A Canadian Perspective: Sexual and Gender Minority Youth in our Community

Generally speaking, Canadian youth and young adults are healthy and highly resilient, and most are successfully making the transition to adulthood. But not everyone is flourishing. ... Sexual [and gender] minority youth are at a much higher risk of experiencing harassment, victimization and physical or sexual violence, both in school and in the community. ... Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ) youth and young adults are also more likely to commit suicide. ... More [research and advocacy] work needs to be done to provide appropriate programs and services.

from The Chief Public Health Officer’s Report on the State of Public Health in Canada 2011: Youth and Young Adults – Life in Transition
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Other University of Alberta Departments, Conferences, and Classes Visited

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Totals

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SOGI Teaching Resource Package

InsideOUT Speakers’ Series

iSMSS Monthly Newsletter

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The Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services: An Overview

Sexual and Gender Minority Youth: A Canadian Perspective

Despite great progress in Canadian law and legislation in recent years that protects individuals against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, culture and society lag behind. In educational, health, and other institutional contexts, many sexual and gender minority youth continue to be marginalized with lives marked by fear, harassment, victimization, physical or sexual abuse, and senses of hopelessness, helplessness, and being alone. All too frequently, the stressors and trauma that these youth experience can result in various mental and physical health problems including eating disorders, cutting, and suicide attempts and completions. In Canadian and international contexts, comparative regional studies as well as longitudinal studies are needed to build research knowledge of assets and educational and community practices that can help sexual and gender minority youth to mediate these difficulties and grow into resilience as happy, healthy, and productive individuals. It is a core goal of the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMSS) to engage in this research as we continue to emerge and network with researchers nationally and internationally.

iSMSS Mission and Vision: Infusing Practice with Research

The Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMSS) in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta is an interdisciplinary hub for groundbreaking research, policy development, education, community outreach, and service provision focused on sexual and gender minorities and their specific issues and concerns. We are particularly concerned with the needs of youth and young adults and with helping them to address issues in the intersection of vulnerability and difference.

Bringing research, teaching, institutional service, and community outreach together under one umbrella uniquely enables the Institute to intersect its studies and services functions in ways that create opportunities for innovative intellectual work and sustained educational and community outreach.

The Institute represents a distinct and holistic model, placing sexual and gender minority inclusive studies and services in a dynamic, interdependent relationship. The research outcomes will not only help youth at large, but guide professional development and education for teachers, social workers, family physicians, psychologists, guidance counselors, and other caring professionals, enabling them to be better resources and advocates for these youth.

In addition, the Institute impacts policy and services for sexual and gender minorities nationally through its work with various agencies and organizations including the Office of Canada’s Chief Public Health Officer, the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, and the Public Health Agency of Canada.
iSMSS Colleagues 2011-12

Dr. André P. Grace – iSMSS Director
Dr. Kristopher Wells – iSMSS Postdoctoral Researcher / Sexual and Gender Diversity Officer, Edmonton Public Schools
Beverly Clarke – Administrative Secretary
Alexis Hillyard – Education Coordinator
Tamara Gartner – Youth Intervention and Outreach Worker
Cory Dawson – Camp fYrefly Coordinator
Lionel Kinkartz – Safe Spaces Initiative Coordinator
Michael Phair – Educational and Community Outreach Facilitator
Melinda McNie – Educational and Community Outreach Facilitator
Lindsay Herriot – Doctoral Student and SSHRC Research Assistant
Carol Allan – Doctoral Student
Fiona Purton – Master’s Student and SSHRC Research Assistant
Lauren Groves – Undergraduate Youth Programming Assistant
Kelcey Pregizer – Roger S. Smith Undergraduate Student Research Award Recipient
Jeremiah Bolstad – Undergraduate Research Assistant and Camp fYrefly Programmer

The Studies Dimension 2011-12

iSMSS research, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, highlights the fact that, with mentors, resources, and supports, many sexual and gender minority (SGM) youth can survive and thrive despite daily stressors, risks, and barriers they encounter in their schools, families, and communities. These youth are “growing into resilience.” By helping them to develop a “resilient mindset,” SGM youth can become self-respecting and self-confident individuals who actively participate in creating change for themselves and others. Although much still needs to be learned about helping SGM youth in this process, current iSMSS research and community outreach work clearly demonstrate that those who set realistic goals and engage in problem solving with people who are supportive and collaborative become self-reliant and happy, even in cases of complete family and societal rejection.

National Recognition for Director

In recognition of the cutting-edge nature of the research conducted at iSMSS, Dr. Grace participates in the following national initiatives:

- Appointment (invited) to the Canadian Teachers’ Federation Panel of Academic Experts (Fall 2010 for three years)
- Expert Advisor (invited) to the Chief Public Health Officer’s Reports Unit on the State of Public Health in Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada (for the 2011 and 2012 annual reports)
Director’s Funded Research Projects

- 2011-2014 – Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Standard Research Grant (operating grant: $113,060); Project Title: Growing into Resilience: Working in the Intersection of Research, Policy, and Practice to Study the Non-linear, Asset-creating Processes of Sexual-Minority and Gender-Variant (SMGV) Youth Living in Power Intersections with Their Other Identities
  
  - 2012 – Roger S. Smith Undergraduate Student Research Award (Mentor), Office of the Vice-President – Research, University of Alberta (operating grant: $5000.00); Project Title: Growing into Resilience: Working in the Intersection of Research, Policy, and Practice to Study the Non-linear, Asset-creating Processes of Sexual-Minority and Gender-Variant (SMGV) Youth Living in Power Intersections with Their Other Identities (Year 1)

- 2012-2017 – CIHR operating grant: $1,977,930 or $399,586 per year for 5 years; Project Title: Reducing Stigma, Promoting Resilience: Population Health Interventions for LGBTQ Youth. Co-applicant with Dr. Elizabeth Saewyc, Principal Investigator, UBC School of Nursing. Dr. Kristopher Wells is also a Co-Investigator.

