

Community Matters

2SLGBTQI+ Community



June 2024

Summer Edition

Edmonton Social Planning Council



edmonton
SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL



ESPC is an independent, non-profit, charitable organization focused on social research. Articles, quotes, and commentaries reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policy of the Edmonton Social Planning Council.

Join our distribution list to receive future newsletters on our website at edmontonsocialplanning.ca/subscribe.

Contributors: Brett Lambert, Sydney Sheloff, Janell Uden, Esjay Lafayette (Pride Centre Edmonton), Chevi Rabbit, Simon Underwood (Doughnut Party).

Editor: Janell Uden

Usage

This issue of Community Matters by the Edmonton Social Planning Council is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.



You are free to:

Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format

Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material

The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms.

Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

NonCommercial — You may not use the material for commercial purposes.

ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original.

No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license



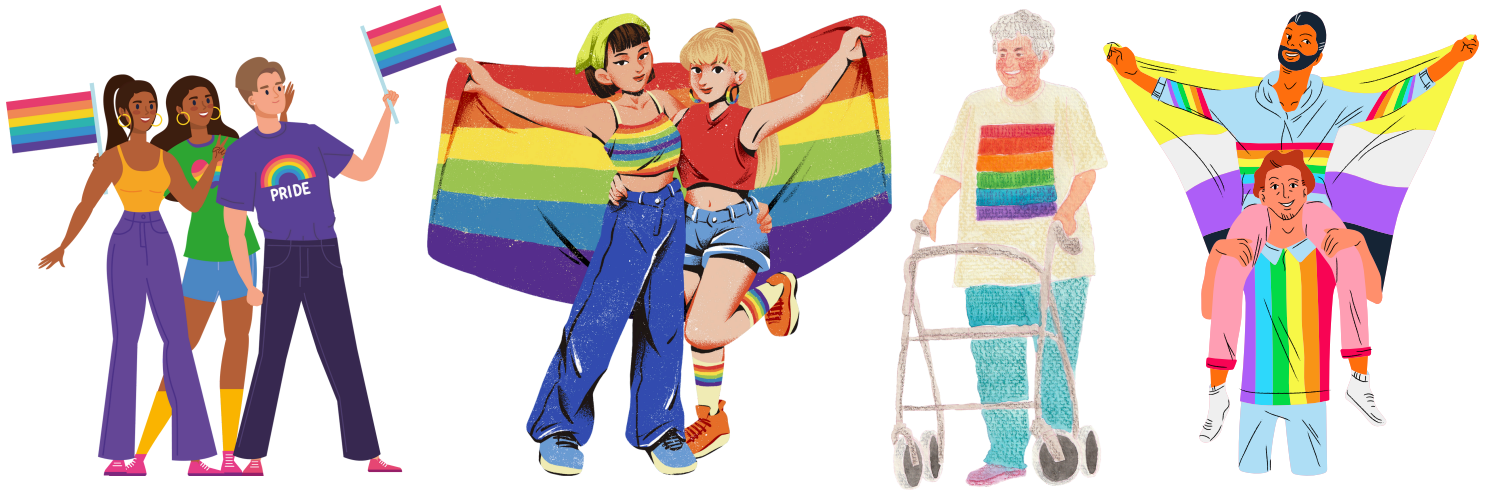


Table of Contents

01	<i>Introduction</i>	p 04
02	<i>2SLGBTQI+ Terms, Definitions and Statistics</i>	p 05
03	<i>Queer History is Part of Edmonton's History: A Conversation with the Edmonton Queer History Project</i>	p 10
04	<i>"Everyone's Invited": Perspectives from a Queer Owned Local Business</i>	p 15
05	<i>Substance use within 2SLGBTQ+ community</i>	p 19
07	<i>Inter-solidarity and Supportive Communities: Building a More Inclusive Space for the 2SLGBTQI+ Community</i>	p 23 p 29
08	<i>Understanding Two-Spirit History and Experiences in Edmonton</i>	p 28

Community Matters

Welcome to the summer edition of our quarterly publication, Community Matters.

The aim of Community Matters is to inform the community about social issues that impact people who live in our community. The information contained allows readers to increase their knowledge, and to connect the dots between social issues, evidence and policy. In Community Matters, we give space to local agencies, ESPC staff and volunteer writers or professionals in the field to share their knowledge and voices.

Each edition will spotlight a specific social issue or topic and highlight its intersectional nature and impact on equality. Articles are written by people with specialized knowledge, research skills or lived experience using evidence to provide clear information and inform on the issues affecting individuals and families.

For our June 2024 issue, we are focusing on different experiences surrounding the 2SLGBTQI+ community. The 2SLGBTQI+ acronym includes Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual people including those who are questioning. The queer community comprises a diverse group of people with various gender identities and sexual orientations. They are also part of every other community in a multicultural city like Edmonton. While this issue does not necessarily touch upon every aspect of these identities (we would need far more space for that!), we hope the issue serves as a starting point for exploring the varied experiences of a valued part of the wider community. Some of these topics focus on the support, community and resource sharing within this community, a perspective from a queer-owned business, substance use in the queer community, the history and experiences of Two-Spirit identities in Edmonton, and queer history in Edmonton.

June is Pride Month and here at ESPC we thought it was important to dedicate this edition to the strengths and some challenges facing this community during this time. As there is an increase in policies targeting 2SLGBTQI+ people in our community, we hope that the information such as that contained in this edition, along with the various celebrations around the city this month provide Edmontonians the opportunity to have productive conversations and to connect.

