

Lesbians wed in historic event

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wanted to get married then. But they were told they could not get a marriage licence.

The issue went before cabinet Tuesday.

The couple were told they might be able to get a licence following that cabinet meeting but that didn't happen either.

Frustrated, Zarow and Majeau left for Nova Scotia Wednesday to get married over there. Licences have been handed out in that province for months.

But before leaving, they stopped into Vital Statistics in Montague.

While there, they filled out an application for a marriage licence anyway.

From Nova Scotia, Zarow decided to make one last attempt to have her dream of being married in P.E.I. fulfilled. She called the Premier's office, Attorney General's office and the Department of Health, which oversees Vital Statistics, Thursday morning.

"I told the Premier's office that I was in to apply for a marriage licence and other couples were given their marriage licences and I was not," Zarow said.

"They walked away happy and I didn't."

The California couple were resigned to getting married in Nova Scotia.

But late Thursday afternoon, Zarow said she got the word she was waiting to hear.

Health Minister Chester Gillan had approved the necessary changes and the marriage licence was waiting for them.

Zarow and Majeau took the ferry back to P.E.I. Friday morning, staff from Vital Statistics agreed to come into the office on the holiday, Gold Cup Day, to give them their licence, and friends scrambled to get the ceremony ready for Friday afternoon.

Zarow said she is pleased she's made it easier for other gays and lesbians to marry in P.E.I.

"From now on any couple can walk into the Vital Statistics office and simply fill out the paperwork as simple as anyone else," said Zarow.

"No one else will have to fight this battle."

Majeau said her heart is still a P.E.I. and that's why she wanted to get married here.

Her cousin, Justice Jacqueline Matheson, was going to perform the service had they



Constance Majeau, left, and Dr. Chris Zarow exchange rings in front of Rev. Barry King of the P.E.I. Interfaith Ministry during a ceremony Friday. Majeau, whose grandfather is from Elmira, and Zarow became the first same-sex couple to marry in P.E.I. Looking on is Jim Culbert of Rainbow Lodge, where the wedding was held.

been able to get married last weekend.

"When it became a possibility to marry in a place that I call home, it's like never mind Halifax we're going to the Island," she said.

Rev. King said he's performed many spiritual unions between same-sex couples, but this was the first official same-sex marriage in P.E.I.

But it won't be the last. A handful other P.E.I. couples have been waiting for the province to start handing out marriage licences.

Another same-sex wedding is planned for next weekend.

"I think it's great," said Rev. King.

"Two loving couples should be able to be together."

Jim Culbert, owner of the Rainbow Lodge, played host to P.E.I.'s first same-sex marriage. He was also a witness for the California couple, along with Astrid Schrader.

"It was a wonderful experience to have the first gay marriage on Prince Edward Island here at Rainbow Lodge," said Culbert.

"I've been fighting for this for quite a while. It's important that people can have their choices in what they want in life."

Gillan said there were a number of legal hoops that the province had to jump through



Chris Zarow and Constance Majeau hold up P.E.I.'s first same-sex marriage certificate. Some work still has to be carried out. The California couple had to scratch out the words husband and wife and replace them with spouse.

before the marriage licence could become a reality.

But, he said, that is now complete and any same-sex couple who wishes to wed can now pick up a marriage licence at Vital Statistics.

"In the end, we had to say 'yes, this can go ahead,'" said Gillan.

"We were hurrying up the forms so the couple could get married in P.E.I."

Zarow and Majeau, who have been together for 28 years, will return to California

— for now.

But both are committed to moving to Canada in the future, a country they describe as tolerant and understanding.

Zarow said she would like to see the day when the U.S. also legalizes same-sex marriage nationwide.

A handful of states, including Massachusetts, now allow gays and lesbians to marry.

"The battle is going forward," she said.

"It's inevitable. It's going to happen."

Lesbian couple make mark with vows

Couple from California have to scramble to become the first same-sex marriage on Island.

BY WAYNE THIBODEAU
THE GUARDIAN

VERNON BRIDGE — Two women made history Friday by becoming the first same-sex couple to legally wed in Prince Edward Island.

Dr. Chris Zarow and Constance Majeau tied the knot at an intimate service in Vernon Bridge.

Zarow is an assistant professor of neurology at the University of Southern California. Her spouse, Majeau, a classical musician, was born in Montreal, but her roots are planted firmly in eastern P.E.I.

Majeau's grandfather, Elijah Pierce, who lived in Elmira, was a blacksmith and farrier in his day.

Zarow could not hold back her tears as the couple stood in a floral garden at the Rainbow Lodge to exchange their vows.

The sound of water flowing from a man-made pond could be heard in the background as Rev. Barry King of the P.E.I. Interfaith Ministry carried out the service.

"Today we celebrate the beginning of a journey for Connie and Chris," said Rev. King.

"This journey is filled with joy because it's filled with love. Connie and Chris chose this path because they love each other."

Following prayers and the exchange of vows, Zarow and Majeau exchanged simple gold rings.

A kiss sealed the service which was held under clear blue skies.



GUARDIAN PHOTO BY WAYNE THIBODEAU
Dr. Chris Zarow, right, and Constance Majeau kiss Friday after becoming the first same-sex couple to legally wed in P.E.I.

If it wasn't for the brightly coloured gay flag flying in the background, it would have looked like any other outdoor wedding.

"I hereby pronounce you married partners in life," he said.

The couple's journey to the altar in P.E.I. wasn't without a struggle.

The law legalizing same-sex marriage in all 10 provinces and three territories was proclaimed on July 20, but P.E.I. government officials said the paperwork hadn't been done which caused a further delay here.

Zarow and Majeau were heading to P.E.I. for a family reunion last weekend and