



Guide For Pride Defenders

Prepared by the Canadian Anti-Hate Network

info@antihate.ca

www.antihate.ca

[@antihateca](https://www.instagram.com/antihateca)

We have been working tirelessly since 2018 to counter, monitor, and expose hate movements in Canada using every legal, ethical, and reasonable tool at our disposal.

We are proud to be part of the long history of antifascist activism on this land.

Our work is informed and inspired by the lessons of those who have come before us, and the courage and creativity of our contemporaries.

For many years, fascists and the far-right have twisted concepts of sovereignty and relationships with the land, to their own exterminatory ends. This includes the twentieth century Holocaust of the European Jews and Roma by the Nazis, that was both predated and postdated, by the ongoing genocide of the original peoples of this land, which is known by some Indigenous peoples as Turtle Island.

As antifascists, acknowledging the true meaning of sovereignty, of the traditional keepers of the land on which we gather, agitate, educate, learn, and organize, is a small step in contextualizing the struggle of which we are part.

INTRODUCTION

It's already been a gruelling year when it comes to hate directed towards the 2SLGBTQ+ community. We know that folks are feeling scared and overwhelmed by what feels like a crushing wave of far-right organizing. We get it—we feel like that sometimes too.

As a watchdog of the far-right, we have had the profoundly hopeful experience of researching, analyzing, and participating in successful antifascist resistance against the far-right. This guide is our way of sharing some of what we've learned with you, the on the ground organizers and grassroots activists who are eager to defend your communities, especially during Pride season.

What is Pride Defence?

Pride Defence is the act of going to any Pride event to protect the 2SLGBTQI+ community from far-right activists who show up.

Pride Defenders are the brave people who show up to counter the far-right, using many different tactics. Some have used spectacle and created a party-like atmosphere with dancing and music to keep the far-right out, while others have blocked them from accessing events using their bodies.

How to read this guide

If you're feeling overwhelmed, it's better to take one action than freeze up because doing everything feels impossible. With that in mind, we've organized this guide into three parts - Before Pride, During Pride, and After Pride - and within each section, we've highlighted the one or two points we would suggest prioritizing. We recognize not everyone will be able to participate in the on-the-ground action on the day of the event, so we have taken care to include points that folks can participate in from home.

While this guide specifically refers to Pride events and defences, the information can be used to prepare you for many kinds of defences or counters against the far-right.

BEFORE PRIDE

1. Build your Affinity Group

According to [Seeds for Change \(UK\)](#), “An affinity group is a small group of people who come together to prepare for and take direct action. They make decisions together, and support each other during and after action.” Affinity groups exist to collaborate, building on one another’s existing skills. Going with a group to a defensive action protects you and builds numbers so that the far-right knows they aren’t welcome in your community.

2. Research the Opposition

Identify your local far-right groups. You can learn about what far-right groups are organizing in your area by paying attention to stickers and posters around your community. You can also keep an eye out for far-right and hateful content being posted to local social media.

Disseminate the information you find to your affinity group. Add this information to your public awareness pamphlets (See #6: *Create banners, signs, pamphlets*), so that people in the vicinity of the Pride defence action can better understand what is going on.

You may find helpful information about potential far-right protestors on www.antihate.ca and www.anti-racistcanada.blogspot.com.

In your research, in addition to making note of who will likely be showing up, pay attention to what kinds of goals they might have and who among them may be physically violent. (See #4: *Strategize*)

3. Research the Vicinity and Venue

Having a good understanding of the location(s) of the Pride gathering can help you prepare the best defence possible. One of the most important parts of a good defence is making sure people are able to arrive at and leave the event as safely as possible.

Is the event a parade? Consider the following:

- Where does it start and end?
- What is the route?
- Are there any hazards on the route?

Is the event at a single location? Consider the following:

- Is it closed in by a fence?
- Where are the entry and exit points?
 - Entry and exit points are a prime location for hateful protesters to set up because it means that anyone accessing the event has to encounter them. Knowing the entry and exit points ahead of time allows you to get there first and set up a proactive defence.