I hope you find this issue to be an informative read and that it contributes positively to the discourse surrounding our 2SLGBTQI+ community in Edmonton their strengths, experiences, and challenges.

Janell Uden, Research Services and Capacity Building Coordinator
Edmonton Social Planning Council



Terms, Definitions and Statistics

Written by Brett Lambert
Research Officer (ESPC)

The terms used to describe a community of people with different sexual orientations and gender identities are expansive and have changed and evolved over time. With that, the umbrella acronym term has shifted and expanded with time as well. Currently, the Government of Canada uses the 2SLGBTQI+ acronym to refer to these communities in Canada. This section will offer an extensive, but not necessarily complete, list of definitions of most commonly used terms to describe these various identities.

Major Identity Groups

Two-Spirit (2S): within Indigenous culture, this refers to a person who embodies both a masculine and feminine spirit and is used by some Indigenous peoples to describe their

gender, sexual, and spiritual identity. In pre-colonial times, different Indigenous cultures had their own variations of the term two-spirit, but they all described similar traits including gender variance, specialized work roles, same-sex attraction, and spiritual identity. Activist Albert McLeod helped develop the term in 1990 to broadly reference Indigenous peoples in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community (Filice, 2023).

Lesbian: a woman who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to other women (Government of Canada, 2022). In addition, some non-binary people may identify as lesbians, often because they have some connection to womanhood and are primarily attracted to women (UC Davis, 2023).

Gay: a person who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to people of the same sex or gender identity. Traditionally this referred to men, but it has been adopted as an identity for people of all genders (Government of Canada, 2022).

Bisexual: A person who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to persons both from their own sex and other genders (Government of Canada, 2022). Some people may use the terms bisexual and pansexual interchangeably (UC Davis, 2023).

Pansexual: a person who has romantic, sexual, or affectional desire for people of all genders and sexes. It has some overlap with bisexuality (UC Davis, 2023).

Transgender: an umbrella term referring to people whose gender does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth. Transgender can describe a number of different identities, which can include transgender men, transgender women, and non-binary people whose identity does not align with a man or woman. Transgender people often transition by changing their appearance, clothing, name, or pronouns.

Legal transition involves changing names or gender markers on government documents. Medical transition can include hormone replacement therapy or gender-affirming surgery. Nevertheless, not all transgender people choose to medically transition. (Wells, 2022).

Non-binary: a person whose gender identity does not align with the mainstream understanding of gender such as man or woman. Their gender identity may include man and woman, androgynous, fluid, multiple, no gender, or a different gender outside of the "woman-man" spectrum (Government of Canada, 2022).

Queer: an umbrella term used to describe sexual orientations and gender identities that fall outside of societal norms. Historically, the term was used as a slur against the community. It has subsequently been reclaimed by the community as a positive way to describe themselves and self-identify in opposition to assimilation (UC Davis, 2023).



Questioning: a person who is uncertain about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (Government of Canada, 2022). This can either describe a temporary situation before they forge an established identity or a lasting identity.

Intersex: people born with sex characteristics (such as sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal patterns, and/or chromosomal patterns) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies. Approximately 1.7% of the population are born with intersex traits (United Nations, 2024).

Asexual: a person who lacks sexual attraction or interest in sexual expression (Government of Canada, 2022). Asexuality is a spectrum of experiences as some asexual people do have sex and do experience varying levels of sexual attraction. There are many diverse ways of being asexual. For instance, a person who does not experience sexual attraction can experience other forms of attraction such as romantic attraction, physical attraction and emotional attraction, as these are separate aspects of a person's identity (UC Davis, 2023).

Differences Between Sex and Gender

Gender: a social construct used to classify a person as a man, woman, or some other identity. This differs from the sex one is assigned at birth (UC Davis, 2023).

Sex assigned at birth: sex is assigned based on the genitals identified either in ultrasound or at birth. A person's sex might not always match their gender identity and sex is not always binary, such as those who are intersex (UC Davis, 2023).

Cisgender: a person who identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth (Government of Canada, 2022).

Gender identity: a sense of one's sense of gender, whether it be man, woman, transgender, or any other identity. It may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth (UC Davis, 2023).

Gender expression: refers to the various ways people choose to express their gender identity. This could be demonstrated by their choice of clothing, hair, make-up, voice, and others. A person's gender expression may not align with societal expectations of gender (Government of Canada, 2022).

Sexual and Gender Identities by the Numbers

According to Statistics Canada, there are approximately 1 million people who are LGBTQ2+. This number does not include intersex people because Statistics Canada does not have data on this population. This represents 4% of the Canadian population aged 15 years and older.

About 52% are women, 44% are men, and 3% are non-binary.

About 100,815 people in Canada are transgender (59,460) or non-binary (41,355), accounting for 0.33% of the population aged 15 and older.

Among transgender people, 53% are women and 47% are men.

Those who have an LGBTQ2+ identity are more likely to be younger in age. Almost one-third of LGBTQ2+ people (29.7%) are between the age of 15 and 24 years old. Among younger generations, this indicates an increased acceptance of diverse gender and sexual identities.

They are also more likely to live in low-income. 40.5% of LGBTQ2+ people have a total before tax personal income of less than \$20,000 (Statistics Canada, 2022).



