



Grand Pride Wedding sees 110 couples wed

'We're really jealous of Canada' says Taiwanese woman marrying partner

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Inae Lee knew she wouldn't have the support of her South Korean parents as she wedded her partner in Toronto today, but she's hoped the 109 other couples tying the knot beside her would make up for her family's rejection of her relationship.

Lee was just one of the participants in a mass wedding for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and two-spirited couples, considered the first of its kind in Canada.

The Grand Pride Wedding involved couples from across Canada, as well as participants from countries where same-sex marriage is illegal.

- [Grand Pride Wedding showcases equality, diversity and fashion](#)

For Lee, the event was historically significant.

"In my parents' mind, they don't believe that this can be celebrated. In their mind, it's something that's illegal, it's something that's not allowed, it's very sinful," 28-year-old Lee said.

"I really want to let them know that we are celebrated, and it's OK for us to get married."



Gay couples from around the world gathered in Toronto for a symbolic mass wedding ceremony Thursday. (Patrick Morrell/CBC)

Lee married Jenny Chang Ho, who is originally from Venezuela. The pair met in Toronto two years ago and have been together ever since.

"This actually makes us appreciate more that we're able to do this and be able to live in Canada," Chang Ho said. "It's very accepting and more diverse than other countries."

Canada's first legally recognized same-sex marriage took place on June 10, 2003, just hours after Ontario's Court of Appeal pronounced the Canadian law on traditional marriage unconstitutional.

Other provinces followed suit and the federal government passed legislation to permit same-sex marriage countrywide two years later with the gender-neutral Civil Marriage Act.

'We're really jealous of Canada'

For Cindy Su and her partner Lana Yu, Canada is a leading example when it comes to the acceptance of same-sex couples.

"We're really jealous of Canada," said Su, who travelled with Yu from Taiwan to tie the knot in Toronto. "We're looking forward to this happening in our country."

Both women spent time studying in Canada years ago, but only met four years ago in Taiwan. Although Yu's parents don't know about Su, the couple is determined to move their relationship forward and plan to try in vitro fertilization in Vancouver after the wedding.

"We figured we didn't really want any objection to stop us from doing what we want in life," she said. "I'm actually looking forward to what happens when we go back. Obviously, maybe in the future there will be some problems with the legality but now that we want to start a family, we have to be really brave."

About 1,000 attending

Organizers forecast up to 1,000 people would attend the Grand Pride Wedding, which is believed to be the largest of its kind in North America.

The setting was Casa Loma, a palatial Toronto home built between 1911 and 1914, which has since become a popular tourist attraction and event venue.

Liberty Entertainment Group, which operates the facility and hosted the event, absorbed all the costs, with the couples only having to pay for an Ontario marriage licence.



Two husbands-to-be wait to get married in the mass wedding at Casa Loma. (Patrick Morrell/CBC)

The venue is of particular significance for Windsor, Ont., resident Aaron Bergeron, who was marrying partner Kenneth Grundy. They first visited Casa Loma when they were in Toronto two years ago.

"We were walking around in it and I was like 'how awesome would it be to get married here,'" Bergeron said. "When we found out that that's where they were having the giant ceremony, I was like, this has to happen."

Despite the significance — and scale — of the celebration, some warn that the rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders, queers and two-spirited people (a First Nations term for individuals who are considered to be neither women nor men) still can't be taken for granted.

"This says a lot about acceptance and change in our society," said Helen Kennedy, executive director of national charity Egale, which was involved in planning the "big fat gay wedding."

"We constantly hear things like 'oh, now you have marriage, now what do you want.' "

Kennedy added that more work still needs to be done to combat issues like homophobic bullying, hate crimes and an overrepresentation of LGBTQ individuals among the homeless.

"It's an amazing thing for these couples to express their love and devotion for each other in this ceremony, but we have to remember all of those other people who are still struggling."