For any type of event, consider the following:

- The neighbourhood like?
 - Consider talking to local businesses ahead of time to see if they would be open to making themselves visibly welcoming to Pride attendees. At Hamilton Pride 2019, youth were followed from the Pride festival by hate preachers, and sought refuge in local businesses in which they felt safe. If your event is being held at a waterfront location, consider how that cuts off potential exit points.
- What are the nearby roads like?
 - Are there safer and less safe roads for people to arrive and leave on? There are lots of factors that can impact the safety of a roadway being used to come to and leave a Pride event—think about things like speed of traffic, pedestrian intersections, dead ends, and enclosed alleys

4. Strategize

Now that you know who your opposition is, and have taken a look at the physical location, it's time to decide on some strategies. Here are some common goals of the far-right, and some suggestions for how you can thwart them:

Their Goals	Your Strategies
<i>Intimidating people so that they don't attend the event</i>	Create social media content... <ul style="list-style-type: none">● promoting your Pride Defence—knowing that there is a plan in place from the community to protect the event may help some people feel more confident attending● providing advice on how people can keep themselves safe from doxxing (when the far-right finds and shares your personal information with the goal of harassing and scaring you and your loved ones)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● exploring the history of Pride as a protest, and Pride as resistance—encourage people to locate their experiences in this history, as a way of as a way of making meaning out of a challenging situation
<i>Preventing or disrupting participants' access to the event</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Arrive early—long before the protestors plan to—and take up space in the location the protestors plan to set up ● Assign Defenders to offer friendly company past hateful protestors (think abortion clinic escorts) ● Take cues from abortion clinic defences! Learn more: Abortion Clinic Defense Needs to Be Seen as a Key Part of Anti-Fascism
<i>Spreading hateful messages (especially to a “captive” audience)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Arrive early at the location where hateful protestors are planning their disruption (much of their organizing will occur on social media, so you should have some idea ahead of time where they plan to be) and prepare to “hold the line” against their attempts to move closer to the event ● Use large banners and flags to create a visual barrier and claim space ● Use loud music and whistles (safety concerns addressed below) to disrupt the hateful protestors' verbal harassment
<i>Goaded counter-protesters into confrontations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commit to collectively refusing to engage in debates or back and forth yelling matches with the hateful protestors—these verbal exchanges can be triggering for even the most seasoned Defender, and can lead to folks making choices they didn't intend to make. ● A lot of physical altercations at protests start with one side purposefully instigating by encroaching on the “personal bubble” of the other, even to the point of stepping on toes or brushing shoulders.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In a heated environment, this is often the only spark needed to ignite a physical altercation. It is especially effective because even though one side is purposefully instigating it, they are doing so in a way that leans into plausible deniability, or frames the other side as easily triggered and unreasonable. Resist by refusing to react aggressively. ● Think ahead of time about whether or not you feel confident in your ability to withstand this manipulation, when you're deciding what kind of role you should be playing during the defence. There are many reasons why holding a line and being face to face with hateful protestors is not something you have the capacity for, and all of them are valid. ● Do whatever is necessary, reasonable, and proportional to defend yourselves if they escalate to more serious physical violence.
<p>Creating propaganda by filming themselves protesting, and filming interactions with antifascist counter-protesters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Delivering polemics at these events is one way hate movements leverage the energy and environment of the event to create more compelling propaganda. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Creating enough of a ruckus with amplified music, drum lines, and whistles is a great way to drown out even the loudest hate protestor, and deny them the opportunity to weaponize your Pride event for their hateful ends. ● Prevent yourself becoming an active part of their propaganda by refusing to engage in debates and yelling matches, and by refusing to be goaded into a physical altercation. Don't let yourself become willing content.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Take safety precautions to conceal your identity—if they are filming or livestreaming, and you are involved in a Pride Defence (especially near the “front line”), there’s a very good chance you’ll be captured on camera. You want to make it as difficult as possible for the footage to be used to identify, dox, and harass you.
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5. Buy/Borrow Supplies

Some protests include whistles, horns, and other loud noisemakers. Bring earplugs for protection. If you bring noisemakers, bring earplugs to hand out to other attendees.

