

# Working with Queer Boys and Men Who Have Been Sexually Abused

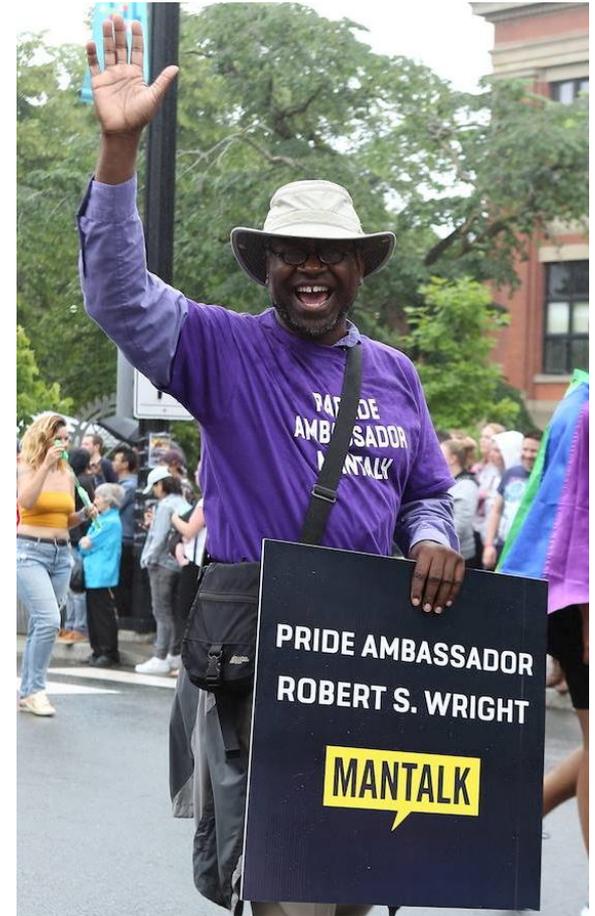
21<sup>st</sup> ANNUAL MASOC/MATSA JOINT CONFERENCE

April 3 – 5, 2019

Marlborough, Massachusetts

# Who is Robert Wright?

- Social Work Private Practitioner, direct practice and forensics
- Ex. Dir. Peoples' Counselling Clinic
- Founder ManTalk
- Former:
  - Ex. Dir. NSCYS
  - Ex. Dir. FCSCC
  - RR-Coord, DDSB



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# MANTALK

Are you a man over the  
age of 19 who has been  
sexually abused?

Would you like to talk  
to other men about that  
shared experience?

# Land Acknowledgement



“I would like to acknowledge that we meet on lands that are the traditional territories of the First Nations that originally settled on this land. Among them are the Nipmuc peoples. I would also like to acknowledge that racism is

North America's "original sin" that is at the root of all current social inequities. Acts of reconciliation and reparations, both symbolic and substantial, are critical to our collective emancipation and the ability to live peacefully and sustainably on this land.

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# My Work with Queer Boys and Men

- YMCA camp counsellor
  - CHINS kids in MA in late '80s
  - SSW at-risk youth (mainly boys) in early '90s
  - Child welfare worker, supervisor, director
  - WSP SHU male institution, mid '90s
  - IWK Child Protection Social Worker
  - Ex. Dir. Child and Youth Strategy, NS
  - Ex. Dir. Non-profit counselling
- In all these settings I worked with queer boys

# Case Study

- This presentation will make reference to matters that are dramatic cases that occurred in Nova Scotia.
- I am not sharing privileged material and will refer mainly to matters well covered by the media.

# Why Talk About Queer Boys and Men?



In September 2012 a 16yr old boy was “chained and held captive” for 2 weeks by 2 men and raped by a

third man in this small home in rural Nova Scotia.

(Go to story)

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# Case and Aftermath

- The boy escaped his captors twice.
- Once he was caught by them
- The second time he went to two neighbors' homes before he got help
- Subsequent stories focussed on the “manhunt”.
- Trials of the perpetrators were widely covered.
- Little was studied about how such a thing could occur.

# Why Talk About Queer Boys?



On April 4, 2013, **Rehtaeh Parsons**, a 17-year-old female high school student, attempted suicide by hanging. Her subsequent death has

been attributed to online distribution of photos of a gang rape that occurred 17 months prior.

