LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS IN CANADA:
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND EQUALITY-SEEKING,
1971–1995

To the expanding literature on lesbian and gay rights in Canada, Miriam Smith contributes this fascinating analysis of trends in the movement towards equality for sexual minorities in the last quarter of a century. Using archival material that has largely been ignored, as well as interviews with Canadian activists, Smith investigates the ways in which the lesbian and gay movement has changed in response to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Smith demonstrates that equality-seeking was well entrenched as a strategy and ideology in lesbian and gay rights networks prior to the adoption of the Charter. However, in the wake of the Charter, the movement has shifted from one form of equality-seeking to another, from a strategy primarily based on building a social movement to one based on achieving concrete legal and policy victories. Rather than focusing on win/loss ratios before the courts under the Charter or on the analysis of legal cases, the work centres on the impact of the Charter from the perspective of those within the movement itself.

Unlike the existing literature on the lesbian and gay rights movement in Canada, Smith's study presents an analysis of the evolution of federal-level social organizing based on primary sources. Smith also discusses the unique nature of Quebec politics, which is often overlooked in the context of lesbian and gay activism in Canada. Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada is an excellent analysis of an important and rising social movement in Canadian politics.

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For Simon and James,
with love and hope.