Banners can block signs carried by protesters from the view of Pride attendees, as well as cameras, preventing protestors and other disruptive parties from filming Pride attendees and defenders. Umbrellas are also useful for blocking hate protesters and easily manoeuvred.

Masks help keep us and our communities safer from COVID and other viral infections, and they also protect us from being identified by the far-right

6. Create Signs, Banners, and Pamphlets

Colourful banners and signs communicate your message clearly and help differentiate you from those who are seeking to disrupt Pride. Take advantage of some nice weather and have a banner painting and sign making party in an outdoor park. Not everyone is able or willing to participate in the direct action of a Pride defence on the day of, and having an outdoors gathering to prepare can accommodate all members of a community, including immunocompromised or disabled persons, share in the experience.

Lesson from the Past:

In the 1990s, Toronto’s Anti-Racist Action organized a demonstration outside the house of prominent Heritage Front member Gary Schipper, who ran the group’s hate hotline out of his home. In addition to the demonstration, ARA activists went door-to-door, explaining their presence in the area to Schipper’s neighbours.

As one ARA activist described it: “While many were understandably nervous about a large militant demonstration passing through their neighbourhood, most were far more horrified to learn of a Nazi organizing in their backyards.”

(Learn more: [June 11, 1993: Toronto Anti-Racist Action target neo-nazi organiser](#))

7. Coordinate Timing and Logistics

Coordinating your timing is more than just syncing your watches like in an action movie. It means making sure that no one will accidentally find themselves alone with hateful protestors. It also means that the core organizers of your action have planned ahead of time when and how they will be arriving and when and how they will be leaving. It means knowing who is responsible for bringing what, and doing research ahead of time to estimate when the hateful protestors plan to arrive, in order to beat them to it. There might not be one (or more) centralized organizers. At the very least, you, your buddy, and your affinity group should have a plan.

8. Plan for Wellness and First Aid

Have at least one person in your group bring a cooler with water bottles, ice packs, and supplies to treat heat illness. Electrolyte drinks are great, but can take up a lot of space. You can pick up electrolyte gels at sports and outdoor stores. Chilled, damp cloths in a cooler can also help with heat-related conditions.

Make sure you bring a first aid kit which includes wound care supplies.

Most Pride events will have some kind of medic or first aid services, so you should also know where they are ahead of time. You may want to consider liaising with them before the action starts to let them know what's going on.

Outside of attire worn to mitigate security concerns (See: *During Pride*), everyone should be dressed and prepared for a hot day, including wearing sunscreen, hats, and sunglasses. You might also consider wearing lightweight fuller coverage clothing (long sleeves and pants), as this can actually be a protective measure against heat-related illness and sunburn. Umbrellas—which can be used to block hate protestors—can also provide relief from the sun.

9. Practice!

If you are bringing large banners, you'll want to practice holding and moving around with them ahead of time—you might be surprised at how unwieldy they can be. If you have the time, you may want to consider physical strength training for this kind of action.

DURING PRIDE

10. Stick Together

Try to not go alone. Using a buddy system allows you to stay safer, check in with each other and have a support system if needed. Show up together, stay together and leave together. You don't need to be joined at the hip, but you should be aware of where the other person is at all times.

11. Know Your Role and Be Intentional

Some folks choose to be at the front, carrying banners or flags, while some prefer to be present, but in the background. These environments can be heated, and potentially triggering. Knowing your limits will help you make safe, intentional choices.

12. Stay Masked/Covered Up

It's not uncommon to see people who attend counter-protests or demonstrations who aren't masked be identified on social media by the far-right. This can often be avoided by actively protecting your identity. On the other hand, some folks may want to be an identifiable presence, and that's another valid choice, but it should be made consciously and with intention. Even if you do choose to go with less coverage for visibility reasons, you should still wear a medical mask or respirator for protection against COVID. Below you will find a scale of coverage options. This scale is meant to be cumulative. This means that wearing a medical mask or respirator is the least amount of coverage you should practice, and if you choose to add more coverage, you should do so *in addition* to wearing a medical mask or respirator.

