

This is a book that needed to be written. This is a book that needs to be read--by a lot of people, not just by Canadians, and not just by trans people. We Canadians are characteristically modest about our accomplishments. We tend to quiet understatement, and we tend to demure attention for our achievements. Living, as we do, within the media sphere of the US, we often know more about, and think more highly of, what happens there. We have a tendency to think of ourselves as a bit slow and awkward by comparison. When it comes to trans activism, this book provides a welcome antidote.

The voices represented in this volume speak loudly and clearly about a very particularly Canadian, quiet, kind and caring, perseverant dedication to broad social justice. Time and again, the authors in this book tell about how they saw a need, and shouldered the responsibility to do what they could to bring about change for the better. They knew that there would be no quick wins, no easy victories. They knew, too, that there would be very little glory. They didn't do their work in order to garner recognition for themselves. The activists who did the work described in these pages, did it because it needed to be done, and someone had to do it. They were there. They saw the need. They did it.

It took an especially hardy type of bravery to be active in the early days of trans activism in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, when Marie-Marcelle Godbout, Michelle De Ville, Jamie Lee Hamilton, Rupert Raj, Raven James, and Sandy Laframboise, and others, such as Stephanie Castle and Gayle Roberts of the Zenith Foundation in Vancouver, were making waves. We all owe a deep debt of gratitude to those folks who were willing to be publically identified as trans advocates when the public was so abysmally ignorant about, and generally overtly hostile to, anything to do with trans. I remember vividly the ways that even the most sympathetic cis people unabashedly stared at transpeople, like they were watching some kind of a freak show. And those were the people who *were trying* to understand. It only got worse from there, too often ending in death by abuse or suicide. The courage that those who are now our elders exhibited back then was breathtaking in the face of such gale-force exclusion, rejection, and hatred, often compounded by racism, sexism, colonialism, ableism, poverty, and other pernicious multipliers. Having known many of our pioneers, I am most pleased to see them being recognized and appreciated in this way, and I hope that others who were there, working shoulder-to-shoulder with them, will also have a chance to tell their stories one day soon.

The bulk of this book is concerned with trans activism in the second millennium. As I read through the many stories of bold initiatives to take more control of trans lives into the hands of trans people, I was once again struck by the vast difference that the development of strong communities has made in quality of life for trans people. Even those in remote and rural areas now know that they are not the only ones. The way we do things may be different away from the big cities, but the story is similar. We need each other. We have each other. We can, and will, be there for each other. Yes, life is still very very hard for many many trans people. We are still losing far too many trans people to the effects of isolation and despair. Yet, what comes through, especially in Part Two: "Changing the Way We Change: Critical Reflections on Doing Trans Activism," and in Part Three: "Transforming Institutions from the Inside," is that we have a momentum going now. We are finding our strength. We are finding our allies. No one is doing it for us. We are doing it for ourselves. And we *are* changing the way we see ourselves, and the way the world sees us.

In these sections, we hear from the people who are driving this change. We hear about how they are doing it through thoughtful introspection, and through active interventions. They are changing the world one person at a time, in groups, and they are taking on institutional bureaucracies. We hear about small

towns and big cities. We hear about reaching to individual people with sensitive respect for where they are, and about reaching inside of big organizations, learning their ways, and bringing them to better places. These are huge tasks, and we hear from the trans activists in this book about how to do these things with respect for others, and for self. Perhaps most importantly, one of the main themes that runs through these accounts is that we can do this. These are stories of confidence and hopefulness born of success. Although we are far from done with the work of trans activism in Canada, these chapters are inspirational. Kudos to Dan Irving and Rupert Raj for teaming up to bring all of this together, allowing us to know something about all of the fine, brave people who have done, and continue to do, the work of trans activism in Canada.