

## We Could All Us a Smile These Days

*Stephen Ditchburn, Rainbow Elders Calgary*

In the good ol' days of way back when, which were just a handful of months ago, I would have looked at you a bit strangely if you had mentioned social distancing to me or told me that you were going into self-isolation. And what was this strange thing everyone was talking about, peculiarly named after a Mexican *cervasa*, this scary, unknown threat called coronavirus or COVID-19 as some folk were calling it?

If you'd told me that groups of more than ten will be banned in our free society, or that all sports would cease and restaurants, pubs, shops would be forced to close I would have wondered what you had put on your corn flakes that morning.

I would have laughed if you'd told me that all schools would be closed, people would be told to work from home, millions would be unemployed and we'd be wearing masks and gloves to pop out for milk. I never would have imagined us here in Canada, this modern land of abundance, ever having empty shelves in supermarkets, places in which there would be position markers (stay two metres away!) and arrows on the floors because the aisles were now one way. And, really, suggesting that I'd have to line up to get into Walmart or Dollarama - what? Are you bonkers?

The numbers seem to be flying in every minute in the news and on the internet. The number of new deaths here, in Alberta, in Canada and around the world or the number of new cases and total numbers of everything from everywhere. There are now predications regarding when this whole thing will peak and some folk are even suggesting when we will be able to resume our normal lives, whatever they may be.

Rainbow Elders Calgary is a support group for LGBTQ+ seniors. Sadly, like everyone else, we have not been able to get together for our usual Friday afternoon meetings at Kerby Centre. We've tried to connect with each other using the video conferencing program called Zoom. We've had limited success with it but will not give up!

During this unprecedented time, many of us are feeling sad and lonely. We are realising just how much we need each other; how much we long to be with our friends and families or how we could all use a big hug.

Our mental health and well-being are suffering these days, so perhaps it's time to brighten the day a bit with a bit of music and a laugh or two. With everyone stuck at home and with oodles of free time, many great things have been posted on the internet. To help guide you we've placed a few of these memorable, inspiring or funny videos on a special page of our website at <https://tinyurl.com/yczlw59s> (or follow the link at [CalgaryRainbowElders.ca](http://CalgaryRainbowElders.ca)).

Turn on "Full Screen" for the an amazing collaboration between the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra and the Edmonton Symphony as they perform together but in isolation from their own home. *Sound of Music* fans, you're in luck and you'll love the COVID-19 version of "Do Re Me." There are some excellent videos that feature Cyndi Lauper's "True Colours," a song which has become an anthem in the LGBTQ+ world and "Hallelujah" is performed by a virtual choir in South Africa.

I don't think I have ever quoted the Queen, but she summed things up very well in early April in her speech to Great Britain, the Commonwealth and the world: " We should take comfort that while we may have more still to endure, better days will return: we will be with our friends again; we will be with our families again; we will meet again."

So from everyone at Rainbow Elders Calgary, take care and stay safe. We will get through this together.

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Rainbow Elders Calgary is a passionate group of volunteers who work to promote awareness of the issues and concerns of LGBTQ+ seniors. Visit us at [www.rainbowelderscalgary.ca](http://www.rainbowelderscalgary.ca) or email: [rainbowelderscalgary@gmail.com](mailto:rainbowelderscalgary@gmail.com).