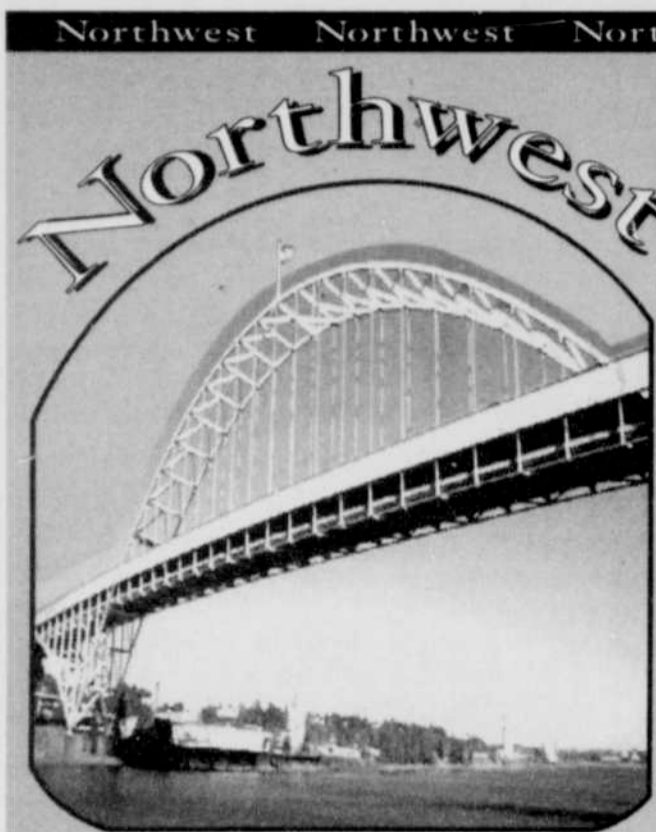


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**WORLD news**



"You may now kiss the groom": Michael Leshner (left) and Michael Stark tie the knot June 10

**CANADA**

The Canadian edition of *Time* magazine chose Michael Leshner and Michael Stark, the first same-sex couple in the country to receive a marriage license, as "Canadian Newsmakers of the Year."

Mid-2003 court decisions in Ontario and British Columbia legalized full same-sex marriage in those provinces, effective immediately. The federal government accepted the rulings and is expected to enact legislation opening up marriage nationwide.

*Time* Canada bureau chief Steven Frank said "the Michaels' " wedding started a cultural revolution and symbolizes the unprecedented acceleration of social liberalism in the country. Only two other nations, the Netherlands and Belgium, offer gay couples access to full marriage as opposed to civil unions or domestic partnerships.

"From gay marriage to moves to decriminalize marijuana and provide supervised injection booths for drug addicts in Vancouver, 2003 will go down in history as the year that Canada rethought what was taboo," Frank said. "The explanation for that broad social shift lies in deep, structural changes to Canadian society, which has steadily become both more urban and more multicultural. But it would not have happened so fast had individual men and women not pushed for change. And so, for passionately and shamelessly jumping into the front lines—and headlines—of a bitter issue, for delivering a bracing national wake-up call with eloquent and at times outrageous sound bites and public appearances, the Michaels are *Time's* Canadian Newsmakers of the Year."

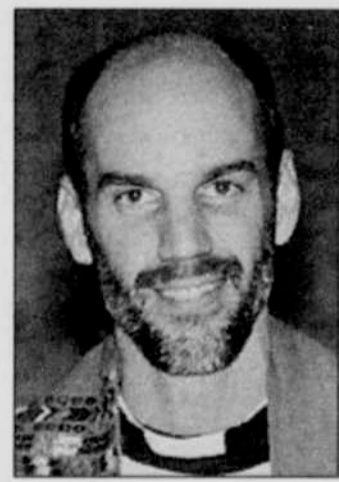
Some 2,000 gay couples—600 of them from the United States—got married in Ontario and British Columbia last year. Foreign same-sex couples can travel to the provinces, buy a license and get married the same day.

