade is getting close to being full, those 20 spaces will only be given to community groups and corporate entries will be waitlisted.

3. The VPS held a winter fundraiser in February. 100% of funds raised at the Unicorn Ball have been allocated to assist marginalized or vulnerable groups to either participate in VPS events or support events these groups are holding to serve their particular communities. Staff have actively reached out to many of these groups to issue an invitation to participate in the parade, as well as, to outline the opportunities to receive financial assistance.
4. The VPS recognizes that it cannot be all things to all people and thus provides financial support to other queer organizations who are already organizing events for specific communities. Many of these events have less of a corporate focus.
5. The VPS annually organizes East Side Pride in June which focuses more on artisanal vendors, community groups and local bands/musicians.

Pride Is Just One Big Party

“I feel like we should be celebrating ‘something’....not just partying to party.”

Feedback

Many people feel that Vancouver Pride Society events have become “one big party” that focuses too much on celebration without “political backbone” or recognition of queer history, the roots of the Vancouver Pride Society, or current struggles faced by community members. There is a desire to have history acknowledged and represented at all Vancouver Pride Society events. People expressed a desire to have struggles, tragedies and pain of the community acknowledged at events, possibly through moments of silence and space for remembering those who we have lost. Some people shared that they felt Pride had become “one big party” and “just a street party” with too much sex, drugs, and alcohol. “We don’t drink,” shared a couple, who felt that “events are too much about alcohol.” Another requested “less drinking.” Alternatively, some participants shared that they work on advocacy year round and enjoy the chance to take a break and celebrate for a day “before getting back to work.”

Strategies

1. For the 2017 season, the VPS is curating a Living Library. Storytellers of all ages will share slices of Vancouver’s LGBTQ2+ history at VPS events. Attendees will be able to “check out” these storytellers, somewhat like a library book, to listen to their stories and ask questions. These stories will also be captured on film and made available through VPS online channels.

2. In addition to East Side Pride and the Terry Wallace Memorial Breakfast, which are alcohol-free events, five new non-alcohol focused events have been added to the VPS 2017 official events schedule. These include: Pride Movie in the Park, LGBTQ Immigration Panel, Pride Premiere at Robson Square, City of North Vancouver Afternoon All Ages Dance, Powell Street Festival “Japanese Third Gender” Event.
3. VPS will continue to offer financial support to partner organizations who are already organizing events for specific communities such as Aging with Pride, Queer Prom, Dyke March and Untoxicated: Clean and Sober Dance.
4. This year, the VPS has partnered with Karmik to provide onsite harm reduction education and support at our large party events. Karmik volunteers will provide a non-judgmental space for participants to learn about safer ways to party and how to access assistance if needed.
5. Chill Spaces will be available at our large events. Last Door Recovery will provide a chill space away from the bars at Davie Street Party and Sunset Beach Festival. The West End Business Improvement Association will provide an additional chill space at the Davie Street Party providing a quieter space with live performers and places to sit down and relax.
6. The VPS is pleased to partner again this year with the Consent Crew, who will be onsite at larger VPS events, educating the public about consent culture and encouraging attendees to think about their personal boundaries and safety.
7. For the 2016 Pride Parade, the VPS organized a tribute to the Orlando shooting victims. Each of our 49 flag bearer volunteers carried a flag with the photograph and name of one of the victims. 2 other volunteers carried a banner indicating our community of Vancouver standing in solidarity with the victims and their families. This year, the VPS staff will work with the parade MCs to create space to recognize those we have lost in our queer community around the world and those still yet to join us.

Trans Exclusion

“The trans community generally doesn’t seem to feel welcome most of the time.”