Dr. Kristopher Wells: iSMSS Postdoctoral Researcher

In 2011 Dr. Wells graduated with a Doctor of Philosophy in Theoretical, Cultural, and International Studies in Education, Department of Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta (Supervisor: Dr. Grace). His dissertation was entitled Sex, sexual, and gender differences in Canadian K-12 schools: Theoretical and empirical perspectives on identity, policy, and practice. For his scholarly excellence, Dr. Wells received the Phi Delta Kappa Outstanding Dissertation Award. The research in his dissertation developed a multi-perspective theoretical framework described as queer criticality to guide the examination of discursive practices, educational policies, and public discourses that undergird heteronormativity and disproportionately impact the personal safety and professional wellbeing of sexual minority and gender variant (SMGV) teachers and students in Canadian K-12 schools.

Publications: Completed and In Progress

Books


Book Chapters


Resource for Educators


Other iSMSS Knowledge Dissemination

- Dr. Grace organized and hosted the inaugural meeting of the Queer Issues in Education and Culture Special Interest Group at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education at Congress 2012. The QSEC meeting involved faculty and graduate students from Canadian and US universities. In addition to the Director, Dr. Kristopher Wells also presented a paper at the first QSEC SIG conference.

- Dr. Grace presented a paper as part of a Special Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences 2012 Equity Panel with invited presenters. The session was co-sponsored by the University of Alberta, the University of Manitoba, and York University, and organized in partnership with QSEC (Queer Studies in Education and Culture), the Canadian Association for the Study of Women and Education, and the Canadian Society for the Study of Education.

- At AERA (American Educational Research Conference) 2012, Dr. Grace presented a paper entitled The politics and pedagogy of sexual and gender minority inclusion studies as part of a symposium sponsored by the Canadian Association for Teacher Education. The symposium was entitled Educating for Social Justice: Canadian Perspectives.

- In total, Dr. Grace presented iSMSS research and discussed iSMSS programming in 1 international, four national, and nine local (Edmonton and Calgary) paper presentations.

- The Director and Dr. Wells did a variety of media events including:


New Queer-themed Course

*Queer Praxis in Adult and Higher Education* — University of Alberta (EDPS 501; Graduate; Fall 2011 – course weight: *3)

The Services Dimension 2011-12

Safe Spaces Initiative

The Safe Spaces Initiative is a University of Alberta student service developed and implemented by the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services. It is built on the premise that our University campuses should be safe places – physically, emotionally, and intellectually – for sexual and gender minority students. This means that all students are recognized, respected, and accommodated across identities and differences in all aspects of University life. Sexual and gender minority students should feel free to express themselves without fear of judgment or criticism, and have their concerns addressed and needs supported by all University employees, policies, procedures, and facilities. This helps constitute a just and empowering University.

Safe Staff Network

- The Staff Network was initiated in the summer of 2011.
• The purpose of the staff network is to provide at least one contact person in each faculty across campus. This staff network 1) provides Safe Spaces with information about any potential points for action on our campuses and 2) serves as a conduit to campus resources for students.

• Staff members who are part of the network attended an initial 2-hour training session. The focus here focus is on training academic and support staff directly tied to faculties. Two large training sessions were held: one in August and one in September, each with 10-15 participants. Several smaller sessions were also held in this timeframe for individuals who could not attend the larger sessions. Topics covered in the sessions included terminology, student-identified campus issues and concerns, and iSMSS and other campus-based resources for students. This was followed by a collaborative conversation with the staff members where we discussed what roles they would play.

• In February 2012, further sessions began. These sessions focused on training staff members working with student services.

• Currently, 33 staff members are part of the network.

• Staff members are identified on the Safe Spaces website (safespaces.ualberta.ca) and also use a “resource person” SSI sticker, which recognizes them as an official safe spaces contact.

Creation of Safe Spaces Visuals

• During summer 2011, drafts were created for visuals – brochures, stickers, bookmarks – and French translations of the text were completed.

• Supportive statements for the brochures were obtained from Dr. Carl Amrhein, the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), and Dr. Frank Robinson, Dean of Students:

  o The University of Alberta campus is a place where we value all people based on the contributions that they make as individuals. It is important that, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, faculty, staff, and students feel safe, welcome and supported at the U of A so that they can reach their fully potential. – Dr. Carl Amrhein

  o Diversity is one of the greatest strengths of our University. Our students come from a multitude of backgrounds and identities, and all students have the right to feel safe and be in positive environments that encourage their successes. The Safe Spaces Initiative plays an important role in educating the campus community on what it means to be inclusive and respectful of our LGBTQ students. – Dr. Frank Robinson

• The U of A’s Marketing and Communications team provided updated, professional visual mock-ups of the drafts. Brochures were initially printed late in the summer. During the
fall, some edits were made to the brochure before a mass printing. Funding applied for and obtained via the Employment Equity Discretionary Fund helped to support the costs of printing materials in French and with braille so the materials would be more inclusive of the larger student population. Printing of brochures, bookmarks, and stickers was completed in late fall. Brochures and stickers were produced in separate French and English versions. The bookmarks were double-sided, with one side in English and one side in French. A smaller amount of brochures and bookmarks were also printed with braille.

English version of the sticker for a member of the staff network:

![Resource Person Sticker](image)

(Training is required to receive this sticker.)

English version of the sticker that can be used by anyone who wants to identify their workspace as supportive for LGBTQ individuals:

![Safe Spaces Sticker](image)

(Training is not required to receive this sticker.)