Less covered options include covering your nose, mouth and chin with a medical mask or respirator.

More covered options include covering your face with a bandana, ski mask or t-shirt, covering tattoos, piercings, scars, birthmarks with clothes or makeup, covering eyes with sunglasses (ideally wraparound sunglasses).

Most covered options include covering logos with electrical tape or permanent marker, covering hair and ears with ski mask, beanie, or a sports hijab

13. Keep An Eye On Disruptive Media

Far-right outlets like Rebel Media, The Post Millennial, and True North Centre (and other livestreamers and content creators) often attend progressive social justice events and interview participants in order to generate sensationalist content. We have seen on at least one occasion (at a drag story time defence in BC), that a member of Rebel's team was reluctant to identify themselves as such when asked.

You can foil their attempts to get sensationalist content by informing others at the event in regards to who these reporters are and what they are trying to do!

- Try to identify "reporters" from these outlets early in the day (you might even find them online promoting their intention to show up in the days before).
- Find/assign someone who is comfortable being filmed to monitor these disruptive "reporters" throughout the event. As these reporters try to interview people, Defenders might inform them of who they are, what outlet they represent, and that they're there with an agenda.
- This monitor should not engage with these "reporters" at all, but they should be aware that they will likely be captured in a great deal of footage.
- This is a good role for someone who can keep a cool head while they're being provoked.

14. Take Breaks Away From the Action

A Pride defence can be a long day. If you have the numbers for it, try to take breaks away from the core of the action. However, be aware of how many people you reasonably need to hold your defence line, and do your best not to let your numbers fall below that. If you're really strapped for numbers, a hydration pack worn on your back can help you stay hydrated and cool throughout the action.

15. Prioritize First Aid

Defending a Pride event from aggressive hateful protestors, in the middle of the summer, brings with it a host of health and safety risks, so you should prioritize first aid and quickly responding to injuries and illness. It's a good idea to have at least one person dedicated to attending to these issues—this will allow those involved in the most frontline defensive roles to remain focused and present.

Be on the lookout for:

- Dizziness or fainting
- Nausea or vomiting
- Headache
- Rapid breathing and/or heart rate
- Extreme thirst

Heat-related conditions are really common at outdoor events in the summer—be on the look out for the above signs. Respond to these signs by moving to a cool place and drinking cool liquids. On-site medics for the event may be able to help with this.

We hope your Pride defence does not become violent, but if it does, take any injuries seriously. Respect people's autonomy regarding medical care, and at the same time, strongly encourage anyone who gets injured, especially if they received a blow to the head, to get checked out by on-site medics.

16. Arrive Together, Leave Together

It's important to make sure no one is left on their own at the event site before or after the action. Consider having a meet up spot on a transit route. People who are driving should think about parking further away and meeting up with transit users for part of the trip.

17. Monitor Social Media

This is a task for folks who are not able to participate in the on-the-ground defence the day of the event. Keeping an eye on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter and relaying important information to Pride Defenders on the ground is an incredibly helpful way of supporting the defence. The next page explains what to look for, and some suggestions for best communicating this information.

Keep an eye out for:

- People who are livestreaming—both allies and antagonists. Folks on the ground may not be able to do anything to stop antagonists from streaming, but a friendly chat with a well-intentioned ally can put a stop to at least one livestream.
 - Filming to document the far-right's behaviour is encouraged, but livestreaming/filming Pride defenders can put them at risk. Any footage taken should be carefully reviewed and identities protected before it ends up online.
- People who are talking about going to disrupt the Pride event. Use the **SALUTE** model to provide details about disruptors to Pride Defenders on the ground.

The SALUTE model is a helpful way to remember what details to use in order to assess information about an event.

S - Size - How many are present?

A - Actions - What are they doing?

L - Location - Where are they, as specifically as possible? What direction are they headed?