Feedback

During the consultation process, several people expressed that there was not enough recognition of trans people at VPS events. “Very few trans flags,” are visible said one community member while another said they “haven’t seen many booths or events geared towards the trans community.” Community members would like to see more trans performers or events geared towards the trans community, as well as for trans-inclusive and trans-specific programming. Some expressed that VPS events are “too cis, too binary,” and that “there isn’t enough awareness of the breadth of the trans community, different gender and sexual identities other than the L and the G.” Several participants shared that they had heard of trans people being misgendered at past VPS events by volunteers and one suggested this was due to a lack

of appropriate volunteer training. Another participant suggested additional training for “front-line people,” or an awareness campaign of trans issues. Suggestions were made to include more trans and other minority gender individuals on the board of directors, and at every level of the organization. Another shared that there is a “a lack of knowledge [in the community] of how accepting the VPS is of trans people.” Many people expressed pleasure with the the TEN pledge and stated that it was positive work which contributed to equal rights for trans people.

Strategies

1. The VPS has and will continue to provide training for all volunteers and seasonal staff around pronoun usage, not making assumptions and awareness of gender identity and forms of gender expression
2. VPS will provide dedicated safer spaces at our festivals for trans folks
3. The VPS will invite and encourage folks from the trans community to perform on our stages
4. Last year, some VPS board members attended the Trans and Genderqueer March and will continue to do so as a show of support and solidarity
5. The VPS will continue the TEN campaign until gender identity and expression are added to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and continue to advocate for the trans community after the bill has passed
6. VPS will purchase more trans flags to ensure there is more representation at each of our events.
7. At the Stand OUT! Awards (formerly Legacy Awards) the Kimberly Nixon Trans Activist Contribution to Community Award will be presented. This award is sponsored by Barbara Findlay and Sheila Gilhooly and recognizes a trans individual who has made significant contributions to advancing trans rights or to creating positive social change in the community at large. This is an important opportunity to formally recognize members of the trans community.

Femme-Erasure, Bi-Erasure, Bi-Phobia

“Feeling discluded as a bi woman.”

Feedback

Community members have shared that they have experienced bi-erasure, bi-phobia, femme-phobia and femme erasure at VPS events and in the broader community, “feeling discluded as a bi woman by some groups.” There has been a “lack of bi-specific spaces or representation,” and a community member expressed they had experienced “bi-phobia and shaming for appearing in heteronormative relationships.” Community members would like “femme friendly spaces, bi-representation, bi-friendly spaces, [and] spaces that don’t solely cater to gay or lesbian orientation.”

Strategies

1. VPS has provided a bursary to fund a Bi-Cabaret during 2017 Pride month. This event will be open for bi-sexual performers to share their talents. The curator of this event created a similar event on Toronto and will work to create a safer space for the bi-sexual community to gather for this event during Pride month.
2. The VPS will provide opportunities for and invitations to bi-sexual individuals to perform on our stages
3. Post Pride 2017, the VPS will engage in community dialogue around this issue and work to create more strategies to address this issue for our 2018 season.

QTBIPOC Inclusion

“The Pride Society’s racism and lack of accountability to QTBIPOC communities is a big barrier that makes it unsafe for me to attend.”

Feedback

Community members have expressed that a “lack of QTIPOC spaces” and “tokenizing [of] BIPOCs” have created barriers to attending VPS events. A “lack of racialized queer voices” “anti-blackness” and “cultural barriers” were pointed to by several community members as issues which make VPS events inaccessible. A community member expressed that “these events just perpetuate the same racism and exclusion that the white queer community has been perpetuating for years,” while others said that there has been “poor inclusion and organizing of the queer indigenous community” and “aboriginal and two spirit people are not engaged with in any meaningful way.”

“Not having events that showcase the diversity of the community, such as events for queers of color..” was brought up as an issue by multiple people. Having “more leadership from racialized queers,” and “more diversity of people who organizing events,” “inclusion of Indigenous groups,” and “meaningful engagement with the Aboriginal people whose land we are occupying” were brought up as ways to create positive change in the future.

Excluding “racist Zionist groups” and “groups which engage in racist pinkwashing” were brought up throughout the consultations. It was emphasized in oral consultations that those who were concerned with pinkwashing were very supportive of the Jewish community and Jewish people, and wished to clearly distinguish between pinkwashing organizations and Jewish people. VPS was told of a historic decision to move the Pride Parade from a Monday to a

Sunday during the Powell Street Festival. This decision excluded Japanese Queer people from the Pride Parade who were faced with the decision of choosing one event over the other.