References

Filice, M. (2023). Two-Spirit. The Canadian Encyclopedia.
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/two-spirit>

Government of Canada [2022]. 2SLGBTQI+ terminology - Glossary and common acronyms. <https://www.canada.ca/en/women-gender-equality/free-to-be-me/2slgbtqi-plus-glossary.html>

Statistics Canada (2022). LGBTQ2+ people.
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/12-581-x/2022001/sec6-eng.htm>

UC Davis. LGBTQIA Resource Center Glossary [2023].
<https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary>

United Nations. Office of the High Commissioner [2024]. Intersex people.
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity/intersex-people>

Wells, V.S. (2022). Transgender. The Canadian Encyclopedia.
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/transgender>

Donate



ESPC relies on the generosity of individual donors to support our ongoing research and public education. Registered Charitable Tax #10728 31 94 RP 0001.
Financial contributions are fully tax deductible and you will receive a registered charitable tax receipt.

Your donation helps us do our work. It keeps our social research current and comprehensive; allows us to take on bigger projects and make a greater impact in the community, strengthens our voice—your voice—and the voices of those who lack the opportunity to speak for themselves.

To donate please go to: <https://edmontonsocialplanning.ca/donate/>



Queer History is Part of Edmonton's History: A Conversation with the Edmonton Queer History Project

Written by Brett Lambert
Research Officer (ESPC)

While mainstream consciousness and understanding of 2SLGBTQI+ communities and their identities is a relatively recent development, the fact of the matter is that queer history has been a part of human history from the very beginning. This is equally true for the history of Edmonton. Since 2SLGBTQI+ identities have historically been hidden due to fear of discrimination, persecution, shame, and stigma, queer history deserves to be recognized not only to understand the struggles of the past, but to guide our present situation and help to chart a more inclusive future going forward.

The Edmonton Queer History Project seeks to shine a light on what has been a hidden part of our history for too long, documenting this history and making it widely available not only for contemporary 2SLGBTQI+ communities, but for all members of the community.

Dr. Kristopher Wells, an Associate Professor at MacEwan University's Faculty of Health and Community Studies and the founding Director of the MacEwan Centre for Sexual and Gender Diversity, is one of the original team members that helped bring about the Edmonton Queer History Project. He recently spoke with us to discuss the work of the Edmonton Queer History Project.

How did Edmonton Queer History Project come about?

The project started in 2015 to mark the 35th anniversary of the Pride Festival in Edmonton to document queer history for an exhibit that would be featured at the Art Gallery of Alberta. In preparation, we started to research this very history. The exhibit would then become a travelling exhibition to showcase this history in other places. When the COVID-19 pandemic happened, there were a lot of queer artists who found themselves out of work. The decision was made to reboot the project and do more in-depth work. We would take the time to uncover stories found in the City of Edmonton Archives and work with different community members to help collect, document, and bring this history alive. This work culminated in a downtown history map, where queer communities at the time were more visible due to safety and acceptance reasons. With the help of community members like Michael Phair, this community map was generated along with guided tours to locate places of historical significance to the queer community.

This map documents 27 locations and helps to make the history come alive.

We may walk past these buildings several times in our day to day lives but not understand its significance to the queer community.

Alongside the map, we put together a website to further document this history and a podcast. All of these and other mediums are great vehicles to get our stories out there into the wider community.

We are also conscious that queer history in Edmonton is not confined to the downtown area, so we created the [EQHPStories](#) platform which allows community members to pin a story or a significant landmark to the map so we can get a broader picture of what queer history looks like in our city.

Other projects linked to this project include the making of a documentary, [Pride vs. Prejudice: The Delwin Vriend Story](#), which will be shown at film festivals around the world. We're also working on a queer history exhibit at Fort Edmonton Park to show that queer history has always been a part of Edmonton's history.



Why is queer history important to Edmonton?

It's important to showcase the diverse tapestry of our city. In addition to the various ethnocultural communities that make up Edmonton, this also includes 2SLGBTQ+ communities. These identities exist within every other community. Amplifying queer history can help build bridges among communities. Different cultures have different understandings of gender and sexuality. As well, some cultures historically may be less accepting or open to different gender identities and sexual orientations.

What considerations do you employ to get a diverse range of queer stories told through this initiative?

Historically, queer stories as told by mainstream institutions get told through pathology, disorder, disease, and so on. It's important to capture our communities as diverse and complex people. It is a constant process to tell as many stories as possible.

We did not want queer stories to be told exclusively through the perspective of just gay white cisgender males, who tend to be the most privileged voices among a wider community that is marginalized. It is also important to recognize the Indigenous Two Spirit perspective as well.

We also try to acknowledge other voices, such as the first all-female architectural firm in Edmonton, [Wallbridge & Imrie](#), who were also a lesbian couple. A number of buildings they helped create are still standing in Edmonton so these are important learning opportunities.

History matters, but what would a queer future in Edmonton look like? What is your ideal queer future?

I would like to see a future where queer history is commonplace, it gets fully represented, it can be taught in our schools, it is visible, and we fight for the most vulnerable and marginalized within our communities.

We don't need to look further than the attacks on our community towards transgender people from our provincial government where we still have to fight for our human rights and resist erasure of our communities.

I see an ideal queer future where today's young people are provided the opportunity to understand their rights, know the sacrifices that those before them took, and continue the fight for human rights.

An ideal queer future is one where we address homelessness, addictions, and poverty within 2SLGBTQ+ communities and that we celebrate everyone for their differences. Diverse communities are resilient and vibrant communities.

There is no doubt that queer history has a lot of struggle and the fear of persecution. Nevertheless, what are the joyful aspects to queer history?

That can be a very personal answer for each queer person individually and can look like many different things.

It could be as simple as a space where they are free to hold their partner's hand and not have to fear getting attacked and harassed for their identity. It can be fond memories of marching in pride parades from previous years, or frequenting coffee shops and other spaces where they feel safe being their true authentic self.