**Safe Spaces Campus Climate Survey**

The University of Alberta Campus Climate Survey was sent out via email to a random sample of 10,000 undergraduate students and remained open for students to complete from November 17, 2011 to December 9, 2011. Two emails were sent out to remind students in this sample to complete the optional survey. Of these 10,000 students, 2,372 began the survey and 2,046 completed the survey. Only those students who completed the survey are included in the findings.

Any undergraduate could respond to the survey. In terms of sexual and gender minorities, and realizing the limitations of naming and categorizing, the group of “sexual minority respondents” consisted of respondents who identified as asexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, pansexual, queer, questioning, or two-spirited. “Gender minority respondents” consisted of respondents who selected at least one of female-to-male, gender-queer, male-to-female, questioning, transgender,
transsexual, or two-spirited. In terms of other demographic data, respondents were also asked to identify their faculty, year of study, age, size of home community, whether they are international students, and the minority categories to which they identify as belonging. The survey collected data on campus atmosphere, homophobia and transphobia on campus, degree of comfort expressing sexual orientation and gender identity to University staff members, and residence life.

A comprehensive document with a complete analysis has been written. It is currently being edited and will be published during the 2012-13 academic year.

**Safe Spaces Presentations and Other Projects**

- The *Coming Out Monologues* was a spring 2012 event initially planned with the Safe Spaces Coordinator and members of the Faculty of Nursing. Later, members from the Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Education also joined the planning group.
  - Financial support was obtained via the Employment Equity Discretionary Fund and the U of A Conference Fund.
  - The *Coming Out Monologues* production ran for two successful evenings: May 17 and 18. The theatrical portion was one hour long, after which there were two speakers on each night who helped to facilitate a discussion with the audience. Speakers came from various locations to speak (Dalhousie University, Calgary, Edmonton).

- Various consultations were provided to groups, as requested throughout the year. Topics included:
  - Inclusivity in course materials;
  - Discussion re: an LGBTQ cohort in residence;
  - Collaboration with the sexual and gender minority undergraduate student groups OUTreach (greater campus) and Siderite (residence) for events;
  - Discussion with the Students’ Union about how SU will help to support LGBTQ students in the future; and
  - Inclusivity session for students regarding homophobia.

- Other presentations and events in which iSMSS/SSI participated:
  - Two Parent Orientation sessions, which were held during summer 2011 to discuss Safe Spaces with the parents of new students;
  - September 6, 7, and 8 events for the Week of Welcome, an orientation week for the new academic year;
  - The Staff Orientation Information Marketplace in both the Fall and Winter semesters;
  - Sustainability Fair (October 2011);
  - Spirit Week (January 2012); and
  - U of A Sex Fest (February 2012).
Presentations about the Safe Spaces program were also provided to these groups: InfoLink, Centre for Student Development (CSD), U of A staff (professional development seminar), the Health and Wellness Team, and OUTreach in the Fall 2011 semester.

• Presentation about Safe Spaces to student services staff (January 2012).

• Work with IntD 410 class as a community partner, supporting students in creating their primary projects for the course (Winter 2012 Semester).

• Presentation for Grant MacEwan Str8 Against H8 event (February 2012).

• Presentation at the Student Advisor’s Conference about the climate on campus for LGBTQ students (March 2012).

• Being Out in the Workplace Career Forum: Through CAPS, and with funding via the Employment Equity Discretionary Fund, a career panel was held in which professionals talked about being out in the workplace.

Communications

• During summer 2011, a Safe Spaces Facebook page and Safe Spaces Twitter account were created. The Twitter account is also commonly used to promote iSMSS-related events and news beyond Safe Spaces.

• A Safe Spaces listserv was also created during summer 2011. The purpose of this listserv is to distribute information regarding Safe Spaces, which has been accomplished by the monthly newsletter being sent to subscribers of this listserv.

• Throughout the year, the iSMSS Facebook page and iSMSS listserv were commonly used to promote iSMSS-related news and events.

• Several Safe Spaces webpages were created to make information and documents available to students. It can be accessed at http://safespaces.ualberta.ca.

Camp fYrefly 2011

The Institute for Sexual Minorities and Services operates an annual summer youth leadership program called Camp fYrefly (www.CampfYrefly.ca), which is a university-community educational outreach project that focuses on the needs of sexual and gender minority youth. Camp fYrefly has evolved into a 4-day volunteer-based, residential style summer leadership retreat for these youth who engage in research-informed activities that 1) promote individual development and socialization, 2) help youth grow into resilience and, as they are able, develop leadership skills such that these youth can become change agents in their communities. Over 600
youth have attended Camp fYrefly since its inception. Annual camps are held at sites in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

The 8th Camp fYrefly Alberta was held in Edmonton in July 2011. The 3rd Camp fYrefly Saskatchewan was held in Saskatoon in August 2011. In sum about ninety youth attended these two camps. In addition to opportunities to attend an eclectic array of workshops on individual development, socialization, comprehensive health, leadership, and growing into resilience, campers also enjoyed the spirited arts-informed queer pedagogy that is at the heart of our artist in residence program.