Community consultation participants from newcomer communities stated that they would like assistance in organizing queer competency workshops, minglers, and events to help address homophobia in communities of color and newcomer communities. “Gay men of color do not feel accepted in the queer community,” and “advocacy is needed for men of colour because people see you as lesser because of your refugee status and your colour,” were expressed as issues that particularly impact newcomers of color.

The issue of Police in Pride was repeatedly brought up as a factor preventing QTBIPOC. Please see : Police in Pride for the feedback on this issue.

The more recent diversification of the board which includes more people of color was seen as a positive, with an expressed wish that this trend continue.

Strategies

1. VPS has had a relationship with the Greater Vancouver Native Cultural Society for almost 40 years. GVNCS participates in all VPS events and provides meaningful blessings and openings for our events.
2. The VPS board has specifically worked on the recruitment of diverse members to sit on the board including queer people of colour, trans folks and gender diverse candidates.
3. The VPS board and executive directors are committed to the continuation of dialogues and discussions with members of the QTBIPOC communities to inform our planning processes and to create events that are more representative of the entire community.
4. This year, the VPS has partnered with the Powell Street Festival for a “Japanese Third Gender Event” on August 5.
5. The Powell Street Festival and the VPS are going to share performer resources with the hope to diversify both events and create more cross-over between the festivals and communities.
6. Funds from the VPS winter fundraiser, the Unicorn Ball, were allocated to a bursary program for vulnerable or marginalized groups to participate in Pride events or to support events that these groups were already organizing for their specific communities.
7. The Unicorn Ball fundraiser event was purposefully held outside of the west end and featured diverse DJs and performers. Feedback from this event indicated that QTBIPOC who attended felt safe and enjoyed the event.
8. VPS has engaged in a community consultation process that has led to further relationship building with queer people of colour, genderqueer young people, folks from the trans community and queer or 2 Spirit Indigenous people. This relationship building has allowed for specific invitations and support to participate in Pride events.

9. The VPS is running a pilot called the Pride Knowledge Exchange Program to support individuals and groups in our community attend conferences, organize events and meet-ups, and more. One of the recipients of our pilot program funding has started up a Queer and 2 Spirit Femme drop-in beading circle, organized by the folks at Virago Nation, Canada's first Indigenous burlesque collective.

I Don't See Myself Represented At Pride

"Some events are very cis white male centric. I know not by purpose, but through systematic issues from the past."

Feedback

Many participants brought up feeling like cis gay men "seem to remain the focus for pride." Participants reported that barriers are created "by centering much of Pride on cis male, gay, relatively privileged and largely white men," and that event efforts are "targeted on white cis men." One participant stated that "Pride doesn't feel like 'mine,'" due to the focus on upper class gay men. A lack of events for "senior gay folk," was brought up, as was "very little inclusion for gay parents and their children," along with a suggestion to have "more women's events." Several people brought up that various issues led them "not feeling a part of pride," with one stating "I do not see the relationship between my queerness and many of the floats in the parade," and another saying that they were "not part of a select group." A couple of participants brought up that there were too many straight people who attended events.

Strategies

1. The VPS held a winter fundraiser in February called the Unicorn Ball at the Imperial on Main Street. This venue was intentionally booked in order to hold an event outside of the west end. This event featured 3 women or femme identified DJs out of 4, 2 of whom identify as people of colour, and a diverse array of stage performers. VPS staff personally invited diverse groups of people to attend the event.
2. During our 2016 season, we worked on changing our performer line-ups to include a greater diversity of performers. For 2017, we will continue to book an even wider range of performers for all of our stages leveraging new relationships formed with community partners and diverse groups.