What makes me hopeful is seeing young queer people embrace their identities at a younger age and feeling safe expressing themselves and living truly authentic lives. We want to see them live a better life than those who came before them.

The fight will always continue and we're not going anywhere!



Resources

You can learn more about queer history by checking out these handy resources:

Edmonton Queer History website:

<https://www.edmontonqueerhistoryproject.ca/>

Downtown Map: <https://www.edmontonqueerhistoryproject.ca/the-map>

EQHP Stories: <https://eqhpstories.ca/>

Pride vs. Prejudice: The Delwin Vriend Story documentary:

<https://www.pridevsprejudice.com/>





“Everyone’s Invited”: Perspectives from a Queer Owned Local Business

Written by Janell Uden

Research Services and Capacity Building Coordinator (ESPC)

Doughnut Party is a locally owned small business by Matthew Garrett and Simon Underwood with three

locations in Edmonton and one in Calgary. Starting back in 2012,, the doughnuts were originally sought out by many at markets across the city, and after gaining a reputation for their delicious doughnuts and creative flavours they were able to open a storefront a few years later. A lot has changed since their farmers’ market days and only running one location. However, what hasn’t changed is the ingenuity of Doughnut Party’s branding and tasty treats. As a long time fan of their whimsical creations, it was a dream come true to be invited into the back corner of

the kitchen of their Brewery District location for a coffee and a great conversation with Simon about owning and running a queer owned business.

Would you say that your business practices differ from that of a cis/het business and if so, how?

For us, inclusivity is always at the forefront of what we do, and a major priority for us as a business is ensuring that everyone that works here is comfortable, I think just because we ourselves are queer and want to build an environment that we ourselves can be happy in every day. It is a huge part of how we approach things because we really value everyone who works for us feeling welcome to be and express who they are.

We also try to communicate with our staff with respect and hope and expect that they communicate with one another with the same mutual respect. Kitchens and food environments can often be very masculine and top down, sometimes even a little bit loud and aggressive and maybe that works in other places. However, I'm a quiet person and having a harmonious, chill, collaborative work environment is something I really value.

Our slogan is "Everyone's Invited" and it comes from wanting everyone to feel comfortable and welcome when they pop into see us as a customer or come to work as an employee. There are so many little ways that queer people can be made to feel uncomfortable on a daily basis and we don't want that to happen here. We want people to come to work and know they will be supported.

What was your personal experience working elsewhere compared to running your own business as a queer person?

I've been working for many years in many different jobs and most of the time I have been the only queer person in that workplace,

and it is something you get used to, but it means you are often navigating a space that doesn't always know what to do with you. Sometimes you are treated differently and other times you might have to explain yourself more than you'd like. You can also feel a little alone.

As an employee, you don't have always the autonomy to change things to make yourself or others more comfortable. When you're steering a business, you do get the chance to create the conditions in which you are working in for yourself and the people you work with. The autonomy and creativity to decide what kind of environment you want to have has been one of the most gratifying things about running a business. We have a very diverse staff, but seeing so many applications from queer people to work with us at Doughnut Party makes me feel like we're on the right track in terms of creating a positive environment and having a reputation for that.



Why are queer 2LSGBTQ+ business important?

Small businesses are dynamic parts of our economy, they often make, produce, and create things and provide services that people enjoy and bring meaning to their lives and it's good to have queer people in the mix! Knowing that our business, and other queer businesses are part of the economy and participating in people's lives in such a positive way is really rewarding, and we know that us being around helps make the business community more diverse. Doughnut Party also makes a product that sparks joy and brings people together and I think this is something that is special about food businesses, because food itself is often communal and often brings people together.

Why is it important to support 2SLGBTQ+ businesses?

I think that across the board running a small business can be challenging and support from anyone is always helpful. Also, there are not as many visible queer-owned business out there, so it is vital to support the ones we have. Supporting a queer business often means supporting queer people - and queer people can definitely use the support, especially right now.

Identifying your business as queer one can certainly make you a little more vulnerable. People may decide they don't want to support you because of who you are, but some people may be more dedicated to supporting you as well. It's an interesting thing to navigate. We try to be ourselves, as much as we feel comfortable, and sometimes that comfort can ebb and flow.

That's a good point, and I am curious how did you and Matthew make the decision to represent your business the way you have?

For us, we wanted Doughnut Party to exist outside of ourselves. We wanted Doughnut Party to be fun, cute, friendly and inviting, kind of like its own world with little characters, creative doughnuts and very colourful, detached from the real world and more of a happy space to escape into. It is common in the food business for straight couples or best friends to center themselves in their brand – to make themselves or their personalities as a people a part of the brand and its appeal. However, Matthew and I didn't necessarily want that to do that, in part just to keep our privacy and some healthy distance between our work and our personal lives, but also because I think again as queer people we're not

always comfortable putting ourselves out there, there's that bit of hesitation that comes from lived experience and takes time to work through and move past. If anyone asks, we're happy to talk about who we are, but the brand itself is maybe more queer-coded than it is loudly queer. Sometimes it's loud! But sometimes it might just be the name of a donut or a joke in an Instagram caption, more of a sensibility. Or it's a rainbow character! We kind of share as we want to share.

Something I love about Doughnut Party is how broad our customer base is – it honestly has to be broad, to be successful, but it also invites the opportunity for our customers to sort of build this positive relationship with a queer-owned business. We may not always agree with all of our customers on certain viewpoints or topics, but we can connect with them over doughnuts and coffee and maybe shift and broaden the conversation over time. I think that's positive!

