



— IN Niagara —

**INFORMED, INCLUSIVE, INDIVISIBLE**

Collectively Advancing  
2SLGBTQ+ Equality in Niagara+

Community Strengths and Needs Assessment



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more  
out reach

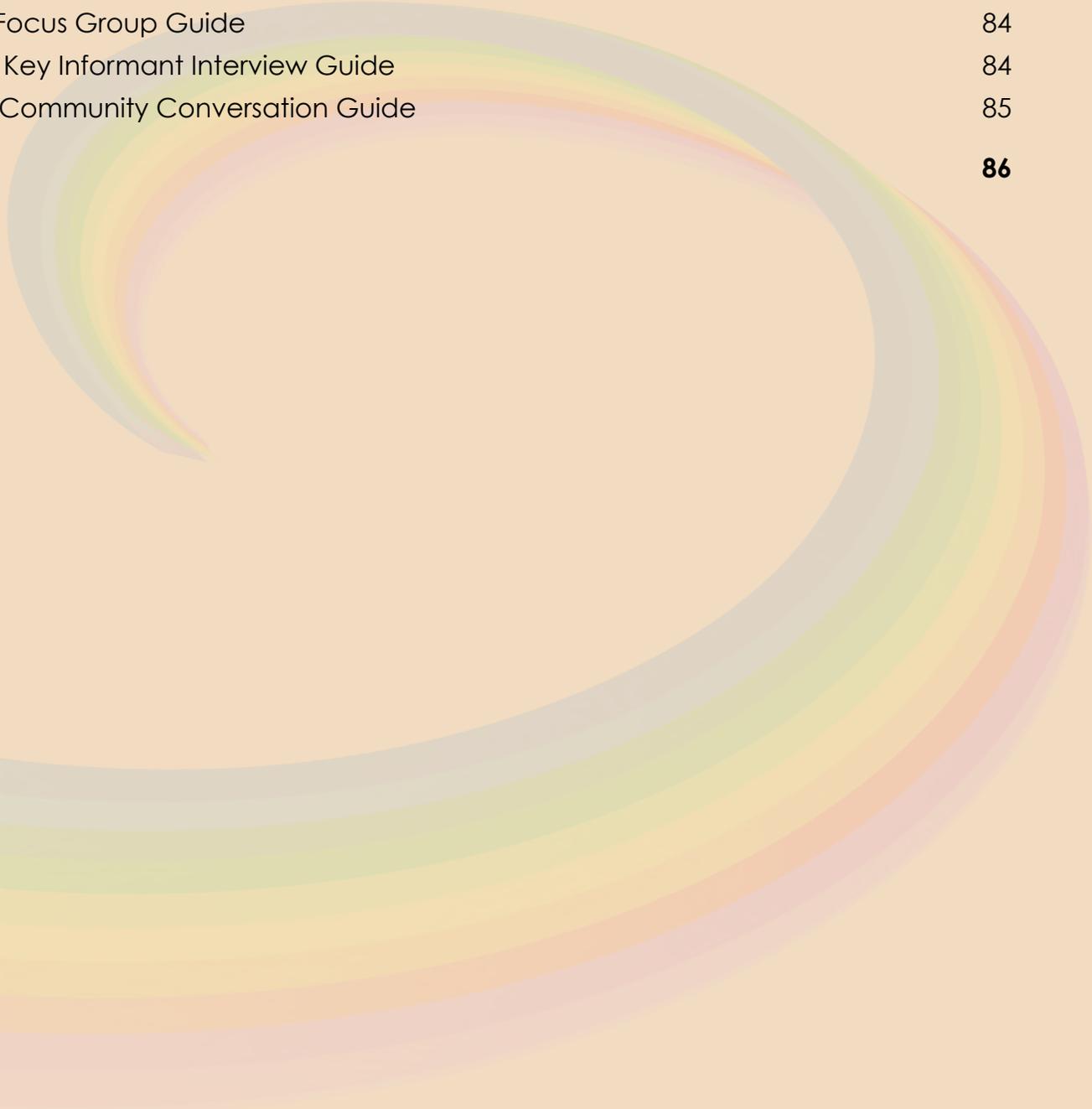


more public  
acceptance

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# Image Descriptions

## **Cover Page**

The cover page shows various tones of the colour tan. A large OUT IN Niagara logo is across the top half of the page. The OUT IN Niagara logo is the map of the 12 municipalities in the Niagara region, each in their own bright colour, with the word “out” in all-caps overlaid, and “In Niagara” below with lines on each side. The bottom half of the page includes a dark tan banner with the project title, and below that includes the following logos from left to right: The Government of Canada with the logo of Women and Gender Equality Canada immediately below it, the OUTniagara logo, and the Wisdom2Action logo. Below the logos is the OUTniagara contact information.

## **Inside Cover Page**

In the bottom-thirds of the page, there is a lumpy-circle style shape that is outlined in black with a shadow behind and filled in with white. Within the shape at the top it says “more outreach” and “more public acceptance” at the bottom of the shape. Within the two phrases there is a grey-blue paint splotch with a stick figure in it on the left. On the right there is a lighter blue-yellow paint splotch with a stick figure in it.

## **Table of Contents - Page 4**

Image Description: In the bottom third of the page, there is a faded rainbow swoosh starting in the bottom-left and ascending to the middle right of the page.

## **Land Acknowledgement - Page 9**

In the top-right hand corner, there is a faded multi-coloured map behind the text, that matches the map colouring from the cover page.

## **Language & Audience - Page 12**

In the middle of the page, there are two graphics side-by-side. On the left there is a pink dinosaur that resembles a T-rex with longer arms, and has a lighter pink flower covering their eye. On the right, there is a yellow alien with rainbow spikes coming out of their head. The alien also has rainbow rocket-style exhaust propelling them upward with the words “Free to Be Whoever the F\*ck I AM.”

## **Executive Summary | Kait Sullivan Art - Page 13**

A scan of a visual art piece with a shadow behind it. This mixed medium piece includes a pattern of purple, blue, and pink watercolour lines resembling a coral reef with some red dots throughout covering the upper half and descending diagonally to the centre. At the end of the watercolour pattern and not overlapping, there is a brown and black line resembling a mound of dirt descending diagonally from the top right corner to the bottom left corner. In the bottom right corner, there are line drawings resembling small trees or branches with some faded purple dots smeared on top. In the bottom left corner, there is a wrinkled non-worn plastic glove with shortened fingers overlaying the painted patterns.

### **Project Introduction | “Breathe” by Rabia Choudhary - Page 17**

A scan of a visual art piece with a shadow behind it. This painting is of a person with purple skin and pink hair bowing forward with their arms crossed while holding a red scarf with a gold dotted pattern and a gold frame of lines and dots on each end of the scarf. The water the person is standing in is a range of dark blues and purples and includes waves throughout and is below a bright yellow and orange sky in the upper eyeline of the piece.

### **Sharing Learnings and Success Art - Page 22**

In the centre of the image, there are the words “THIS MOMENT” in orange pastel crayons. The words are in the middle of a drawing of a yellow sun in pastel crayon. At the top left of the image, there is a patch of blue, pink and purple pastel crayon that looks similar to the bi flag. Below it is the word “Love” in red with a few small black hearts around it. On the top right, there is a purple drawing of hands touching each other. On the bottom right there is a dark blue drawing.

### **Understanding Strengths and Needs | Art by Kai Kristoff - Page 30**

A scan of a visual art piece with a shadow behind it. This mixed medium piece includes a light blue background with pastel zig zags in green, yellow, and purple covering the entire background, but allowing for the blue to come through as the primary background colour. At the top of the piece, there are three separated white-blue pastel clouds with clear outline and faded interiors and include the words “Out And About” on each cloud. Below the clouds to the left is the word “riding” in all caps in white faded pastel with a pile of orange wavy lines below it. Throughout the middle and lower half of the piece, there are four collaged multi-coloured frogs riding bicycles that are framed with dark purple pastel and smears from the bottom indicating movement.

### **Building on Strengths Art - Page 31**

In the bottom left hand corner, there is a person with a smiley face and no hair, standard happy face, blue tie, no feet, and blue suitcase to the right. The person's head, shirt, and pants/ legs are coloured in brown. Above the person is a crayon drawing of a rainbow. To the right of the person, there is a multi-coloured audience of people with no faces, and holding a rainbow flag that follows the same colour scheme as the rainbow above the person.

### **Priority Community Snapshots Art - Page 32**

In the bottom third of the page, in a rainbow box, there is a pencil drawing of the upper half of two topless people with a gold heart for their face surrounded by jems and stickers emulating flowers. The person on the left is outlined in blue and holding their right fist in the air and blue multi-tone jewels emulating top surgery scars. Below this person is the word 'strength' in all caps. The person on the right is in the center of the image is outlined in pink and is holding their upper chest. They have pink jewels covering their nipples. In the top right hand corner is the phrase 'growth as one' in all caps with a small flower to the left of the words. Below the phrase, there is a crayon image of half a rainbow. At the bottom of the image, there is the sentence 'I owe NO ONE my body nor an explanation' in dark pink writing.

### **Health and Healthcare | Art by Lisa Forstinger - Page 35**

A scan of a visual art piece with a shadow behind it. This painting is of a building resembling a maze of stairs and ladders going multiple directions and leading to nowhere in front of a hospital. The maze is primarily textured stone grey, white, and light brown and has 3 brown gears sitting (one small, one medium, one large) stagnant in the middle right of the structure and a waterfall stream throughout the centre, leading to water at the bottom of the piece. The hospital behind the maze with a white tower-like structure with a grid of the blue windows and a cloud in the centre of the building. The hospital also has a progress pride flag mounted on the top of the building.

### **Health and Healthcare Workshop Art - Page 37**

In the bottom third page, there is a three-layered star drawn in crayon in the blue, pink, and light-purple resembling the trans-flag. Below the star in cursive font, and slightly overlapping the star, it says "We are all Valid \*" in black pen. The word "all" has two underlines.

### **Employment and Poverty | "Dear Eric" by Sc - Page 38**

This written piece is laid out in the shape of the letter Q and is meant to be read left to right from top to bottom. There is a shadow behind the Q to have it pop off the sheet similar to a mounted art piece.

### **Employment and Poverty Workshop Art - Page 39**

In the bottom right corner, there is a black crayon stick-figure person with a shirt and tie, a skirt, and high-heels. The person is holding an oversized purse. Above the person it says "Safety in Workplaces" in all caps, with a downward arrow on the left to point to the person.

### **Housing and Homelessness | "They Want Us Dead" by Jane Soltes - Page 40**

This written piece is formatted in a diagonal layout from the top-left descending towards the bottom right, with each phrase or statement in the piece having its own line on the page. The phrases "They want us dead", "They want it dead", and "We need it dead" are highlighted in a gradient of orange with the lightest orange at the top and darkest at the bottom.

### **Violence and Discrimination | "Untitled" by Melissa Montovani - Page 42**

A scan of a visual art piece with a shadow behind it. This mixed medium collage piece includes various images and designs using magazine cuttings and paint. The piece is on a white piece of paper and depicts a feminine leaning face collaged together in the centre with the left half of the face positioned forward, and the right half positioned profile with a separation between their face and hair. At the top of the piece there are two red line pieces of the collage that have torn edges. The lower line piece is overlaying the face. On the left middle-lower half of the piece, there are various patterns and textures collaged on top of one another, as well as a dove standing with its wings extended and a red hand below that. On the bottom right of the piece, there are two security people holding large batons appearing to be on the defence of an attack and are standing on blue collaged pieces of paper resembling waves.

### **Violence and Discrimination Workshop Art - Page 44**

On the right side of the image, the words "I want to be able to kiss my partner in public without having to scan the area to see if it's SAFE." are written in black marker surrounded by loopy doodles in red crayon. On the left of image is a pastel crayon drawing of a yellow character with multi-coloured hair and rainbow colours coming out from under it.

### **Community and Culture | “Beauty of Man” by Lorenzo Cromwell - Page 49**

A scan of a visual art piece with a shadow behind it. This digital art piece has a shadow behind it and depicts an adult masculine person who is naked sitting profile on the ground looking downward and loosely hugging their knees. The person is sitting on a multi-coloured ground with various textures and dots and made up of various shades of light and dark blues, purples, browns, pinks, and greys. The sky behind the person is bright gradiented orange in the top-left corner, and then is overlaid with a dark blue dotted sky descending from the top right corner. The person is white presenting and has short hair with sideburns, a moustache, and a short beard, all of which are brown and grey. The person's left arm is covered in a range of colourful roses, shells, and a snake tattoo in colours of deep pinks, blues, and yellows. The person's body has dark pink shadows and is textured to depict skin, muscles, and hair from their neck, down their back, to their toes and fingers. Surrounding the person is a bright highlighted coloured based on the background to highlight the person.

### **Community Recommendations Art - Page 57**

In the bottom third of the page is the words “THIS MOMENT” in orange pastel crayons. The words are in the middle of a drawing of a yellow sun in pastel crayon. On the top right, there is a purple drawing of hands touching each other. On the bottom right there is a dark blue drawing.

### **Cissexism and Transphobia in Niagara's 2SLGBTQIA+ Community Art - Page 62**

In the bottom right of the page is the words ‘fertility freedom’ in cursive printing and black font.

### **Lateral Violence and Conflict Transformation Recommendations Art - Page 66**

In the bottom left of the page there is a cartoon-style illustration of a bus that is rainbow multi-coloured.

### **Appendices | Art by Vincent Von Rose - Page 67**

A scan of a visual art piece with a shadow behind it. This drawing is of a person sitting in a purple chair with their cat. The background is the colours and pattern of the trans flag (light blue, light pink, white, light pink, light blue). Throughout the drawing there are five pieces of text with white backgrounds. The five pieces of text zig zag across the piece and read the following “There is something quite magical about cats ... Their reputation and opinion of a person is based on a person's scent and their actions ... Their societal roles and constructs don't play into how a cat perceives a person ... Neither does whether one is big or small, left or right, straight or gay, even whether they are purple or orange ... They've always seen authentic selves!”. The person has a haircut with it short on one side and shoulder length on the other side. The person is topless with defined pectoral muscles or breasts and has a thin waist with a six pack of muscles in their abdomen. They are wearing yellow tight shorts with the word “gay” in all caps on waistband. They are also wearing yellow tube socks and have their legs crossed.

### **Appendix A: Glossary of Terms - Page 73**

In the bottom third of the page, there are three distinct images and words in a row. Firstly, there is an eyeball looking upward with a weed plant coming out of it. In the centre the word “Belonging” in light-blue font, outlined in gold, and positioned vertically, reading upwards. On the right, the word “Safety” is written in dark green font and outlined in gold, written left-to-write.

# Land Acknowledgements

The work of OUTniagara primarily takes place on lands governed by Dish with One Spoon wampum of 1701. This treaty between the Anishinaabe, Mississaugas and Haudenosaunee binds them to share the territory and protect the land. These territories are also included in the Two Row Wampum, the Upper Canada Treaties, and the 1764 Treaties of Niagara. To learn more about the treaties that govern the nation to nation relations in your area, we recommend checking out [www.native-land.ca](http://www.native-land.ca).

Since time immemorial, this shared territory has, and continues to be stewarded by the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, Wendat, and Chonnonton people, as well as being home to many Indigenous people from First Nations from across Turtle Island, Metis, and Inuit people. Niagara is also home to many folks across multiple generations who live on this territory due to forced displacement and global imperialism.

This project was primarily completed in 2021, a year where for a period of news cycles, national attention was called to a portion of the thousands of Indigenous children recovered unmarked graves at Residential Schools across Canada and the U.S.. While Indigenous communities and activists have been calling attention to genocidal atrocities and multigenerational impacts of the Residential School System long before 2021, the news of these children being recovered, alongside many stories of ongoing colonial violence against communities and movements such as 1492 Landback Lane and on the Wet'su'weten territory made it even clearer that there is no more time to remain idle in our commitments to Indigenous solidarity. All of our work must do better to prioritize the experiences and calls to action of those impacted by the systems so many members of the LGBTQQIA+ settler communities benefit from. In thinking about understanding the roles of settlers in supporting survivors and the families of folks who were forced into the Residential School System, there are a wide range of options for self-education and directions for continually engaging in Indigenous solidarity, and we call on everyone reading this report to ensure they are active in these commitments every day.

Being responsible and accountable to these realities has required various steps throughout this research process. From engaging in more in-depth conversations and research on the role and commitments needed in our land acknowledgements, to improving our self-education tools, these are just some of the foundational steps to be accountable to our nation to nation relationships and responsibilities. Throughout the year, we relied on several secondary sources (many of which have been included in the Beyond the Rainbow Resource Syllabus), but would like to call attention to the following educational materials that we have gone back to consistently:

- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (2015), source link: [www.nctr.ca/records/reports/#highlighted-reports](http://www.nctr.ca/records/reports/#highlighted-reports)
- Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex, Indigenous Action (2014), Source link: [www.indigenousaction.org/accomplices-not-allies-abolishing-the-ally-industrial-complex](http://www.indigenousaction.org/accomplices-not-allies-abolishing-the-ally-industrial-complex)
- Starting from the Heart: Going Beyond a Land Acknowledgement, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) (2019), Source link: <https://etfofmi.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Going-Beyond-A-Land-Acknowledgement-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>

In working on thoughtfully fostering partnerships, throughout the various bodies engaged in this research process, we have been working directly with the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre and De dwa da dehs nye - Aboriginal Health Centre, as well as many individual Indigenous activists and service providers from across the region. In terms of our consulting team, Wisdom2Action's work on the Community Strengths and Needs Assessment research processes were guided by their Statement of Commitment to Ethical Practice, which operates in alignment with "the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres' framework which articulates 4 grounding principles – utility, self-voicing, access and inter-relationality".

Additionally, under the the various components of the Informed, Inclusive, Indivisible: Collectively Advancing 2SLGBTQ+ Equality in Niagara+ project, OUTniagara has also been working with a Governance Consultant from the company Decolonize Now, to ensure it's governance practices align with our commitments to Indigenous solidarity, and established the Community, Indigenous, and Land Relations Committee at the Board of Directors level to continue this work and collaborate on programming aspects going forward.

OUTniagara and our networks must continue to work on prioritizing Indigenous solidarity in all of our work. We must all prioritize doing better.

# Content Warning

This Community Strengths and Needs Assessment Report contains information and community members' experiences related to transphobia, biphobia, homophobia, racism, ableism, ageism, violence, substance use, and suicide. These topics have the potential to bring up difficult emotions and triggers.

Your safety and well-being are important to us. If you need support or would like someone to talk to, we encourage you to reach out to someone you trust or a support:

## Niagara Region Sexual Assault Centre (CARSA INC)

☎ 905-682-4584 24/7  
🕒 Monday to Friday 9AM - 4:30PM

## LGBT YouthLine Peer Support HelpLine

☎ 1-800-268-9688 6PM - 9PM  
☎ 647-694-4275 4PM - 9:30PM  
🌐 www.youthline.ca 4PM - 9:30PM  
✉ askus@youthline.ca 24/7

## Distress Centre - 24 Hour Crisis Line

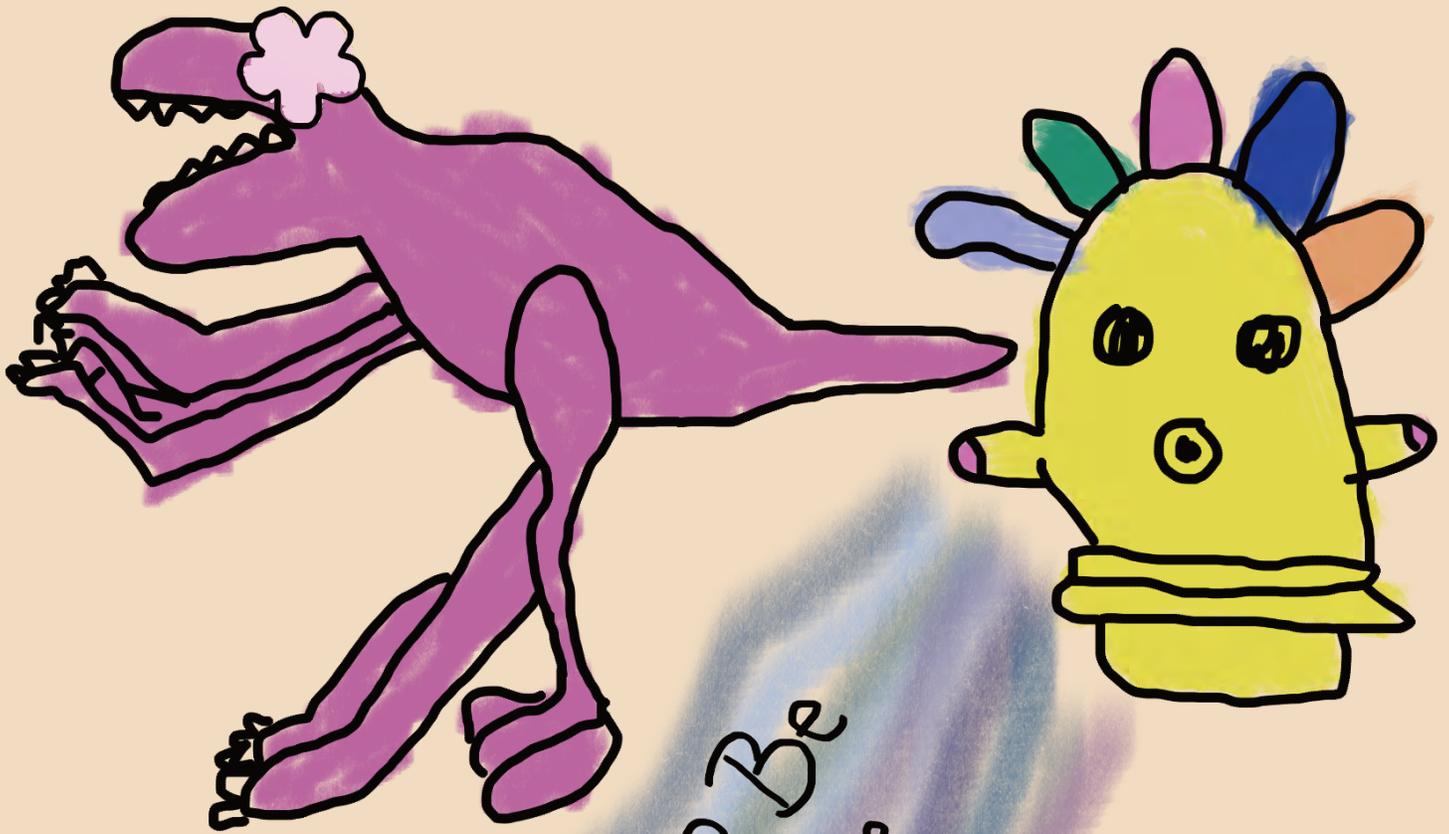
📍 Fort Erie 905-382-0689  
📍 St. Catharines 905-688-3711  
📍 Grimsby/Beamsville 905-563-6674  
📍 Welland/Port Colborne 905-734-1212

# Language and Audience

This report is firstly meant for Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community. It is also our hope that organizations, services, schools, business, public leaders, and allies will learn from this report and take up its recommendations as a responsibility.