U - Unit - Based on badges, clothing, insignia, what kind of group is this?

T - Time and date - When exactly was this information observed?

E - Equipment - Are they carrying weapons? Flags? Banners? Be specific and try not to speculate. If you don't know what a piece of equipment is, describe it rather than guessing.

Using the SALUTE model helps your team know what they are walking into, and prevents unhelpful panic from arising out of vagueness or misunderstanding. If you don't have an answer to any of the SALUTE questions (for example, you might not know what kind of group they are), that's okay—it's better to just leave out than make something up.

AFTER PRIDE

18. Seek and Provide Emotional Support

Two things are true at the same time—participating in a protest for a cause we believe in can have positive impacts on our mental health (in the words of one Yale University psychiatrist, protesting “[is acting on hope and it is also, in the case of oppression, therapeutic](#)”) **and also** participating in a protest like a Pride Defence can be both physically and mentally exhausting, as well as potentially traumatizing.

You may find it helpful to have at least two debrief sessions - one with your affinity group and one with the larger community. The level of opsec (operational security, or how closely guarded your information is) will probably differ between the two. Debriefing with your affinity group allows you to be more candid, and offers a space to discuss what worked and what didn't, strategically speaking. Debriefing with the wider community of people who showed up to help out allows you to hear other perspectives and determine specific community needs.

Remember that big feelings about the situation might take several days to arise. Be compassionate with yourself and others as you recover from the stress of the day. Make a plan to check in with others in your affinity group a few days and a few weeks after the event.

Pay special attention to the needs of folks—especially youth—who come from non-affirming/anti-2SLGBTQ+ homes, families, or backgrounds. Prioritize their ability to participate in debrief meetings and check-ins (see below for practical suggestions).

19. Seek and Provide Practice Support

Oftentimes, practical circumstances can get in the way of people being able to fully participate in and show up for their community. Here are some suggestions for how to address these:

- Provide childcare at/during debrief meetings, court support, doctor's appointments.
- Help people get to and from debriefs and other events and actions.
- Open your home (your dinner table, your couch) to folks—especially youth—who may be struggling with their families or living situation due to anti-2SLGBTQ+bigotry.

20. Seek and Provide Legal Support

Unfortunately, there is a history of antifascists and Pride Defenders being criminalized.

We're not in the position to provide legal advice, but we do want to acknowledge that that may be something you need leading up to, during, and following a Pride Defence. These are some very basic principles for dealing with repression:

- Know your rights and obligations when it comes to what information you are legally required to give the police.
- Know who to call for help if you are arrested or detained (ideally a friendly lawyer).
- Respect people's autonomy and privacy—some people may want their story of repression publicized to seek wider community support. Others may not want their names and stories shared publicly, for a variety of reasons, including potential professional fallout or familial risks.
- Show up for each other according to the wishes of the people most directly impacted by the repression. Be especially mindful when making public callouts for actions like jail support or court support.

If you don't know who the friendly lawyers or legal services are in your region, anti-racist, labour, and other activists in your area may have some suggestions.

CONCLUSION

We shouldn't need to defend our Pride events. We wish this guide didn't need to exist. But as long as we do and as long as it does, we'll be in your corner, confronting far-right hate and protecting the communities being targeted. Antifascism is a community effort, for community benefit, and everyone has a role to play.

We would love to hear how your Pride Defence goes—email us at info@antihate.ca.

Pride Defenders have been unjustly criminalized and/or had their privacy violated before. In order to protect yourself and others, we recommend setting up an encrypted email account (such as ProtonMail) to communicate about this. Avoid sharing any personal information about yourself or others.

MORE RESOURCES

[Know Your Rights Guide](#) - from Community Solidarity Ottawa

[Safety Planning Guide](#) - from Community Solidarity Ottawa

[From Self-Care to Community Care with LSPIRG](#) - from Laurier Students' Public Interest Research Group

[Free Bystander Intervention Trainings](#) - from Right to Be

[Pride Defence Guide](#) - our handout version which is great to distribute at Pride events



Get in touch!

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