3. East Side Pride is held annually at Grandview Park and is a family friendly event.
4. Pride Sports Day is expanded again for 2017 and will include opportunities for families to participate in picnic games, a family fun zone and sports activities
5. Stand OUT! Awards (formerly Legacy Awards) is held annually at Roundhouse Community Centre and is an opportunity for folks of all ages to come together to recognize the achievements of our community members. The VPS staff will issue invitations to individuals that represent all parts of the LGBTQ2+ community in order to have a diverse adjudication panel.
6. VPS is partnering with the City of North Vancouver to have an afternoon all ages dance on the quay.
7. VPS supports the annual Aging with Pride event with funds and staff time.
8. VPS is partnering with new to Vancouver curator, Katie Sly, to present a Bi-Cabaret to be held in East Vancouver.
9. Funds from the winter fundraiser were allocated to small and/or marginalized community groups to assist them to participate in VPS events or to support other events that these groups are organizing for their specific sectors of the LGBTQ2+ community.
10. The VPS Parade Working Group has reserved extra spaces in the 2017 Pride Parade for queer community groups and has intentionally invited community groups to participate. There are also opportunities for groups to access bursary funds and to partner with VPS to have a reduction in parade fees.
11. VPS has engaged in a community consultation process that has led to further relationship building with queer people of colour, genderqueer young people, folks from the trans community and queer or 2 Spirit Indigenous people

Police In Pride

“There shouldn’t be police in a party about us, cops choose to be cops, they aren’t born that way. If they want to really show they are here for us they should listen to the most marginalized folks in the group.”

Feedback

Feedback regarding police involvement has run the spectrum from no police presence of any kind at any of our events to a desire for uniformed police at all of our events. Our goal is to find the solution that prioritizes the most marginalized in our community while continuing collaboration and dialogue. There is a recognition within the community of the improvements in the interactions between police and the public, and a desire to see more work done by the police to address racism, ableism, transphobia and homophobia within policing institutions. Until these issues are adequately addressed, there will still be distrust of police, and discomfort with the uniform and weapons as symbols of the institution of policing. Due to this historic and ongoing violence and marginalization, many members of our community are uncomfortable with

the presence of police in the pride parade and at VPS events, particularly but not limited to people who are QTBIPOC, trans, and People With Disabilities (PWD). “Police scare me,” voiced one community consultation participant, there is a “lack of feeling safe with the involvement of VPD,” stated another. “As long as cops are at pride, marginalized folks will not feel welcome or safe. It’s insulting to have cops march at an event to celebrate a police riot.” Others told us to “remember, our history has been of struggle where police and military have incited/ continue to incite violence against LGBTQ2IA communities.” Community consultation participants told VPS to “get rid of police,” have “no police, no military,” have “no cops, especially not with a fucking tank, ESPECIALLY not on motorcycles before the dykes on bikes.”

For many community members who have had negative interactions with the police, or belong to groups who have experience harassment and violence from the police, the police uniform is a visible *symbol* of that mistreatment which can cause symptoms of PTSD. “Uniformed police presence within the parade,” is a barrier expressed by many community members, with one person stating “I was appalled with the amount of weapons being carried by police,” and another saying “I have no desire to march with the police.” Many people have expressed they would be more comfortable with the police marching without weapons and uniforms. Suggestions to address police presence included the inclusion of the police marching band rather than uniformed officers, police marchers to be selected from a compiled list of police representatives nominated by the community that have shown accountability to the community, marching out of uniform, the removal of police vehicles, having the police contingency dispersed in a float with other city services such as fire, ambulance, library, etc.

There are members of groups who experience police violence who have requested VPS keep the police in the parade. Community consultation participants expressed that they had experienced racially motivated police brutality and believe that police marching in the parade provides an avenue for reconciliation. Some newcomers to Canada who have moved from countries which enforce state violence and imprisonment against LGBTQ individuals expressed that they are proud to now reside in a country where the police will openly support the community, and that it would be “hypocritical to stand against police in Canada, when they they are doing here what we asked of them at home.” Some community members who self identified as part of Metro-Vancouver’s diverse Black community stated that “tossing aside the positive strides” made by the LGBTQ community with the police would be a “huge and unfruitful step backwards.”