Artist-in-Residence

Every year, as part of the Artist-in-Residence Program, Camp fYrefly hosts emerging and established contemporary artists from across Canada who have demonstrated a commitment to innovation, exploration, community outreach, and the public understanding of sex, sexual, and gender differences. During summer 2011, Spencer Harrison was artist in residence at both Camp fyrefly Alberta in Edmonton and Camp fYrefly Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. Spencer’s contribution was unique and significant, conveying his passion and commitment to helping sexual and gender minority youth make their lives better now. When he was not conducting workshops, Spencer could be found engaging campers in animated conversations. He was always ready to encourage campers and nurture their deeper critical thinking through thoughtful questioning. The workshops Spencer led were tied together using the common theme of authentic engagement. He raised key questions underlying this theme: What do you want your legacy to be? What stories do you want to leave behind? Through various artistic activities combined with small and large group discussions, Spencer led campers through a journey where participants were encouraged to be self-reflective and authentically engaged as they shared their stories with those around them. Spencer’s workshops facilitated the strengthening of friendships and a sense of belonging among camp participants. He modeled what he was teaching through the keen interest he showed in others and the genuine appreciation he demonstrated for the individual stories and experiences shared. Spencer’s parting words were ones of hope as he challenged everyone to be true to oneself and to be courageous on personal life journeys. Spencer encouraged one and all to take a bow and loudly say, “Ta Dah!”

Youth Participant Demographics: Edmonton Campers

Participating in Camp fYrefly is a powerful and unique experience, which focuses on developing leadership qualities through activities that challenge youth to explore their identity, build resilience, and enhance self- and social-esteem. Camp fYrefly would like each youth participant to be able to return home with a more “resilient mindset” and a support network of positive friendships, trusted adult mentors, and an empowered sense of self.
In 2011, 100 youth applied to attend Camp fYrefly Alberta – roughly double the number we are currently able to accommodate. Of the applications received, nearly 40 youth indicated they wanted to take on a leadership role at camp by applying to be youth leaders. While the majority of applications came from the Edmonton area, there was significant interest in the Camp from youth across Canada. We received over 15 applications from youth living in Calgary as well as applications from British Columbia and Ontario.

Social media has been a vital way to communicate information about the Camp to potential youth campers. The Camp fYrefly Facebook page has seen an increase in traffic over the past year and currently has over 950 “likes,” up 150 since July 2011, and our posts reach well over 2,000 viewers. While the majority of our Facebook followers are from the Edmonton area, we have followers from regions across Canada and around the world. Additionally, we distribute Camp fYrefly postcards to all schools in Alberta with in-kind support and mailing assistance from the Alberta Teachers’ Association.

**Programming at Camp fYrefly Alberta**

All of our camp programming is guided by input from youth and facilitated by trained educators and youth workers in collaboration with a team of artists, dramatists, educators, and community and youth leaders. The camp, guided by an arts-based educational philosophy, is jam-packed with dance, drama, music, writing, visual art, empowerment and reflection exercises, anti-oppression work, personal growth opportunities, healthy socialization, and in-depth learning activities about specific youth topics and social issues. At Camp fYrefly 2011, a wide range of community members presented workshops including:

- “Re-Imagining Home” – Spencer Harrison, Artist-in-Residence
- “Telling Our Stories: Leaving Behind our History” – Spencer Harrison, Artist-in-Residence
- “This is Me: At Least This is How I Remember It” – Spencer Harrison, Artist-in-Residence
- “Building your Activist Toolbox” – Murray Billett, former Police Commissioner
- “How to Handle Your Money” – Liz Bron, ATB Financial
- “Media Awareness: Heteronormativity in Advertising” – Wade Kelly, U of A
- “What is a Hate Crime?” – Edmonton Police Service Hate Crimes Unit
- “Writing Outside the Lines” – Gail Sobat, local author
- “Advocacy 101” – Office of the Child and Youth Advocate
- “Assertive Spiritual Self Defense” – Gary Simpson, McDougall United Church
- “Cool Minds: Coping with Stress” – Christina Larson
- “Healthy Relationships and Sexual Health” – Dr. Brian Parker and David Rust, Region 6
- “I am no Demographic: I am me” – Talia Morrissey
- “Influence and Individuality: Forms of Cultural Exclusion” – Patrick Dunn
- “Intersectionality in Identity” – Melissa Casey, U of A
- “Intro to Dance Composition: Finding Meaning in Movement” – Ainsley Hillyard
- “Meteorology 101: A Tour of Weather and Climate” – Claude Labine

“With some of the workshops... I realized I don't have to choose an identity. I am comfortable with my feelings and I love myself.”

- Youth participant, 2011
“Music for Social Change” – Heather Dyck
“Persecution of Gays and the Hidden Holocaust” – John Braga
“The Forgotten T: Talking About the Trans Spectrum” – Dan Tallack, U of A
“Youth and Drugs: What to Know and Where to go” – Youth Community Services
“Stand Up & Speak Out: Playing with Improv” – Charles Bidwell, St. Stephen’s College
“Self Defense” – Carol McKinlay and Bobby Talibi

In addition to the workshops, we were fortunate to be able to take the campers on two off-site field trips to further explore sexual and gender minority issues. With transportation donated by the Edmonton Transit System, campers were able to visit the Art Gallery of Alberta, which was hosting an Andy Warhol exhibit. As well, the campers visited Edmonton’s lively Whyte Avenue to view the documentary Stonewall Uprising, the history of gay liberation, at the Princess Theatre.

Support for Camp fYrefly

Camp fYrefly simply would not exist without the support of many generous individuals, community organizations, churches, businesses, and corporations from across North America. Annual camp operating costs are in excess of $50,000. We raise these funds from a variety of sources, which include fundraisers, community partnerships, and grants.

Camp fYrefly receives support – financial and/or in-kind – from the University of Alberta, University of Regina, Canadian Teachers’ Federation, Alberta Teachers’ Association, Government of Alberta, City of Edmonton, Edmonton Police Service, Edmonton Public Teachers’ Local, Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities, Alberta’s Promise, TELUS, ATB Financial, and PFLAG Canada. In addition to these organizations, Camp fYrefly is also supported by hundreds of donors from across Canada.