*photo taken by Janell Uden at the Brewery District Doughnut Party location after the interview

Would you or your agency like to get involved in Community Matters?

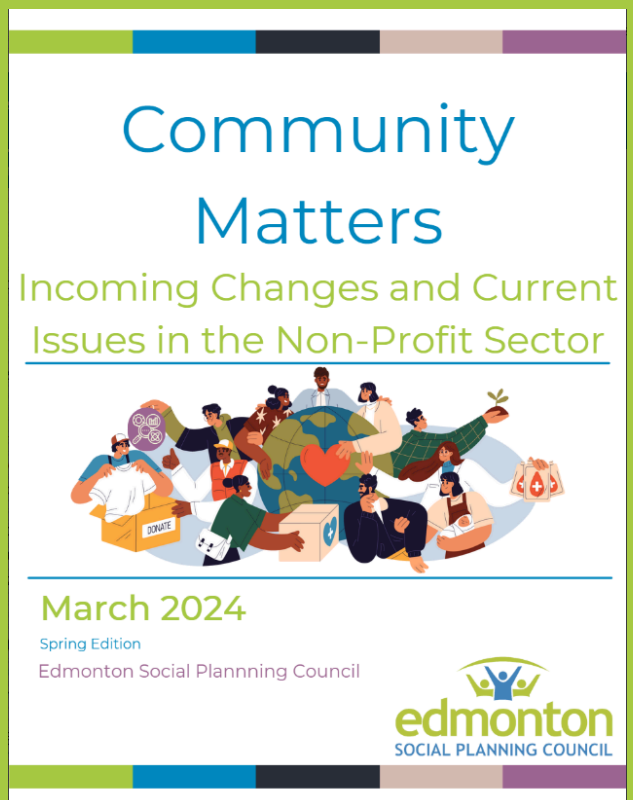
There are multiple ways that you or your organization can contribute to our upcoming publication in September which will focus on an Inclusive look at People with Disabilities and Community.

Our planning for the next edition will be starting in mid-July!

For more information or to express your interest please contact:

Janell Uden

(janellu@edmontonsocialplanning.ca)





Substance use within the 2SLGBTQ+ community

Written by Sydney Sheloff
Strategic Research Coordinator (ESPC)

Research from around the world has shown the 2SLGBTQ+ community experiences high rates of alcohol and drug use. For example, the Trevor Project (2022) based in the United States, found that 56% of LGBTQ+ youth had used alcohol in the past year, 35% used cannabis, and 11% used a prescription drug not prescribed to them. Furthermore, among young adults over the age of 21, 33% reported *regular* alcohol use, and 21% reported regular cannabis use.

These rates are higher than that of heterosexual and cisgender communities. Research out of England found that 29% of women in sexual minority groups reported heavy drinking

compared to 12% of women in the general population, and 34% of men in sexual minority groups have reported heavy episodic drinking compared to 18% of men in the general population (Emslie, Lennox, & Ireland, 2017). It is important to interrogate why alcohol and drug use is more prevalent within the 2SLGBTQ+ community, and barriers these folks may experience in getting support.

Substance use and trauma

For many people from the 2SLGBTQ+ community, alcohol and drug use may be used as a coping mechanism, or form of self-medication, to deal

with marginalization, stigmatization, and abuse (Emslie, Lennox, & Ireland, 2017). 2SLGBTQ+ folks experience violence and discrimination at higher rates than heterosexual and cisgender people, both in childhood and adulthood, including familial rejection, intimate partner violence, and physical and sexual abuse due to their gender or sexual identity (McKay, 2021).

Research has shown a direct correlation between experiences of abuse and increased substance use within the 2SLGBTQ+ community. The Trevor Project (2022), for example, found that youth who had experiences of conversion therapy (efforts to change a LGBTQ youth's gender identity or sexual orientation), had higher rates of substance use than LGBTQ youth who had not experienced it. Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez (2009), found that Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual youth who had been rejected by their families were 3.4 times more likely to use illegal drugs than those who had not experienced rejection.

Clubs and bars are seen as important by many people within the 2SLGBTQ+ community as they can offer respite from trauma. They are spaces away from heteronormative society in which people can be 'authentic,' explore their gender and sexuality, and celebrate difference.

Many 2SLGBTQ+ people frequent bars because there are limited other opportunities to socialize with large groups of members of their community (Emslie, Lennox, & Ireland, 2017). While clubs and bars are important to developing community and creating spaces of belonging, the fact is that being in these spaces often increases drug and alcohol use.

Emslie, Lennox, & Ireland (2017) found that people drink more heavily on the "gay scene" than they do elsewhere.

Lack of access to treatment

People from the 2SLGBTQ+ community may lack the resources to pursue more normative ways of dealing with trauma. Research has shown that Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual people are more likely to work in unstable and low-paying industries that lack health care, such as sales and service, and overall have lower incomes than their heterosexual counterparts. Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual people are also more likely to experience food insecurity, meaning they have inadequate or precarious access to food due to insufficient financial resources (Statistics Canada, 2022). Not only does financial insecurity exacerbate feelings of stress and exclusion, it limits 2SLGBTQ+ peoples ability to afford counselling,

therapy, and addictions supports. However, barriers go beyond just financial, many 2SLGBTQ+ people do not access mental health supports or treatment for alcohol and drug use out of fears that treatment will perpetuate discrimination and trauma. Historically, 2SGBTQ+ identities have been constructed as mental illnesses or criminal offenses, and those legacies continue to impact the treatment 2SLGBTQ+ people receive when they try to access services (MacKay, 2021). Many people avoid services altogether over fears of their identities being delegitimized, experiencing microaggressions, and a lack of understanding of their experiences on the part of mental health professionals. When people do access services, these experiences lead to a lower quality of care.