Strategies

1. The VPS co-executive directors have engaged in extensive dialogue about police participation in the 2017 Pride Parade with the Vancouver Police Department and the RCMP over a period of 6 months.
2. VPS staff and board have met with Black Lives Matter as well as other queer POC groups/individuals to collect feedback and lived experiences to inform dialogues about police participation in the 2017 Pride Parade.

3. VPS has requested that VPD and RCMP participate in the parade in t-shirts v. uniforms and to reduce their vehicle footprint, as well as, participate in listening circles before 2017 Pride.
4. VPS has committed to holding police accountable for continued trust building work with vulnerable communities beyond the Pride Parade recognizing that this work must be done 365 days of the year.

Inclusion and Accessibility

“What does inclusion mean?”

Feedback

A participant in the community consultation process helped us re-frame VPS thinking about accessibility. They stated that accessibility is important because it allows people to access events, but the aim should really be inclusion, including booking performers who are Deaf and/or PWD, and discussion about disabilities/abilities at VPS events. Most of the feedback around accessibility/inclusion focused on the Pride Parade. Multiple people suggested providing “a shuttle to pick up people from the skytrain,” to help with “difficulty getting to location,” due to “the number of people in the streets and transit shutting down,” making it difficult to get to pre-existing accessibility seating. “Access to seating for PWDs” which are also shaded because “long days in the heat are exhausting,” was brought up by many community consultation participants. “Stairs can be difficult, as well as having to wait a long time in a line up,” and “crowded venues without options to sit or bypass lineups” were identified as access barriers.

Bleachers along the route was brought up as a suggestion to provide more seating to those who do not use mobility devices but require seating, as was having multiple accessibility zones along the route to give people more choice over where they sit. An expansion of accessible bathrooms was suggested as the bathroom situation is currently not adequate, particularly at Sunset Beach and along the parade route. Many participants brought up having “full ASL interpretation” at all events, closed captioning at events, as well as booking POC interpreters for POC performers in order to give a better understanding of cultural exchange. Several participants requested “scent-free environments at events for people with multiple chemical sensitivities. Many people, after they learned about pre-existing supports for PWD, were surprised and said VPS has done a poor job of communicating what is currently in place, and that better pre-event outreach should be done in order to notify PWD what is available.

Strategies

1. VPS will move and restructure the main parade accessibility viewing area to include easier access for people with mobility barriers, improved space for ASL interpreters, better parking and drop-off areas
2. VPS will also add smaller viewing areas on Robson Street and Denman Street
3. VPS will continue to provide ASL interpretation at all of our events
4. VPS will continue to engage in dialogue with queer community members who face accessibility barriers to continually work on making our events more inclusive
5. VPS will arrange tactile performances at East Side Pride for visually impaired folks in partnership with Vocal Eye
6. VPS will provide relaxed performance space at our Stand Out! Awards
7. VPS will actively work to curate performers with differing abilities on our stages
8. VPS will Increase the number of accessible toilets at our festivals
9. VPS commits to a more effective communication plan about our accessibility offerings to ensure those needing to access these supports are aware of them
10. VPS will promote our events as scent reduced spaces and work to educate attendees on what they can personally do to reduce scents

Cost - Participants & Organizations

“Cost of some events are not accessible to low income folks like myself.”

Feedback

Many participants in the consultation identified cost of and at events as a barrier. One pointed to the high “cost of breakfast for day against homophobia” and another said “anything where I have to spend money” creates financial barriers. Some stated that vendor prices are too high. Having “less expensive options for food and beer garden” was brought up as part of the solution, as was having “low-cost events.”

People representing organizations also discussed barriers to participating at VPS events. Several organizations reported historically participating at VPS until the cost became too high, one stating “you have made it impossible for many small non-profit LGBT organizations to participate.” Booth price as well as parade fees were both brought up as financial barriers for small nonprofits, with participants stating “the cost of enrolling” is a barrier, “fees for entry and booths are prohibitive,” and “marching is expensive!”