Community members' stories and experiences are at the heart of this report. Quotes from participants are direct quotes from the survey or consultations. This report is based on extensive research and interviews with members of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community. We circulated a version of the report as a courtesy to other stakeholders in Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community. At least one stakeholder organization disagreed with our findings. We have a duty to accurately report our findings and survey results, and communities have a duty to receive this information, reflect on it, and hopefully become better. OUTniagara cannot change the findings on these important issues, and is committed to collaborative approaches and dialogue in addressing the issues named in this report.

Some participants named specific organizations and services while speaking to the strengths, needs, and recommendations. We provided any feedback or criticism that participants shared about specific organizations or services directly to the organization or service, anonymizing the identity of participants.



Free to Be  
Whoever the  
F\*ck / AM

# Executive Summary



This piece is about how the community is strongly rooting itself but has room for growth. Also a hope for more outside/physically active get togethers around the community such as trail walks, litter clean ups, and tree plantings to help the community and nature.

**Kait Sullivan**

# Community Engagement Process

**428** SURVEY RESPONSES

**2** PARTICIPATORY MAPPING SESSIONS

**7** KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

**1** QTBIPOC FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

**3** COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

**1** ARTS WORKSHOP

**4** CREATIVE SUBMISSIONS

**6** FEEDBACK SESSIONS

A total of 480 people participated in the OUTniagara Community Strengths and Needs Assessment. 428 people completed the online public survey, of which 392 people (92%) are 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members. 45 people engaged in other activities: two participatory mapping sessions, seven key informant interviews, one Queer and Trans Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (QTBIPOC) focus group, three community conversations, one arts workshop, four creative submissions, and six feedback sessions.

## Key Strengths

An undocumented but rich queer history and the wisdom of 2SLGBTQQIA+ older adults.

The leadership of students and youth in 2SLGBTQQIA+ student groups and organizing in secondary and post-secondary settings.

Passionate and committed individual community organizers, service providers, activists, artists, parents, caregivers, and educators.

There are a number of health services, school clubs, businesses, online spaces, social services, and cultural spaces where 2SLGBTQQIA+ feel safe and welcome.

Spiritual value and health benefits of connections to land and water.

Arts, theatre and entertainment

2SLGBTQQIA+ friendships, love and solidarity.

# Key Issues & Needs

## Queer and Trans Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (QTBIPOC)

- Disconnection, exclusion, and isolation in Niagara region, facing racism within and outside of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community
- Racism in job interviews and workplaces
- Professional development and employment needs of new immigrants
- Trauma, mental health, and addiction challenges
- Need for sex and intimacy healing and learning opportunities
- Need for QTBIPOC physical and online spaces

## Rural/Remote Communities

- Few to no rural services, supports, and spaces
- Insufficient support for children and parents
- Poor public transportation
- Lack of access to technology and rural high-speed internet
- High levels of fear and discrimination in conservative and religious communities

## Health & Healthcare

- Lack of general practitioners who are knowledgeable and supportive of 2SLGBTQQIA+ health
- Distinct lack of physicians willing and trained to provide trans healthcare
- Insufficient coordination and collaboration between health centres and providers
- Lack of trauma and mental health services, such as affordable counsellors
- Lack of overdose prevention services, addiction management services, and long-term rehab programs
- Lack of addiction services competent in 2SLGBTQQIA+ identities and needs and addiction-specific queer support groups
- Lack of 2SLGBTQQIA+ sexual health education and services
- Lack of accessible and affordable family planning and fertility services
- Transphobia and heterosexism in long-term care and retirement homes

## Employment & Poverty

- Employer discrimination
- Unemployment, underemployment, and lack of living wages
- Discrimination and violence in workplaces
- Limited support and advocacy from unions

# Key Issues & Needs Continued...

## Housing & Homelessness

- Affordable housing crisis
- Discrimination from landlords
- Homelessness particularly of youth with unsupportive families, community members struggling with addiction, and community members trying to leave abusive relationships
- Lack of 2SLGBTQQIA+ competence across shelter and homelessness services

## Violence & Discrimination

- Systemic transphobia, biphobia, and homophobia, interconnected and compounded by other forms of oppression
- Elementary and secondary schools, particularly Catholic schools, are sites of systemic discrimination and violence
- Public forms of violence and explicit acts of homophobia and transphobia
- Negative impacts of local politicians
- White supremacist, racist, and anti-2SLGBTQQIA+ groups
- Police violence and discrimination
- Lateral violence within 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities

## Community & Social Services

- Lack of organizational and front-line care provider knowledge and competence on 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusion
- Barriers and discrimination in disability support services, shelter and homelessness prevention services, and legal services
- Need for broader community and social service planning and implementation

## Community & Culture

- Gendered bathrooms, change rooms, and sports teams
- Many recreational spaces and activities are not physically accessible
- Events are centred around cis gay men
- Need for opportunities to connect outside of party spaces in community-oriented, family-friendly, and intergenerational ways
- Limited communication, outreach and inclusion from 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations and service providers
- Issues of transparency, coordination, transphobia, racism, ageism, and accountability with 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations and groups in Niagara

# Project Introduction



سیناس (Breathe)  
Rabia Choudhary

# Acknowledgements & Gratitude

First and foremost, OUTniagara and Wisdom2Action are so grateful to the **2SLGBTQQIA+ community members** who participated in this Community Strengths and Needs Assessment and shared their knowledge, experience, and wisdom with us to inform and strengthen this initiative. Your insights and expertise have been of tremendous value to this assessment. Thank you for your trust in this process. We hope to do justice to your voices and perspectives.

We deeply thank **Women and Gender Equality Canada** for generously funding this initiative under the Informed, Inclusive, Indivisible: Collectively Advancing 2SLGBTQ+ Equality in Niagara+ project. This process would not have been possible without the support of Women and Gender Equality Canada, nor the support of the many community, health, and social service organizations throughout the city that have made this initiative possible.

Finally, we extend our thanks to the **OUTniagara Regional Advisory Committee** and **Agencies and Partners Working Group** who have been instrumental throughout this process. We are honoured to work alongside such dedicated community champions.

## About OUTniagara & Wisdom2Action

**OUTniagara** is a community organization that began in November 2004 with the purpose of uniting Niagara's sexual and gender-diverse community. All of OUTniagara's work is guided by their mission statement:

*OUTniagara elevates sexual and gender diverse communities through capacity building, advocacy and partnerships. Working together, we strive to advance anti-oppression, decolonization and liberation for all.*

OUTniagara provides a virtual online community hub whose primary roles are supporting the sustainability of community led initiatives, fostering connections between 2SLGBTQQIA+ members and groups, and amplifying the unique and diverse voices that make up our community. OUTniagara is run by a volunteer Board of Directors, with 13 director positions. As a working and governance Board of Directors, all Board Directors are active in one or more of the following board committees: 1) Executive; 2) Governance & Succession Planning; 3) Community, Indigenous, and Land Relations; and 4) Fund Development Committee.

In addition to being an organizational hub for 2SLGBTQQIA+ community groups and organizations across Niagara, OUTniagara offers the following resources:

- 2SLGBTQQIA+ Community Fund;
- Online Community Calendar;
- *Beyond the Rainbow Resource Syllabus*;

Resources continued:

- OUT IN Niagara Education Series;
- Collaborating on events like Trans Day of Remembrance, Trans Day of Visibility, etc.;
- Humans of OUTniagara campaign;
- Advocacy letters of support for 2SLGBTQQIA+ matters across the Niagara region;

**Wisdom2Action** is a national consulting firm and social enterprise with expertise in community engagement, creative facilitation, research and evaluation, knowledge mobilization, capacity building and 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion. We are proudly 2SLGBTQ+-owned and operated and committed to bringing an intersectional analysis and approach to every aspect of our work.

Wisdom2Action was founded in 2011 as the Children and Youth in Challenging Contexts Network at Dalhousie University in 2011 through the federal government's Networks of Centres of Excellence Knowledge Mobilization Network program. In 2018, Wisdom2Action incorporated as a social enterprise. As a social enterprise, we work with nonprofits, health and social services and governments across Canada to leverage our particular expertise to facilitate change and strengthen communities.

## Project Background

*The Informed, Inclusive, Indivisible: Collectively Advancing 2SLGBTQ+ Equality in Niagara+* project was funded through an application to the LGBTQ2 Community Capacity Fund under Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) in early summer 2020, and was awarded \$299,941 (the full amount of the proposed budget), starting in late fall 2020. Through this funding, OUTniagara was able to bring on two staff members, as well as work with a range of contractors and consultants.

To provide feedback and community insights on the various phases of the Community Strengths and Needs Assessment, as well as the implementation process for the project's outcomes and recommendations, OUTniagara formed its regional advisory committee, OUT IN Niagara. This committee is composed of individuals living and working across the various municipalities in the Niagara region. Each member of OUT IN Niagara received a monthly honourarium for their involvement, which included a monthly full committee meeting, as well as various Working Group meetings.

This process also included the formation of an Agencies & Partners Working Group, which included the following agencies and organizations:

- [Brock Social Justice Centre](#)
- [Bridges Community Health Centre](#)
- [Centre de Santé Communautaire](#)
- [Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre](#)
- [John Howard Society of Niagara](#)
- [Niagara Community Legal Clinic](#)
- [Niagara District CUPE Council](#)
- [Niagara Health System](#)
- [Niagara Falls Community Health Centre](#)
- [Niagara Folk Arts & Multicultural Centre](#)
- [OPIRG Brock](#)
- [PFLAG St. Catharines Niagara](#)

Agencies & Partners Working Group continued:

- [Pathstone Mental Health](#)
- [Positive Living Niagara](#)
- [Quest Community Health Centre](#)
- [Senior Pride Network Niagara](#)
- [Silver Spire Church](#)
- [Suitcase In Point](#)
- [YMCA Employment & Immigrant Services](#)
- [Youth Wellness Hub \(Contact Niagara\)](#)
- [Underdogs Boxing Gym](#)
- [Willow Arts Community](#)

Throughout the feedback process, the Board of Directors, OUT IN Niagara, the Agencies & Partners Working Group, as well as various community groups and individuals, have been active in reviewing drafts and providing insights and data validation.

## Community Engagement Process

### Approaches

Wisdom2Action's approach to this Community Strengths and Needs Assessment is guided by our values. We strive to align every aspect of the assessment with our fundamental values of anti-oppression, appreciative inquiry, community development, and collective impact.

### Limitations

While many 2SLGBTQQA+ community members participated in the Community Strengths and Needs Assessment, there are communities and important voices that are not represented or underrepresented. Ongoing efforts were made to make it possible for incarcerated folks, people with lived experience of homelessness, sex workers, intersex people, newcomers and immigrants, migrant workers, and non-English speakers to participate. Outreach to these groups was done in various ways but was met with many roadblocks and was largely unsuccessful. We also recognize that the summer and fall of 2021 was a particular time of mourning for many Indigenous communities, with the recovering of thousands of unmarked graves at former Residential Schools and the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

Engagement with various workers and labourers, both unionized and non-unionized, and working in the formal and informal economies, varied across the research process. Engaging with workers in the context of their work environment was limited by COVID-19 safety restrictions and was highly dependent on the context of the work environment. For example, migrant workers were in the middle of their season during the COVID-19 pandemic when the survey launched and consultations began. In the case of labour unions, promotional materials were widely circulated on social media. The Niagara District CUPE Council was highly engaged, however this does not encompass the many different union locals, or necessarily the experiences of their membership. Web promotion, rather than presentations at the union locals' meetings, may have resulted in many unionized workers missing the opportunity to participate in the survey.

Youth perspectives are also not as well represented as they could be in this report. Secondary schools and 2SLGBTQQIA+ student groups were off for the summer, and some student groups actually haven't been meeting regularly since before COVID-19. Niagara has a large population of transient post-secondary students, many of whom do not stay in Niagara over the summer and may have missed the opportunity to participate in the survey.

It is not possible for this report to fully encompass every need and experience of Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community in all its diversity, but rather to provide a high-level overview of key strengths, needs, gaps, and recommendations with as much attention to equity, intersectionality, and detail as possible.

We also recognize that trust and past harm is a consideration and barrier to community members who have been exploited by researchers in the past or who have not felt seen, heard, or valued by OUTniagara or Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community more broadly. Trust takes time and consistency, and we hope that this CSNA process and report is a step in rebuilding relationships and trust that have been lost or damaged.

## **Methods**

To kick off the Community Strengths and Needs Assessment, Wisdom2Action worked with OUTniagara staff members and volunteers to determine accessible and relevant ways to engage Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members, as well as service providers and allies. The methods aimed to provide community members and key stakeholders a variety of options to participate in ways that felt safe, convenient, and best for each individual.

In summer 2021, Wisdom2Action reviewed key background documents and existing research, launched an online public survey, and held three participatory mapping sessions to deepen our understanding of existing services, initiatives, and assets, and inform the next set of research activities. In fall 2021, Wisdom2Action conducted five key informant interviews, one Queer and Trans Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (QTBIPOC) focus group, and three community conversations.

In addition to these more traditional research methods, we co-designed and hosted a very successful arts workshop with Willow Arts Community and Suitcase in Point. We also invited 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members to share their experiences and perspectives through artistic and written pieces.

We were thrilled to have 428 community members complete the online public survey. A total of 42 people engaged in the participatory mapping sessions, key informant interviews, QTBIPOC focus group, community conversations, an arts workshop, and creative submissions.

Wisdom2Action reviewed all of the knowledge and insights shared through these activities, and conducted an analysis of common themes, needs, gaps, and recommendations. Wisdom2Action and OUTniagara shared initial findings with the Regional Advisory Committee and Agencies and Partners Working Group in December 2021 to validate the key themes, needs, strengths and recommendations identified.

## Sharing Learnings & Successes

While the outcomes of this assessment are critical, we also want to highlight a key learning from the process of designing and implementing this assessment. The development of the arts workshop, “DRAW it out. RAGE it out. DREAM it out.” was a particularly rich process with strong results.

OUTniagara and Wisdom2Action approached Willow Arts Community and Suitcase In Point to explore the idea of an arts workshop as a part of the assessment and their interest in co-facilitating this. We met weekly for two months leading up to the workshop to build relationships with one another, understand each other’s strengths, and **co-design** together. This allowed for a **gradual and organic envisioning** and materialization of an in-person arts space and flow of activities that were grounded in **accessibility, collective reflection, and creative expression** by and for Niagara’s 2SLGBTQQIA+ and marginalized communities.

More community members registered to participate in “DRAW it out. RAGE it out. DREAM it out.” than any other assessment activity, aside from the online public survey. If time allowed, we would have liked to offer multiple arts workshops as it became evident there is lots of interest in arts-based, in-person, and communal activities. We hope this can provide a springboard and example of meaningful processes, collaborative partnerships, and workshop development that centres community.



## Community Who? Survey Demographics

A total of 480 people participated in the Community Strengths and Needs Assessment. This section provides an overview of demographic information about the Community Strengths and Needs Assessment survey respondents. Demographic information was not collected for the two participatory mapping sessions, five key informant interviews, one Queer and Trans Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (QTBIPOC) focus group, three community conversations, one arts workshop, four creative submissions, and six feedback sessions.

A total of 428 people participated in the online public survey. 392 participants (92%) are 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members. Of these 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members, 72 (18%) are service providers in a 2SLGBTQQIA+-specific organization or a community, health or social services organization.

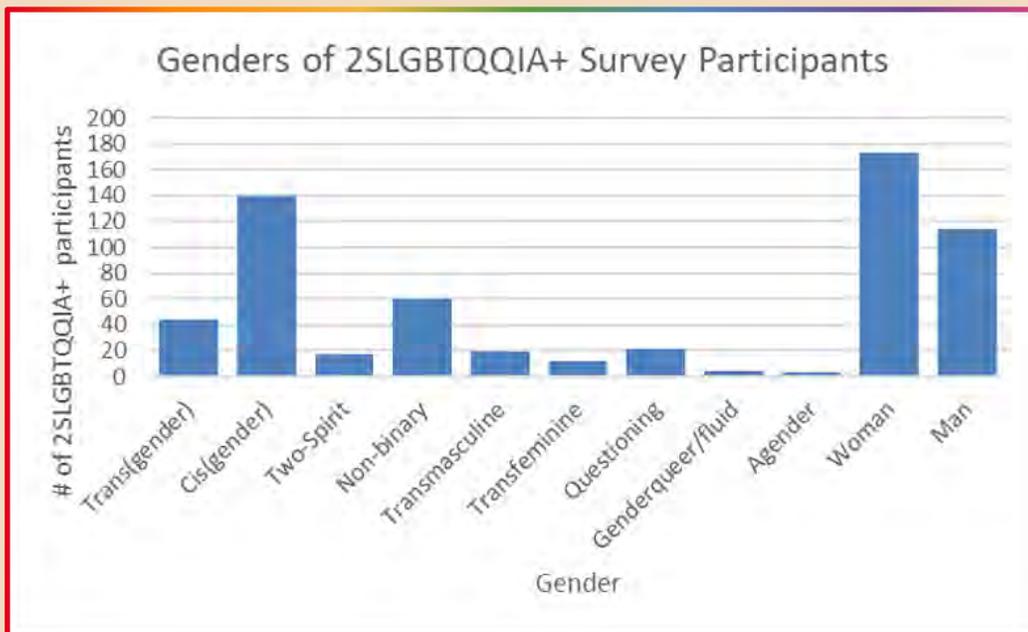
The rest of the 35 participants (8%) are family members of 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members and/or service providers in a community, health, or social service organization who are not a part of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community.



## Gender Identity

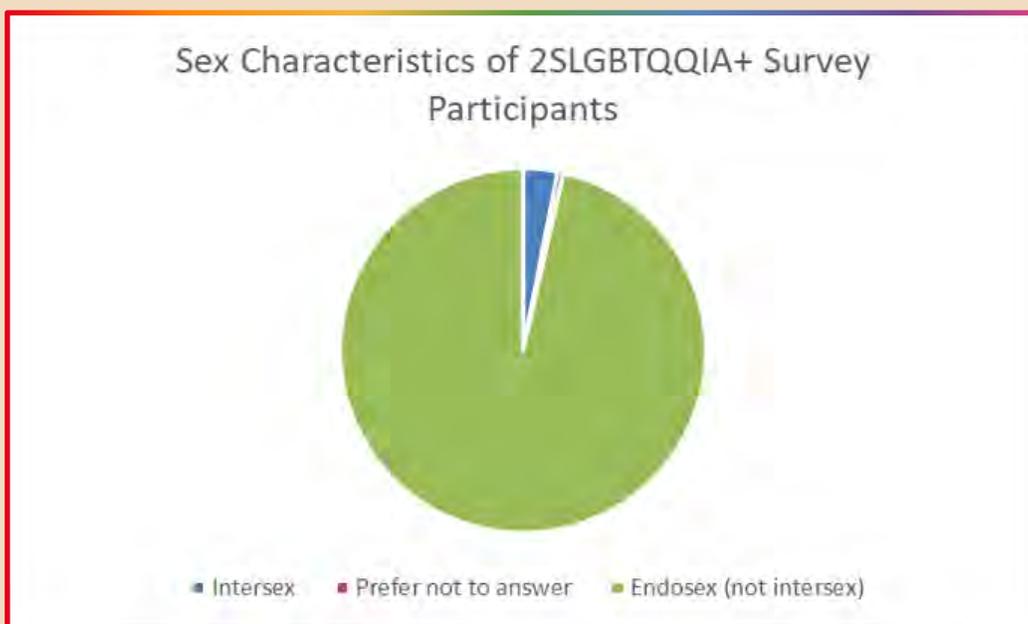
The survey invited participants to share their gender by choosing all options they identify with. This summary of gender-related data is limited; it does not break down the details of participants' gender identities. This data portrays all answers that participants selected.

Of the 392 2SLGBTQQIA survey participants, 44 participants (11%) are trans(gender), 140 participants (35%) are cis(gender), 17 participants (4%) are Two-Spirit, 60 participants (15%) are non-binary, 19 participants (5%) are transmasculine, 12 participants (3%) are transfeminine, 22 participants (6%) are questioning their gender, 4 participants (1%) are genderqueer and/or genderfluid, 3 participants (1%) are agender, 173 participants (44%) are women, and 114 participants (29%) are men.



## Sex Characteristics

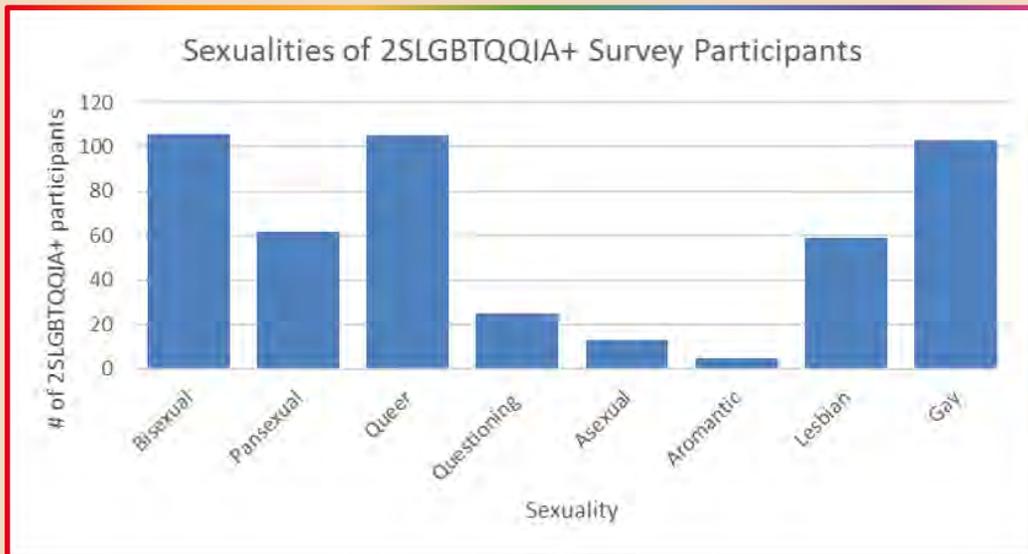
Of the 392 2SLGBTQQIA survey participants, 12 participants (3%) are intersex, 379 (96%) are endosex (not intersex), and 2 participants (1%) prefer not to answer.



## Sexuality

The survey invited participants to share their sexuality by choosing all options they identify with. This summary of sexuality-related data is limited; it does not break down the details of participants who identify with multiple sexualities. This data portrays all answers that participants selected. Of the 392 2SLGBTQQIA+ survey participants, 106 participants (27%) are bisexual, 62 participants (16%) are pansexual, 105 participants (27%) are queer, 25 participants (6%) are questioning their sexuality, 13 participants (3%) are asexual, 5 participants (1%) are aromantic, 5 participants (1%) are demisexual, 59 participants (15%) are lesbians, 103 participants (26%) are gay, and 3 participants (1%) prefer not to disclose.

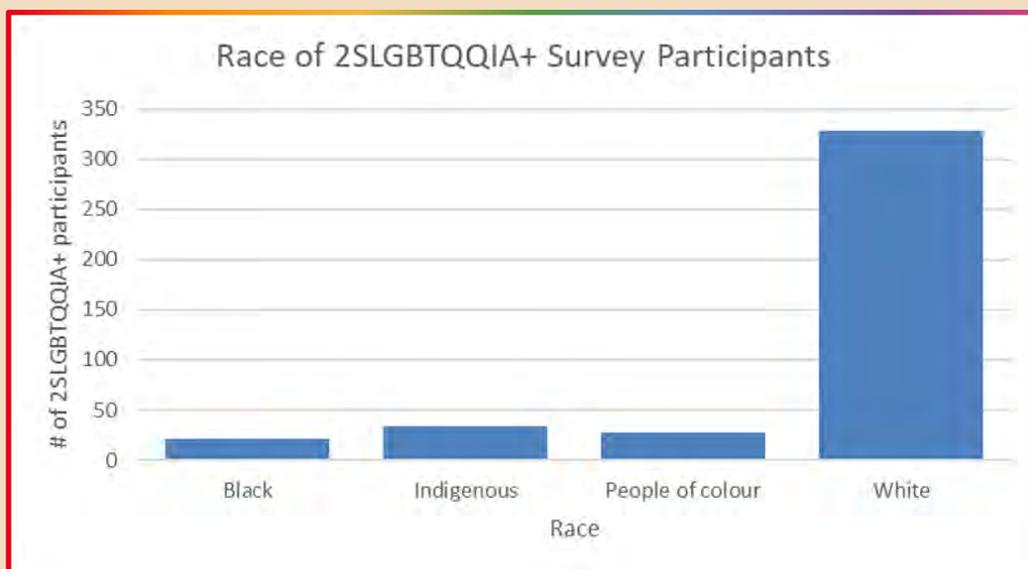
As well, some 2SLGBTQQIA+ participants shared that they are non-monogamous and/or polyamorous. While this can be an important aspect of sexual identity for some folks, this was not included here because this data focuses on sexual orientation rather than relationship orientation.



## Race

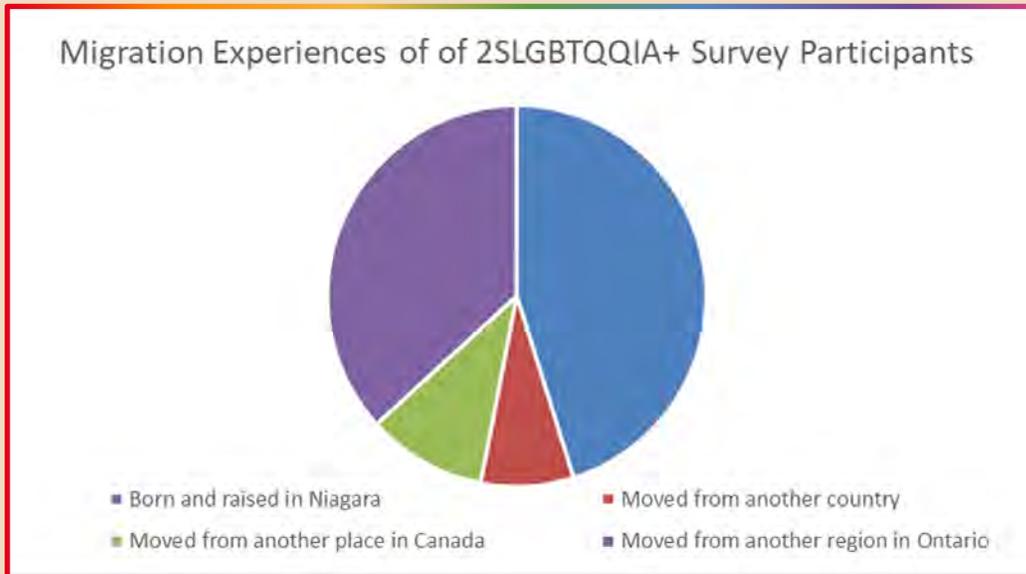
The survey invited participants to share their race by choosing all options that apply to them. This summary of race-related data is limited; it does not break down the details of multiracial participants. This data portrays all answers that participants selected.

Of the 392 2SLGBTQQIA+ survey participants, 21 participants (5%) are Black, 34 participants (9%) are Indigenous, and 28 participants (7%) are people of colour. 328 participants are white, making this the large majority (84%).



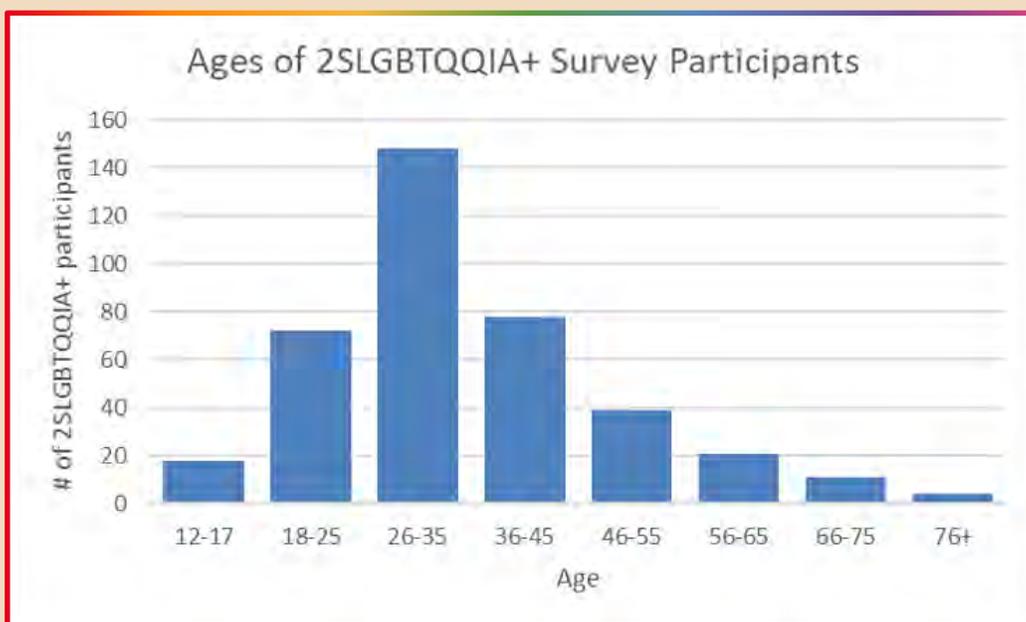
## Migration

Of the 392 2SLGBTQQIA+ survey participants, 31 participants (8%) moved from another country, 40 participants (10%) moved from another place in Canada, 144 participants (37%) moved from another region in Ontario, and 177 participants (45%) were born and raised in Niagara region.



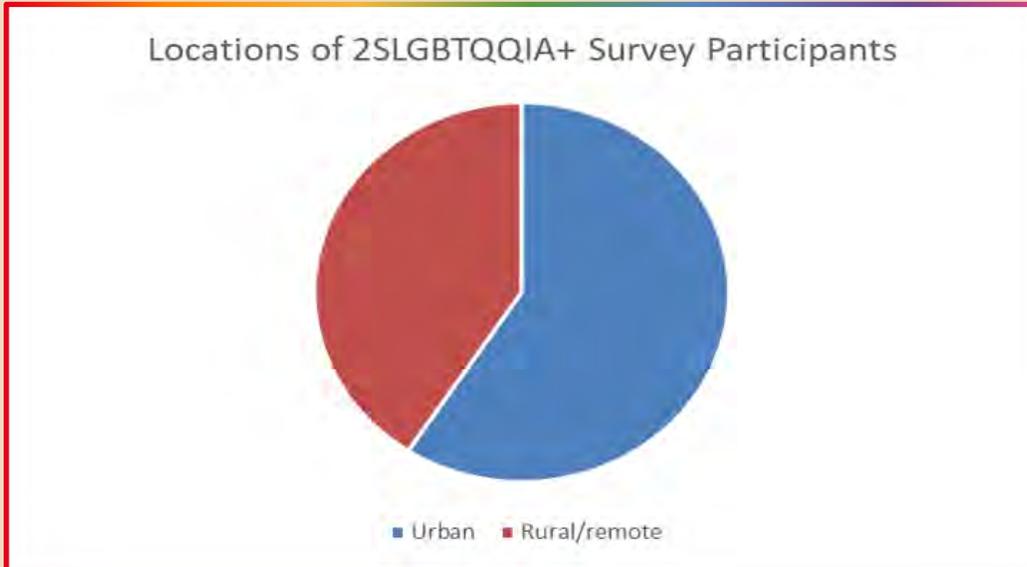
## Age

Of the 392 2SLGBTQQIA+ survey participants, 18 participants (5%) are 12-17 years old, 72 participants (18%) are 18-25 years old, 148 participants (38%) are 26-35 years old, 78 participants (20%) are 36-45 years old, 39 participants (10%) are 46-55 years old, 21 participants (5%) are 56-65 years old, 11 participants (3%) are 66-75 years old, and 4 participants (1%) are 76+ years old.

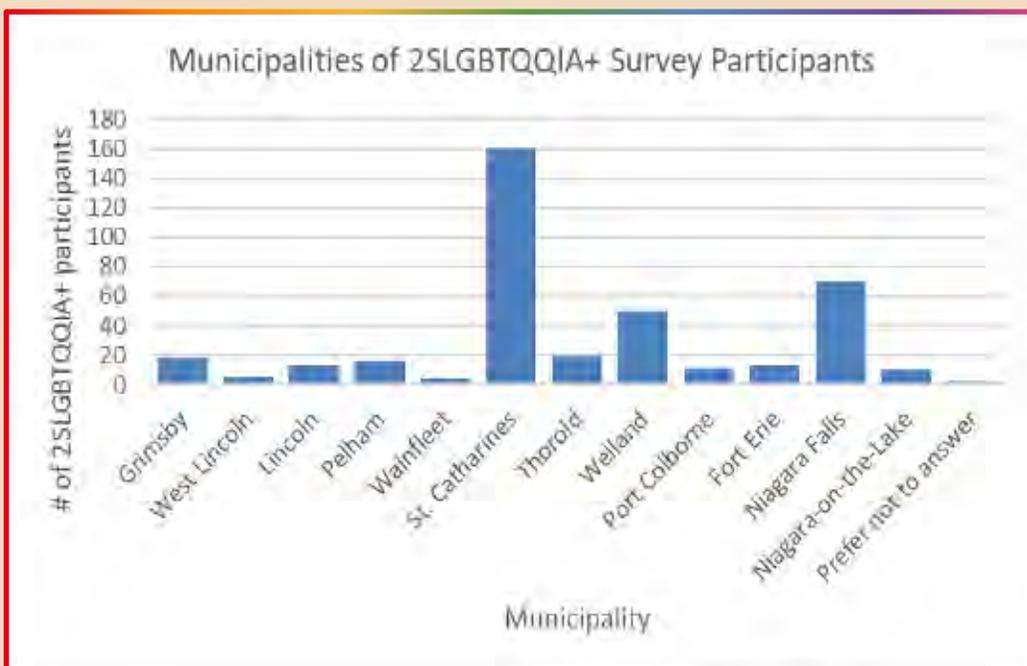


## Geography

The majority (231 participants) of 2SLGBTQQIA+ survey participants (59%) live in either St. Catharines or Niagara Falls. 159 2SLGBTQQIA+ survey participants (41%) live in the municipalities of Grimsby, West Lincoln, Lincoln, Pelham, Wainfleet, Thorold, Welland, Port Colborne, Fort Erie, or Niagara-on-the-Lake.



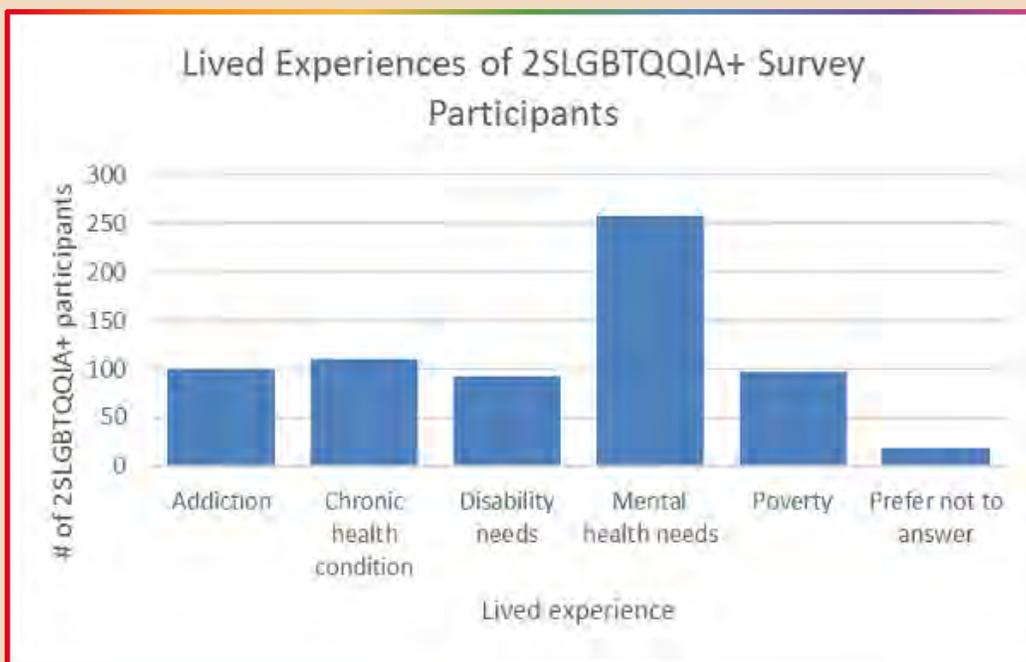
Of the 392 2SLGBTQQIA+ survey participants, 18 participants (5%) live in Grimsby, 5 participants (1%) live in West Lincoln, 13 participants (3%) live in Lincoln, 16 participants (4%) live in Pelham, 4 participants (1%) live in Wainfleet, 161 participants (40%) live in St. Catharines, 19 participants (5%) live in Thorold, 50 participants (13%) live in Welland, 11 participants (3%) live in Port Colborne, 13 participants (3%) live in Fort Erie, 70 participants (18%) live in Niagara Falls, 10 participants (3%) live in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and 2 participants prefer not to share.



## Lived Experience

Some participants have multiple lived experiences with addiction, chronic health conditions, disability needs, mental health needs, and/or poverty. This summary is limited; it does not break down the details of people with multiple lived experiences across these categories.

Of the 392 2SLGBTQQIA+ survey participants, 100 participants (26%) have lived experience with addiction, 111 participants (28%) have a chronic health condition, 93 participants (24%) have disability needs, 258 participants (66%) have mental health needs, 97 participants (25%) have lived experience with poverty, and 19 participants (5%) preferred not to share.



## Context and History

*"The history is undocumented, but it's also been re-written. The history has been told by a white gay men's perspective with maybe a few white lesbians being tokenized... people are being written out."*

**2SLGBTQQIA+ Community Member**

The history of Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community starts with the **Two-Spirit and LGBTQQIA+ Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, Wendat, and Chonnonton** peoples who have existed on this land since time immemorial. Some Indigenous community members noted that the Niagara Regional Native Centre and Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre are valuable resources in keeping and teaching culture, language, and history through their programs and digital library. However, access to Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQQIA+ histories and knowledges outside of these spaces is limited. Histories of how Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community has struggled, evolved, and thrived is largely undocumented. Knowledge of community gatherings, organizing, and advocacy seem to reside in peoples' memories and in boxes in basements. For example, many 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations used to sit on a committee run through public health to run Pride collaboratively.

Organizations historically coordinated to host different events throughout the week in June, such as Transgender Niagara's classic movies and munchies event. Histories like this are **undocumented and rewritten**. One community member describes, "The people with power are rewriting history and people are getting erased."

**2SLGBTQQIA+ community and political organizing** has seen waves of both momentum and disconnection over the last several decades. Transgender Niagara, the LGBTQ+ Women's Group, the Gay Men's Meet Up, and Senior Pride Network of Niagara are some lesser-known groups that have been running with little to no funds. The COVID-19 pandemic halted all in-person gatherings and activities, but organizers are hopeful about re-starting programming when safe.

This largely undocumented and re-written history deepens generational disconnects and political divides. It also contributes to what some community members described as the **2SLGBTQQIA+ community's identity crisis**. It is difficult to learn and grow from history and take pride in your community without access to that history. A shared history can help community connect to its sense of self, place, and belonging. As one community member highlights, "We need to find our own identity and stop comparing ourselves to Hamilton and Toronto. We keep looking to them as something to strive for. Bigger isn't always better."

Settler colonialism, religious intolerance and bigotry, white supremacy, and the exploitation of migrant farm workers underpin the region's culture and socioeconomic conditions. Many community members shared how **hostility from Christian conservatives** makes Niagara feel unsafe for 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, with some community members describing how they feel that they have no choice but to flee to Hamilton or Toronto.

Niagara's **regional and municipal political systems and officials largely reinforce this culture of intolerance and apathy**. Boldly homophobic attitudes and actions of multiple councillors, mayors, Members of Provincial Parliament, and Members of Parliament, along with a lack of political will to take meaningful action on 2SLGBTQQIA+ issues, has been a broad source of frustration, disappointment, and despair for the community. 2SLGBTQQIA+ representation in local municipalities is lacking, and community members describe politicians to be more focused on tourism than supporting the needs of their own communities.

However, there are **beacons of leadership in regional and municipal politics**. As one community member describes, "Some [politicians] are doing it because it's politically smart and some moves feel tokenistic. But there are some politicians who are genuinely trying to make changes." For example, multiple motions have been put forward to Niagara Regional Council addressing homophobic and transphobic discrimination, racism, and public health disparities. Such motions have led to the establishment of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee and Officer. The raising of the Pride flag in all municipalities and creation of rainbow crosswalks and benches are positive steps.

# Understanding Strengths & Needs



I wanted to focus on the needs of having more activities that are active, along with the need for LGB folks to learn more about T folks. There are automatic assumptions that folks are on the binary when they aren't. Event organizers aren't even introducing with their names and pronouns. Sometimes there are only gendered bathroom options when all it takes is putting a sign on the door during an event. These are a few strategies that can make gnc (gender nonconforming folks) feel welcome.

