



MUNICIPALITY *of the*
COUNTY *of* KINGS

Pride Event Guests Reflect on Importance of Flying Flags, Celebrating and Reflecting

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The student became the teacher when 16-year-old Izzy Park spoke at the Municipality's Pride Art Exhibition and Flag Raising June 9.

Park, an artist with work on display at the event, stressed the importance of supporting Pride events in a world where gender and relationship diversity is criminalized – and even punishable by a death sentence – in some countries.



“A lot of people wonder why Pride is such a big deal, why we make all of this effort with flags and celebrations and festivals and parades but it’s important for us to fly this flag because in some countries some people are killed for it,” the Annapolis Valley Regional Centre for Education student shared.

“We need to do it for those who can’t, in honour of those who have died for it, in honour of those who hide themselves, hate themselves and have taken their lives - or had their lives taken.”

Park reflected on what it means to live in Canada, where she feels free to feel what she feels and love who she loves.

“I could have been born in a place where my dreams of getting married one day could have never happened. My future is bright but not everyone is so fortunate,” she said.

“Our rights, our freedom, our happiness and our lives should not be privileges to begin with.”

Emma Van Rooyen, a School Health Promoter in the Annapolis Valley, was on Council in 2013 for discussions and decisions that resulted in approval to fly the Pride flag at the Municipal Complex.

“We had to take a vote and it wasn’t unanimous, so I’m reminded of that every year when I come to this Pride Flag Raising and I am grateful to still be here and still see the flag going up and that it doesn’t have to be based on somebody’s opinion about whether or not it’s acceptable,” she said.

Sruthika Saravanan, the Municipality’s Inclusive Communities Intern, spoke of the importance of celebrating Pride for two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and gender-diverse community members and remembering that this includes our neighbours, our family members, our coworkers, and our friends.

“When we raise a flag at this building, we are making a statement: *you belong here*. Today, we raise the Pride flag to say that Kings County sees and welcomes its 2SLGBTQIA+ community,” she said.

Saravanan called on allies to join their 2SLGBTQIA+ peers in being brave in the face of harmful biases and counterproductive stigma.

“It’s time for allies to be just as courageous, because that fight is not over,” she said.

“I hope that you all find that courage – to look inward and challenge yourself, and to look outward and be a part of creating the community we envision, where everyone has the opportunity to feel like they are safe, and they belong.”

Valley Pride representative Lilly Ashdown spoke of the impact of trailblazing activism undertaken by past and current civil rights icons and reminded everyone of the importance of being each other’s guardians.

“We aren't rioting - we are asking for better. We aren't rioting - we are asking for respect. We aren't rioting - we are living our lives and should have every right to do so openly and safely,” said Ashdown, referencing Stonewall and the common practice of framing activism and activists as dangerous by framing protest as a "riot."

The Pride Art Exhibition featuring work by Annapolis Valley Centre for Education students will be on display in the lobby of the Municipal Complex at 181 Coldbrook Village Park Drive for the rest of June. Visitors are welcome to drop in and enjoy the art from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday.