

THE SEAHOSE SOCIETY OF N.S.W. INC. PRESENTS

January 13, 2009

RITE OF PASSAGE No.4

RITE OF PASSAGE: CONSOLIDATION AND SUMMARY
PROPOSAL CONTINUED OF IDENTITY
PROPOSAL OF NATIONAL REGISTER. CONTINUING OUR
CONTRIBUTION TO THE "HUMAN RIGHTS AND DIVERSITY" PROJECT.
(AUSTRALIA)

Welcome to A NEW YEAR 2009.

Before I begin with the continuation of the suggestions for a forward direction for our trans-community, I would like to summarize the journey of passage so far, by presenting a short summary of the previous "Rite OF Passage" papers written.

Firstly, the Rite of Passage was originally formed in 2008 as a means of self-identification, associated with the Seahorse Society of N.S.W. and to let our brother and sister organisations, as well as counsellor and other support groups that this new communication set-up was being used as a broad, communication base, but more specifically to be used for communication and sharing of resources. This program was and still is to be distinct from the rest of our other programs, but remain as part of our on going Society programs.

WHY? And how this eventuated: We, as a part of the trans-community, were approached by the Australian Human Rights and Discrimination to submit a summary of who we are, what we do as a support group, and to present a summary of our activities, programs, etc., and to provide a brief summary of how we see ourselves fitting into the "Big Picture" of the rest of the trans-community. This has now become an on going program.

CONSOLIDATION – SUMMARY OF 2008.

RITE OF PASSAGE No. 1 –

This was used as part of the above request, which led onto the rest of the following.

I submitted a summary of the organisation, known as the Seahorse Society, including summaries of our internal programs, what we ourselves had discovered in research and accumulation of books, documents etc. as well as a providing a detailed document, outlining the phenomena of cross-dressing, with some history, presentation of the main theories of why it exists today, and what are some of the causes and effects of how one is a cross-dressing gender person, and how behaviour and practices impacts on the general Australian Society.

I also wrote 2 books, documenting some of these discoveries and observations, and sharing what I had found with other organisations, as part of my own personal research and presenting examples from my own life journey.

RITE OF PASSAGE No.2

I was asked by the Human Rights Commission to become a part of what I call a discovery of actually finding out who and what organisations were out there.

I began by using our own programs, and part of our own network contacts formed over the last 2 years previous to 2008, and add parts of our "Outreach" and "Big Sister" programs, as well as our general communication programs.

The more that I communicated with other people, the more I found just how isolated each organisation is, and that by doing their own programs, however worthwhile that they might be, including ourselves at the Seahorse Society, we were not keeping up with what is happening around the World, as to social developments and medical discoveries, and finding new ideas to use to support and assist our membership, and others coming into the Society.

This document was a type of invitation presented to all who it was sent to, and specifically asked for information and asks their committees, for a willingness to share resources and information. In other words to become part of the communication bridge, and become a part of a trans-community register.

RITE OF PASSAGE No.3

As this developed through last year, the communication network became like the ripple effect that one experiences, by throwing a pebble into a still pond of water.

I discovered that I used the “box Names”, e.g. Gay, CD, TS, and so on, and I still hate using box terms, but I guess we are all stuck with the good old English language and the adjectives that abound within! During this time, I found many overlaps of purpose and direction, while having discussions with all of these gracious people, regardless of what position or “name” or how they identified themselves as part of the wider community.

What I did discover is that we, as individual organisations are all on the same “like-minded” journey to enlightenment, whether it is here in Australia or overseas. I also found that there were two main expressions of direction that needed addressing.

The first was, and I quote “How can we expect others to understand and be tolerant of us, if we don’t understand and tolerate ourselves, within our own trans-communities”.

The second part of this was we as trans people have a problem with identity and how to achieve this acceptance by the rest of society and change some of the misconceptions and perceptions of who we are, and what we truly represent.

I proposed that we have an identity card system, operating within our own individual organisations, something along the lines that is used in Australia, by the registered clubs, a type of club identity card. This system would then be used in conjunction with a national register of name and statement of all Trans organisations with major public organisations, such as hospitals, counsellors, doctors, law enforcement, etc.

To briefly reiterate how this works. We submit, as organisations, a summary of all our aims and directions, etc., with a email and/or phone contact, if a website is available, but have a recognition internally within our own organisations of the membership cards. See this document for a more detailed explanation of the full proposal. We, at the Seahorse Society have already discussed how to

implement this into our own organisation and I am just awaiting responses from other groups back as to their views on this.

The main statement that is constantly provided on all outgoing communications, under the banner of “Rite of Passage”, is a reminder to everyone that all the above directions for communicating and sharing experiences is not meant as a “take over” bid by any one organisation (government or otherwise) to join all transgroups under one banner, with one policy or one direction dictated to by that one body or by a committee of a type of alliance.

We must, and I repeat, we must all maintain our own individuality of structure and purpose, and of how we perceive all this information. However, we must also communicate and share information and resources to enrich our own experiences and enhance the growth of our own individual communities. To this end, this is my encouragement. This is not a demand to be involved. However, I can see, and I am still encouraged to continue, with this exercise or journey, as so far, it has been worthwhile exercise, even as shown from the results that this relatively new program has already been delivered and achieved.