Other people pursuing recovery may also be a barrier. Anecdotal stories show 2SLGBTQ+ persons being forced to hide their gender or sexual identity within recovery programs due to stigma or fears fellow people in one's recovery program may be homophobic or transphobic. Gender segregated programs mean people with diverse gender and sexual identities may be forced into binary and heteronormative environments in which they may not be comfortable to be themselves (Kury de Castillo, 2023).

A group in Calgary is currently in the process of creating a recovery center focused on 2SLGBTQ+ people, named the Stonewall Recovery Center. This organization will offer specialized supports that recognizes the unique circumstances and intersectional identities of 2SLGBTQ+ people, creating a safe and supportive environment to pursue treatment (Stonewall Recovery, n.d.). That being said, it is important that all addiction and mental health programs are trauma-informed, and professionals have the competency to understand and respond to the unique experiences and needs of 2SLGBTQ+ clients. They deserve to feel comfortable, validated, understood, and safe no matter what services they access (Stonewall Recovery, n.d.).



References

- Emslie, C., Lennox, J., & Ireland, L. (2017). The role of alcohol in identity construction among LGBT people: a qualitative study. *Sociology of Health and Illness* 39(8), 1465-1479. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.12605>
- Kury de Castillo, C. (2023). Canada's first 2SLGBTQ+ addiction treatment centre to open in Calgary. Global News. <https://globalnews.ca/news/9529306/canadas-first-2slgbtq-addiction-centre-calgary/>
- MacKay, J. (2021). 2SLGBTQ+ inclusive trauma-informed care. GBV Learning Network. <https://gbvlearningnetwork.ca/webinars/recorded-webinars/2021/webinar-2021-2.html>
- Ryan, C., Huebner, D., Diaz, R. M., & Sanchez, J. (2009). Family rejection as a predictor of negative health outcomes in white and Latino Lesbian, gay, and bisexual young adults. *Pediatrics*, 123(1), 346–352. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2007-3524>
- Statistics Canada (2022). Labour and economic characteristics of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-28-0001/2022001/article/00003-eng.htm>
- Stonewall Recovery (n.d.) Why do we need Canada's first 2SLGBTQ+ addiction recovery centre? <https://www.stonewallrecovery.ca/>
- Trevor Project (2022). Substance Use and Suicide Risk Among LGBTQ Youth. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/substance-use-and-suicide-risk-among-lgbtq-youth-jan-2022/>



Inter-solidarity and Supportive Communities: Building a More Inclusive Space for the 2SLGBTQI+ Community

Written by Janell Uden

Research Services and Capacity Building Coordinator (ESPC)

Esjay Lafayette is the Executive Director of the Pride Centre of Edmonton. The Pride Centre of Edmonton provides a welcoming, non-judgemental space for people of all attractions, expressions and identities so that they may feel comfortable being themselves. At the centre, people can find support, be a part of and grow a community, and have a safe space.

We sat down with Esjay to talk about Inclusivity, Supportive Communities, Inter-solidarity and Resource Sharing in the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community in Edmonton. Inter-Solidarity is unity within a group arising from common goals, interests, sympathies or responsibilities. Good conversation flowed, questions were answered, and knowledge was shared.

How would you describe inter-solidarity in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community?

Inter-Solidarity is a necessary building block or component to the evolution of 2SLGBTQIA+ rights, it is not only necessary for us though, it is a necessary component for all marginalized communities. Inter-solidarity is fundamental to our nature as human beings. However, it is not happening enough, both within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and among the broader spectrum of other marginalized communities. I don't believe this lack of inter-solidarity is because of a lack of desire, but a by-product of the capitalist, colonial society that keeps people oppressed and separated.

Colonialism and capitalism use fear as a tactic, presenting scarcity as a fact of life. Consequently, programs, services, and communities that centre and advocate for equity must constantly contend with this scarcity mindset. The current support systems often make it seem like we need to prioritize one group over another. However, this is false. Our strength lies in our inter-solidarity.

“Scarcity should have no place in human rights, people should have access to not only basic needs, but to be represented, valued, and honoured for who they are in all of their complexity”

What are some examples of resource sharing in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in the Edmonton area that stand out to you?

Here at the Pride centre, we focus on resource sharing and collaboration in a few different ways. We work with the Queer and Trans Health Collective (QTHC). They run their spectrum drug testing program, which provides safe drug testing for anyone who needs it out of the Pride Centre. They get a physical office, that is centrally located, wheelchair accessible, and a place many queer folks feel comfortable accessing. We benefit by having a fantastic resource to share with the community in house and it helps us connect with people in the community who we might not otherwise have an opportunity to meet.

We also work with Edmonton Newcomer Centre (ECN) as many 2SLGBTQIA+ refugees are coming to Edmonton seeking asylum.

This collaboration includes jointly applying for funding, having one of their staff members work one day a week at the Pride Centre, and partnering with Legal Aid as a team. Additionally, we sometimes co-host programs and events.

Another example of resource sharing that comes to mind is when the C.H.E.W. project lent their space to Edmonton Two-Spirit Society. E2S were set to host an open house, in their space however, it ended up being unavailable for the open house so instead they held it in the C.H.E.W. project's space.

Collaboration and focusing on strengths that we all have in the social services sector and non-profit sector is so crucial. We are all operating trying to help others when financial resources are scarce, and funding is not increasing where it should be. We must turn and look at what each of us have to share and give to others to improve conditions for all. It is incredible to see that your organization has its strength in both its people and the space you operate in and share that with other organizations.

We try and focus on using our people and our space to build these relationships and connections with people and other organizations. We may not have the time and resources to get into the community and go and foster these connections, but we are always happy to collaborate and/or host other anti-racist, anti-oppressive organizations who share similar values and goals.

In your opinion, what are some of the best practices for sharing resources in the 2SLGBTQ+ community?

The first thing that I would recommend is to make it a priority. It can be easy for us to prioritize the tasks with deadlines and get pulled into what needs to be done, and although I think this is true for many types of organizations, nonprofits and social service agencies experience this at a heightened level. We are constantly having to apply for one grant after another. I know someone who used to work in the arts sector who thought they had to apply for a lot of grants per year, but they came to the social service sector and found the volume and work of the never-ending grant applications to be overwhelming.

When our many cycles are short-term and dependent, and there are so many deadlines, it is easy to get caught up in this schedule. However, more of us need to prioritize relationships both individually and between organizations. This is a difficult ask difficult because the way which the system works doesn't meaningfully support these changes or collaborations, but we must prioritize making them happen.

Esjay, what does an inclusive, supportive community look like in the 2SLGBTQ+ community?

Woven into the fabric of an inclusive and supportive community, whether it be 2SLGBTQIA+, or any other community, is the understanding that each individual is sacred. This makes me think about the policies suggested around gender-affirming care and parental rights for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth. It is not the adults in the youth's life job to dictate to them or guide them to who we want or think they should be. I think basketball star, Dwayne Wade explained the role of caregivers beautifully when speaking about his trans daughter Zaya. "As your father, my job isn't to create a version of myself or direct your future. My role is to be a facilitator to your hopes, your wishes and your dreams".

Another part of supportive community is accountability and addressing conflict and harm. In order to have a supportive and inclusive community, we need mechanisms around how we hold people accountable when harm has happened. Additionally, many people are not raised with skills around dealing with difficult situations, but conflict is a part of life. Building skills to address conflict and harm in ways that do not create further harm (i.e., shaming) but lead to a clear naming and addressing of the damage, with the ultimate goal of understanding and healing for all involved is the goal.

We also need to address trauma. Unresolved trauma often manifests itself in creating more harm. Within activist communities I see so many folks that are driven by their unhealed trauma. Therefore, healing trauma is a necessity to creating a truly inclusive and supportive 2SLGBTQIA+ community. There are a lot of people doing incredible work in the community, and at the same time, many of those same people who have incredible gifts to offer this world, end up using tools oppression and operate from a place of scarcity which hinders the work and even creates harm.

Lastly, self-reflection and privilege need to be regularly examined within all marginalized communities. Intersectionality has real impacts on people's lives. Communities can't be safe and inclusive if members within marginalized groups who have greater access and privilege are unaware of their social location and the power they hold.

To truly support a 2SLGBTQIA+ community and any marginalized group, those most impacted by systems of oppression need to be centered. Ultimately everyone benefits through this approach, including those with the most privilege.



PRIDE CENTRE
OF EDMONTON



Understanding Two-Spirit History and Experiences in Edmonton

Written by Chevi Rabbit - 2SLGBTQ+ advocate & Janell Uden - Research Services and Capacity Building Coordinator (ESPC)

Chevi Rabbit is a leading LGBT advocate in her generation. She has worked extensively with the Diversity RCMP Committee, previously was a Hate Crimes Committee member, advocated in Ottawa for LGBTQ housing and has collaborated with the Native Women’s Association of Canada on gender diversity. Chevi has carved out a unique space for LGBTQ advocacy, working with all political parties and building bridges with various political figures to advance social movements in Edmonton and the rest of Alberta.

In 1990 at an intertribal First Nations gay and lesbian conference in Winnipeg, the term “Two-Spirit” was decided to be an umbrella term for Indigenous people encompassing various sexual, gender/and or spiritual identities (Vowel, 2016). This term was decided to replace the previously used term Berdache that was sometimes used to refer to homosexual men and transgender people but was offensive due to its origins (Vowel, 2016). Although the term “Two-Spirit” is broad and intended to be all-encompassing, Chelsea Vowel in her chapter All My Queer Relations: Language, Culture and Two- Spirit Identity explains the complexity of language.



She points out that not all words, including the intended meanings, are transferrable between languages. Being that “Two-Spirit” is an English term, people incorrectly assume it simply means an Indigenous person who is transgender. The Western view of gender, sexuality, gender roles and hierarchical socio-political orders imposed by colonialism have taken over and continue to dominate today. This view ignores the history of “Two-Spirit” people in Indigenous communities that existed long before this time. Although social norms differed between First Nations, before the arrival of Europeans there was no strict division of people into categories of men and women based on biology. Additionally, same sex and same gender relationships were not condemned, or looked down upon.

Due to the Christian views surrounding non-monogamous relationships, same sex relationships and gender roles that were enforced through laws, criminalization and residential schools, much of the history of what we now call “Two-Spirit” people has been erased. They are not always honoured, or even accepted in their communities as a result of their assimilation and cultural erasure over generations.

For many Two-Spirit individuals in Edmonton, the journey begins with a profound struggle for acceptance and recognition within their own communities. Two-Spirit identities reflect a sacred understanding of gender diversity, acknowledging individuals who embody both masculine and feminine qualities or fulfill unique gender roles within Indigenous societies.