(Go to story)

# Case and Aftermath

- Her death sparked a provincial outrage
- Nova Scotia enacted cyberbullying law in August 2013
- Province commissions a report of School System's response/support for Parsons
- Second inquiry into conduct of Public Prosecution was commissioned
- Sexual violence strategy was initiated

# The Contrast Is Telling

- There is limited interest in male victimization
- Male victims' perpetrators are incidental monsters – response is manhunt
- Female victims' perpetrators are part of a cultural phenomenon – response is comprehensive strategy

# Your Questions as we Begin

- What must you take from this session in order for it to be of value to you?
- Take a minute to speak with one person before sharing.

# Little Interest in Male Victimization

- Fred Mathews authored *The Invisible Boy: Revisioning the Victimization of Male Children and Teens*, in 1996.
- In 2002, he was conference co-chair for *Canadian Boys: Untold Stories, the First National Conference on the Status of Male Children in Canada*.
- Little interest has been shown in studying the needs and issues of boys/men in Canada since.

# Incidence

- Shifting dramatically
  - Old data suggested 90% of victims were female
  - 1 in 3 women vs. 1 in 6 men
  - 2013 NCVS found 38% of victims were male
  - 2010 NIPSVS found incidence as ~50%
  - BJS surveys – 89% male juvenile victims abused by female staff

# Stats May be Highly Sensitive

- Gender norms are shaking up allowing men to report
- Recent incidents of mass abuse of boys:
  - Sheldon Kennedy, Mount Cashel, Shelburne School for Boys, Antigonish Diocese, PHYB, E. F. MacIntosh, Cardinal Law, etc. etc.

# Highest Risk Males

- Persons of colour, disabled, aboriginal boys at greater risk
- Queer boys at high risk
- Boys with intersecting identities at highest risk

# Who Are Queer Boys?

- Gay, bi, effeminate, gender-nonconforming, questioning, nonheteronormative, kinky, asexual, trans, . . . Are all queer boys.
- Queer boys grow up to be queer men.

# Understand to Treat

- One principle of cultural competence is that you must understand the socio-cultural reality of the client in order to best serve them

# Cultural Competence: Definition

- Cultural competence refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures, and to manage and promote diversity and inclusion:
  - A. Acknowledge and address hostility towards diversity\*\*
  - B. Understand our own cultural positions and how they differ from others
  - C. Understand the different social and cultural realities we work in**
  - D. Cultivate appropriate attitudes towards cultural difference
  - E. Generate and interpret a variety of verbal and non-verbal responses
  - F. Understand structural oppression and commit to social justice
  - G. Cultivate the ability to manage diversity tensions and conflicts in a way that promotes inclusion and improved team effectiveness\*\*

# My Response to the Case

- Closely followed “chained and detained”
- Wrote an open letter to Dir. CYS
- Gathered a panel of queer elders and activists to ask 5 questions
- Became a member of Canadian Professional Association for Trans Health

# Q1. The Case/Phenomenon

- What do you make of this (this case or phenomenon)?
  - perpetrators were well known – were cruisy in gay circles – known for taking young guys home
  - Young, vulnerable queer boys often offered support
  - Spoke of the dark underbelly, and “gay uncle”
  - Housing, substances, cash, sometimes exchanged
  - “Chicken hawk” a derogatory term

# Q2. The Problems of Queer Boys

- What do you know or suspect about the status of sexually exploited boys in Nova Scotia?
  - Samuel, at 35, after completing his masters degree left a 20 year relationship with his partner who is 20 years his senior.
  - Stewart, at 17, after partying with the girls and turning tricks for small favours, gets trafficked and taken to SW Ontario where he is branded and kept for 2 years.

# The Queer Teen is Still At-risk

- Despite Savin-Williams assertion to the contrary, gay teens are still at risk. (S-W wrote *The New Gay Teenager* in 2005)
- Though there is more acceptance and services (youth project, gay-straight alliances, etc.) gay youth are still marginalized

# The Queer Teen is Still At-risk 2

- Queer youth dramatically overrepresented:
  - Child abuse (of all types)
  - Isolation and bullying from peers
  - Mental health problems, including suicide
  - Sexual assault, exploitation, trafficking
  - Homelessness
  - Drop out
  - Underemployment
  - Generally disrupted development
  - Substance abuse

# The Boy in Question

- Was 16 and disconnected from his rural family
- Was “living on the streets” in Halifax
- Was a user of the shelter system
  
- Was he involved in survival sex trade?
- Was he queer/questioning?