Service Fund Raising (2011-2012) for Camp fYrefly, Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (Breakdown of Fundraising Tallies - Total: $118,995.00):

- Camp fYrefly Winter Gala: $37,000.00
- Memorial Estate Donation: $20,000.00
- Mayor's Pride Brunch for Camp fYrefly: $4,100.00
- Individual Donations: $40,154.00
- Imperial Sovereign Court of the Wild Rose: $1,000.00
- Edmonton Public Teachers' Charitable Trust Fund Local #37: $6,000.00
- Affirm United Church: $2,000.00
- Alberta Treasury Branch Financial: $5,000.00
- Health Services Association: $1,000.00
- Rotary Club - Urban Spirits: $1,000.00
- Southminster Steinhauer United Church: $1,200.00
- Unitarian Church of Edmonton: $191.00
- Womonspace: $350.00
Events Throughout the Year

While Camp fYrefly only takes place for 4 days during the summer, iSMSS staff and volunteers host a variety of events throughout the year to promote Camp fYrefly and raise funds.

Edmonton Pride Festival

As part of Edmonton’s 2011 Pride Festival, iSMSS staff, volunteers and youth marched in the annual Pride Parade. The 2011 Parade focused on youth and the Camp fYrefly float had the honor of following the parade’s grand marshals – youth from various Edmonton schools’ gay-straight alliances. With the generous support of private donors, we were able to debut our giant inflatable fYrefly mascot in the 2011 Parade, which made appearances at various Camp fYrefly events throughout the 2011-12 year. We also collaborated with Edmonton Public Schools and the Edmonton Public Library to share a joint resource and information tent in Churchill Square.

6th Annual Mayor’s Pride Brunch in Support of Camp fYrefly

This event was held at the end of the Edmonton Pride Festival in June 2011 and was completely sold out, with 300 people in attendance including Dr. Fern Snart, Dean of Education, and Dr. Randy Wimmer, the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Teacher Education. Mayor Stephen Mandel hosted the brunch and various dignitaries were in attendance including Minister Thomas Lukaszuks, MLA Laurie Blakeman, and City of Edmonton Councillors Don Iveson, Karen Liebovici, Amarjeet Sohi, and Ben Henderson. Edmonton Public School Board Chair Dave Colburn, Vice-Chair Sarah Hoffman, Trustee Michael Janz, and members of the Edmonton Police Service were also among guests. This event raised more than $4,000 for Camp fYrefly programming.

7th Annual Camp fYrefly Wine & Silent Auction Gala

In November 2011, the planning for this March 2012 event began. With a planning committee consisting of Dr. Kristopher Wells, Beverly Clarke, Lionel Kinkartz, Cory Dawson, and Neil Salsbury (Canaccord Wealth Management), a highly successful Wine & Silent Auction Gala fundraiser was held. With the acquisition of a new venue and sponsor, The Matrix Hotel in downtown Edmonton, we were able to increase our capacity to 200 guests. This increased capacity allowed us to sell almost 40 more tickets this year, and resulted in a net profit increase of almost $6,000.

The increase in capacity alone wasn’t the only reason the event was more successful. deVine Wines, who have been with us since the beginning, organized and served the flight of wines and assisted with the silent and live auctions. As well, Chef Nathin Bye of Wildflower Grill donated his services, the services of his team, and all the food for the evening. Chef Bye was able to procure a wide selection of seafood to fit with the Manhattan theme of the evening. He connected us with Wanda Rowe (of Urban Affairs) who donated her time and supplies to decorate the venue and Cory Christopher who donated flowers and decorations.
Updated Camp fYrefly Website

The original website, created in 2006, was updated this past year. It complements the iSMSS websites (www.ismss.ualberta.ca). As we moved forward with this project, the goal has been to make the website more user friendly. The previous website consisted of only a handful of pages that contained an array of unsorted information that was read by scrolling through the entire page. Thus we created a new website that was easier to navigate, and succinct but informative. The new website has been operating since fall 2011, featuring more than a dozen links in the navigation panel that contains numerous sub-menus, all of which provide visitors with an easy to navigate Camp fYrefly website that can be viewed at www.CampfYrefly.ca.

The Youth Intervention and Outreach Worker Program

The Youth Intervention and Outreach Worker (YIOW) program (Phase 1) was in operation from December 2008 through to December 2011. The following statistics reflect the third and final year of operation of Phase 1:

- Offered 64 registered group events for youth, with 724 participants in total.
- Provided 38 face-to-face contacts including repeats with a total of 26 participants.
- Provided information referrals to 411 participants.
- Provided referral service to 70 participants.
- Attended 2 community events reaching 535 participants.
- Provided 18 workshops/presentations to 332 professionals.

The Family Resilience Project

The Institute for Sexual Minority Studies & Services moved into Phase II of the YIOW program in Winter 2012. Phase 2 is called The Family Resilience Project. It focuses on providing evidence-informed professional supports for sexual and gender minority (LGBTQ) children, youth (under 25 years old), families, and community agencies in the Edmonton region.

In Phase II the following supports and services are offered:

**Individual and Family Counselling**

Short-term, solution-focused

---

**Note from a VPM (Very Proud Mom) to the Youth Intervention and Outreach Worker**

I just wanted to send a quick thank you for all of your support this weekend ... and for all your support in general.

You have been such an amazing gift to our daughter K and both my husband and me. I know you helped advocate for her to attend Camp fYrefly and I don’t think THANK YOU even begins to say how much we appreciate you doing that for her!

Camp Firefly has truly made a difference in not only K’s life but ours as well. Please say thank you to everyone who was part of making camp such an amazing event.

