

The Out/Law Series of Legal Guides

Tying the Knot Getting Married in British Columbia

barbara findlay Q.C.

Want to get married? No problem. Any two adults, including any two men, or any two women, can get married in British Columbia, provided they are not related to each other or married to anyone else.

You do not need to be a Canadian, or a resident of British Columbia, to get married. In B.C. there are no preconditions to getting a marriage licence (e.g., no blood tests).

You need a marriage licence, someone to perform the service, and two witnesses.

One of you must apply in person for a marriage licence. You will have to show identification, fill out a form, and pay the fee, which is \$100. In Vancouver licences can be had from the Vital Statistics Agency (2nd floor, 605 Robson Street) or at London Drugs at 665 West Broadway.

Marriages can be performed by marriage commissioners, by ministers of religion, and by judges. Our office canvassed the marriage commissioners to find out how they felt about performing marriages for lesbians or gay men. For a list of the marriage commissioners we would recommend, based on their responses, see the end of this pamphlet.

Marriage commissioners are allowed to charge \$82.50 to do a marriage service. They can also charge for disbursements like a mileage allowance for travel, and fees for their time if you are having a rehearsal. Most report that though they can get booked up

for popular times, if you are willing to be flexible they can accommodate you on very short notice. Marriage commissioners will perform your marriage wherever you choose: at your home, in a hotel, in a park. Most will also perform the ceremony at their home if you request them to, and if you don't have witnesses will provide them (but make sure to arrange that first). You can create your own service, or have them use the standard service. Many of the commissioners I had messages from clearly enjoy working with their clients to create a unique ceremony which is meaningful to the participants.

You take the marriage licence (filled out, of course) to the marriage commissioner. S/he will complete a Marriage Registration form and send it in to the Vital Statistics Registry. In due course, you will receive a Certificate of Marriage.

And that's it! You are married.

Your marriage will be recognized throughout Canada. It may or may not be recognized in other countries: that depends on the law of the country.

Some non-homophobic marriage commissioners in Vancouver:

Karen Ell	karen.ell@telus.net
Gayda Coblin	gcoblin@telus.net
Kathy Sharan	kathysharan@shaw.ca
John Humphreys	fmhumphreys@hotmail.com
Lam Dang	lamdang@yahoo.com (Vietnamese)
Ann Moore	bmoore15@telus.net
Ivy Leung	gethitched@hotmail.com (Cantonese)

All marriage commissioners will attend at the venue of your choice; they will also, if requested, hold the ceremony at their home and make arrangements for witnesses.

The information in this booklet is current to August 2010

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