



## “Out” in the Field: NFU-O celebrates Pride Month by highlighting LGBTQ+ farmers

In the early hours of June 28, 1969, the New York City police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay club located in Greenwich Village in New York City, and sparked a riot among bar patrons and neighbourhood residents that lasted six days. This event is remembered as the “Stonewall Uprising”, and though by no means was it the only event of its kind, will forever be recognized as a turning point for the Gay Liberation Movement in the United States. Its legacy lives on in the celebration of “Pride Month” in June: a month-long series of parades, picnics, parties, concerts, and memorials, among other festivities, to acknowledge and celebrate LGBTQ+ community and queer histories.

Elizabeth Snyder and Maureen Bostock have been together for 39 years and began farming in northwest British Columbia where they met. They kept livestock and grew vegetables at Crows Nest Farm until 2002 when they moved to eastern Ontario and restarted their vegetable operation at Sweet Meadow Farm near Balderson, ON.

“From the very beginning we were determined to be out and proud and do what we could to foster pride.” They were part of the Terrace Rainbow Committee, a group in northern British Columbia which took the City of Terrace to the Human Rights Commission when the city refused to acknowledge the celebration of “Pride Day”. Throughout the process, Maureen and Elizabeth became more aware of the ways in which homophobia and transphobia presented itself; not just in overt harassment, but also through more discreet means including discrimination in the housing market. The group won their case and in northern British Columbia “Pride Day” continues to be celebrated on July 5.



**Above: Maureen (back) and Elizabeth (front) in the hay field at Crows Nest Farm, near Terrace BC.**



**Right: Simone (left) and Celeste (right) are the owners of Slow Growing Farm and the organizers of Not Your Fathers Farm Conference.**

Maureen and Elizabeth have, and will, always believe in honouring the reality of their life. “By living our truth, we have found that our friends, neighbours and coworkers moved past their homophobic fears and we’ve welcomed them as collaborators and supporters of our farming life.”

Since the days Terrace Rainbow Committee won their case, the country has come a long way. The Toronto Pride Parade – the country’s largest, typically held on the first Saturday in July – in recent years has had an estimated attendance of 100,000 people, all there to celebrate LGBTQ+ social and self acceptance, achievements, legal rights, and pride. Still there is a more conversation to be had about the acceptance and celebration of queer folks, particularly in rural communities where the majority of farming takes place.

Celeste Lopreiato and her partner Simone, own and operate Slow Growing Farm in Marketdale, ON, and are in the midst of planning one of the first farm conferences for folks

in the gender minority, Not Your Fathers Farm Conference. “As one of few BIPOC, Queer & Womxn-owned farms and farm-adjacent businesses in our region, we hope the conference will connect our growing community, and provide a safe space to learn, and teach each other, how to create opportunities and a voice for ourselves in farming.”

Says Celeste, “To me, being a Queer farmer is part of radicalizing a very hetero-normative industry. The “traditional male farmer and his wife” is an archetype that is changing, and people who previously didn’t think their identity could include “farmer” are starting to see a space for them in agriculture.”

Celeste, Simone and like-minded other farmers are continuing the conversation Maureen and Elizabeth were having in the 2000s in British Columbia. They too value the ecological, small-scale approach to farming attributed to our idea of the “family farm”. Their vision for the future just conceives of a more inclusive family photo.

Happy Pride month!