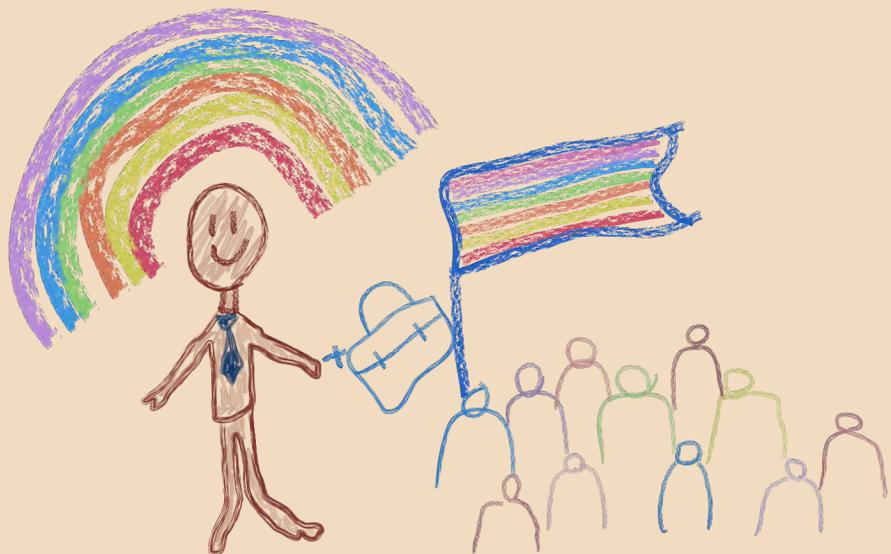
Kai Kristoff

## Building on Strengths

The **leadership of students and youth** stood out as a strength of Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community. There is a strong 2SLGBTQQIA+ student community at Brock University, with Brock Pride and the Brock Student Justice Centre, as well as OPIRG Brock. There are also a few 2SLGBTQQIA+ school groups or Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA) in Niagara region making waves by and for 2SLGBTQQIA+ secondary students. The Grimsby Positive Space Project is a strong example of this. It is a high school group dedicated to creating a positive, accepting atmosphere for all students, regardless of their differences, that fosters inclusion, belonging, and confidence. Led by grade 12 students, the group has had mixed support from school leadership and faculty, but a handful of teachers have stepped up over the years to ensure the group has a space and supervision to meet. Community sponsors have also made the group's activities possible. An alum of the group describes, "We got a lot of support from some of the local businesses. When we ran our cafe, we got a lot of donations and support."

As described in the Context and History section, Niagara region has an **undocumented but rich queer history and wisdom of 2SLGBTQQIA+ older adults**. Though not well documented, older 2SLGBTQQIA+ have done much for their communities to create spaces that were the first of their kind, and share life experience and wisdom with peers and younger generations.

There are many **passionate and committed individuals and groups** who are assets to the community, including 2SLGBTQQIA+ community organizers, service providers, activists, artists, parents, caregivers, and educators who give so much time and energy. For example, community development and some successful advocacy work has been accomplished by **labour unions**.



Some unions have allies or committees, such as the Ontario Public Service Employees Union's (OPSEU) Rainbow Alliance. When organizations, service providers, schools, businesses, and politicians collaborate, incredible achievements have and will continue to be made.

Many community members expressed appreciation for the climate and described the **spiritual value and health benefits of connections to land and water** in Niagara region. Hiking, biking and gardening, along with farmer's markets and access to local produce were mentioned as many peoples' favourite things about living in the region. Some community members also expressed appreciation for **the arts, theatre, and entertainment** in Niagara.

Lastly, 2SLGBTQQIA+ friendships and relationships are a cornerstone of belonging and hope. There is **fierce love and solidarity** in Niagara region, as well as motivation and momentum for change.

## Understanding Needs

This section dives into the key issues and needs of Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community.

While 93% (395/438) of survey respondents listed at least one 2SLGBTQQIA+ community, program, service, event, or space they are aware of, only 49% of respondents report being involved in any 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities, programs, services, events, or spaces. This section provides insights to barriers and key challenges as to why that may be.

## Priority Community Snapshots

This report aims to take an anti-oppressive and equity-based approach to community strengths and needs. For this reason, we begin this section by highlighting the key issues and needs raised by two priority communities: Queer and Trans Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (QTBIPOC) and rural 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks.



## Queer and Trans Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour( QTBIPOC) Community Snapshot

QTBIPOC experience significant **disconnection, exclusion, and isolation** in Niagara region, facing racism within and outside of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community. To start, anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism are experienced widely in employment. **Racism in workplaces** ranges from blatant racism to microaggressions and intellectual theft from white management. One Black community member described showing up to job interviews, only to have employers question, gaslight, and insult their qualifications and experience. Migrants and newcomers noted that **professional development and employment coaching for new immigrants** would be helpful.

Access to affordable and culturally relevant mental health and wellness services and supports is another key issue faced by QTBIPOC in Niagara region. In particular, Indigenous community members expressed that COVID-19 has exacerbated **trauma, mental health, and addiction** challenges, emphasizing high needs for Two Spirit events and elders, spiritual counselling, crisis support, peer support, and addiction programs. In addition, QTBIPOC community members expressed needs for **sex and intimacy healing and learning** opportunities.

*"I don't see a space for me here."*

QTBIPOC Community Member

**Within Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community itself**, some QTBIPOC community members shared that events such as Pride and drag shows aren't inclusive or safe spaces for them. Migrants and newcomers to the region feel disconnected and unwelcome in the community. One community member described, "If you haven't lived here long, or aren't from the Niagara region, you are treated like an outsider."

QTBIPOC envision a Niagara where they can experience **authenticity, belonging, and liberation**. Community members expressed the need for **QTBIPOC physical and online spaces** for networking, community building, and programming grounded in nature, arts, wellness, cooking, culture, and joy.

### Key Recommendations from QTBIPOC:

- A community accountability process and support for QTBIPOC youth, students, and employees who are ignored or afraid to come forward with instances of abuse and discrimination
- Anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies, practices, and trainings in Niagara workplaces
- Professional development and employment coaching for new immigrants
- The creation of QTBIPOC physical and online spaces and programming - particularly Indigenous and Afro-centric spaces
- A virtual wellness hub where you can find QTBIPOC and 2SLGBTQQIA+ spaces, events, learning opportunities, therapists, physicians, etc.

*Continued on the next page.*

- Intentional outreach by 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations to make space for QTBIPOC participation and leadership
- Uniformed police removed from all Pride and 2SLGBTQQIA+ events in Niagara and replaced with a community safety marshalling program

## Rural/Remote 2SLGBTQQIA+ Community Snapshot

*“More outreach and activities in smaller towns are needed. Lincoln doesn't seem to do much other than flying a Pride flag in June... The smaller communities need something to feel safe.”*

**Rural/Remote 2SLGBTQQIA+ Community Member**

Rural and remote 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members face heightened discrimination and significant barriers to accessing community, health, and social services and resources. Communities outside of St. Catharines and Niagara Falls have **few to no local services, supports, and spaces**. As one community member shared, “I know where I live, Lincoln, there are a lot of mommy groups but they aren't welcoming to gay dads. I also don't think there are really queer-friendly spaces for youth in the region, or at least not the smaller towns.”

Parents expressed that there is **insufficient support for children and parents** in rural and remote communities, leaving parents at a loss for where to turn to get support for their child.

**Public transportation is poor** and prevents people from accessing critical services and valuable programs. As one community member describes, “The only reason I can't participate in any community events, which are mostly in St. Catharines, is because of lack of transportation and costs associated.” Virtual programming and services can't necessarily fill these gaps, as **access to technology and rural high-speed internet** are also challenges.

Lastly, rural and remote 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members experience anxiety about going out places, especially if they are visibly queer or trans, out of **fear of discrimination**. Transphobic, biphobic, and homophobic values and actions of conservative and Christian communities are common, especially in Port Colborne, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Grimsby, Lincoln, and West Lincoln. One community member describes, “If a company doesn't somehow indicate that they're 2SLGBTQQIA+ friendly...it can be scary.” Community members need services and businesses to be more open and visible about supporting the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community.

### Key Recommendations from Rural/Remote Community Members:

- Accessible, affordable, and consistent regional public transportation
- Engage older generations and religious leaders in 2SLGBTQQIA+ awareness and allyship
- 2SLGBTQQIA+ trainings for businesses and financial institutions

# Health and Healthcare



Health & Healthcare  
Lisa Forstinger

2SLGBTQQIA+ community members identified health as the biggest challenge they face, with more than half (243/438) of survey respondents naming issues related to health when asked about the biggest issue for 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities in Niagara region. There is a **lack of general practitioners and affordable counsellors** in the region, and an even greater gap in practitioners who are knowledgeable and supportive of 2SLGBTQQIA+ health.

**Discrimination, stigma, and ignorance** are common across family health and urgent care, as well as physiotherapy, massage therapy, and chiropractic care, especially for trans folks. Community members experience healthcare providers' refusals to take on 2SLGBTQQIA+ patients, deadnaming, misgendering, fat shaming, poor shaming, heteronormative assumptions about sexual health, birth control, and family planning.

There is a **distinct lack of physicians willing and trained to provide trans healthcare**. Wait lists are long. There are no providers who do trans care for children and youth under 16 years old. As one community member describes, "Gender transition support is not available for my 13-year-old. We were referred to Ron Joyce and have been waiting for 6 months without any word of when the first appointment will be." Community members express frustration in delays of gender-affirming surgeries, deemed unnecessary.

Even within the few health centres in Niagara region that provide trans health, experiences vary. While some community members have had terrific experiences, others describe negative experiences and doing a lot of **self-advocacy** to get the healthcare they need. In seeking hormone replacement therapy, one community member shares, "*I had to fight with my doctor at Quest Community Health Centre for nearly every prescription I have ever had from them. Whether it be just to start basic medications or to alter my dose... This has been going on for 5 years now.*"

**Coordination and collaboration between health centres and providers** is essential, but a real challenge in Niagara region. 2SLGBTQQIA+ health service providers noted a culture of ownership and possessiveness around the few existing trans health programs and services.

*"These kinds of [trans health] waiting lists cause untold physical and mental harm to gender diverse people, who are already at high risk of self-harm and suicide."*

**Parent of 2SLGBTQQIA+ Youth**

In terms of **trauma, mental health, and addiction**, community members made clear connections between mental health, trans health, violence, employment, and housing. Niagara's **opioid crisis** is killing 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members, with the region's number of opioid-related overdoses continuing to rise.<sup>1</sup> 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members shared that the current overdose prevention services are insufficient and stressed the need for much more comprehensive **harm reduction policies, programs, and practices**. As one service provider underscores, "It is essential to enhance programming specific to meeting the needs of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community and to do so we must value and honour people's experiences and expertise. We must continue to actively dismantle systems of oppression while simultaneously building more inclusive and supportive communities where people feel welcomed and safe to be their true selves."

The lack of **addiction management services and long-term rehab programs** in the region puts recovery out of reach for many. Community members noted that addiction services need to be better equipped to support the needs of 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals. Some community members recommended **addiction-specific queer support groups and service providers** in addictions and CMHA who specialize in working with 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals.

Next, many 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members are disappointed with the lack of 2SLGBTQQIA+ and sex-positive sexual health education in healthcare settings and schools. Experiences with sexual health and reproductive justice education and services, including STI testing, PrEP, menstrual products, contraception, and family planning, are shaped by stigma, assumptions, high costs, and low-quality care. Community members highlight the inaccessibility and cost of fertility services, with the nearest fertility clinic located in Stoney Creek. Niagara Reproductive Justice has compiled a list of free and low-cost sexual and reproductive health resources in Niagara region, available at:

<https://niagarareproductivejustice.com/resources/>.

Lastly, marginalized community members such as older adults and newcomers face specific challenges. Transphobia, heterosexism, and isolation in long-term care, retirement homes, and home care services are key issues for 2SLGBTQQIA+ older adults. For **2SLGBTQQIA+ immigrants and migrant workers**, barriers to healthcare include racism, legal status, transportation, and language.



<sup>1</sup> [https://www.niagararegion.ca/living/health\\_wellness/alc-sub-abuse/drugs/opioids.aspx](https://www.niagararegion.ca/living/health_wellness/alc-sub-abuse/drugs/opioids.aspx)

# Employment and Poverty

Dear Eric,

Don't hold it against my mom for letting it slip, but I heard about your mom and dad. How are you and your siblings holding up? I hear separation is difficult on everyone it touches — I hope you know you still have me to talk to.

Eric, I'm writing because I can't help but think of the domino effect this will have on you. I don't know much about divorce and its effects, so I'll learn with you as you go through it. What I do know is that you and I were already dealt unfavourable hands to start with. You and I were not top of mind when the system we live in was made. Your parents weren't either. Neither were mine.

There are hurdles our mamas and papas, and lolos and lolas kept from us — hurdles that illustrate our 'place' in society. My parents thought they protected me by hiding these things from me, but doing so only made me less prepared. My dear cousin, I didn't have anyone to talk to about these 'things' I was noticing when I was your age, so I'm going to articulate to you the 'things' I now know to let you know you're not alone in seeing these unfold.

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Things like not being born into wealth and the positive cycles that come with it. Things like not having the financial freedom to volunteer for a cause we care about because we have to work on the weekends, which means we don't get to plant seeds for meaningful, things like not working we personally find and rest peacefully because we have to be doing to survive having the ease of mind to sit to set ourselves up to not having a car to go places and a long list of things and well-rounded network exposed to museums, classes, workshops, and talks because it was out of reach because of money, time, or access. Things like how the colour of our skin sets us back in the job market. Things like how your family name on your resume puts you at a disadvantage. Things like your parents being grateful that you don't have an accent so that you'd have a better chance at a better damper on their relationship they're self-conscious even if you have a life, even though it puts a conversation with you and your friends.

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Some of your friends won't have to come across these hurdles, and I hope they know enough not to take that for granted. You and I have an uphill battle. Don't get me wrong, I think there's beauty and poetry in a life of work, resilience, and building something out of nothing. We don't have to go far for look for examples — our parents came to this country for a better future for their kids. They quite literally flew out of their comfort zones, and yet they managed to get us to where we are now. I know you and I carry baggage there, after all they were still only human beings going through an insurmountable amount of change, challenges, doubt, and discrimination. To this day, I still hear a certain tone when they hear a people's tone changes more...contemporary one, too. I wish I could say that but I know you notice that, trying to make, but what is that they're all connected.

Some of your friends won't have to come across these hurdles, and I hope they know enough not to take that for granted. You and I have an uphill battle. Don't get me wrong, I think there's beauty and poetry in a life of work, resilience, and building something out of nothing. We don't have to go far for look for examples — our parents came to this country for a better future for their kids. They quite literally flew out of their comfort zones, and yet they managed to get us to where we are now. I know you and I carry baggage there, after all they were still only human beings going through an insurmountable amount of change, challenges, doubt, and discrimination. To this day, I still hear a certain tone when they hear a people's tone changes more...contemporary one, too. I wish I could say that but I know you notice that, trying to make, but what is that they're all connected.

You're going to notice soon that other than your mom to help untangle the pain and trauma he experienced as a child living in poverty. You're also going to notice that he also going to notice that he has freedom to process all of it, professional help.

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You're going to notice soon that your habits from their parents. that you've absorbed some of these habits yourself.

You're going to notice soon that your habits from their parents. that you've absorbed some of these habits yourself.

You're going to notice soon the greater divide between the rich and the poor. You're also going to notice that it's much harder for the poor to break out of the cycle.

You're going to notice soon the greater divide between the rich and the poor. You're also going to notice that it's much harder for the poor to break out of the cycle.

You're going to notice soon how your last name on a resume will get it thrown out of the pile — I'm repeating this because I confirmed this on both sides. in our home country, and I'm know friends who have don't have those jobs now. that this is partly why they

You're going to notice soon how your last name on a resume will get it thrown out of the pile — I'm repeating this because I confirmed this on both sides. in our home country, and I'm know friends who have don't have those jobs now. that this is partly why they

You're going to notice soon how education can blur themselves available for it. You're are many, many other hurdles in life that people go through or that never experience...hurdles that can block them from things like and having your social support split into two. I imagine you having to siblings through all this, at least emotionally, maybe even more. Knowing support your dad, even after how you, you're probably going to about yourself, too. he was to your mom. Don't spread yourself too thin, you have to worry

Your mom willing to bet

You're going to notice soon how important family really is, and how keeping the divide, but that it's not as has a huge impact on your future. You're also support your mom and your I've talked about so far have the potential you, you're probably going to a slippery slope.

You're going to notice soon how important family really is, and how keeping these relationships intact and healthy has a huge impact on your future. You're also to sever your relationships by I've talked about so far have the potential fighting an uphill battle, Eric, the trail up is also overwhelming you — you and I are not only a slippery slope.

You're going to notice soon how important family really is, and how keeping these relationships intact and healthy has a huge impact on your future. You're also to sever your relationships by I've talked about so far have the potential fighting an uphill battle, Eric, the trail up is also overwhelming you — you and I are not only a slippery slope.

Eric, I'm telling you all this not to try and discourage you. I'm telling you all this because soon you'll be graduating from high school and you'll feel these connected hurdles more palpably.

I'm telling you this because I want you to know that it's not your fault. I'm telling you because I want you to remember when we talked about how you and I experience vicious cycles because we're both gay, and how we're set back a few years from our straight peers because we have to hide who we are at some places or to some people, and how we have to be careful where we work and where we play because one 'wrong' move will get us kicked out of there. Remember that this is because of the society that we live in, not because of you.

I need you to muster up the bravery you gathered when we talked about that, because you'll also now have to realize that these 'things' are also largely up to you and your family to set yourself up for success because no one else will.

I need you to muster up the bravery you gathered when we talked about that, because you'll also now have to realize that these 'things' are also largely up to you and your family to set yourself up for success because no one else will.

Remember that you've got family in me.

Sc

Dear Eric  
Sc

*"I'm poor, disabled, and raising a young child on my own. I'm grateful for the few supports, but it's never enough. I'm struggling... Disability and poverty make access to higher education extremely challenging. Disability and poverty make viable employment nearly impossible."*

### 2SLGBTQQIA+ Community Member

Well-paying jobs are hard to find in Niagara region, leaving many people living below the poverty line and struggling to make ends meet. **Employer discrimination** is widespread, shaping many 2SLGBTQQIA+ community member's experiences of unemployment and underemployment. As one community member describes, "I personally have not been able to land a job since coming out as trans. I have 6+ years of schooling and 10+ years of work experience, and it seems to count for nothing now." Employer discrimination was especially noted in the manufacturing industry and other trades.

When 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals do find work, many are precariously employed and working in the service industry. Community members expressed that **living wages** must be a priority in Niagara region. Many community members also expressed feeling **unsafe at work**, experiencing dead naming, misgendering, sexual harassment, and discriminatory termination without cause.

Community members highlighted the role **labour unions** can take to support their 2SLGBTQQIA+ members. Some unions have taken initiative through their Equity & Inclusion committees (or a similar committee under a different name), to receive training, host events, and sponsor community led initiatives. Additionally, some union locals have endeavoured to update language in their policies and bylaws to be more gender inclusive, and through their collective bargaining processes, have advocated for increased gender-affirming health benefits. However, these different approaches to support 2SLGBTQQIA+ union members and community activism is inconsistent, and dependent on who was in leadership at the union local.

As one community member simply put it, "many unions aren't doing anything and should be". Many people don't feel unions are a safe space to turn to and see that equity issues are often the first ones to be dropped in collective bargaining. There is a need for relationship building and willingness to listen and commit. Access to funds can be a barrier. It was identified that some locals would be available to assist funding specific programs especially if they were related to an equity issue.



# Housing and Homelessness

Everywhere I go, every day I continue, every action and inaction around me puts this into my head;

They want us dead.

It's the last fear, that food can be taken, that security can be taken, that home can be taken from any

They want us dead

The pieces aren't seen until they've fallen apart. Oh, how quickly everything we knew can disappear.

They want us dead

All the supports we once knew, all the comforts built up. You see them go; becoming – being – alone.

They want us dead

Where do we keep the parts of us that have no home? How do you keep humanity? We become an It.

They want it dead

It doesn't matter if It loses Its things, it doesn't matter if It's harassed. It has always been hated.

They want it dead

Those who are given the power to protect It will see Its things stolen and declare it a nuisance.

They want it dead

The truths It knew never mattered. Make a tent and they'll cast it into a river. It can't sleep on spikes.

They want it dead

It has feelings though. You have feelings. All the agony pent up, all this tragedy, someone will care.

They want us dead

But how can It be cared for when there are mouths to feed, taxes to pay. Working lives to continue.

They want it dead

Even if It had a house, can It live truly? Can Its flag fly in the window? Does Its surroundings love It?

They want it dead

It's declared worthless, Its needs aren't being met and still It must work. The wheel must keep spinning

They want it dead

The systems in place take years, decades, to come to fruition. We are turned into "Its" every moment.

They want it dead

Even if It escapes back into a home... the system, *it*, still remains. Nothing invites paranoia quite like it.

We need it dead

**They Want Us Dead**  
Jane Soltes

*"I have a trans friend who got kicked out of their home and then was bullied in a shelter. It's horrifying how often it's happening in the region. It's bad."*

**QTBIPOC Community Member**

Safe housing and homelessness are challenges especially for 2SLGBTQQIA+ youth, community members struggling with addiction, and survivors of violence trying to leave abusive relationships or homes.