Since we saw you on Monday (after camp and still sad) K has been so incredibly happy and is celebrating who she is. She is not scared to be herself and is no longer mad at both of us for sending her to camp. I honestly didn’t believe that she would come back a different kid but she most certainly has. She even told another friend of ours that she went to camp for sexual minorities and that she identifies as Lesbian. She even shared the story of how one of the guys is fab at walking in high heels. I loved seeing her speaking in such a “this is not a big deal way” I almost fell of my chair but kept it together. She then said, “I found a place where I fit in where I don’t feel different.” Anyways I could keep going on and on but I won’t. I am so happy for K and after coming from a place of wanting to end her life, she now is celebrating who she is. We have our daughter back... and I am so thankful for that.

I know things won’t be perfect but I finally feel like all will be well.
counselling is provided for sexual and gender minority children, youth, and their constructions of “family.” Referrals are accepted from school social workers, counsellors, family therapists, physicians, teachers, caseworkers, and parents as well as self-referrals from youth.

**PFLAG Support Group**

This group runs the last Wednesday of each month at the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services. This group is designed to support parents, guardians, caregivers, friends, and loved ones in the lives of sexual and gender minority youth.

**Trans and Gender Questioning Youth Support Group**

This group runs the last Tuesday of the month at the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies & Services. This group is designed to support trans and gender questioning youth under 25 years old.

**Professional Development**

iSMSS provides evidence-informed presentations and case consultations primarily for Region 6 agencies with Alberta Children and Youth Services to help staff build professional capacity to support the comprehensive health (including physical, sexual, and mental health), individual development, safety, and socialization needs of sexual and gender minority youth in their caseload.

**Key Achievements of the Family Resilience Project (Statistics: January 1, 2012 – June 30, 2012)**

**Outputs**

- Active clients at present = 21
- Closed Files = 9
- Average length of service = 2.25 months
- Average # of sessions = 7.11
- Number of Volunteers = 3 (15 hours in total)
- Average # of participants for group = 5.5
- Total # of hours in session since December 2011 = 255.25

**Referrals/Intakes in total**

- Referrals/intakes/consultation phone calls have come from 30+ different professionals from the following individuals and organizations:
  - Gender Identity Clinic
  - Edmonton Public Schools
  - Yellowhead Youth Centre
  - AHS Youth Addiction Youth Services
  - St. Albert Therapist
  - AHS – Adolescent Mental Health Therapist
o PFLAG inquiries
o Caseworkers – Region 6
o The Family Centre – Agency Staff
o CASA Organization
o The Family Centre – Therapist
o Boys and Girls Club
o Big Brothers and Sisters Edmonton
o Mental Health Therapist – AHS
o School Guidance Counselors
o Night Wind Treatment Centre – Clinical Coordinator
o Office of the Child and Youth Advocate
o Numerous self referrals – consultations – resource linking
o University of Alberta

Trans & Gender Questioning Peer-to-Peer Led Group Attendance

- April 24, 2012 = 5
- May 29, 2012 = 5
- June 26, 2012 = 1
- July 24, 2012 = 7

PFLAG Group Attendance

- April 25, 2012 = 7
- May 30, 2012 = 5
- June 27, 2012 = 7
- July 25, 2012 = 7

Community and Region 6 Presentations

Community

- The Family Centre
  o Family Intervention Program – December 8, 2011
  o Success Coaches Program – January 18, 2012
- Yellowhead Youth Centre – February 21, 2012
- CASA Child, Adolescent, and Family Mental Health – Sherwood Park – July 9, 2012

Region 6 (presentations are 2 hours in length)

- Southwest/Leduc Neighborhood Centre – May 1, 2012
- East Neighborhood Centre – May 23, 2012
- Aboriginal Initiatives Office – June 27, 2012
- West Central Office – July 4, 2012
Project Trends

- Trans-identified/gender minority clients comprise a higher caseload than what was originally expected.

- Main presenting concerns for youth: anxiety, bullying, depression, and lack of family acceptance.

- The power of group is evident: decreases isolation and participants can relate to one another.

- There has been an increase in demand for professional development workshops on sexual and gender identity issues from professionals and service providers in the Edmonton and surrounding area.

YIOW Funding (Youth Intervention and Outreach Worker Program Phase II)

- Edmonton Community Foundation: $40,000
- The City of Edmonton - Community Services, Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) Programs: $28,197
- United Way: $25,000

Educational Outreach Programming

During the 2011 – 2012 academic year, iSMSS has maintained its strong commitment to educational outreach in the Faculty of Education and other faculties and professional bodies in the University of Alberta as well as in schools and community groups. Each education session that iSMSS provides is individualized to address a) specific course objectives, b) unique requests from specific instructors/teachers, c) the knowledge base of the students, or d) the unique professional locations and needs of pre-professional students. The following list represents some of the key objectives of our educational outreach programs:

- Understand LGBTQ terminology;

- Understand our rights and responsibilities as teachers/educators with regard to LGBTQ inclusion in relation to such topics as policymaking and the law, addressing homo/bi/transphobic language and bullying, dealing with difficult parents, family diversity, and transgender youth in sports;

- Highlight strategies for creating inclusive educational spaces for sexual and gender minority students;

- Identify risks and resilience factors surrounding issues of homo/bi/transphobic bullying;

- Be more mindful of assumptions and stereotypes that arise in sociocultural interactions in schools, healthcare facilities, and other institutional contexts;
• Explore societal structures such as heterosexism, homo/bi/transphobia;

• Understand the lived and learned realities of sexual and gender minority (LGBTQ) youth, with special attention given to LGBTQ youth with disabilities;

• Consider issues of access to healthcare and the overall health implications for LGBTQ individuals;

• Identify useful resources across campus, in professional contexts, and in the wider community; and

• Help teachers and students identify ways they can be allies in addressing sexual and gender minority issues in their schools.

