



Jer's Vision.org

Canada's Youth Diversity Initiative
L'initiative canadienne des jeunes pour la diversité

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PRESS RELEASE

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The Jer's Vision Gala celebrates the transformation from a Scholarship into a National Charity

**(Also below: George Stroumboulopoulos & Ember Swift are awarded Youth Role Model of the Year;
And Founder Jeremy Dias is the recipient of Ottawa's Citizen of the Year & Outstanding Achievement in Queer
Youth Visibility)**

Jer's Vision: Canada's Youth Diversity Initiative is happy to announce that it will be having its 2nd Annual Gala this year on the 3rd of November, 2006, at Barrymore's Music Hall (323 Bank St.). Named the Event of the Year by the Ottawa citizen and Ottawa Sun last year, this event will be even bigger and better! This year's event will feature: George Stroumboulopoulos, Hon. Marlene Jennings, Paul Dewar, Diane Holmes, George Bédard, Alex Munter, and *Star Daily's* Sean Gehon. There will also be performances from: Ember Swift, The Habit, CPI, Oni the Haitian Sensation, Kelly Dear, Robyn de Cradle, CPI, Ivan (the Fire Breather), and Patrick Ouelette. There will also be appetizers from Ottawa's finest restaurants; a cake by Tatiana; an art auction; and a wine and beer tasting.

Jer's Vision will also be launching as a national organization this year. After winning his Human Rights Case last year, founder Jeremy Dias set up Jer's Vision to be Canada's first national diversity scholarship. However, support from communities and leaders from across the nation moved Jeremy and the Board to being to start new initiatives transforming the scholarship into a full National Organization. The gala will officially launch new programs including: <The Jeremy Dias Scholarship, CYCI Award, Youth Role Model Award, Telephone Info Line, Youth Speakers Bureau, Resources, and Diversity: Stories of Canadians (newsletter)>. It will also announce upcoming programs and services <Definition of Discrimination, How to Promote Diversity Guide Books, Educational Material, Jer's Vision the Movie, and Diversity: Stories of Canadians (book)>.

Jer's Vision is now the only organization in the nation (and world) to address all types of discrimination simultaneously, recognizing that all forms are interrelated and equally unacceptable. With the multi-lateral approach the organization hopes to introduce diversity to youth, and motivate them with the tools and resource to make a difference in their community.

George Stroumboulopoulos & Ember Swift are awarded Youth Role Model of the Year

Jer's Vision is excited to launch the Jer's Vision: Youth Role Model of Year award. Designed to recognize their work to address discrimination, the award celebrates exceptional Canadians who also worked with youth in a variety of fields.

George Stroumboulopoulos has earned the respect of youth as being a reputable and trustworthy journalist, not afraid to ask the tough questions. Through his career he has remained committed to educating youth not only



about the news, art and affairs of the world, but has motivated youth to seek their own answer and ask questions. Jer's Vision is proud to select George Stroumboulopoulos as our Youth Role Model of the Year: Education.

A Canadian icon of song, Ember Swift tells a story with her music that blends the folk, pop, rock, punk and jazz genres. The owner of her own independent record label, Few'll Ignite Sound, she has used music to energize and educated youth about political, environmental, and sociological issues (both in Canada and internationally). Jer's Vision is proud to honour Ember Swift as our Youth Role Model of the Year: Activism.

Founder Jeremy Dias is the recipient of Ottawa's Citizen of the Year, recipient of Outstanding Achievement in Queer Youth Visibility and nominees for Political Activist of the Year.

Citizen of the Year—Youth

The award is given to a youth in the City of Ottawa whose volunteer work shapes the National Capital Region. Jeremy Dias is an outstanding individual; an active volunteer during high school, participating in many extra-curricular committees. He tried to establish a gay-straight alliance in his school, but was met with a great deal of opposition that ultimately ended in a human rights settlement in his favour. Mr. Dias moved to Ottawa to attend university and when the settlement was received, he used those funds to establish the Jeremy Dias Scholarship. This scholarship is targeted to youth who have demonstrated a commitment to addressing issues of discrimination in their communities. With the momentum created from the launch of the scholarship, Mr. Dias went on to create the registered charity, *Jer's Vision: Canada's Youth Diversity Initiative*, which promotes activism among other youth in Canada. As founder and executive director, he manages the day-to-day operations and Web site, speaks to other high-profile organizations, while he continues to attend university. His dedication to bettering the lives of others, especially his fellow youth, is already firmly entrenched. His boundless energy and willingness to work hard has made him a role model, mentor and leader. He inspires others, not only to believe in his causes, but also to believe in themselves. Mr. Dias is a civic-minded individual who is motivating others and especially our youth to become active volunteers in their communities.

Outstanding Achievement in Queer Youth Visibility

The award seeks to recognize outstanding members of the community who have changed the face of Ontario, by addressing issues of discrimination and making a real difference in the lives of youth in the province.

"Jeremy Dias is extremely dedicated to the well-being of the community around him," stated Jer's Vision director Erin Lux in support of Dias's nomination. "When he won a human rights settlement from his high school, instead of using the money to travel or help fund his studies, he put the money, plus his time and effort, into establishing Jer's Vision: Canada's Youth Diversity Initiative. Jeremy works tirelessly to further the cause of diversity in Canada."



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The organization Jer's vision includes a scholarship fund aimed at helping youth fight discrimination, and is working to develop services to educate youth about discrimination and promote diversity.

In addition to founding Jer's Vision, Dias organized Sault Ste Marie's first LGBTQ youth group while in high school, and has volunteered with numerous organizations including Canadians For Equal Marriage, the Femme Affinity Group Of Ottawa and the Algona AIDS Network.

Political Activist of the Year (nominee)

The Political Activist of the Year is a person who has worked in the LGBTQ community to address political injustices through their work and other efforts.

Jeremy Dias, nominated with mayoral candidate Alex Munter and Member of Parliament Bill Siksay, has dedicated his life to addressing social injustice. His work grew when he challenged his high school in Human Rights Court. His efforts through his successful win mark a major battle in the work for equal rights in Canada. To then turn around and use the financial reward to start a national scholarship only further demonstrates his commitment to making the world a better place.

Jeremy not only works to address LGBTQ rights with Jer's Vision, but has also volunteers in the community, including at his university pride centre, university women's centre, Pink Triangle Service and at Egale Canada (to name a few).

His work has also extended into women's rights, addressing racism and education about religious discrimination.