

KEN COOLEN

I joined the Vancouver Pride Society six years ago and was not prepared for the amazing journey it would take me on. I was like many who just saw Pride as a time to celebrate our community, but have come to learn that Pride is so very much more.

Since joining Pride, I have been able to see the growth we have made in terms of events, infrastructure, education, outreach, and community involvement. We as an organization have changed people's lives, and given opportunities for people to celebrate and embrace their authentic self.

During my time as President, Pride has taken on many tremendous yet important challenges in terms of growth. In 2010 we started with strategic planning which has set the groundwork for many important changes. Pride went from being a working board to having an office with four full time employees, including a general manager. Pride grew to include events to engage more of our community including the Pride Trans BBQ and the Pride Seniors Dance and continue to find ways to raise the year-round profile of VPS. We reached out to Prides across the province and beyond and found ways to support and engage them, including the first ever BC Pride Summit which happened last year. Pride engaged our local LGBTTTQ groups by collaborating and participating in many different ways.

It was a team of truly outstanding and diverse individuals that has accomplished all of this. I truly believe my gift of bringing people together who align with the complex vision of Pride is what has made all of this possible. I have and will continue to be an active part of the LGBTTTQ community in Vancouver, throughout our province and beyond. Connecting and listening to people from all the parts of our community has been the key to my success and will continue to be the guiding force behind the direction of our organization. Understanding what Pride means to our community is best understood by the building of relationships both personal and organizational. VPS as an organization and myself as an individual have created a bond and a trust with many of these organizations and the people who lead them. Creating a confidence in Pride as an open-door organization is what I will continue to strive for in my next term.

Pride is in the midst of a very important transition, which is what has been a focus for the board and myself for the past three years. Many things have been accomplished as we move from being a working board to a board governed/staff operational organization. Providing an opportunity to attract more diverse and passionate members of our community to step up and be involved is what will continue to strengthen and grow our organization.

I commit to serving my second term as President, continuing this transition. To stay active in all aspects of our great community and to always be conscious of the diverse and amazing community I represent.

Yours in Pride, Ken Coolen

President/Vice-president/Secretary/Treasurer