Strategies

1. All but one (Stand OUT! Awards is a ticketed event) of our Pride 2017 events are free for the public to attend. If cost is a barrier for someone to attend Stand OUT!, they would be eligible to receive ticket assistance.

2. Many people do not realize VPS does not organize ALL of the events that happen during Pride season. We will continue to advertise our events to let participants know they are free to attend.
3. All proceeds from the winter fundraiser, the Unicorn Ball, were allocated to assist small vulnerable or marginalized groups to participate in Pride events by providing funding for banners, t-shirts, costumes or other items associated with participation.
4. VPS employs a year round Community Partnerships Coordinator who is able to create a community partnership agreement which provides lower to no-cost options for community groups to participate in the Pride Parade, festivals and events.

Other

VPS received feedback which did not fit into major themes but we would still like to acknowledge and address them. Lack of shade, heat of the day, not enough toilets, lack of seating, length of the parade, and overcrowding along parade route and at the Sunset Beach festival were brought up. Having events “where I have to go to the West End,” and “getting into Vancouver,” create barriers to attending events. Several people brought up that VPS should provide free water at events. Another had difficulty attending events because they worked weekends. A participant suggested creating more laid back events. Some requested “more beer gardens,” and “more opportunities to purchase alcohol.”

Strategies

1. VPS staff will continue to explore ways to make our event infrastructure as user friendly as possible
2. VPS staff will continue to explore avenues for alternative events and locations to round out our event schedule

What VPS Does Well

“I have never felt so included in a community event, to the point that after my first time there, I had tears in my eyes.”

Feedback

We at VPS were humbled by and grateful for the responses from community members who told us that despite having a lot of work ahead of us, they love coming to our events which is why they want to push us to do better. Thank-you for placing your trust in us. We also greatly appreciate the emotional labor by those who do not attend our events and will not be attending in the future, but who nevertheless took the time and energy to respond to our surveys and

attend our community consultations. One participant stated, “I think that they’re [VPS] open to change, which is important. The people there seem great, there just needs to be more of a focus done with trans people and queer/lesbian folks.” We are happy to say we are very open to change and look forward to incorporating as many suggestions as we can in 2017 and beyond.

“The annual parade which has become a firm part of our culture,” and “the parade itself is a very reassuring ritual” stated members of our community. People stated they looked forward to the “sense of community and fun,” “the ability to communicate one to one,” “rainbows,” “being with other LGBTTS folks,” “diversity and solidarity,” “costumes, friendliness, friends, women’s events,” and “freedom, excitement, decadence.” One participant stated “it often feels like a reunion of all the queer people in my community and a chance to make very visible political statements about the continuing fight for our rights,” and other states they loved “the safety [they] feel walking the streets on Pride Weekend.”

People told us we should continue incorporating “TEN!!!! Made my heart happy,” while another said “I fully supported VPS requiring organizations sign the pledge for gender equality.” Community members told us we should continue to hold “events in historically and culturally relevant sites outside Davie Street/West End,” “open air events,” and the “Clean Sober and Proud event.” Community members enjoyed that we run “several events over several days,” which “reach a broad range of peoples, all ages.” VPS “including the community of persons with disabilities has been so valued,” as well as “the feeling of inclusion I get when listening to the parade described.” Another participant stated “having VocalEye there to describe the parade for the blind is truly amazing... thank-you to the pride society.”

Conclusion

The VPS would like to thank everyone who participated in the Community Consultation process, from in person meetings to anonymous written feedback. We have heard from many community members that people had given up giving feedback to the VPS because it has been ignored. We appreciate the trust you have placed in us as we try and do better. We understand that this is a continual process, not a one-time-fix, and will be continuing to work on the issues raised in 2017 and beyond, while being responsive to the community. We will continue supporting smaller community events because we know we can not be everything to everyone and there is a wealth of talented community organizers in Vancouver who are creating events that will fill needs we will never be able to fill. Please continue to send us your feedback, we welcome your thoughts.