Despite this rich cultural legacy, many Two-Spirit individuals face rejection and ostracization, their identities marginalized within both Indigenous and non-Indigenous spaces. They grapple with a myriad of challenges, navigating a landscape riddled with discrimination, violence, and systemic injustices. While we have heard personal stories of all these issues, there is a serious lack of robust data and research surrounding this topic, obscuring many of the injustices Two-Spirit individuals face on a daily basis.

Violence and bullying are pervasive threats, haunting the daily lives of Indigenous people in Edmonton. Two-Spirit Indigenous people are even more at risk of being targets of discrimination and crimes. From physical assaults to verbal harassment, the specter of discrimination looms large, fueled by ignorance and intolerance.

Gender-based violence further compounds these challenges, with many Two-Spirit individuals falling victim to acts of aggression driven by fear and hatred towards non-conforming gender identities. Across Canada, Two Spirit and Indigenous women are both greatly affected by the growing number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and the lack of action to solve this critical situation.

In the realm of housing, discrimination rears its ugly head, denying Two-Spirit individuals access to safe and stable accommodations. Landlords and fellow tenants alike perpetuate prejudice, leading to frequent evictions and instances of homelessness. Although no data is available in Canada at this time, a study in the U.S. found that over 34% of Indigenous LGBTQ youth reported either being homeless in the past or were experiencing homelessness at the time of the study (The Trevor Project, 2023). The lack of having a permanent address can be a barrier to gaining employment, which hinders the ability to gain housing (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2024).

Even when one has employment, the low availability of housing in many places in Canada allows for landlords to be selective about who they want to live in their buildings (Native Women's Association Canada, 2024).

The workplace offers little respite, as Two-Spirit individuals contend with bullying, microaggressions, and a lack of gender-inclusive facilities. Even in accessing basic services like transportation, the vulnerability of Two-Spirit individuals is laid bare, as verbal and physical abuse from cab drivers highlights a critical gap in protection and respect. Instances of sexual violence against Two-Spirit people have occurred through transportation and hotel services in Edmonton (Rabbit, 2024).

These experiences underscore the urgent need for change in Edmonton. It is a call to action that demands collective effort and solidarity. By acknowledging the struggles faced by Two-Spirit individuals and addressing the systemic injustices they endure, Edmonton can take a significant step towards becoming a more inclusive and equitable city for all its residents. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach, starting with comprehensive education and sensitivity training.

Housing providers, employers, and public service workers, including cab drivers, need mandatory training on Two-Spirit identities and the challenges these individuals face. Implementing and enforcing inclusive policies is essential to protect Two-Spirit individuals from discrimination and violence.

The struggles faced by Two-Spirit individuals in Edmonton highlight broader issues of systemic discrimination and intolerance. Creating a safer and more inclusive Edmonton for Two-Spirit individuals is not only a matter of justice but also of honoring the rich cultural heritage they represent. By acknowledging the unique challenges, they face and taking concrete steps to address them, we can move towards a future where every individual, regardless of their gender or sexual identity, can live with dignity and respect. It is our collective responsibility to stand against violence and discrimination, ensuring that Edmonton becomes a true sanctuary for all its residents.



Call to Action

Creating a safer and more inclusive Edmonton for Two-Spirit individuals is a collective responsibility. Here are some steps you can take:

1. Educate Yourself and Others: Learn about Two-Spirit identities and the unique challenges they face.

2. Support Inclusive Policies: Advocate for policies that protect against discrimination in housing, workplaces, and public services.

3. Promote Safe Spaces: Support organizations and initiatives that provide safe spaces and resources for Two-Spirit individuals.

4. Report Violence and Discrimination: If you witness or experience violence or discrimination, report it to the appropriate authorities.

References

Community Based Research Centre. (2024). *Two-Spirit Program - Community-Based Research Centre*. Community Based Research Centre. <https://www.cbrc.net/2spirit-program>

Native Women's Association of Canada. (2023, December 6). *NAP: Enhancing Cultural Safety in the Workplace*. <https://nwac.ca/journal/nap-enhancing-cultural-safety-in-the-workplace>

Ott, M. (2016, June 6). *A Walk in Two Worlds*. Digital Project by Masters Students at Ryerson School of Journalism. <https://trc.journalism.torontomu.ca/taking-a-walk-in-two-worlds/>

Two-Spirit Journal. (2024). *Two-Spirit Journal*. <https://twospiritjournal.com/>

Vowel, C. (2016). All My Queer Relations. In *Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis, & Inuit Issues in Canada* (pp. 106–115). essay, Highwater Press.

About the Edmonton Social Planning Council

The Edmonton Social Planning Council is an independent, non-profit, non-partisan social research organization, with registered charitable status. Our focus is social research, particularly in the areas of low-income and poverty. ESPC is a source of knowledge and expertise on social issues within our community.

We are dedicated to encouraging the adoption of equitable social policy, supporting the work of other organizations who are striving to improve the lives of Edmontonians, and educating the public regarding the social issues that impact them on a daily basis.

Our Vision: A community in which all people are full and valued participants.

Our Mission: Through rigorous research, detailed analysis, and community engagement, we deepen community understanding of social planning issues, influence policy, and spark collaborative actions that lead to positive social change.

We thank you for your continued support.

Contact

Edmonton Social Planning Council
10050 - 112 Street NW, Suite 206,
Edmonton, AB T5K 2J1
(780) 423-2031
www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca
[@edmontonspc](https://twitter.com/edmontonspc)