2SLGBTQQIA+ youth living with unsupportive or abusive family, or in unsafe homes, face significant challenges with **safe housing and homelessness**. Family rejection, inadequate social services, and discrimination in housing, employment and education contribute to 2SLGBTQQIA+ youth being unable to secure safe and affirming places to live. In fact, Canada has a 2SLGBTQ+ youth homelessness emergency, with 2SLGBTQQIA+ youth representing 25-40% of all homeless youth in Canada.<sup>2</sup> There is no 2SLGBTQQIA+ youth data on homelessness in Niagara; we only know that 8.43% of all survey respondents who participated in Niagara Region's 2021 Homelessness Point-in-Time Count Report identified as being part of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community. Of the 665 people that were experiencing homelessness in Niagara, 121 were children aged 0-15 years and 76 were youth aged 16-24 years.<sup>3</sup>

Community members emphasized the need for 2SLGBTQQIA+ competence across **homelessness services**. Outdated policies and insufficient training perpetuate poor service experience, and create additional barriers. Trans youth, especially young trans women of colour, generally experience some of the highest levels of violence in housing programs and shelters.<sup>4</sup> Many Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary youth avoid shelters altogether or face rejection from shelters because they're not permitted to access a shelter that matches their gender identity, or shelters do not feel equipped to support Two-Spirit, trans and non-binary youth.<sup>5</sup>

2SLGBTQQIA+ community members broadly stressed the affordable and inclusive housing crisis in Niagara region. As one rural/remote community member describes, "I live with my parents in my mid 30s - almost everyone I know does... Even my friends in St. Catharines can't afford it". Community members stressed that affordable housing must provide inclusive options for disabled 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people navigating legal and incarceration systems. Discrimination from landlords is also an issue, with instances of landlords refusing to rent to 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, even when they offer to pay more.

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<sup>2</sup> The 519. LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness in Canada.

Available at: <https://www.the519.org/education-training/lgbtq2s-youth-homelessness-in-canada/in-canada>

<sup>3</sup> Niagara Region. (2021). Homelessness Point-in-Time Count Report.

Available at: <https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=16848>

<sup>4</sup> Abramovich, Alex. (2016). Preventing, reducing and ending LGBTQ2S youth homelessness: The need for targeted strategies. *Social Inclusion* 4 (4): 86-96.

<sup>5</sup> The 519. LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness in Canada.

Available at: <https://www.the519.org/education-training/lgbtq2s-youth-homelessness-in-canada/in-canada>

# Violence and Discrimination



Untitled  
Melissa Montovani

*"I am afraid of the police and find they do not truly serve me or my community."*

### **2SLGBTQQIA+ Community Member**

Community members consistently spoke to the severity and range of violence and discrimination they encounter in their everyday lives, and highlighted the root causes as **systemic transphobia, homophobia and biphobia**, interconnected to and compounded by other forms of oppression.

**Elementary and secondary schools in Niagara region**, are sites of systemic transphobia, homophobia and biphobia. Many 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members emphasized how schools aren't equipped to handle students' gender and sexuality exploration. Discrimination also took the forms of exclusion and erasure. An alumni of a positive space program explains, "It was faculty who were causing the issues rather than students... We would submit our [club's] announcements every week, and [the secretary] almost never played them... They put all the clubs and teams in the yearbook, and ours just wasn't included." Catholic schools were emphasized as particularly homophobic. One community member recounts their experiences, describing, *"Growing up in a Catholic school many teachers were openly homophobic, especially in elementary school. When I reached high school, the teachers and school were more accepting, however students still had prejudice, and the school system was built to only accommodate mainly straight white men and boys."* There is a clear need for positive space programs at secondary schools, especially at Catholic schools. As one QTBIPOC community member explains, *"A lot of students in the Catholic schools reached out to me asking if I could start a positive space program in their schools. Kids need that help. They're asking for it – screaming, begging, and crying for a safe space in their school."*

Community members highlighted **public forms of gender-based violence and explicit acts of homophobia and transphobia** as prominent issues. Many community members reported experiences of bullying in schools, cyber-bullying, sexual and street harassment, and threats including but not limited to murder. Community members also cited experiences of property damage such as tire slashing, and public displays of homophobia and transphobia such as the defacement of rainbow imagery.

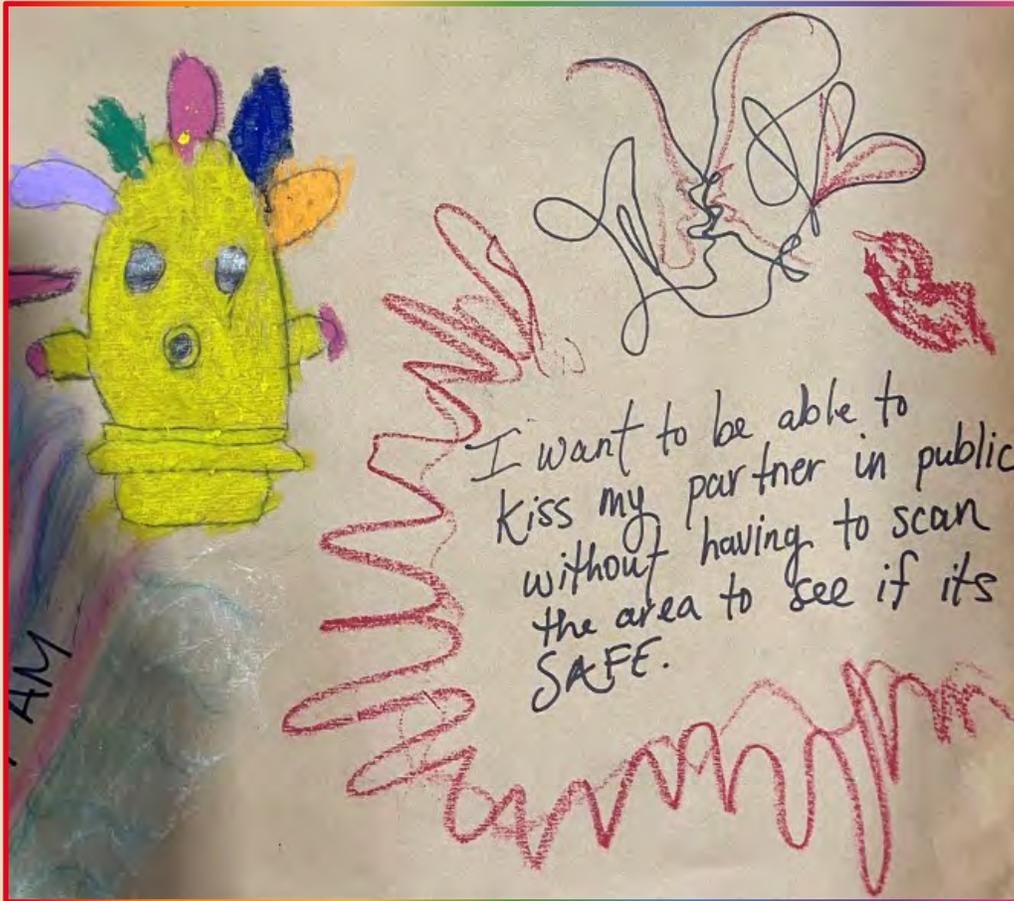
While there is no data specific about Niagara, a national survey found that 57% of trans people reported experiencing unwanted sexual behaviour while in public over a 12-month period, compared to 22% of cisgender people in Canada.<sup>6</sup> Further, a provincial study found that two-thirds of trans Ontarians have avoided a public space or situation for fear of harassment or being outed, with washrooms being the most commonly avoided space.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Jaffray, B. (2020). Experiences of violent victimization and unwanted sexual behaviours among gay, lesbian, bisexual and other sexual minority people, and the transgender population, in Canada, 2018 [PDF]. Statistics Canada.

Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/85-002-x/2020001/article/00009-eng.pdf?st=e411s0zl>

<sup>7</sup> Scheim, A., Bauer, G., Pyne, J. (2014). Avoidance of Public Spaces by Trans Ontarians: The Impact of Transphobia on Daily Life. Trans PULSE e-Bulletin. 4(1). Available at: <https://transpulseproject.ca/research/avoidance-of-public-spaces-by-trans-ontarians-the-impact-of-transphobia-on-daily-life/>

At the intersections of racism, transphobia, and cissexism, Trans PULSE Canada found that 72% of racialized trans and non-binary people experienced verbal harassment, 49% had experienced sexual harassment, 41% had been physically intimidated or threatened, and 23% had experienced physical violence in the past five years.<sup>8</sup> This study also looked at the experiences of newcomers and immigrants. Among trans and non-binary newcomers, 40% experienced sexual harassment and 72% experienced verbal harassment in the past five years. Meanwhile, 37% of trans and non-binary immigrants experienced sexual harassment and 63% experienced verbal harassment in the past five years.<sup>9</sup>



Little information about domestic violence and intimate partner violence came up in the Community Strengths and Needs Assessment, which is not surprising given the broad focus of the assessment and the stigma and silencing of these issues within 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. To address this gap, we turn to information that other research has captured.

<sup>8</sup> C. Chih, J. Q. Wilson-Yang, K. Dhaliwal, M. Khatoon, N. Redman, R. Malone, S. Islam, & Y. Persad on behalf of the Trans PULSE Canada Team. Health and well-being among racialized trans and non-binary people in Canada. 2020-11-02. Available from: <https://transpulsecanada.ca/research-type/reports>

<sup>9</sup> Navarro, J., Ferguson, T., Chih, C., Jibril, A., Khatoon, M., Inkingi, S., Beaulieu-Prévost, D., Thaker, P. (2021). Health and well-being among trans and non-binary immigrants & newcomers. Trans PULSE Canada. Available from: <https://transpulsecanada.ca/research-type/reports>

For example, we know that nationally, sexual minority women are at least two times more likely than heterosexual women to experience most types of intimate partner violence, and that two-thirds of sexual minority women experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime.<sup>10</sup>

Transmisogyny is pervasive in society generally and within 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities, and it contributes to trans women and transfeminine people experiencing high levels of gender-based violence. According to Trans PULSE Canada, three in five trans women in Canada have experienced intimate partner violence since the age of 16. Racialized and Indigenous trans women and Two-Spirit people, as well as those living with disabilities, often face more discrimination than white, able-bodied trans women.<sup>11</sup>

Trans PULSE Canada looked at experiences of racialized trans and non-binary people and found that one in three had been sexually assaulted in the past five years. Physical violence, sexual harassment, and sexual assault were all significantly more common among racialized trans and non-binary people when compared to non-racialized trans and non-binary people.<sup>12</sup> Trans PULSE Canada also reported about the experiences of newcomers and immigrants. They found that 31% of trans and non-binary newcomers experienced sexual assault, and 24% of trans and non-binary immigrants experienced sexual assault in the past five years.<sup>13</sup>

Bisexual people also face particularly high rates of gender-based violence in Canada compared to their heterosexual, gay, and lesbian peers. This is related to biphobia and the hypersexualization of bi people in both queer and heterosexual communities.<sup>14</sup> In a national 2018 study, 76% of bisexual women reported experiencing unwanted sexual behaviour while in public over a 12-month period compared to 31% of heterosexual women.<sup>15</sup> Bisexual individuals are also almost nine times more likely to be sexually assaulted over a 12-month period.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Statistics Canada. (2021). Intimate partner violence: Experiences of sexual minority women in Canada, 2018. [PDF]. Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2021001/article/00005-eng.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Women's Shelter Canada (2019 May). Community of practice: Supporting trans women in VAW shelters [PDF]. Comox Valley Transition Society. Available at: <https://transpulseproject.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Trans-PULSE-Statistics-Relevant-for-Human-Rights-Policy-June-2015.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Chih, C. et al.

<sup>13</sup> Navarro, J. et al.

<sup>14</sup> Praill, C. (2018). "LGBTQ Canadians disproportionately affected by violence according to Stats Canada survey". Global News. Available at: <https://globalnews.ca/news/4255599/lgbtq-canadians-disproportionately-affected-by-violence-according-to-stats-canada-survey/>

<sup>15</sup> Statistics Canada. (2019). Gender-based violence and unwanted sexual behaviour in Canada, 2018: Initial findings from the Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces. Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2019001/article/00017-eng.htm>

<sup>16</sup> Statistics Canada. (2014). Violent victimization of lesbians, gays and bisexuals in Canada, 2014. Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54923-eng.htm>

Homophobic and transphobic violence is enabled by a social and political environment that provides legitimacy to homophobic and transphobic rhetoric and ideology. Community members consistently emphasized the **negative impacts of local politicians** giving voice or platforms to homophobic and transphobic rhetoric. One community member shared, *“Local politicians and other leaders are given a voice in many organizations across Niagara despite their harmful views.”*

Concerns about **white supremacist, racist, and anti-2SLGBTQQIA+ groups** have a negative impact on 2SLGBTQQIA+ and QTBIPOC communities, making it harder and riskier for many to participate fully in community and public life. Community members emphasized that politicians, organizations, and groups that legitimize white supremacist and anti-2SLGBTQQIA+ ideologies have a direct influence on their sense of safety and belonging in the Niagara region. As well, **trans-exclusionary radical feminism (TERF)**-focused discrimination and commentary targets trans and non-binary activism and activists in the region.

2SLGBTQQIA+ people have few options to turn to when they experience violence or hate, with many community members expressing they wouldn't feel safe contacting police services. Some community members have had positive experiences with Niagara Regional Police Service (NRPS), while others have experienced **police violence and discrimination** in the forms of harassment, misgendering, and excessive use of force. One participant described experiencing *“blatant discrimination against ‘visibly’ queer people, especially those who are gender non-conforming to a point of potential loss of life.”*

Another community member shared, *“NRPS routinely targets and harasses Indigenous and Black community members - especially those living in impoverished communities. NRPS still responds to mental health calls. This is a dangerous and inappropriate practice.”* Community members want more awareness of rights, especially when it comes to body searches for trans and non-binary people. Some community members would like police to be better trained in 2SLGBTQQIA+ issues, while others expressed the need for police to be defunded and for funds to be reinvested into social services and mental health alternatives.<sup>17</sup>

Recognizing that 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities are not exempt from perpetuating homophobia, transphobia, racism, white supremacy and other forms of oppression, community members spoke to experiences of **lateral violence within 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities**. In particular, community members highlighted issues of, transphobia, biphobia, racism, and ageism within the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community and organizations. In order to meaningfully address the volume and complexity of lateral violence that came up in assessment without taking away from the other needs and issues, this report includes a Lateral Violence and Conflict Transformation Sub-Report within. Please see the Sub-Report for more details and recommendations.

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<sup>17</sup> OUTniagara's Board, Regional Advisory Committee, and Agencies and Partners Working Group engaged in a process to determine if and how the NRPS should be engaged in the Community Strengths and Needs Assessment Process. Wisdom2Action conducted a key informant interview with representatives of the NRPS. In alignment with the report's equity-based approach and goal to amplify the voices of 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members, rather than the voices of organizations or institutions, the findings from the NRPS interview are not integrated into this report. A summary of the interview was shared back with OUTniagara's Board, Regional Advisory Committee, and Agencies and Partners Working Group.

# Community and Social Services

 **Where Do I Go?**  
Colleen McTigue

[Click here for the full song!](#)

My man of 3 years just threw me out on the street,  
Just the clothes on my back, and the shoes on my feet.  
Haven't eaten much in over a week,  
Now where do I go? Is there a place I can go?

I've heard there's a place for abused women like me,  
They provide a safe shelter, and their services are free,  
I rang the bell, and said "Can you help me?"  
She opened the door, and said, "Come in, and we'll see."

She looked at my health card, said "This name is a man's."  
I said, "Let me explain, you see the thing is, I'm Trans."

"This is a shelter for women," she said with a frown,  
"I'm afraid we're gonna have to turn you down.  
You need to go to the men's shelter downtown,"  
Now where do I go? Is there a place I can go?

So now I'm in trouble, on the street and alone,  
I have no place to call my home,  
No one to care for me, no one to phone,  
Now where do I go? Is there a place I can go?

She looked at my health card, said "This name is a man's."  
I said, "Let me explain, you see the thing is, I'm Trans."

I'm starting to shiver, it's raining and cold,  
Can't get the services I need, so I've been told.  
I'm sure I'm gonna die before I get old,  
Now where do I go? Is there anyplace I can go?

**Where do I go?**  
Colleen McTigue

*“Until there are social supports in place for homelessness, addiction, and domestic abuse, the LGBTQ community will continue to face these issues at overwhelming rates.”*

### **2SLGBTQQIA+ Community Member**

Community members continue to face barriers accessing mainstream community and social services in the Niagara region due to persistent and historical experiences of poor treatment, transphobia, and homophobia. While many organizations have taken positive steps, continued efforts are needed to build **organizational and front-line care provider knowledge and competence** on 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusion. One community member expressed, “When accessing social services, I often feel that providers are unable to address my needs or don’t have staff that fully understand the needs of the LGBTQ2S+ community.”

2SLGBTQQIA+ people are diverse, present in every community, and may need access to a wide range of services. Community members emphasized the need for 2SLGBTQQIA+ competence across **all types of social services, including disability support services, shelter and homelessness services, childcare services, legal services, among others**. Outdated policies and insufficient training perpetuate poor service experience and create additional barriers. As with accessing health services, barriers to providing **legal documents** with correct names and sex designation causes issues in community and social services.

Community members emphasized the need for a fulsome implementation of 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusion, including the addition of all-gender bathrooms, consistent use of pronouns, inclusive intake forms, and well-trained staff. Additionally, providers often lack training and willingness to work at the intersections of different **accessibility needs** and identities. When asked about community and social services, one 2SLGBTQQIA+ community member highlighted, “Many places are reluctant to offer alternate ways of communication for disabled folk”. There is also a lack of understanding of culturally diverse gender identities and experiences, resulting in **additional barriers for Two Spirit, Indigiqueer and QTBIPOC community members**.

Within community and social services, community members were concerned that 2SLGBTQQIA+ issues were deemed of insufficient importance or urgency, and that 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities have not been sufficiently considered in **broader community and social service planning, design, or implementation**.

Access to 2SLGBTQQIA+-specific community and social services presents additional barriers and gaps, with **insufficient 2SLGBTQQIA+ services and support spread thinly across the region**, while concentrated in St. Catharines. “[We] need childcare. I’ve tried to advocate for changes that I feel are important. Few people listen. Nothing changes.” 2SLGBTQQIA+-specific community and social services continue to be a rarity within the broader community and social service sector, resulting in insufficient services and unequal access across the region.

# Community and Culture



**Beauty of Man**  
Lorenzo Cromwell

*“There's a lack of active supportive organizations that are offering anything beyond a party. I'm in my mid-late 20's and I'm no longer interested in partying it up - I'd rather just have an opportunity to talk with other like-minded queer people.”*

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**2SLGBTQQIA+ Community Member**

Existing organized recreational activities in Niagara region are not inclusive for 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members, especially for trans and non-binary folks. **Gendered bathrooms, changerooms, and sports teams** are barriers to community members participating in recreational activities they would like to partake in. One community member describes, “We need more gender neutral bathrooms for members of the community who identify with neither male or female. Being able to use the bathroom comfortably and peacefully is incredibly important for non-binary individuals. Choosing which bathroom to use is a very unneeded source of stress.” Disabled 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members highlighted that many recreational spaces and activities are not **physically accessible**.

2SLGBTQQIA+ community spaces and programming in Niagara region are largely limited to parties and drag shows. Many community members expressed feeling that these **events are centered around cis gay men**, and are not for trans, bi, ace, QTBIPOC, and/or people over 40. As one community member describes, “Bi-erasure and biphobia in conjunction with asexual intolerance or ignorance creates barriers to entering existing community spaces that are centered around cis gay men.”

Community members strongly expressed the need for **opportunities to connect outside of party spaces**. People want to build relationships in **community-oriented, family-friendly, and intergenerational** ways that are accessible and inclusive to everyone - including those who are QTBIPOC, disabled, experiencing addiction or mental health challenges, poor or working class, rural or remote, and/or older adults. 2SLGBTQQIA+ parents and parents of 2SLGBTQQIA+ children and youth also expressed the need for programming specifically for parents. 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members have lots of ideas for activities they would like to participate in: picnics, hikes, soup nights, arts nights, poetry slams, cultural and faith-based events, a sports league, gaming events, sex and intimacy events, book clubs, and movie nights.

Lastly, community members shared concerns and frustrations with **limited communication, outreach, and inclusion from 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations and service providers**. Some community members expressed a lack of communication and outreach regarding employment, volunteer, and programming opportunities. For example, one community member described, “Leadership and contract work jobs in organizations like OUT Niagara and Positive Living Niagara are not widely posted”. People suggested consistent, effective, and timely communication via social media, newsletters, program and service provider networks, radio, and direct outreach to underrepresented groups.

2SLGBTQQIA+ community members specifically spoke to **issues of transparency, transphobia, racism, ageism, and accountability with 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations**. For more information and recommendations, please see the Lateral Violence and Conflict Transformation Sub-Report.

## Community Recommendations

- Create more 2SLGBTQQIA+ gatherings, events and spaces
- Develop additional support groups for 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members
- Create a list of 2SLGBTQQIA+ friendly health and social service providers
- Create a directory of 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusive businesses
- Create a 2SLGBTQQIA+ community hub
- Develop public education campaigns on 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusion
- Develop a centralized 2SLGBTQQIA+ information website
- Strengthen collaboration between union locals, labour organizations, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations, trainings, and events
- Coordinate with collective organizing for housing
- Create a 2SLGBTQQIA+ histories project

## QTBIPOC-Specific Recommendations

- QTBIPOC specific spaces and services
- Strengthen outreach to QTBIPOC and underrepresented groups, including but not limited to sex workers, undocumented people, migrant workers, and incarcerated people
- Anti-racism and anti-colonialism education and training
- Professional development and employment coaching for new immigrants
- Community accountability and reporting processes
- Uniformed police removed from all Pride and 2SLGBTQQIA+ events in Niagara and replaced with a community safety marshalling program

## Wisdom2Action Recommendations

- Establish a formal 2SLGBTQQIA+ service providers network
- Develop a regional planning table for 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusion and health
- Develop a trans health navigation program
- Develop funding mechanisms for community events and spaces, with a focus on QTBIPOC and rural communities
- Develop a dedicated 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusion capacity building program

# Community Recommendations

## Want to Feel Safe

Growing up with Italian parents I felt like I was being programmed, on what to do and how to act.

