

New Internationalist

The people, the ideas, the action in the fight for global justice

A very young activist

New Internationalist Easier English

Ready Intermediate Lesson

This lesson:

- Vocabulary
- Reading
- Writing



What do you think?

- 1) How old is the person in the car?
- 2) Why is the person in the car?
- 3) Which country is this?
- 4) Is the person a girl or a boy?



Now read and check your answers:

Charlie Lowthian-Rickert stands in an open red car. She is wet from the rain. And she leads the 2016 Ottawa Pride Parade. She waves to the crowds. They shout ‘We love you, Charlie!’.

She wears a blue dress and she looks very much a young girl. She sees herself as a girl but Charlie was born a boy. And at the age of 10 she is already a transgender activist.

Do you know what these words mean?

Discuss or look them up:

- gender
- an activist
- transgender people
- LGBTQ
- a parade
- confident
- protect
- discrimination
- a representative
- wise
- a bully

Match:

1) gender

2) an activist

3) a transgender person

4) a parade

5) LGBTQ

6) confident

7) to protect

8) discrimination

9) a representative

10) wise

11) a bully

a) very sure, very certain

b) someone who speaks for a group or organisation

c) eg. male, female

d) unfair action against someone because of their sex, class, race, religion, or group

e) someone who was born female and feels male or is born male and feels female

f) someone who works to help a political idea

g) knows and understands a lot

h) a big group of people walking through the streets in a protest or to celebrate

i) to look after

j) someone who says or does something to hurt another person

k) lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer

What do you think?

1) Is it OK for a transgender girl to use male public toilets?

2) Is it OK for a transgender boy to use female public toilets?

What do you think the answers are to these questions?

1) People in Canada disagree about transgender people using public toilets. Yes/no?

2) Charlie thinks public toilets are not safe for transgender people. Yes/no?

3) The Canadian Justice Minister thinks it's Ok for transgender people to choose which toilet they use. Yes/no?

Now read and check your answers:

Charlie has become well-known very quickly. Two years ago when she was only eight, she went with her parents to a meeting in the Canadian Senate. The meeting was about new laws to protect transgender people from discrimination and hate crimes. But, as in the US, toilets became a political problem. The Conservative Party wanted transgender people to use the toilets for the gender when they were born. Charlie was very angry, but she was sitting with representatives from Amnesty International, Gender Mosaic, and other LGBTQ groups. And this gave her the idea to join them.

She helped with a protest on Parliament Hill called 'Occupotty'. They sang 'Let Us Pee'. She stood in front of rows of toilet seats and told the crowd why the toilet problem is important to transgender people. There was a lot of national interest in the protest.

Charlie says that in toilets transgender people have more problems than non-transgender people: 'It is very unsafe. If I go into a boys' toilet, people will think "Why is SHE here?" and perhaps they will do something bad to me.'

She hopes new laws will make transgender people feel safer. In May 2016 Jody Wilson-Raybould was the new Liberal Justice Minister. With Charlie by her side she introduced transgender rights laws again. The Minister says Charlie is very wise for her age. Charlie says Wilson-Raybould is 'one of my best friends in Parliament'.

What do you think the answers are?

- 1) Charlie's family helped her a lot. Yes/no?
- 2) In Canada 50% of young people are homeless.
Yes/no?
- 3) In Ottawa 50% of young people are LGBTQ.
Yes/no?
- 4) Young LGBTQ people live on the streets in Ottawa because they have no families. Yes/no?
- 5) 43% of young LBGTQ people in Ottawa commit suicide. Yes/no?

Now read and check:

But Charlie knows she can only do this work with the help of her family.

‘We didn’t want to be our child’s first bullies,’ says her mother, Anne. Charlie felt bullied at her primary school and in her rural community. So the family moved to Ottawa. There they found a school which accepted Charlie and she did really well there. Her mother is now busy taking Charlie from Girl Guides to hip-hop dance to skateboarding and to camping. In Ottawa half of all homeless young people are LGBTQ. And they live on the streets because their families do not accept them. Charlie understands these terrible statistics very well.

‘Forty-three per cent of young transgender people in Ottawa think about suicide,’ she says. ‘I am one of the lucky ones. Today I speak for all the people who feel they cannot speak.’

What do you think now?

1) Is it OK for a transgender girl to use male public toilets?

2) Is it OK for a transgender boy to use female public toilets?



Write a tweet (not more than 140 characters) to support the idea that transgender people can choose to use the public toilet they want to.

Homework

Now read the original article:

<https://www.newint.org/columns/makingwaves/2016/11/01/making-waves-charlie-lowthian-rickert/>

Find words in the original article which mean:

- 1) very wet
- 2) sees herself as
- 3) very confident
- 4) very fast
- 5) making laws
- 6) the American English word for “toilets”
- 7) very angry

