iSMSS-EDPY Annual Report
Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMSS) – Department of Educational Psychology (EDPY)

2013 – 2014

Prepared by

Dr. André P. Grace
Canada Research Chair in Sexual and Gender Minority Studies
Professor, Department of Educational Psychology
Director, iSMSS-EDPY

Institute Website: [www.iSMSS.ualberta.ca](http://www.iSMSS.ualberta.ca)
Camp fYrefly Saskatchewan Website: [www.usask.ca/education/fyrefly/index.htm](http://www.usask.ca/education/fyrefly/index.htm)
# Table of Contents

The Mission and Vision of iSMSS ........................................ 3

The Studies Dimension 2013-2014 ..................................... 4
  - Canada Research Chair: Sexual and Gender Minority Studies (Tier 1) 4
  - Major Research Grants ............................................ 5
  - Graduate and Undergraduate Research Assistantships ............... 6
  - Scholarly Publications and Presentations .......................... 6
  - Professional Resources, Community Presentations, and Media .... 7
  - Interviews Emanating from iSMSS Research ........................ 7
  - Positions Held/Invitations in Academic, Consultative, and Community Contexts ......... 8
  - Queer Studies in Education and Culture SIG at CSSE ................. 9
  - Teaching: SGM-Inclusive Course Development in the Faculty of Education .......... 9

The Services Dimension 2013-2014 .................................. 9
  - Service Grant for Community and Educational Outreach ............. 9
  - The Comprehensive Health Education Workers’ Program ............... 9
  - Camp fYrefly – Saskatchewan 2013 .................................. 10

iSMSS Endowment Campaign Update ................................ 11
The Mission and Vision of iSMSS

Advocating for Sexual and Gender Minority (SGM) Youth: Using Research to Inform Programming and Services

The Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMSS), which is housed in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, was established in 2008 after nearly a decade of continuous work using research to advocate for sexual and gender minorities, especially vulnerable youth. iSMSS represents a unique and holistic Canadian university – community action model, placing inclusive studies and services focused on sexual and gender minorities in a dynamic, interdependent relationship. At iSMSS (http://www.ismss.ualberta.ca), research and advocacy via programming and services are inextricably linked. We work with the spectrum of sexual and gender minority (SGM) youth—or LGBTTIQQ2SA youth, with the acronym including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex, questioning, queer, two-spirit and allied youth—as we engage them in intervention and prevention programming that is life-wide, focusing on educational outreach, individual development, socialization, and comprehensive health. Our goal is to enable SGM youth to be happy, healthy, and hopeful members of the iSMSS 3H Club as we focus on their physical, mental, sexual, and social health as well as their safety in family, in-care, street, school, and community contexts. In my work in iSMSS-EDPY I emphasize the process of *growing into resilience*, which is about helping youth to (i) build assets (significant adult, institutional, and community supports) and (ii) show signs of thriving (positive outcomes built around recognition, respect, and accommodation of SGM youth). iSMSS-EDPY works to fulfill this mandate through our research on how SGM youth grow into resilience and through the Comprehensive Health Education Workers’ (CHEW) program and Camp fyrefly, with particular responsibility for the camp in Saskatchewan. For other dimensions of iSMSS studies and services work, please see the complementary report developed by Dr. Kristopher Wells, iSMSS in the Department of Educational Policy Studies.

Bringing research, institutional and community service work, and educational and community programming together under one umbrella enables iSMSS to intersect its studies and services functions in ways that create opportunities for university students (graduate and undergraduate) to engage in innovative intellectual work and sustained community outreach. The Institute’s modus operandi is to enhance possibilities for groundbreaking research, policy development, educational and cultural programming, service provision, and adequate resource allocation that meet the multiple needs of sexual and gender minorities so all have space and place in education, healthcare, and other institutional and living contexts.

iSMSS research informs the Institute’s programming in school- and community-based contexts. Our research and advocacy indicate that, with mentors, resources, and supports, many SGM youth can survive and thrive despite the daily stressors, risks, and barriers they encounter in their schools, families, healthcare, other institutional contexts, and communities. These youth are growing into resilience. We see them as at promise.
The Studies Dimension 2013-14

Through diverse iSMSS initiatives, we bring research to bear on deficiencies and absences in policymaking and institutional and caring professional practices in order to advance SGM inclusivity and equity in keeping with Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that provides protections to all citizens on grounds of individual differences. My research program in iSMSS-EDPY is built to incorporate studies of inclusive lifelong learning; SGM-focused social and cultural theorizing; sexual and gender minorities and our issues concerned with recognition, respect, access, and accommodation in institutional and community contexts; resilience as a non-linear, asset-creating process; policymaking and its implementation in caring practices in institutional and community contexts; and the preparatory and continuing education of caring professionals, including teachers, school administrators, school counsellors, and school psychologists.