Until one day I broke free. I can see clearly for the first time.

Do you mean I can wear what I want and fix my hair the way I want.

I don't have to go by the rules they gave me. I don't have to sit still and be quite.

Boy or girl **who fucking cares.**

Why can't I be both or none at all. Why do I have to choose?

I wish I could feel safe in Niagara Falls.

There is nowhere for me to meet like-minded people.

The only place I thought was safe removed their pride sticker.

Anonymous

Through our engagement process, we identified a wide range of recommendations from community members and key stakeholders. These recommendations speak to issues spanning health and social services, community and cultural, addressing violence and discrimination. In sum, they lay out a vision for an informed, inclusive, and indivisible approach to improving community health, wellness, and safety for 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in the Niagara region.

These recommendations are reflective of those shared with us through the survey, key informant interviews, focus groups, the arts workshop, and numerous advisory committee meetings.

### **Recommendation #1**

Create more 2SLGBTQQIA+ gatherings, events, and spaces.

Community members consistently identified the need for more community gatherings, events and spaces, including those for distinct age groups (children, youth, early 20s, early adults, all ages), alcohol-free spaces, spaces for specific communities (QTBIPOC, trans people, bi+ people, older adults, etc.), and spaces outside of urban centres. This assessment's community engagement process found a high demand for arts-based programming which should be taken up further.

### **Recommendation #2**

Develop additional support groups for 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members.

Support groups, primarily within a peer-support model, were recommended by many community members. Community members cited the need for more support groups, and more support groups for distinct communities and experiences, including groups for newly out community members, groups for community members struggling with substance use and addiction, positive space groups for secondary students, and groups for community members who may be coping with traumatic experiences.

### **Recommendation #3**

Create a comprehensive list of 2SLGBTQQIA+ friendly health and social service providers.

Given the barriers to access community, health and social services for 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, community members recommended the creation of a comprehensive list of 2SLGBTQIA+ friendly health and social service providers, to facilitate access to services and minimize risk of transphobic encounters by facilitating connection to 2SLGBTQQIA+-competent care.

#### **Recommendation #4**

Create a directory of 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusive businesses.

Safer spaces for 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members were of great import to those engaged with this initiative. Community members cited the importance of supporting 2SLGBTQQIA+-owned businesses in particular, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusive businesses more broadly, and thus recommended the creation of a directory of such businesses in the Niagara region.

#### **Recommendation #5**

Create a 2SLGBTQQIA+ community hub.

Physical community infrastructure is an important aspect of 2SLGBTQQIA+ culture and inclusion. Through a 2SLGBTQQIA+ community hub, community members would have access to a one-stop shop for essential services, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ community groups could utilize such a space for events, support groups and other activities. Through a hub, 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities in the Niagara region would be afforded a physical bulwark of safety and inclusion. SPECTRUM in Waterloo and Kind Space in Ottawa are examples of physical community hubs.

#### **Recommendation #6**

Develop public education campaigns on 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusion.

Persistent homophobic and transphobic public opinions result in and normative violence against 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, ranging from street harassment to deadnaming, misgendering, and other micro- and macro-aggressions. Community members recommend the creation of a regional public education campaign to address misconceptions and stigma, building understanding and solidarity with 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities.

#### **Recommendation #7**

Develop a centralized 2SLGBTQQIA+ information website.

Access to key information on a range of 2SLGBTQQIA+-related issues was consistently identified as a barrier for community members, who often struggled to find centralized information about pertinent 2SLGBTQQIA+ services, events, organizations and health. Through the creation of a centralized website, community members would have access to all the pertinent, localized, information they might need.

**Recommendation #8**

Strengthen collaboration between union locals, labour organizations, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations, trainings, and events.

Union locals all have different levels of commitment to supporting 2SLGBTQQIA+ union members and different approaches to doing so. To address these inconsistencies dependent on leadership, it would be strategic for union locals, labour organizations and activists, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations to strengthen their coordination and collaboration.

**Recommendation #9**

Coordinate with collective organizing for housing.

Niagara region's housing crisis, housing discrimination, and homelessness are significant issues for 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities. 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members recommended supporting and coordinating with existing collective organizing efforts for housing and homelessness, such as Niagara Tenants Union, in the forms of tenants organizing, street outreach, rent strikes, and focusing more resources on supporting our unhoused community members.

**Recommendation #10**

Create a 2SLGBTQQIA+ histories project.

Niagara has a rich 2SLGBTQQIA+ history, but it is undocumented and being rewritten. This documentation would be an incredible resource for the community and future generations to learn and build from the struggles, lessons, and joys that came before. Niagara region has the existing infrastructure, including libraries, museums, and Brock University, to do a 2SLGBTQQIA+ histories project such as a virtual archives.

## QTBIPOC-Specific Recommendations

Integral to the CSNA was meaningful engagement with the unique needs, experiences, and recommendations of QTBIPOC communities, due to the particular violence imposed on the varied intersections of white supremacy, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, transphobia, biphobia, and homophobia, among others. These recommendations reflect QTBIPOC-specific recommendations as identified within the QTBIPOC focus group and QTBIPOC survey respondents.

### **Recommendation #11**

QTBIPOC specific spaces and services.

QTBIPOC community members cited the need for QTBIPOC-specific social and community spaces and services, including support groups, arts and culture programming, and other activities, by and for QTBIPOC communities in the Niagara region.

### **Recommendation #12**

Strengthen outreach to QTBIPOC and underrepresented groups, including but not limited to sex workers, undocumented people, migrant workers, and incarcerated people.

Building relationships and trust between and among marginalized 2SLGBTQQIA+ groups and 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations must be a priority of 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations. 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations can start or continue doing this by strengthening their communication and outreach. Community members suggested consistent, effective, and timely communication via direct outreach to underrepresented groups, relevant networks, social media, newsletters, and radio.

### **Recommendation #13**

Professional development and employment mentorship for new immigrants.

2SLGBTQQIA+ migrants and newcomers can face multiple barriers to accessing gainful employment in Niagara region due to racism, citizenship, and language, in addition to transphobia and homophobia. Community members identified gaps in networks, mentorship, knowledge, and skills for migrants and newcomers that need to be addressed.

### **Recommendation #14**

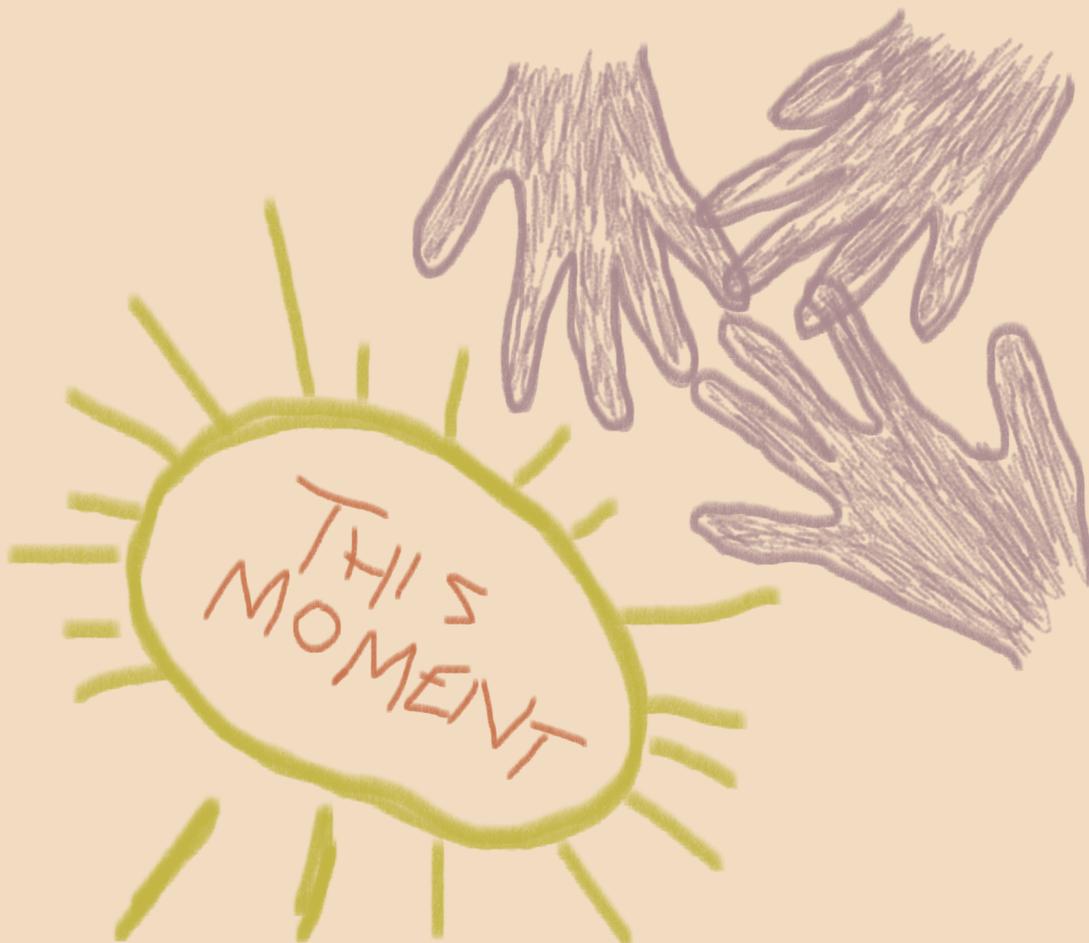
Anti-racism and anti-colonialism education and training.

Given the unique intersections of white supremacy, colonialism, homophobia and transphobia, QTBIPOC and Two Spirit community members experience significant barriers and heightened harm. As such, community members recommended that both 2SLGBTQ+-specific and mainstream community, health and social service organizations undertake anti-racism and anti-colonialism education and training, alongside organizational change efforts to address complicity within racist, colonial, and white supremacist structures and cultures.

### **Recommendation #15**

Uniformed police removed from all Pride and 2SLGBTQQIA+ events in Niagara and replaced with a community safety marshalling program.

QTBIPOC community members recommend the removal of uniformed police presence from all Pride and 2SLGBTQQIA+ events in Niagara throughout the entire year. Community members also expressed the need for a more fulsome reflection on the role of police accountability for past harms. Community members suggested the establishment of a community safety marshalling program that is trained in conflict resolution and non-violent de-escalation to replace uniformed police presence. This recommendation aligns with approaches that cities across Canada are moving towards, as documented in Appendix B.



# Wisdom2Action's Priority Recommendations

These recommendations bring together findings from all stages of this Community Strengths and Needs Assessment, including community engagement efforts, conversations with key stakeholders and organizations, and a review of pertinent literature, resources and publications. Based on an analysis of the data, our knowledge of promising practices in other jurisdictions and our experience working with key stakeholders throughout this process, Wisdom2Action recommends the following actions be undertaken to improve foundational service infrastructure, build on local strengths, and address the needs of 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities in the Niagara region.

## Recommendation #1

Establish a formal 2SLGBTQQIA+ service providers network.

Wisdom2Action recommends the creation of a formal 2SLGBTQQIA+ Service Providers Network in the Niagara region. Fostering strong and collaborative relationships between community, health and social service providers is integral to building competence and confidence in inclusive care with 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities. Stronger relationships and formal networks enable knowledge sharing, mentorship, and collaboration to flourish, leading to improved care experiences. Additionally, service provider networks would empower internal champions within mainstream services, by affording them a connection to a broader pool of allies. A formal network would also facilitate improved referral pathways and greater access to care, through greater collaboration. A notable example of a service providers network includes the [Ottawa Rainbow Service Providers Network](#).

## Recommendation #2

Develop a Regional Planning Table for 2SLGBTQQIA+ Inclusion and Health.

The Community Strengths and Needs Assessment demonstrated an immense interest in collaboration within community, health, and social service organizations for a more coordinated approach to supporting 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities in the region. Planning tables are an effective means to improve collaboration between organizations within and across sectors, as demonstrated by the [Champlain Regional Planning Table for Trans Health Services](#), based in Ottawa. Wisdom2Action recommends the creation of a 2SLGBTQQIA+ Planning Table with representation from key community, health, and social service organizations, and community members, to support high-level planning to improve 2SLGBTQQIA+ health and wellness in the Niagara region.

### **Recommendation #3**

Develop a trans health navigation program.

Throughout the CSNA, Wisdom2Action consistently heard about barriers to access gender-affirming healthcare in the region, including difficulty finding basic trans health information, long wait-lists for accessing hormones or surgical referrals, and difficulty finding trans-competent providers. Wisdom2Action recommends working with pertinent local health authorities and partner organizations to explore the creation of a dedicated trans health navigation and capacity building program, to improve access to gender-affirming healthcare within the Niagara region. The [Hamilton Trans Health Coalition](#) is one example of an effective community-based trans health navigation program.

### **Recommendation #4**

Develop funding mechanisms for community events and spaces, with a focus on QTBIPOC and rural communities.

Community members, particularly those from QTBIPOC and rural communities, consistently identified a lack of inclusive community spaces and events, alongside concerns about the inclusivity of existing 2SLGBTQQIA+ events and spaces in the region. Recognizing the importance of vibrant 2SLGBTQQIA+ cultures, particularly for QTBIPOC and rural community members, Wisdom2Action recommends the creation of a community-based funding mechanism, such as a micro-grants program, to enable more local events by and for diverse 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities, and the exploration of other avenues through which to support more vibrant 2SLGBTQQIA+ and QTBIPOC community events and spaces. Examples of community-based funding programs include [Max Ottawa's Maximizer program](#), and the Enchanté Network's [Capacity Building Micro-grant](#) program.

### **Recommendation #5**

Develop a dedicated 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusion capacity-building program.

Despite progress, there are persistent barriers to 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusion in community, health and social services, as well as within local businesses and other spaces. Wisdom2Action recommends exploring the creation of a dedicated 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusion capacity-building program, to provide education, resources and implementation support to service providers and organizations in the region to build momentum towards 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusion. Examples of dedicated inclusion training programs include the 519's [Creating Authentic Spaces](#) program, and Spectrum Waterloo's [Rainbow Diversity Training](#) program.

# Lateral Violence and Conflict Transformation Sub-Report

## The Power of Laughter

I've been told my laugh is infectious. People hear it out in public and compliment its vibrant ringing often gifting me with their own amused titters. Throughout my life I have learned to use it as a kind of shield, protecting me from any social discomforts.

A seemingly simple exchange of thoughtless words tumbles from the mouths of peers, transformed instantly into a misguided joke all with the distinctly unique power of my chuckle. Altering a painful barb against my ebony flesh into an ill-advised gag.

With my laughter I put Rosa in the back. With my gales of giggles, I told King his dream was just a delusion. Every time I chuckled, I trivialized the seriousness of the flames that engulfed Mississippi. Danced in the river of tears that mothers of young black men cried as they watched their babies swing from trees. Deep belly laughs undercut the achievement of two black gloved fists raised in defiance on a world stage.

How was I to know when they told me my laugh held a kind of **power**, it would be power to destroy?

The Power of Laughter  
Jo

*“Queer communities are full of wounded dreamers - how could they not be? And because we are so wounded, we are not prepared for the reality of bad things happening among us - how to talk about it, how to hold it, how to heal from it. We do not know how to have difficult conversations, how to look at each other through the lenses of love and justice at the same time.”*

**Kai Cheng Thom, I Hope We Choose Love**

This sub-report aims to provide context and specifics about the issues of 2SLGBTQQIA+ lateral violence raised in the **Violence and Discrimination** and **Community and Culture** sections of the report.

2SLGBTQQIA+ communities face systems of oppression and discrimination such as racism, transphobia, biphobia, and ageism not only from society at large, but also from within our own communities. This harm within 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities can be described as lateral violence. Lateral violence is displaced violence directed against one's peers rather than one's true adversaries.

Lateral violence related to racism, transphobia, biphobia, and ageism came out the most clearly in this CSNA. A few considerations and limitations must be kept in mind. First, while these topics came up most in terms of lateral violence, that doesn't mean that the impacts community members experience from other forms of oppression aren't felt. For example,

Next, these systems function together with other forms of power and oppression, including misogyny, classism, ableism, religion, geography, citizenship, and migration status. This means that community members experience lateral violence differently based on their many specific identities and experiences. We must keep these multiple systems of power and oppression in mind to understand lateral violence in 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities. As well, the CSNA was unable to meaningfully engage with 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members who are incarcerated, sex workers, or migrant workers, and so lateral violence experienced by these community members is not sufficiently represented here.

Lastly, understanding lateral violence within Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community was not an intentional aim of the CSNA. Yet while speaking to the strengths, needs and recommendations of Niagara region's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community, some participants shared experiences of lateral violence and feedback about specific organizations in response to questions. As mentioned in the introduction of the report, OUTniagara has directly provided anonymized feedback to all organizations that community members explicitly named. All quotes included in this section are direct quotes from community members who completed the online public survey for the Community Strengths and Needs Assessment.

## **White Supremacy and Racism in Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ Community**

Settler colonialism and white supremacy are foundations of Niagara's society generally, and the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community is no exception. QTBIPOC community members underscored racism as a major issue within Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community. QTBIPOC community members described an, “Obvious hierarchy in the queer community with gay white men and drag queens taking control of the social agendas for the Niagara community.”

Power and benefits, including political, economic, and social benefits, are central to systems of oppression such as racism. It is clear that QTBIPOC, and their diversity of perspectives and priorities, are largely overlooked, excluded, tokenized, and made to feel like outsiders from participation and leadership in Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community.

QTBIPOC referenced experiencing racism from 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations, social media, and social events such as pride and drag shows in particular. As one community member explains, "Queer spaces... state that they are inclusive but are usually racist or exclusive." For example, one community member expressed, "I don't like that Mahtay calls themselves a safe space since they give free coffee to cops". Indigenous community members described a lack of appreciation for Indigenous communities and their land.

Migrants and newcomers to the region feel disconnected and unwelcome in the community. Racism in Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community also takes the form of white saviorism. As one QTBIPOC community member stressed, "[There is a] need to address the racism and transphobia present in our community and hold individuals and organizations accountable."

## **Cissexism and Transphobia in Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ Community**

Cissexism is another system of oppression that Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community is both shaped by and upholds. A hierarchy exists here, similar and connected to the racist hierarchy mentioned above. Cis people have access to the most power and benefits in Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community, while trans and non-binary community members are largely undervalued, excluded, and targeted with transphobia.

Trans community members shared examples of transphobic violence and discrimination they faced from within Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community. From consistent misgendering to harassment and threats, trans people experience high levels of lateral violence and have insufficient supports and resources that are run by and for the trans community.

For example, one community member describes alarming cyber violence and its significant impact on trans people's mental health: "*Inclusivity and transphobia within our community is a big issue. There isn't much to do due to the pandemic but recently there was a drag show in Niagara Falls. Prior to this show there was a lot of online bullying and mental health shaming, as well as calling a transman a girl (transphobia)... The online attacks had a large impact on them for sure, and it has on my mental health as well. I already know I'm very different from everyone, but to read and see the blatant disrespect and threats has me feeling like Niagara doesn't hold a safe space for people like me... It's all very depressing on top of everything else.*"

fertility freedom

## **Monosexism and Biphobia in Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ Community**

Monosexism and biphobia are significant issues in Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community. While bisexual, pansexual, queer, fluid, disexual, omnisexual, and other bi+ people together make up the majority of Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community, they face greater discrimination, isolation, and violence than their gay and lesbian counterparts because of monosexism and biphobia. Whereas monosexual people are systemically and socially rewarded for being attracted to one gender, bi+ people are oppressed and discriminated against for their attraction to more than one gender.

For example, one bi community member shared that "Many people in the queer community have told me that my sexuality doesn't exist outright". Bi people face biphobia in their intimate partnerships and dating life in particular. One bi community member described, "I've had past same sex partners who have consistently asked me biphobic things." Another bi community member shared that their spouse was warned not to marry them because of their bisexuality. Bi people also described experiences of bi-erasure and invisibilization. As one community member describes, "Lateral violence happens from other people in the queer community who purposefully leave out Bi+ people from the event/group, or may include them in the acronym, but then specifically focus queer women's activities around being a lesbian."

Given the monosexism and biphobia that bi+ people face from both outside and within the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community, it's no surprise that bi community members shared that they also struggle with internalized biphobia. Bi+ people stressed the impacts of monosexism and biphobia on their mental health and noted that there are no community groups or social supports in Niagara that focus on the bi and pan community.

## **Ageism in Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ Community**

While 2SLGBTQQIA+ older adults face transphobia, homophobia and biphobia from society, they also experience ageism from within 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities themselves. 2SLGBTQQIA+ older adults and even middle-aged adults raised experiences of ageism in Niagara. As one community member puts it, "Ageism is rampant in the gay community... if you are over 30 you are dead." Ageism within 2SLGBTQ+ communities contributes to 2SLGBTQQIA+ older adults being stigmatized, devalued, and invisibilized.