Faculty of Education Classes Visited

• EDU 250: Introduction to the Teaching Profession
• EDPS 310: Classroom Management
• EDPS 410: Ethics and Law in Teaching
• EDPS 360: Society and Education
• EDPS 521: Adult Learning and Development
• EDPY 301: Inclusive Education
• EDPY 402: Child Development for Educators
• EDPY 404: Adolescent Development
• EDPY 456: Consultation and Collaboration in Special Education
• EDSE 447/451: Physical Education
• EDEL 355: Early Childhood Program Environments
• EDEL 409: Teaching Literature in Elementary Schools
• EDEL 457/458: Early Childhood – Theory and Practice

Other University of Alberta Departments, Conferences, and Classes Visited

• Status of Queer Conference, Sherwood Park
• Middle Years Program housed in Red Deer College
• Faculty of Medical and Dentistry: students and student advisors
• Human Ecology
• Sociology

Other Academic, Government, and Community Institutions Visited

• Grant MacEwan University: Social Work and Health Education
• Chimo’s TSIL Program
• City of Edmonton, Fleet Services
• Edmonton Public School Board
Junior High and High School Sessions Conducted in the Edmonton Area

- Amiskwaciy Academy: Talking Circle on LGBTQ inclusiveness
- Junior High Leadership Conference at M. E. Lazerte High School
- Strathcona High School [fYrefly in Schools]
- W. P. Wagner High School [fYrefly in Schools]
- Edith Rogers Junior High School [fYrefly in Schools]
- Beaumont Composite High School [fYrefly in Schools]
- Old Scona Academic High School [fYrefly in Schools]
- McNally High School [fYrefly in Schools]

**Totals**

Total number of Educational Outreach sessions delivered: 63
Total number of Educational Outreach session participants: 2,544

**fYrefly in Schools**

fYrefly in Schools is an educational initiative developed to help reduce discrimination against sexual and gender minority youth, increase awareness of the impacts of homo/bi/transphobia, build capacity for allied behavior, and create safe and inclusive school environments for all students. Geared towards junior high and high school students, fYrefly in Schools workshops are facilitated by an experienced educator and a peer education team. Sessions are 40 – 80 minutes in length and delivered to schools on a request basis.

Through a series of student-centered activities, fYrefly in Schools workshops are designed to increase students’ understanding of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) related terminology, engage with common assumptions and stereotypes, and address some of the unique safety, health, and educational challenges that sexual and gender minorities face in schools. Specifically, these sessions provide participants with a safe learning environment to reflect upon the impacts of homophobic and transphobic language and bullying. Students are encouraged to be proactive and construct positive and productive ways to become allies and reduce discrimination and harassment of sexual and gender minority youth as well as those perceived to be LGBTQ by their peers.

A key component of all fYrefly in Schools presentations is providing students with the opportunity to hear firsthand from a panel of

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<th>What students are learning:</th>
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<td>&quot;It doesn't matter if you are gay or lesbian just be yourself.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;That no matter who you are and what makes you ‘you’ there should not be any kind of inequality between different people.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;Assumptions are dangerous, you should give a person an opportunity to introduce themselves.&quot;</td>
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<th>How they can use what they have learned in their lives:</th>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Don't use words like “gay” to describe something negative.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Watch what I say and stand up when I hear homophobic comments.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I know I can support the LGBTQ [community] and become an ally.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;To come out and not care what people think.&quot;</td>
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peers who are sexual or gender minorities, self-identified allies who support sexual and gender minorities, and/or youth that have a family member who identifies as non-heterosexual. Along with providing a safe place for students to ask age-appropriate questions, the program’s activities enable students to learn from their peers about 1) the coming out experience and processes of self and familial acceptance; 2) consequences of homo/bi/transphobic bullying and guidelines to promote safety and wellbeing; and 3) positive aspects about “being who you are” in the world and the importance of recognizing diversity and difference as fundamental aspects of our society.

On February 4, 2012, iSMSS hosted a very successful 5-hour workshop for 49 adults and youth from the Edmonton area and surrounding districts, including Beaumont and Black Gold. Along with providing a safe space for participants to experience and engage with the fYrefly in Schools module, organizers facilitated a panel discussion featuring 4 community professionals. The purpose of this full-day workshop was to familiarize, empower, and equip individuals with the tools needed to help deliver the fYrefly in Schools sessions in Edmonton and the surrounding area and to build capacity for the fYrefly in Schools peer education team.

**Totals**

Total number of fYrefly in Schools sessions delivered: 10
Total number of fYrefly in Schools session participants: 255

**Outreach to Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs): Rainbow Workshop Series**

A common question from GSA members and leaders has been: “We have a GSA… Now what do we do?” With this in mind, three capacity-building Rainbow Workshops were developed to support already-established GSAs in the Edmonton area so the student groups could clarify their vision as a club (purple/spirit), make concrete plans to enact their vision (blue/community), and heal conflicts within the group itself (orange/healing). Drawing from the GSA Advisor Handbook (2011), the capacity-building workshop series aimed to reassure participants that the structure, goals, and activities of a GSA are context-dependent, so it is important to design a model that works best for a particular GSA.

The workshops were advertised through GSA network listservs and at the monthly GSA Roundtables. Interested youth used email to contact Dr. Kris Wells who then forwarded requests to Lindsay Herriot for scheduling. Capacity-building Rainbow Workshops were delivered between 9 March 2012 and 10 April 2012. In total ten workshops were provided to four schools (Harry Ainlay, Beaumont Composite, Strathcona, and Ross Sheppard), with a mean number of 9.3 participants per workshop. The total number of youth who participated in the capacity-building Rainbow Workshop series was 39.