RITE OF PASSAGE No. 4

The second part of this document is to consolidate the past 3 with new developments still happening and occurring now, even as I write. Hence, a revisit and summary of the last 3 documents. Before beginning the next section of this document, I must again say that this is only suggestions and one way of achieving the forward projection and not the only way.

I would like to look at the register idea and how this could be implemented and how this would operate, as part of the previous plans stated.

What I propose is something along the lines of an already used and in place website used by the government mental health organisation (N.S.W.CAG) Where there is a website or access point where the public or trans-communities can access the following information. Each club or society would be described by name and then a short summary of what they are containing their aims and services offered and a brief explanation of what they are doing at

the moment, by a type of link method as already used. Also a contact phone, web site, or email address would also be stated.

This register would also contain people like us, people like ACON, Life Line, the Gender Centre and so on. I would also suggest that a copy of this register be sent to all hospital and mainframe support groups, as to a quick reference for their own files, to provide contacts for people who need emergency support. Obviously hospitals and government organisations have their own register of counsellors, psychologists, and would need to work internally as to referral positions.

However, would it not be easier even for them to have a register of other reference points of support to go to? For example, if a cross-dresser ends up in a hospital for one reason or another, or even brought to the attention of the police, these organisations may not have any idea as to what they are dealing with, but the situation needs to be addressed.

It would be a lot easier for the professional dealing with the situation, if they had immediate access to information and people, who are involved directly with the particular phenomena, if they wanted to access this resource.

Also in our work as a committee, we receive approaches from many other outside areas, such as counsellors and individuals who come into a situation, and are seeking some answers and support for their situation. We only have a small network at the moment that was originally geared for N.S.W. cities and country areas, but because of our website, and of the ease of greater communication at our disposal, we are getting "hits" at the moment, from not only all over Australia, but from New Zealand as well.

I am not saying that other organisations are not doing their job of support or are inefficient in their methods. What I am saying is that with a register, whether it is web driven, like the N.S.W. CAG) or just a resource for contact that everyone could have the ability to access each other's network. And doing it this way, as I said earlier, we all are retaining our own autonomy and individuality. I am not proposing that we all must register as individual people. The club or society would be the only name on the register, not people's private identity or personal details.

Another spin on this concept is education. I am working on the connection between perception and acceptance within the youth of our country, as to the problems associated with children who are different. This is a major situation and can be a large problem for our youth, whether they are different in how they present or see themselves in public, physical differences, gender expressions, and sexual expression. "Am I gay" or what does that really mean to an adolescent. Then we have the cultural influences and add spiritual inputs as well. Our youth are getting bombarded daily by concepts of life by television, computer networks, newspapers, etc., let alone what the poor teachers and parents are trying to show them. All they see are the main effects demonstrated by the extremes, for example, youth suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, live for today carried to the extreme, no responsibilities for actions, fast cars, excitement, lifestyle experimenting, thrill seeking, and to hang the consequences. However, how can I find who I really am and how I fit in as I navigate through this mine field of ideas?

From my own life example. When I was at college many years ago, I recognised my need to crossdress in female attire and I thought it was just a phase or a fetish (what ever that meant). I knew that I had this drive. I could not control it and I knew that I would probably be accepted in the then gay community, so therefore I must be gay.

In fact at that time, over 40 years ago, there existed in Australia a very 'them and us' attitude. You definitely did not associate with 'them'. I had many problems in family life and relationships because of the secrecy involved and my inner frustrations that, of course, became manifest in obnoxious antisocial behaviour, as we call it today.

I sought help from counsellors, priests, etc., They tried in their own way and with their limited understanding of the phenomena to support me, and please remember, I am not condemning them at all for their lack of knowledge, I am saying that things could have turned out very differently for me, had I not had the good friendship with a very understanding gay person in my class at the time. My point was that this person shared his journey with me at that time and we both learned from the experience of debates and learning.

How do we learn to understand ourselves?

All of us, at some stage in our lives, need to take stock of who we are honestly and be true to that identity that we find and try to understand. How this is achieved is by sharing our life experience, our thoughts and our dreams, and listening to how others have handled similar situations and problems.

How can we access some of this? Well now I am back to my suggestion? The next question is how can we “educate”, for want of a better word, others outside our own communities and help our youth and the general public to understand about us. We must find “us” first, and then accept who and what we are (our own personal perceptions), and then when the opportunity presents itself, share our life’s gifts with others. Notice I said share not demand acceptance from others of whom or what we are. It is a very thin line to walk indeed.

By already having and using this type of resource, via our website, again I have found that even doing the limited Outreach seminars and public presentations when asked for, by people who approach our Society, because of the “register” principle being adapted on our website (the links etc,) we are slowly, in our own small way already becoming an influence on and changing public perceptions of the trans-community. That is how we present ourselves, as members of this greater wonderful trans-community. We are not just "us". We are a community with our own individuality, and part of a wider trans-community.

So, back to where we started, the “pebble in the still water principle”. Like everyone else, I also am open to suggestions and outlooks and, again, I ask you all to join me, and share with me at this exciting time in the communication development. I am only offering ideas and hopefully building on some of the many already existing successful programs that are in existence today.

I thank you for the opportunity to communicate with you today and for your reading of this paper. Note that any part of this document may be reproduced with the permission of the author.

With regards

Phil/Julia (President of the Seahorse Society Of N.S.W. INC.) 2009

