

Mac celebrates NCOD

The MSU challenges homophobia and trans-phobia to promote a more inclusive community

Natalie Timperio

Senior InsideOut Editor

“We’re here, we’re queer, and we’re fabulous!”

Perhaps these words, claimed by Vilma Rossi, Program Coordinator for the Office of Human Rights and Equity Services, best encapsulate National Coming Out Day (NCOD), celebrated this past Tuesday in the Student Centre atrium.

Tuesday represented McMaster’s very first celebration of NCOD and was primarily focused on breaking down homophobia and trans-phobia.

“NCOD ... started with a gay rights march in Washington, D.C., that has now spread around the world,” said Chris Erl, SRA-Humanities and MSU Executive Board member.

The event was organized by the MSU in partnership with Human Rights and Equity Services, Diversity Services, the SRA, the Feminist Alliance McMaster (FAM) and numerous other allies like gay rights organizations in the community such as The Well—Hamilton’s LGBTQ community wellness centre.

The event marks a milestone in the MSU’s anti-oppression campaign, stemming from an anti-oppression policy created by the MSU this past September.

Erl said that the anti-oppression policy “shows that there is a new direction for students; it shows that their representatives aren’t just there to discuss where the vending machines go in the Student Centre or what kind of coffee we have in the Union Market.

It shows that we are taking a stand on social issues that actually matter; that affect all students on this campus.”

Raven Tam, Queer Students Community Center (QSCC) Coordinator, also said that NCOD “ties into the larger MSU anti-oppression campaign. I think the anti-oppression campaigns that will be going on in the coming years are going to be really helpful in making it obvious to newcomers to Mac,

and potential people who may be thinking about applying to Mac, that Mac is a safe place [for those who are queer].”

Though in previous years the MSU has not put a lot of focus or effort into such matters, Erl noted it is something that they are now beginning to take a stand on and will continue to.

“It’s [the MSU’s] responsibility to represent everybody and that’s why [we are] tackling homophobia, trans-phobia, and religious discrimination, which includes Islam-phobia and anti-Semitism [and] ableism.”

Rossi said that NCOD and the MSU’s anti-oppression campaign extend beyond the McMaster student experience as well.

“Our take on the event [was] Coming Out at Work day because there really is a very strong recognition that people do not leave parts of themselves at the front door,” said Rossi of the Human Rights and Equity Services’ goal.

“We want to encourage people and employers to create a safe space where everybody could be all of who they are in the workplace ... [to be] a much more engaged and productive employee. So it’s a win-win situation; the employer gets recognized for building an inclusive community and in return employees are much more satisfied.”

Emphasizing the connectedness within the McMaster community as a whole was one of the central focuses of NCOD and still is for the MSU’s anti-oppression campaign.

“There is a large community of people [oppression] affects, and it affects everybody if there’s discrimination on campus; it affects the structure of our Union, it affects our ability to represent all people and so I think it’s our responsibility to take on social activism roles,” said Erl.

Whether straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, transsexual, queer or questioning, the participants of NCOD produced one salient message: closets are for clothes.



Students and staff alike congregated in the MUSC Atrium for NOCD.

MSU’s Night Market madness



TYLER HAYWARD / SENIOR PHOTO EDITOR

Delicious treats and eats alongside live performances at the MSU Night Market.

Katherine George

Silhouette Staff

An assembly of students gathered in the McMaster University Student Center (MUSC) on Tuesday Oct. 11 for the McMaster Students Union (MSU) Night Market event.

Beginning at 6 p.m. and running throughout the evening until 10:30 p.m., this event was organized by the MSU Diversity Services in collaboration with MacBEAT, McMaster Breakdancing club and the Canadian Asian Student Society (CASS).

Inspiration for the MSU Market Night was derived from East and South-East Asia, where a similar type of a street market takes place. The objective is an interactive shopping environment where individuals are able to purchase a variety of items from different vendors within the surrounding Hamilton area and to experience what McMaster has to offer.

Items that were available from the various vendors included eco-friendly clothing made organically with bamboo, jewellery, decorative household items such as colourful magnets, bright pillows, and pictures.

In addition to some leisurely shopping, MSU services and student clubs hosted a variety of games where students had the chance to win prizes.

In addition, psychics, henna tattoo artists, and caricaturists were just a few of the many special activities available on this night.

Although entrance to the

event was free, attendees who purchased a Night Market Pass in advance were given free access to all of these special activities.

Not only were there special activities, but the MSU Night Market also gave individuals a chance to indulge in food, which was provided by Paradise Catering.

Sticking to the theme of cultural diversity, the food was traditional Asian cuisine which included dishes such as spanakopita, samosas, bubble tea in addition to delicious desserts including fruit kabobs and tiramisu.

In between the shopping, games, activities and food, there were multiple performances that ran continuously throughout the night that helped to keep the energy alive. Performers included the McMaster Breakdancing Club and McMaster Marching Band, Chris the Magician, McMaster Poetry & Writing Society, Mac Beatboxing, School of Bhangra and many more.

Elora Bibby, a fourth year McMaster nursing student, said that “events like these are great because they encourage students to get involved, interact with new people and enjoy a chance to have fun while learning about cultural diversity.”

Numerous students who did not purchase a Night Market Pass were found curiously wandering into the event in order to catch a glimpse of the commotion.

Attendees who did purchase a pass were present most of the night enjoying the diverse array of food and live performances.