# Other Boys

- Online personal ad c. 2015:
  - 20yr old twink, broke need rent money
  - City: Halifax, NS-Nova Scotia
  - I'm: Escort/Massage, Position: Versatile, Cock Size: Average, uncut
  - Height: 5' 5" (165cm), Weight: 150lbs (68kg)
  - Ethnicity: Caucasian
  - Safer Sex: Always
- hey looking to make some money lol pm me, New to this looking for anything really need \$ atm broke looking for decent amount :( or a friend maybe that can teach me dress me and \$spoil me and maybe even leave me move in :) ps send a cell number i can txt to:))
- Viewed 1726 Times

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- Birmingham
- Dothan
- Gadsden
- Huntsville
- Mobile
- Montgomery
- Muscle Shoals
- Tuscaloosa

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Other agencies participating in and supporting the enforcement action include the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona, the U.S. Department of Justice's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Central District of California, the office of the California Attorney General, and the office of the Texas Attorney General.

Additional information will be provided at around 6:00 pm EST on Friday, April 6, by the U.S. Department of Justice, and all media inquiries should be directed to the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Public Affairs at 202-514-2007 and [press@usdoj.gov](mailto:press@usdoj.gov).

**April 6, 2018**

# Q3. Root Causes of Vulnerability

- What are the root causes of this phenomenon?
  - Homophobia and toxic masculinity are the root cause of the silence that enables the abuse of queer boys go unchecked
  - Boys who are abused by men fear being thought to be gay; those abused by women fear they will not be seen as “manly” if they complain

# Q4. Challenges and Opportunities

- What are the challenges and opportunities that exist related to engaging this issue?
  - Finding/making greater space for the stories of male victims is the greatest challenge
  - Creating micro-climates that promote disclosure and have resources to respond
  - Expanding awareness of the problem of SA creates space for issues of boys and men to be sensitively advanced

# Protecting and Engaging

- #1 protective factor – accepting home environment
- Accepting, queer norming in school & community
  - Use of gender neutral and queer norming language
  - Be knowledgeable and unflappable about gay sex culture
  - Understand and share limits of “duty to report”
  - Display representation of queer culture
  - Openly discuss healthy sex-positivity, promoting consent
  - Explicitly ask about sex, gender and orientation at intake
  - Be a visible community ally and activist organization

## Q5. How to

- What would successful engagement in this issue look like?
  - Fred Mathews, author of *The Invisible Boy: Revisioning the Victimization of Male Children and Teens*; and *Breaking silence, creating hope : help for adults who molest children* created a set of principles to guide engagement with men and boys

# Mathews' Principles 1-3

- Insist on a true and inclusive national dialogue on abuse and violence that includes the stories of male children and youth in all their diversity.
- Support male victims as they search for balance in their struggle to heal.
- Confront all sources of gender stereotypes, jokes or humorous media images and biased research that minimize, support or render invisible the victimization of male children and youth.

# Mathews' Principles 4-6

- Confront and hold accountable anyone who applies double standards, minimizes or portrays boy's victimization experiences as harmless or rare.
- Eliminate the inexcusable and significant knowledge gap about male victims that exists in colleges and universities that prepare professionals to work with children and youth.
- Provide opportunities for boys to name their victimization and abuse experiences and tell their stories in their own words.

# Mathews' Principles 7-9

- Honour and protect female victims' gains and women's leadership in breaking the silence about violence and abuse.
- Support the aspirations of girls and young women in all their diversity to full humanness and equality and demand the same for boys and young men.
- Envision the empowerment of all stores into a coherent and inclusive perspective that we can collectively and respectfully own and use in the struggle to reduce and eliminate interpersonal violence and aggression.

# Treatment for Boys & Men

- Some excellent resources have been developed
- ManTalk uses Singer's: Evicting the Perpetrator; and Lew's: Victims No Longer as reference texts
- Group treatment is highly effective – addresses social isolation and idea of “unicorn” syndrome
- Psycho-ed, narrative, psycho-social development, attachment, relationships, trauma

# Trauma Work Culturally Informed

- Review Trauma Model
- Socio-cultural construction of trauma
- Socio-cultural healing from trauma

# Discussion, Q&A

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# Questions

- How do queer boys and men assess your competence?
- How competent are you to hear the stories of queer boys?
- How knowledgeable are you about the experience of queer males in your community?
- How competent are you to bring socio-cultural healing into your clinical work?
- How accepting of queer boys/men is your community?

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