Community members described ageism in Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community in the context of social activities and events. This is concerning because of how critical social connectivity and belonging are for the health and well-being of 2SLGBTQQIA+ older adults. In a national study, the Government of Canada identified that few social interactions, limited or loss of social networks, discrimination based on age, and feeling unwelcome at programs for 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities as risk factors for social isolation of 2SLGBTQQIA+ older adults. On the other hand, being a part of a community and having a social support network are important protective factors against social isolation.

## Communication, Transparency, and Accountability from 2SLGBTQQIA+ Organizations

2SLGBTQQIA+ community members expressed concerns and disappointments with the lack of communication, transparency, and accountability from 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations in Niagara region. Communication is currently inaccessible, insufficient, and unreliable for many community members. Many community members described that websites and calendars of 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations are outdated or inactive. Community members also expressed interest in becoming more involved in organizations, but don't know if and how staff, volunteer, and membership opportunities are advertised. Outreach and collaboration with QTBIPOC were also specifically underscored as a need: "OUTniagara needs to reach out, collaborate and create more spaces for QTBIPOC communities".

In terms of transparency, 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members raised questions and concerns related to where funds are going and the lack of information around this. 2SLGBTQQIA+ activities and events in Niagara region, "Typically revolve around drag shows, alcohol, and financial gain". Community members also raised concerns about the level of financial transparency and being inclusive of everyone in the community. Community members expressed the need for information and transparency about how donations to 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations are being spent.

Lastly, community members shared feedback about how 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations have handled harm, call-ins, and callouts. One community member expressed, "Calling out people on Facebook posts "statements" is so wildly unprofessional. Certain situations should be handled with more care than that. A blanket statement that "this person is transphobic" without an explanation, or an opportunity to resolve things properly behind closed doors, is childish, saddening, and only further divides our community."

## Lateral Violence and Conflict Transformation Recommendations

### Recommendation #1

Develop/revise and implement conflict prevention and resolution policies and processes across all 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations and organizations serving 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

Many 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations and organizations serving 2SLGBTQQIA+ people don't have conflict prevention and resolution policies and processes. If organizations have existing policies and processes in place, they may not be sufficient to address the harm and conflict experienced by 2SLGBTQQIA+ people or may not be up to date with current best practices and require revisions for improvement. The development/revision and implementation of conflict prevention and resolution policies and processes would meet some needs of organizations' 2SLGBTQQIA+ clients, patients, members, volunteers, and staff. These policies and processes must be as survivor-centered, trauma-informed, community-driven, and transparent as possible to build accountability, trust, and effectiveness. Once these policies and processes are ready for implementation, organizations will need to publicly communicate about them in various and accessible ways for community members, volunteers, and staff to use them. Best practice would involve the monitoring and evaluation of conflict prevention and resolution policies and practices so organizations can...

...continue to evolve to best meet the community's needs. Organizations may benefit from sharing their conflict prevention and resolution policies and processes to learn from each other.

### **Recommendation #2**

Seek organizational commitments and funding for a community Safety Lab project.

Community members expressed significant barriers and deterrents to reporting instances of harm and abuse. Power differences, further harm, reprisal, and minimization prevent safety and healing in reporting and accountability processes. QTBIPOC community members recommended the creation of a community-based reporting and accountability process. This could take shape in the form of a Safety Lab.

Safety Labs, originating in San Francisco by Community United Against Violence (CUAV), are a space for 2SLGBTQ+ and racialized communities to practice core skills needed for grounded, accountable, and liberating community-based responses to harm. Safety Labs focuses on preventing and intervening in ways that do not rely on isolation, shame, retaliation, or incarceration.

Kind Space, a 2SLGBTQQIA+ community organization in Ottawa, is carrying out a Safety Lab project called **OUTtawa** in partnership with Planned Parenthood Ottawa, MAX Ottawa, and The Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity. The project hopes not to create quick fixes but begin the process of organizational capacity building, focusing on where, why, and how organizations have intentionally or unintentionally harmed members of the Queer Ottawa Community. This process is not intended to mediate harm and/or conflict with individuals, but to specifically address how harm, conflict and/or violence has systematically affected survivors. This project will address how oppressive systems, and lack of knowledge, resources, or support has harmed the community as a collective.

OUTtawa is funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE). For more information and to see the OUTtawa community letter and project plan, visit: <https://kindspace.ca/outtawa/>

### **Recommendation #3**

Refer interpersonal conflicts to relevant mediation services.

Some mediation services exist that 2SLGBTQQIA+ people may find helpful to increase safety while working through interpersonal conflicts. First, the John Howards Society of Niagara runs Project REWIND, a **school-based mediation** program. Project REWIND can be found in elementary, secondary, and alternative education schools across all four of Niagara's school boards. The goal is to provide a safe environment, wherein each participant can share how they were impacted by the incident in a diplomatic and non-judgmental manner. The program uses a proactive and collaborative approach to addressing harm. Next, AXIS Family Mediation Inc. offers **family mediation** services in Niagara region for family law issues, such as decision-making responsibility (custody), parent time (access), child support, spousal support, and division of property.

Family mediation allows the parties to discuss the issues in a safe environment and work towards a mutual agreement. AXIS Family Mediation provides mediation services by contract with the Ministry of the Attorney General. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in person mediation (both on and off-site) and in-person information services are suspended until regular court operations resume. However, AXIS Family Mediation Inc. is offering a new Distance Mediation program. All fees, where there are any, are subsidized to never cause fees to be an impediment to accessing services.

Some **gender-based violence crisis centres and shelter services** in Ontario also offer free mediation services for conflict in situations related to intimate partner violence and domestic violence. As Niagara's shelter services don't offer mediation services, it is worth exploring whether any gender-based violence crisis centres or shelter services outside of Niagara region are providing virtual services to communities outside of their regions.

As well, the Ontario Community Mediation Coalition is a not-for-profit association of **community mediation services** in Ontario. While no general restorative community mediation services exist in Niagara region, it is worth exploring whether some members of this coalition are providing virtual services to communities outside of their regions. For example, Community Justice Initiatives Waterloo Region (CJI) is one exemplary member organization of this coalition. They provide conflict resolution services, support for people impacted by sexual trauma, assistance for families involved with child protection, reintegration support for adults returning to the community from prison or custody, and integration support for newcomer Canadian youth.

Lastly, there are a few **2SLGBTQQIA+ mediators** who specialize in working with 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members and organizations on conflict resolution, such as [Kai Cheng Thom](#) and [Eddie Jude Haraven](#). These folks run small businesses and may offer sliding scale options.

## Free Resources

1. OUTniagara Syllabus - Lateral Violence<sup>18</sup>
2. So You're Ready to Choose Love Full Workbook: Trauma-Informed Conflict Transformation for Social Justice and Spiritual Growth<sup>19</sup>
3. Creative Interventions Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Stop Interpersonal Violence<sup>20</sup>



<sup>18</sup>Available at: <https://www.outniagara.org/resources/beyondtherainbow/#1630859214822-868d6706-e098>

<sup>19</sup>Available at: <https://ariseembodiment.org/free-workbook/>

<sup>20</sup>Available at: <https://www.creative-interventions.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/CI-Toolkit-Final-ENTIRE-Aug-2020-new-cover.pdf>

# Appendices



My creative piece is sort of a stream of consciousness in the writing. In the center of the image, it has a pre-op trans man with a cat. I made this for an appreciation for my cats. They have always been there for me regardless of any transition I've gone through in life. They're absolutely wonderful companions. I'm not in the process of transitioning medically yet, so it's very hard when I face misgendering throughout the day, but I know I can always come home to a cuddly, loving cat.

Vincent Von Rose

## Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

These definitions of the following terms are adapted from the MMIWG2SLGBTQQA+ National Action Plan Final Report,<sup>21</sup> Black Equality Resources,<sup>22</sup> Racial Equity Tools' Glossary,<sup>23</sup> Egale Canada's Supporting Your Intersex Child resource,<sup>24</sup> Shiri Eisner's Monosexism,<sup>25</sup> The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion's Glossary of Terms,<sup>26</sup> and The 519's Glossary of Terms,<sup>27</sup> Statistics Canada's Canadian Income Survey,<sup>28</sup> and Statistics Canada's Illustrated Glossary.<sup>29</sup>

**2SLGBTQQA+:** 2-Spirit (Two-Spirit), lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual. The + where used denotes the diversity of remaining identities not covered in the acronym.

**Ableism:** Discrimination or exclusion based on conscious or unconscious beliefs that people with disabilities are less valuable, and therefore less able to contribute and participate in society. Ableism may be embedded in institutions and can limit opportunities and inclusion of disabled people.

**Ally:** Rooted in the term "alliance", an ally is an individual in a position of privilege or power who makes consistent efforts to understand, uplift, and support equity deserving groups. An ally is not a member of the group, but seeks to act in solidarity to end oppression, discrimination and/or prejudice.

**Ageism:** Discrimination or exclusion based on age, generally referring to discrimination against people who are older.

**Anti-Black Racism:** The ongoing prejudice and discrimination directed at Black people or people of African descent. Anti-Black racism is embedded in our systems and institutions, impacting educational outcomes, career progression, health outcomes, and racial profiling in law enforcement.

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<sup>21</sup> Lezard, P., Prefontaine, Z., Cederwall, D., Sparrow, C., Maracle, S., Beck, A., McLeod, A. (2021). MMIWG2SLGBTQQA+ National Action Plan Final Report. Available at: <https://mmiwg2splus-nationalactionplan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/2SLGBTQQA-Report-Final.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Black Equality Resources. Available at: <https://blackequalityresources.com/white-savior-complex/>

<sup>23</sup> Racial Equity Tools. (2020). Glossary. Available at: <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

<sup>24</sup> Egale Canada. (2019). Supporting Your Intersex Child. Available at: <https://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/PRO-Intersex-Resource-5.0.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Eisner, S. (2016). Monosexism. In A. Goldberg (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of lgbtq studies* (Vol. 1, pp. 793-796). SAGE Publications, Inc. Available at: <https://sk.sagepub.com/reference/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-lgbtq-studies/i8278.xml>

<sup>26</sup> Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion. (2022). Glossary of Terms. Available at: <https://ccdi.ca/media/3150/ccdi-glossary-of-terms-eng.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> The 519. (2020). Glossary of Terms. Available at: <https://www.the519.org/education-training/glossary>

<sup>28</sup> Statistics Canada. (2019). Canadian Income Survey, 2017. Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/190226/dq190226b-eng.htm>

<sup>29</sup> Statistics Canada. (2017). Illustrated Glossary. Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/92-195-x/92-195-x2016001-eng.pdf?st=bgsklo9K>

**Anti-Indigenous Racism:** The ongoing prejudice and discrimination directed at Indigenous Peoples. Anti-Indigenous racism is systemic and institutional, existing in federal policies such as the Indian Act and the residential school system.

**Anti-Oppression:** Strategies and actions that actively challenge existing intersectional inequities and injustices.

**Anti-Racism:** An active effort to eliminate all forms of racism. Beliefs, actions, policies and movements developed to actively identify and eliminate prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination on the basis of race.

**Aromantic:** Someone who experiences little to no romantic attraction to others and has little to no interest in romantic relationships. Aromanticism exists on a spectrum and can fluctuate. It is sometimes shortened to Aro.

**Asexual:** A person who experiences little or no sexual attraction to people of any gender.

**Bi+:** An umbrella term that includes non-monosexual identities, including bisexual, pansexual, and omnisexual, among others,

**Bi-erasure:** Biases or attitudes that include denying entirely that bisexuality exists, calling it a 'phase', or the insinuation that people who identify as bisexual are questioning their sexuality or not ready to 'come out' as gay or lesbian.

**Bisexual:** A person who is attracted to people of more than one gender.

**Biphobia:** Negative attitudes, feelings, or irrational aversion to, fear or hatred of bisexual people and their communities, or of behaviours stereotyped as bisexual, leading to discrimination, harassment or violence against bisexual people.

**Cis(gender):** A person whose gender identity is in alignment with the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Cissexism:** Actions that discriminate against or exclude transgender people based on the belief that cisgender is what is 'normal' or superior.

**Colonialism:** The practice of domination where one nation occupies land for the purpose of subjugating, conquering, and exploiting the colonized territory and its people. Settler colonialism is the long-term forced physical occupation of lands by a non-Indigenous population. Settler colonialism involves the imposition of the colonizer's identity including their language, culture, and religion while erasing the identity of the colonized people.

**Decolonization:** An ongoing process that aims to deconstruct settler colonial ideologies such as white supremacy, give value to Indigenous knowledge, and dismantle power imbalances. Decolonization is the active work to give back the colonized territory's independence and undo the effects of colonialism on the social, political, and economic aspects of a people's life.

**Demisexual:** Someone who has little to no sexual attraction to others unless a strong emotional connection is formed, while romantic attraction may form more easily

**Dead Name:** The name that a person was given when they were born but they no longer use, usually a trans or non-binary person. Some people use the term 'birth name', but the word 'dead' is used to emphasize the seriousness of not using the person's birth name. Use of someone's 'dead name' is offensive and, in the case of a trans person, generally misgenders them.

**Disability:** Under the medical model, this term refers to a limitation or loss of physiological abilities, whether apparent or not. These can be physical, cognitive, learning, and visual disabilities. Under the social model, disability is identified as a disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by systemic barriers, negative attitudes, and exclusion by society.

**Discrimination:** Any form of unequal treatment based on a ground protected by human rights legislation, that results in disadvantage, whether imposing extra burdens or denying benefits. Discrimination can be intentional or unintentional; and it may occur at an individual or systemic level. It may include direct actions or more subtle aspects of rules, practices and procedures that limit or prevent access to opportunities, benefits, or advantages that are available to others.

**Endosex/Dyadic:** A person whose chromosomal, hormonal, or anatomical sex characteristics fall within the conventional classifications of male or female.

**Gay:** A person who is attracted to people of the same gender.

**Gender Expression:** How someone publicly shows or presents their gender through their appearance, name, preferred pronouns, speech, and behaviour. Gender expression can align with gender identity but is separate.

**Genderqueer/Non-binary:** Individuals who do not follow gender stereotypes based on the sex they were assigned at birth. They may identify and express themselves as "feminine men" or "masculine women" or as androgynous, outside of the categories "boy/man" and "girl/woman." People who are non-binary may or may not identify as trans.

**Gender Identity:** A person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person's sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither or anywhere along the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be the same as or different from their sex assignment at birth.

**Harassment:** A course of comments or actions, such as unwelcome attention, jokes, threats, remarks, name-calling, touching or other behaviours that are known, or ought reasonably to be known, to be unwelcome, offensive, embarrassing, humiliating or demeaning. Harassment under human rights legislation is based on the prohibited/protected grounds.

**Homophobia:** Negative attitudes, feelings, or irrational aversion to, fear or hatred of gay, lesbian, or bisexual people and communities, or of behaviours stereotyped as "homosexual." It is used to signify a hostile psychological state leading to discrimination, harassment or violence against gay, lesbian, or people.

**Inclusion:** An approach that aims to reach out to and include all people, honouring the diversity and uniqueness, talent, beliefs, backgrounds, capabilities and ways of living of individuals and groups.

**Indigenous Peoples:** An umbrella term for self-identified descendants of pre-colonial/pre-settler societies. In Canada these include the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples as separate peoples with unique heritages, economic and political systems, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs. While the collective term has offered a sense of solidarity among some indigenous communities, the term should not serve to erase the distinct histories, languages, cultural practices, and sovereignty of the more than fifty nations that lived in Canada prior to European colonization.

**Indigiqueer:** An identity term that may be used by someone who is both Indigenous and queer that emphasizes the intersections of both identities. The term is described by Joshua Whitehead, a Two-Spirit, Oji-nêhiyaw Indigiqueer scholar from Peguis First Nation who popularized the term, as “a braiding of two bridges” - indigeneity and queerness - and “the forward moving momentum for two-spiritness”. Someone who identifies as Indigiqueer may or may not also identify as Two-Spirit.

**Intersectionality:** A term coined by black feminist legal scholar Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the ways in which our identities (such as race, gender, class, ability, etc.) intersect to create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

**Intersex:** A person born with sex characteristics (chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, or genitals) that do not fit the typical medical definitions of male or female bodies.

**Lesbian:** A woman who is attracted to women.

**Misgender:** The act of referring to someone, intentionally or not, with a term that does not align with their gender identity. This includes using the wrong pronouns, using a trans person's dead name, or using a gendered term (sir or ma'am, husband or wife, etc.).

**Monosexism:** A social structure operating through a presumption that everyone is, or should be, monosexual (attracted to no more than one gender). This term is used to address and define oppression of bi+ people as institutional and systematic.

**Non-monogamy:** An umbrella term that describes having more than one romantic and/or sexual relationship at the same time. Ethical/consensual non-monogamy is any type of relationship where the people involved consent to some level of non-exclusivity. The central idea of ethical non-monogamy is that specific boundaries for the relationship are set within the relationship, everyone involved is aware, and consent is freely given.

**Oppression:** The obvious and subtle ways dominant groups unjustly maintain status, privilege and power over others, using physical, psychological, social, or economic threats or force. Frequently, an explicit ideology is used to sanction the unfair subjugation of an individual or group by a more powerful individual or group, which causes injustices in everyday interactions between marginalized groups and the dominant group.

**Pansexual:** A person who is attracted to other people regardless of gender.

**People of Colour:** An alternative term for visible minority used to identify non-white racial and ethnic groups.

**Poverty:** Canada's poverty line is based on a market basket measurement: A family lives in poverty if it does not have enough income to purchase a specific basket of goods and services in its community.

**Pride:** Pride movements and events are a recognition of 2SLGBTQQIA+ identities, affirmations of equal rights, and celebrations of visibility, dignity, and diversity in the LGBTQ community. The histories of Pride movements and events are vast and complex, and often cited as originating at the Stonewall Riots in 1969 in New York City, led by racialized trans women, such as Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, and Miss Major Griffin-Gracy. Within the Niagara region, we have seen many organizations and events participate in this advocacy work and use the term Pride in their name (e.g. Brock Pride, the Niagara Falls Family Pride Event, Pride Niagara, the Senior Pride Network, etc.).

**Pronouns:** Words that refer to a person when not using their name. Gendered pronouns include she/her and he/him. Gender neutral pronouns include they/them or neo-pronouns such as ze/zir and ey/em.

**Queer:** An umbrella term used and reclaimed by some whose sexual orientations and/or gender identities fall outside of cisgender/straight norms.

**Questioning:** A period where a person explores their own sexual identity, orientation, and/or gender.

**Race:** Culturally or socially constructed divisions of humankind, based on distinct characteristics that can be based on: physicality, culture, history, beliefs and practices, language, origin, etc.

**Reproductive Justice:** A concept created by a coalition of 12 Black women in the U.S. during the 1990s. It has three core tenants: 1) The right to have an abortion; 2) The right to have children under the conditions you want to have them; and 3) The right to raise your children in a safe and healthy environment. For more information about reproductive justice, please visit [SisterSong's](https://www.sistersong.net/reproductive-justice) website, available at <https://www.sistersong.net/reproductive-justice>

**Rural:** All areas outside population centres.

**Sexual Orientation:** The direction of one's attraction. Some people use the terms gay, straight, bi, pan, or lesbian to describe their experience.

**Trans:** An umbrella term referring to people whose gender identities differ from the sex they were assigned at birth. "Trans" can mean transcending beyond, existing between, or crossing over the gender spectrum. It includes but is not limited to people who identify as transgender, transsexual, non-binary or gender non-conforming (gender variant or genderqueer).

**Transfeminine:** Someone who is trans and identifies or presents as feminine.

**Transmasculine:** Someone who is trans and identifies or presents as masculine.

**Transmisogyny:** Negative attitudes, expressed through cultural hate, individual and state violence, and discrimination directed toward trans women and trans and gender non-conforming people on the feminine end of the gender spectrum.

**Transphobia:** Negative attitudes and feelings and the aversion to, fear or hatred or intolerance of trans people and communities. Like other prejudices, it is based on stereotypes and misconceptions that are used to justify discrimination, harassment and violence toward trans people, or those perceived to be trans.

**Two-Spirit:** A pan-Indigenous term used by some Indigenous LGBTQQIA+ people that honours male/female, and other gendered or non-gendered spirits, as well as spiritual and cultural expressions. The term may also be used interchangeably to express one's sexuality, gender, and spirituality as separate terms for each or together as an interrelated identity that captures the wholeness of their gender and sexuality with their spirituality.

**White Saviour Complex:** When a white person or white culture "rescues" people of colour from their own situation. There is a notion that white people know what communities of colour need, rather than listening to how they can truly be of help.

**White Supremacy:** The idea that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to people of colour and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. While most people associate white supremacy with extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the neo-Nazis, white supremacy is ever present in our institutional and cultural assumptions that assign value, morality, goodness, and humanity to the white group while casting people and communities of colour as worthless, immoral, bad, inhuman, and/or "undeserving."



Belonging

Safety

# Appendix B: Context for Recommendation #15 to Remove Uniformed Police from All Pride and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Events

## Introduction

Recommendation #14 in this report calls for the removal of uniformed police from all Pride and 2SLGBTQQIA+ events in Niagara, and for the establishment of a community safety marshalling program. Like all community recommendations, this is not a recommendation from OUTniagara but a recommendation that comes directly from community members. This appendix provides context for this recommendation with more information about community members' experiences with police and their suggestions. This appendix also offers a national context to the recommendation by sharing how other regions across Canada are responding to community calls for removing uniformed police from Pride and 2SLBTQQIA+ events.

