



## *Ulysse et Alice*: A family with two moms?

*Ulysse et Alice* is a book for children 3-7 years old. This tool can help teachers and parents to respond to questions around family diversity. The book will also help in answering children's questions about families with same-sex parents, as well as opening a discussion on different ways that families are formed.



**A** ccording to the Quebec Statistical Institute, in 1998 there were tens of thousands of gay and lesbian parents in Quebec living with children under 18 years of age. Thus, if you are a teacher there's a good chance that you will at one point encounter a child with gay or lesbian parents. It goes without saying that it's important for these young children to see their own experiences reflected in school.

In today's world, in class as well as at home, questions about diverse family forms are inevitable. In reading "Ulysse et Alice" some

children may wonder how it is possible for a child to have two parents of the same gender. For many parents and teachers of young children, it can come as a surprise when a child comments on or asks a question about a classmate's homosexual parents.

Rather than stammer a quick reply or change the subject entirely, parents and teachers can address children's questions in an open, supportive and age-appropriate manner. Some of the following suggestions may help you to approach the topic while reading *Ulysse et Alice* to your children.



## Think...

**about your own values beforehand**

Don't allow a child's curious questions to catch you off-guard. Many adults worry that if they talk about gay people in front of children, it's giving them permission to be gay. But it's not a choice that people make. People are who they are.

## Help...

**children to appreciate and respect differences in others**

Hearing an adult who speaks openly about differences and values diversity is an excellent model for a developing child. *Ulysse et Alice* can be used as a springboard to present a variety of family forms. By opening a discussion you can teach your children to appreciate differences in others and not to judge others. You will also show them how a person can be happy without conforming to the norm. Chances are, most children will be confronted with peer pressure or hard social decisions in their personal lives. Our example and our openness will help them find their way. **Diversity, tolerance, acceptance, pride, individuality, integrity.** These are amongst the most important lessons that children can learn!

## Describe...

### other families by talking about families with heterosexual parents.

If a child finds it strange that Ulysse has two moms, the parent or teacher can say, 'Well, *Maman* and *Mamo* love each other the way your Mommy and Daddy love each other.' Using a child's own family as an example can help him or her to consider families with same-sex parents to be just like every other family. Ulysse and his two moms' daily life resembles the everyday life of countless other families (like the cleaning and chores we see on pages 26-27).

## Talk...

### about love, not sex.

Typically when a child asks about his friend's two moms or two dads, he's not thinking about the bedroom. More often than not kids, especially young

children, just want a simple explanation. There's this misconception that homosexuality is all about sex. What it really boils down to is who we love.

## Explain...

### that babies come to families in different ways.

Children are naturally curious about where babies come from. Rather than talking about a man and a woman making a baby together, it's okay to say to young children that babies come in lots of different ways. Some parents can't make a baby together, so there are different ways for them to have a baby. For

instance, pages 14 and 15 of *Ulysse et Alice* show a number of different types of families that can be discussed with children. The subject of adoption can be discussed on page 16 and 17 when Capsule adopts Ulysse and at the end of the book when Ulysse adopts Alice.

## Respond...

### immediately when children use negative words about gays.

Kids may not know what it means, but they're using words like 'fag' and 'faggot' out on the playground or the word "gay" as an insult. If the teachers don't know how to deal with this, it can really become a problem. A teacher should be comfortable saying, "That's not acceptable," then opening up a discussion of hurtful words.



# Continue to explore.

The resources listed below can help to further explore some of the themes brought up in *Ulysse et Alice*. With a little research you can also find many more books and videos about single-parent families, multiracial families, divorce, adoption, and other gay and lesbian families. The list can also be used to inform yourself and your co-workers about homophobia, heterosexism, and the realities of the lives of lesbian and gay people and their families.

## **Association des parents et futurs parents gais et lesbiens (APGL), France** [www.apgl.asso.fr](http://www.apgl.asso.fr)

French only—L'APGL s'adresse depuis 1986 aux personnes ou aux couples concernés par l'homoparentalité. Articles sur la parentalité et références de livres pour enfants.

## **Direction de santé publique de Montréal (DSP)** [www.santepub-mtl.qc.ca](http://www.santepub-mtl.qc.ca) • (514) 528-2400

The DSP has created a "tool box" to help professionals dealing with youth to understand and combat homophobia and heterosexism. This resource is complementary to the workshop given by the Ministry of Health and Social Services, "For a New Vision of Homosexuality".

## **Enseignement en Communauté française de Belgique : Combattre l'homophobie. Pour une école ouverte à la diversité** [www.enseignement.be](http://www.enseignement.be)

French only—Dossier pédagogique destiné aux professionnels de l'enseignement primaire et secondaire, il comporte une partie informative suivie de 24 activités pédagogiques à réaliser en classe.

## **Gay and Lesbian Educators of British Columbia (GALE-BC)** [www.galebc.org](http://www.galebc.org)

LGBT educators group in Vancouver. Extensive list of resources, videos, books and links regarding LGBT youth and challenging homophobia in schools. GALE-BC also has an excellent pedagogical guide with lesson plans for children of various ages.

## **Groupe de recherche et d'intervention sociale (GRIS), Montréal** [www.gris.ca](http://www.gris.ca)

French only—Le guide pédagogique, *Démystifier l'homosexualité, ça commence à l'école*, permet d'aider le personnel du milieu scolaire à transmettre des connaissances objectives sur l'homosexualité et à contrer les effets dévastateurs de l'homophobie dont sont victimes les jeunes en général et les garçons en particulier. En plus d'offrir un répertoire de ressources communautaires, adresses de sites Internet, vidéos, livres et films abordant la thématique de l'homosexualité, ce guide pédagogique donne aux enseignants de précieux renseignements afin d'acquiescer une plus grande aisance pour parler d'homosexualité. Cet outil comprend une série d'activités pédagogiques destinées aux niveaux primaire et secondaire, ainsi que des plans de cours sur la diversité familiale pour les jeunes enfants.

## **Lesbian Mothers Association of Quebec (LMA)** [www.aml-lma.org](http://www.aml-lma.org) • [info@aml-lma.org](mailto:info@aml-lma.org) • (514) 846-1543

Founded in 1998, a bilingual group of lesbian mothers and mothers-to-be providing community, exchanging information, sharing resources and doing family activities. Amongst a variety of other projects the LMA initiated the project for *Ulysse et Alice* as well as this teaching guide. The web site contains an excellent list of books and videos, as well as interesting links for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual (LGBT) parents.

## **Research Team on Family and the Environment** [www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/erfe/main.htm](http://www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/erfe/main.htm)

A web site initiated by researchers in the psychology department at the Université de Québec à Montréal (UQAM) with access to an excellent bibliography on LGBT families (by clicking on « autres sites »).

**Ulysse et Alice** is now available in bookstores across Quebec. It can also be purchased through Les éditions du remue-ménage: 514-876-0097 and [www.editions-remueménage.qc.ca](http://www.editions-remueménage.qc.ca)