<table>
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<th>What students are learning:</th>
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<td>“It provided a concrete plan to follow that solidifies the existence of the GSA and will hopefully help to realize our goals.”</td>
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<td>“It can help us to be way more open minded especially to the feelings of others.”</td>
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<td>“It educated us on how we could educate others.”</td>
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<td>“Good, comfortable way to talk about infighting within the community. We get along better and know how.”</td>
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<td>“Very informative! Especially new terms.”</td>
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Arts-based Rainbow Workshops were also offered to complement the capacity-building workshops. These workshops aimed to create community whereby all students, regardless of previous artistic experience, could come together to create, reflect, and express their individuality in a safe and supportive environment. While each session was structured by a specific theme (for example, nature) and technique (for example, print making), there was flexibility in the art-making process. In total five workshops were delivered to three schools (Beaumont Composite, Strathcona, and Ross Sheppard), with an average of 10 participants attending each workshop. The total number of youth who participated in the arts-based workshops was 30.

**SOGI Teaching Resource Package**

With a grant from the Ministry of Education, Government of Alberta, iSMSS designed the *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Curricular Resource for the Alberta Program of Studies* in order to support the Alberta Program of Studies and the creation of welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environments that respect diversity, promote inclusion, and foster a sense of belonging for all students. Jointly published by Edmonton Public Schools and the Edmonton Public Library, and entitled *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: Recommended Fiction and Nonfiction Resources for K-12 Schools*, this resource package consists of critically reviewed books and resources. All have been individually linked to the Alberta Program of Studies in multiple, user-friendly ways. These books and resources meet Alberta Education’s criteria of presenting diverse points of view and meet the programming and curricular needs of all students by recognizing diversity and promoting respect in the K-12 program of studies and Alberta’s *Human Rights Act*. Relevant resources have also been linked to Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week: an educational initiative designed to promote awareness and understanding of bullying and its consequences in the school community. Phase 1 (K-6 resources) of this project is complete, and we are currently working on phase 2 (7-12 resources). Links to this resource will be available on our iSMSS website.

**InsideOUT Speakers’ Series**

The Institute also plays a vital role in campus knowledge mobilization through ventures such as our InsideOUT Speakers’ Series. We host monthly seminars during the academic year that focus on sexual and gender minority research in education and culture. These seminars are designed as an interdisciplinary engagement for academics, postdoctoral fellows, and graduate students. Undergraduates and members of the larger community are also invited to attend. In total 234 people attended the 2011-12 Inside/OUT speakers’ series program on campus. Sessions included:

- **September 15th** – *Chance to Dance for You: True Confessions of the Author*
  Gail Sidonie Sobat, Author

- **October 11th** – *“Make It Better”: Moving from Hostile Climates to LGBTQ-Inclusive Schools from Coast-to-Coast-to-Coast*
  Dr. Catherine Taylor, University of Winnipeg
Dr. Taylor was the featured speaker for the 2011-12 Inside/OUT Speakers’ Series. The Institute also facilitated Dr. Taylor’s invited presentations to the Edmonton Public School Board and the Government of Alberta. More than 100 people participated in these events during Dr. Taylor’s visit.

- November 17th – The presence of an absence: Youth and Bill 44
  Lindsay Herriot, Doctoral Student, Department of Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta

- December 1 – Queer Role Models in Recent Children’s Picture Books
  Lindy Pratch, Library Assistant, Edmonton Public Library

- January 19 – The MadHaus of Lady Gaga: Hysteria and Commodity Feminism in “Bad Romance” and “Telephone”
  Derritt Mason, Doctoral Student, Department of English & Film Studies, University of Alberta

- February 16 – Beyond Inclusion: Anti-Racism in Queer Politics in Alberta
  Dr. Suzanne Lenon, Assistant Professor, Department of Women & Gender Studies, University of Lethbridge

- March 15 – Little Trannies’ Little Mermaid: A Shape-Shifting Tale
  Dr. Natasha Hurley, Assistant Professor, Department of English & Film Studies, University of Alberta

- April 5 – From Intersex to Disorders of Sex Development: Recent Developments in Intersex Activism
  Catherine Clune-Taylor, Doctoral Student, Department of Philosophy, University of Alberta

**iSMSS Monthly Newsletter**

- iSMSS started a new monthly newsletter in November 2011. Each detailed newsletter highlights activities of key iSMSS programs. It also covers LGBTQ community news and events that may interest readers.

- During the 2011-12 academic years the Director wrote monthly editorials for the iSMSS Newsletter. Editorials included sexual and gender minority themed perspectives with titles including "Reducing Stigma, Promoting Resilience in the Lives of Sexual and Gender Minority Youth" and "Gay Rights as Human and Civil Rights in Canada: A Review and a Reflection."

- The readership consists of subscribers to the iSMSS listserv, the fYrefly listserv, and the Safe Spaces listserv, and other iSMSS supporters and donors.
• The number of people that the newsletter is sent to each month has varied between a 911 and 973. Correspondingly, the readership rate for the newsletter has varied between 26.09% and 30.63%.

• Common sections in the newsletter include:

  o Message from the Director of iSMSS
  o Family Resilience Project
  o Camp fYrefly
  o Safe Spaces
  o Educational Outreach
  o Get to Know iSMSS’s Staff
  o Community News and Events

• There are additional pieces included in the newsletter that vary on a month-by-month basis. A newsletter archive can be found at: http://www.industrymailout.com/Industry/Archives.aspx?m=27127&qz=4037d854

Our Websites

For further information, please visit our websites:

Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMSS)
www.ismss.ualberta.ca

Camp fYrefly
www.fyrefly.ualberta.ca