## 2SLGBTQQIA+ Community Members' Experiences of Police Violence and Discrimination

The CSNA survey asked participants to describe what challenges 2SLGBTQQIA+ people face in several areas, including social services, education, healthcare, cultural activities and events, advocacy and political activities and events, policing, and recreation. Participants shared a significant amount of the information in response to the policing prompt. Policing also surfaced in response to the survey question, "What would you say are the main issues facing 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities in Niagara region?". As well, policing came up in the QTBIPOC focus group.

As the CSNA takes an equity-based approach, this report prioritizes the experiences who have been most impacted by police violence – namely 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members who are Black, Indigenous, racialized, have lived experiences of homelessness, drug use, and/or sex work.

In addition to this equity-based approach, it is worth noting that the vast majority of survey responses about policing describe 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples' negative experiences with the Niagara Regional Police Service (NRPS). This appendix only includes a small portion of the quotes shared.

2SLGBTQQIA+ community members shared about experiences of deadnaming, misgendering, surveillance, harassment, criminalizing mental health crises, and excessive force, particularly against community members who are unhoused, use drugs, are QTBIPOC, and/or visibly trans. As one community member described, "NRPS routinely target and harass Indigenous and Black community members - especially those living in impoverished communities. NRPS still respond to mental health calls. This is a dangerous and inappropriate practice."

Community members also spoke to the dangers that police presence in schools pose to QTBIPOC youth and/or visibly trans youth. Seven NRPS School Resource Officers (SRO's) currently operate at 30 high schools in Niagara region.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Niagara Regional Police Services. (2019). Available at: <https://www.niagarapolice.ca/Modules/contact/search.aspx?s=bcTKpWSE7Op9PiMXuaTQLQeQuAleQuAl>

As one community member shared, “Students that have spoken to me are afraid of police. Especially the trans-identifying students. Liaison officers in schools are not trained to speak to students, never mind address homophobia or transphobia.”

2SLGBTQQIA+ community members described that they actively avoid interacting with police at all costs to prevent harassment and violence. Some community members even purposefully misgender themselves to avoid conflict. As one community member explains, “I’ve been misgendered by law enforcement and treated negatively as well due to living in poverty. I’m afraid to express my identity to police so I willingly misgender myself to avoid confrontation.”

If incarcerated, “Many trans men choose not to disclose their identities to officials... and serve their time in women’s facilities. These trans men are often forced into an impossible choice: either live in an institution that reinforces their misgendering or live in an institution where their lives are at risk.”<sup>31</sup> Nationally, we know that incarcerated trans people face violent discrimination from staff and other prisoners. Trans women incarcerated in men’s prisons report being misgendered, denied women’s clothing and sexually harassed, threatened, and assaulted. Statistics about trans people in custody are hard to obtain, but an unpublished Canadian Human Rights Commission report revealed that the Commission has seen a doubling of complaints from trans prisoners over a decade and a half.<sup>32</sup>

This harm builds upon generations and decades of state violence against 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. One community member described, “The police are antithetical to queer life and have been the source of major trauma for queer people especially unhoused queer people from the past to the present and presumably into the future.” This trauma, and the presumption of further trauma under the current policing conditions, informs the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community’s visions and demands for a different future.

## **2SLGBTQQIA+ Community Members’ Ideas for Addressing Police Violence and Discrimination**

This section turns to 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members’ ideas for addressing this police violence and discrimination. As above, this section prioritizes the demands of 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members who have been most impacted by police violence – namely 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members who are Black, Indigenous, racialized, have lived experiences of homelessness, drug use, and/or sex work.

2SLGBTQQIA+ community members in Niagara call for defunding and abolishing the police. In the words of community members, “Abolish the police. They are vile” and, “No police. The NRP is not a safe ally for the LGBTQ community”. One community member explained, “Queer people are routinely harmed by the police... I don’t think it’s hard to see why many queer people support the defunding of the police and re-investing those funds in social services. The police maintain the status quo, and the status quo is built on colonial, binary norms.” Community members also shared that 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, especially trans and transitioning folks, would benefit from more awareness and understanding of their rights in the context of body searches.

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<sup>31</sup>Rolston, S. (2021). The hidden lives and uncertain future of trans prisoners. Xtra Magazine. Available at: <https://xtramagazine.com/power/trans-prisoners-canada-legal-fights-209961>

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

A few community members shared suggestions for NRPS to improve, such as creating or revising policies to keep 2SLGBTQQIA+ people safer while police are interacting with them, and effectively training officers on 2SLGBTQQIA+ issues, trauma, and mental health. However, community members expressed concerns about NRPS publicly claiming allyship by using symbols of 2SLGBTQQIA+ pride and inclusion, while causing harm to the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community. As one community member described, “We don't want rainbow-washed policing; NRP must be defunded and abolished so that resources can be invested in the community for things like mental health care and affordable housing.” Community members outlined that 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations and service providers should end their collaboration with police. One community member urged, “Defund the police and stop working with them”. Community members specifically underscored that police presence doesn't increase safety at 2SLGBTQQIA+ events, but makes these spaces very unsafe, particularly for marginalized and criminalized members of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community. As one community member described, “Police are at St. Catharines pride which makes it an unsafe environment. Also, the fact that police still exist is a huge problem for queer people.”

For these reasons, Recommendation #14 of this report calls for the removal of uniformed police from all Pride and 2SLGBTQQIA+ events in Niagara and for the establishment of a community safety marshalling program instead. It can be assumed that this recommendation from community members is directed towards Pride Niagara, which hosts most Pride events, as well as the community more broadly, including funders, partners, performers, and allies. As mentioned in the Language and Audience section of the report, we provided any feedback or criticism that participants shared about specific organizations or services directly to the organization or service, anonymizing the identity of participants.

In taking up this recommendation, Niagara will follow in the footsteps of QTBIPOC activists across the country that have fought for and won safer 2SLGBTQQIA+ spaces free of uniformed police presence. Back in 2017, Black Lives Matter - Toronto protested Pride Toronto because of historical and ongoing anti-Black racism perpetuated by Pride Toronto and its majority white staff and leadership. Black Lives Matter - Toronto had nine demands, including full and adequate funding and self-determination for Black community spaces and stages, and a commitment to increase representation amongst Pride Toronto staffing/hiring, prioritizing Black trans women, Black queer people, Indigenous folk, and others from vulnerable communities. One of the demands was the removal of police floats and booths in all Pride marches, parades, and community spaces.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Martis, E. (2017). Pride Toronto members vote to keep police out of the Pride parade. Xtra Magazine. Available at: <https://xtramagazine.com/power/pride-toronto-members-vote-to-keep-police-out-of-the-pride-parade-72858>

Since then, cities including Hamilton,<sup>34</sup> London,<sup>35</sup> Toronto,<sup>36</sup> Winnipeg,<sup>37</sup> and Vancouver<sup>38</sup> have removed uniformed police and/or police recruitment booths and cruisers from their events. The rationale behind these decisions stem from QTBIPOC experiences with police violence and racism, and demands for the removal of uniformed police and floats from 2SLGBTQQIA+ events. In addition to the lived experiences of community leaders and members, McMaster University and the AIDS Network's 2019 report, *Mapping the Void: Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ Experiences in Hamilton*<sup>39</sup> and the Ontario Human Rights Commission's 2020 report, *A Disparate Impact*,<sup>40</sup> have documented police violence and its impact on Black, Indigenous, and people of colour, including those who are 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members.

It is also worth noting that school boards across Canada are choosing to end police presence in schools. School boards in Toronto,<sup>41</sup> Peel,<sup>42</sup> Hamilton,<sup>43</sup> Vancouver,<sup>44</sup> Ottawa,<sup>45</sup> and Guelph<sup>46</sup> recently ended their SRO programs as a concrete step towards student safety, equity, and anti-racist education.

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<sup>34</sup> Polewski, L. (2019) Hamilton Pride celebration will not include police recruitment booth. Global News. Available at: <https://globalnews.ca/news/5392798/hamilton-pride-no-police-presence/>

<sup>35</sup> Dolynny, T. (2018) Pride London to police: No uniforms or cruisers at our parade. CBC. Available at: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/pride-parade-no-police-uniforms-or-vehicles-1.4619108>

<sup>36</sup> Martis, E. (2019). Why Toronto police aren't marching in Pride. Xtra Magazine. Available at: <https://xtramagazine.com/power/why-toronto-police-arent-marching-in-pride-157996>

<sup>37</sup> Plowman, S. (2017) Winnipeg police officers can march in pride parade, but not in uniform: organizers. CTV Winnipeg. Available at: <https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/winnipeg-police-officers-can-march-in-pride-parade-but-not-in-uniform-organizers-1.3431629>

<sup>38</sup> CBC. (2020). No more police at Vancouver Pride as organizers join call to defund VPD. Available at: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/no-more-police-at-vancouver-pride-as-organizers-join-call-to-defund-vpd-1.5607249>

<sup>39</sup> Mills, S., Dion, M., Thompson-Blum, D., Borst, C., and Diemert, J. (2019). Mapping the Void: Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ Experiences in Hamilton. McMaster University and The AIDS Network. Available at: <https://labourstudies.mcmaster.ca/documents/mappingthevoid.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC). New OHRC report confirms Black people disproportionately arrested, charged, subjected to use of force by Toronto police. 2020 Available at: [https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/news\\_centre/new-ohrc-report-confirms-black-people-disproportionately-arrested-charged-subjected-use-force](https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/news_centre/new-ohrc-report-confirms-black-people-disproportionately-arrested-charged-subjected-use-force)

<sup>41</sup> Nasser, A. (2017). Canada's largest school board votes to end armed police presence in schools. CBC. Available at: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/school-resource-officers-toronto-board-police-1.4415064>

<sup>42</sup> Jiang, K. (2020). Peel police end controversial program that put officers in schools. Toronto Star. Available at: <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2020/11/18/peel-police-announce-permanent-end-to-controversial-program-that-put-officers-in-schools.html>

<sup>43</sup> Van Dongen, M. (2020). Hamilton public board ends controversial cops-in-schools program. Hamilton Spectator. Available at: <https://www.thespec.com/news/hamilton-region/2020/06/22/hwdsb-hamilton-schools-police-liaison-program-vote.html>

<sup>44</sup> Steacy, L. (2021). Vancouver School Board votes to end liaison officer program. City News. Available at: <https://vancouver.citynews.ca/2021/04/26/vancouver-school-board-votes-to-end-school-liaison-officer-program/>

<sup>45</sup> Miller, J. (2021). Trustees vote to end police in schools program for Ottawa's largest board. Ottawa Citizen. Available at: <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/end-of-police-program-in-schools-on-agenda-for-trustees-of-ottawas-largest-board>

<sup>46</sup> Khan, A. (2021). Guelph police will no longer be stationed at Upper Grand schools. Guelph Today. Available at: <https://www.guelphtoday.com/local-news/its-official-no-more-police-resource-officers-in-upper-grand-schools-3671574>

## Appendix C: Community, Health and Social Services, Supports and Spaces for 2SLGBTQQIA+ Communities in Niagara region

While the following provides an overview of the available services, supports and spaces for Niagara region's 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities, a truly comprehensive picture is impossible to achieve due to the segmented nature of the community, health, and social service sector, particularly with regards to 2SLGBTQQIA+-inclusive services.

### 2SLGBTQQIA+ Specific & Inclusive Services, Supports, and Spaces

[Affirming Ministries Program](#)

[Brock Pride](#)

[Central United Church's Safe Space](#)

[De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health](#)

[Centre's Indigenous 2SLGBTQ Circle](#)

[Get Real Movement](#)

[Gay Men Coffee Meet Up](#)

[Niagara College Loving Out Loud Club](#)

[Niagara Falls Family Pride Event](#)

[LGBTQ+ Women's Group](#)

Secondary school Positive Space clubs

[Senior Pride Network Niagara](#)

[City of St. Catharines LGBTQ2S+ Advisory Committee](#)

[TransParent Hamilton-Niagara](#)

Trans/Gender Questioning Youth Group

[Transgender Niagara+](#)

TransRainbow Youth

[Bridges Community Health Centre](#)

[Brock Social Justice Centre](#)

[Niagara Regional Police Service Crisis](#)

[Outreach and Support Team \(COAST\)](#)

[Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre](#)

[Mahtay Cafe](#)

[Niagara Community Legal Clinic](#)

[Niagara Falls Community Health Centre](#)

[Niagara Falls Museum](#)

[Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre](#)

[Niagara Regional Native Centre](#)

[Niagara Sexual Assault Centre](#)

[OPIRG Brock](#)

[OUTniagara](#)

OutParents

[PFLAG St. Catharines Niagara](#)

[Pathstone Mental Health](#)

[Positive Living Niagara](#)

[Pride Niagara](#)

Queer Youth Collective

[Quest Community Health Centre's Rainbow](#)

[Niagara Services](#)

[Quest Community Health Centre's Trans and](#)

[Gender Questioning Youth Group](#)

[REACT Niagara](#)

[Rise Against Bullying](#)

[SAGE](#)

[Shaw Festival](#)

[Silver Spire](#)

[Suitcase in Point](#)

[The FORT](#)

[Third Space Cafe](#)

[Underdogs Boxing Club](#)

[Willow Arts Community](#)

## Appendix D: Community Strengths and Needs Survey

1. Which of the following describe you? (Please check all that apply)
  - Member of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community
  - Family member of \*and\* ally to someone in 2SLGBTQQIA+ community
  - Service Provider in a 2SLGBTQQIA+-specific community organization
  - Service Provider in a Community, Health, or Social Service Organization (non-2SLGBTQQIA+-specific)
  - None of the above
2. If you would like to pass on receiving your honoraria for completing this survey, please check this box.
  - Waive honoraria
3. If you have selected to waive your honoraria, but would like to be entered into a draw for an iPad, please enter your e-mail address below:
4. If you have selected the honoraria, please allow 2-3 weeks for the e-transfer to be sent to you. If you cannot accept your honoraria by e-transfer, please complete this survey at an in-person session. For a list of in-person session times and dates, please e-mail [laura@outniagara.ca](mailto:laura@outniagara.ca). To have your honoraria paid to you by e-transfer, please enter your e-mail address below:

### Demographic Questions

Please consider completing the following demographic questions. These questions will help us be intentional about reaching out to under-represented communities, and factor in under- or over-representation of different communities and identities in our analysis. All questions are optional.

5. Do you identify as Two-Spirit?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to answer
6. Do you identify as any other Indigenous or cultural identity that relates to gender, gender presentation, and/or sexuality?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to answer
7. If you answered yes to the question above about Indigenous or cultural identity, please share that identity, if you're comfortable doing so:
8. Are you intersex?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to answer

9. How do you identify in terms of gender? Please check all that apply.

- Cis(gender)
- Man
- Non-binary
- Questioning
- Trans(gender)
- Transfeminine
- Transmasculine
- Woman
- None of these, I use... (see next question)
- Prefer not to disclose

10. If you chose "None of these, I use..." in the question, please tell us what you use, if you are comfortable doing so:

11. How do you identify in terms of your sexuality? Please check all that apply.

- Aromatic
- Asexual
- Bisexual
- Gay
- Heterosexual
- Lesbian
- Pansexual
- Queer
- Questioning
- "None of these, I use..." (see next question)
- Prefer not to disclose

12. If you chose "None of these, I use..." in the question, please tell us what you use, if you are comfortable doing so:

13. Which of the following do you identify with most closely? Please check all that apply.

- Black
- Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit and/or Metis)
- Person of Colour
- White

14. How would you describe your race and/or ethnicity?

15. How old are you?

- 12-17
- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 66-75
- 76+

16. In which municipality of the Niagara region do you reside most often?

- Fort Erie
- Grimsby
- Lincoln
- Niagara Falls
- Niagara-on-the-Lake
- Pelham
- Port Colbourne
- St. Catharines
- Thorold
- Wainfleet
- Welland
- West Lincoln

17. How long have you lived in Niagara?

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 20+ years

18. If you have not lived in Niagara your whole life, where did you previously live...? Please check all that apply.

- In another region in Ontario
- In another place in Canada
- In another country

19. Do you have lived experience with any of the following? Please check all that apply.  
Addiction

- Chronic health condition
- Disability needs
- Mental health needs
- Poverty
- Prefer not to answer

20. Are there any other identities that you would like to disclose?

## **Identifying Strengths**

Help us better understand the strengths that already exist in Niagara for 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and communities.

21. How connected or involved with 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities, programs, services, events, or spaces do you feel?

- Well-connected and involved
- Somewhat connected and involved
- Not connected or involved

22. What 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities, programs, services, events, or spaces do you know about?
23. What 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities, programs, services, events, or spaces are you involved with?
24. In your opinion, what are the best activities and resources for 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in Niagara region?
25. What is your favourite thing about living in Niagara region?

## Identifying the Issues

Help us better understand the issues that matter to you and your communities.

26. What would you say are the main issues facing 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities in Niagara region?
27. As a 2SLGBTQQIA+ person, service provider, or ally/family member, what challenges are encountered by 2SLGBTQQIA+ people participating in:
- Social services?
  - Education?
  - Healthcare?
  - Cultural activities and events?
  - Advocacy and political activities and events?
  - Policing?
  - Recreation (physical or social)?
  - Other areas (please provide details)?
28. If you moved to Niagara region from another part of Ontario, another part of Canada, or another country, do you find Niagara region to be:
- More 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusive and welcoming
  - Just as 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusive and welcoming
  - Less 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusive and welcoming

\*Content warning: Potentially traumatic content\* Please remember that all questions are optional.

29. Are there any particularly challenging experiences or difficulties you have encountered in Niagara region related to your identity as a 2SLGBTQQIA+ person or ally?

## Exploring Opportunities

What are we missing? What could we be doing more of?

30. If we want a vibrant, healthy and connected 2SLGBTQQIA+ community in Niagara region, what needs to be done?

31. What kinds of services or programs are we missing in Niagara region that would help 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities?
32. What is the best way to inform people about events, networks, resources, and community and social services available for 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in Niagara region?

### **COVID-19 Impact**

33. How has the COVID-19 pandemic and associated response measures impacted the lives of 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in Niagara region?
  - Positively (please describe):
  - Negatively (please describe):

### **Closing Thoughts**

34. What other issues are important to you, related to 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities?
35. Is there anything else you want us to know?
36. Would you like to receive further updates about this project, as well as the final report, once completed? If so, please provide your email here:
37. Would you like to learn more about OUTniagara, including membership, volunteer opportunities, advocacy, and/or events? If so, please provide your email here:

## **Appendix E: Participatory Mapping Workshop Guide**

1. Where do you feel safe in your community? Identify a list of safe spaces
2. Where do you feel unsafe in your community and why?
3. What are the 2SLGBTQ+ specific spaces in your community?
4. What are the community spaces that are inclusive of or welcoming to 2SLGBTQ+ people in your community?
5. Outline the six most important assets for 2SLGBTQ+ people in your community (we are looking for things such as online, physical, social and cultural assets):
6. What kind of programs and projects can support and reinforce these assets?

## Appendix F: Focus Group Guide

1. If you could do anything to improve life for 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in the Niagara region, what would you do?
2. What are the barriers to full 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion and acceptance in the Niagara region?
3. What would help you access more inclusive services and supports as a member of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community in Niagara region?
4. What kind of support would help create a safer, more inclusive and connected 2SLGBTQQIA+ community in the Niagara region?
5. Describe your vision of what an ideal future would look like for Niagara region's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community.

## Appendix G: Key Informant Interview Guide

### Demographic / Context Questions

1. Whereabouts in Niagara region are you based?
2. What organization or group do you work with?
3. How would you describe your work?

### Issue Identification

4. What are the main issues relevant to 2SLGBTQ+ communities that you encounter in your work?
5. What are the main issues your organization is facing when it comes to 2SLGBTQ+ service-users?
6. We know that 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion has come a long way in recent years, but community, health and social services still struggle to provide inclusive and affirming care to 2SLGBTQ+ populations. What do you think are the barriers stopping inclusive care from happening?

### Opportunity Ideation

7. What would help your organization or sector provide more inclusive care and support to 2SLGBTQ+ communities?
8. What kinds of system supports do you think need to be in place to improve community well-being for 2SLGBTQ+ communities in Niagara Region?
9. How can we enhance collaboration between 2SLGBTQ+ communities and organizations, and broader community, health and social services? What would help make more collaboration happen?

## Data Exploration

10. Does your organization track gender and sexuality demographic data with your service-users?
  - If no, why not?
  - If no, what would help you track this kind of information?
11. Would your organization be open to sharing your demographic data on 2SLGBTQ+ communities accessing your services?

## Appendix H: Community Conversation Guide

1. If you could do anything to improve life for QTBIPOC people in the Niagara region, what would you do?
2. What are the barriers to full 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion and acceptance in Niagara region?
3. Whereabouts in the Niagara region do you live?
4. How would you describe your involvement in Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community?
5. What do you like about living in the Niagara region?
6. What's challenging for 2SLGBTQQIA+ people living in the Niagara region? Specifically in terms of:
  - Health and healthcare
  - Housing and employment
  - Community and culture
  - Violence and discrimination
7. What do you feel are the barriers to belonging and equality for 2SLGBTQQIA+ in the Niagara region?
8. If you could do anything to improve life for 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in the Niagara region, what would you do?
9. What would help you or other 2SLGBTQQIA+ access more inclusive services and supports?
10. What kind of support would help create a safer, more inclusive, and connected 2SLGBTQQIA+ community in Niagara region?
11. Describe your vision of what an ideal future would look like for 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities in the Niagara region?
12. How did you hear about these conversations for the OUTniagara strengths and needs assessment?

# Conclusion



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