The Anglican bishop in Vancouver, British Columbia, has closed down a church in Abbotsford that refused to endorse same-sex unions.

Bishop Michael Ingham initiated gay union ceremonies in the Diocese of New Westminster in May. He ordered Holy Cross Church closed Dec. 23 after the parish rejected his authority and sought to align itself with the Anglican bishop of the Yukon, Terrence Buckle, who is less gay-supportive.

Buckle now faces charges of improperly interfering in Ingham's diocese. Holy Cross's pastor, the Rev. James Wagner, celebrated Christmas Mass despite the closing.

"Can you imagine abandoning my people at this point and not serving them Communion on



The Rev. James Wagner's B.C. church was closed down for refusing to endorse same-sex unions

Christmas Day?" he asked the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. "I can't do that to them."

Gay men and lesbians won a nationwide class-action lawsuit Dec. 18 to gain equal access to Canada Pension Plan benefits.

When the federal government extended numerous spousal benefits to same-sex couples in 2000, it arbitrarily chose 1998 as the date for retroactive access to pensions. Now, the benefits will be available to any gay man or lesbian whose partner died anytime after April 17, 1985—the date on which equality guarantees were included in Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

According to Toronto's *Globe and Mail*, the judgment will affect about 1,500 people and result in pension payments of more than \$75 million. The federal government could appeal the decision to a higher court.

The theme for Toronto's 2004 Gay Pride celebration will be "Pride: Bursting with Fruit Flavors."

According to the Toronto gay newspaper *Xtra!*, "It might be a mouthful, but at least it's easy to accessorize with, especially compared to last year's theme, 'Pride 3D: Diverse, Defiant, Divine.'" The parade, which likely will include multiple Carmen Mirandas, is June 27.

Pride Toronto co-chairwoman Ayse Turak told *Xtra!*: " 'Bursting' relates movement, velocity and actions symbolizing the propulsion of the queer community's endeavors. 'Fruit' acknowledges our reclamation and reintroduction of the word as a celebratory affirmation of our diversity. And 'Flavors' solidifies our message that the LGBTTIQ community is a diverse and delightful mosaic empowered by a multitude of individuality."

**UNITED KINGDOM**

Jamaican reggae star Bounty Killer canceled concerts Dec. 5 and 6 in England after a gay rights group urged cops to arrest him on charges of inciting violence against homosexuals.

At the request of OutRage! police warned the venues—the White Pearl Club in Birmingham and the Stratford Rex in London—that they could be found guilty of aiding and abetting criminal offenses if Bounty Killer performed his hit songs calling for gays to be burned, drowned, stoned, wiped out and murdered.

"The cancellation of his concerts is a victory over homophobia in pop music," said Peter Tatchell of OutRage! "Our aim is to make Britain a no-go area for singers who incite violence against gay people and other minorities."

Among Bounty Killer's lyrics: "Bun a fire pon a kuh pon mister fagoty. Poop man fi drown a dat a yawd man philosophy (Uh huh)." The translation, OutRage! said, is: "Burn the queer. Men who have anal sex should be drowned, that's a yardie man's philosophy."

Also: "Hear this likkle punk guh sing a batty-man concept. To kill dis yah fool, to me dat is no stress. Murder dem fast just like a Federal Express." Translation: "Hear this little punk who sings a queer song. To kill this fool, to me that is no stress. Murder him fast, like Federal Express."

Spokesmen for the two clubs said Bounty Killer, whose real name is Rodney Price, canceled the shows because he missed his flight from Jamaica.

Cross-dressing artist Grayson Perry won Britain's most prestigious contemporary art award, the Turner Prize, Dec. 7.

The 43-year-old decorates ceramic vases with disturbing depictions of pedophilia and violence against children, among other themes. Dressed in drag as "Claire," Perry collected his \$35,000 prize at the Tate Gallery from artist Sir Peter Blake, *The New York Times* reported.