As we work to advance research in these areas, the iSMSS research program is an ideal fit with the theme area transforming research in education, which is acknowledged as the Faculty of Education’s recognized research strength in the University of Alberta’s Strategic Research Plan. In keeping with the educational imperative to be there for every student, and the healthcare imperative to do no harm, the iSMSS-EDPY research program aims to transform research by opening up possibilities for collaborative, transdisciplinary research on sexual and gender minorities, especially vulnerable children and youth, with the goals of improving social, cultural, and comprehensive health education for SGM youth as well as SGM-inclusive preparatory education and continuing development for educators and healthcare professionals.

Canada Research Chair: Sexual and Gender Minority Studies (Tier 1)

In April 2014 I was awarded the Canada Research Chair in Sexual and Gender Minority Studies (CRC-SGMS) (Tier 1) at the University of Alberta. This award from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada is for seven years (2014-2021) and is valued at $1,400,000.00.

The planned CRC-SGMS five-year research program, which aims to advance inclusive education for SGM youth, has four objectives:

- to contribute to the emergence of queer theory by considering how ways of queer social and cultural theorizing need to be rearticulated as transgender, Two-Spirit Aboriginal, other racial/ethno-cultural, and other SGM positionalities challenge and impact moves in queer theorizing;
- to investigate how SGM youth across relational and contextual differences grow into resilience where this growth is viewed as a dynamic ecological process enabling youth to (i) deal with stressors, risk-taking, and setbacks in personal, social, and institutional contexts (the risks component) and (ii) move forward to demonstrate positive outcomes and signs of thriving (the resilience component);
- to investigate developments and trends in education and complementary caring institutions in Canada with regard to policymaking and its implementation in caring practices, programs,
services, strategies, and interventions that highlight recognition, access, and accommodation of SGM youth; and

- to investigate knowledge levels that caring professionals in education and complementary caring professions have of policies and practices that affirm and accommodate the needs of SGM youth, with the goal of using this study to inform an integrated approach to inclusive education, including comprehensive health education in junior and senior high schools.

My CRC-SGMS research program recognizes the urgent need for greater synchronicity in research, policy, and practice arenas. The Canada’s Chief Public Health Officer’s Reports Unit and an array of university and community researchers have identified meeting this need so stakeholders in Canadian education and healthcare can collectively help SGM and other vulnerable youth to build capacity (a solutions approach), moving away from unconstructive strategies focused on stigmatizing or fixing these youth as a source of social disorder (a problems approach).

Since its inception, iSMSS has engaged in educational and community work focused on the individual development, socialization, safety, and comprehensive health and wellbeing of SGM youth. This work is informed by ongoing research projects (currently and predominantly funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research). SGM youth participating in Camp fyrefly, the CHEW program, and other iSMSS programming can participate voluntarily in our iSMSS research program. First, these youth can participate in our CIHR-funded study (2012-2017) of population health coupled with health and educational interventions for assisting SGM youth. During 2013-2014 this included conducting a Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey. For this survey, research participants included 14-to-25-year-old trans/gender nonconforming individuals. This survey and follow up are being conducted by a team of researchers from education (including iSMSS), medicine, nursing, psychology, and public health from universities across Canada. Currently, we are analyzing the results of this investigation of health issues affecting these youth and comparing findings to other youth populations. Research outcomes will be used to (i) assess the health and risk behaviours of adolescents, including out-of-school youth and young adults and (ii) improve trans-spectrum/gender nonconforming youth health services and programs.

Second, SGM youth currently have an opportunity to participate in my SSHRC-funded iSMSS national SGM Youth Resilience Survey, which is based on the resilience typology that I have developed to examine stressors, risk taking, assets, indicators of thriving, and demographic variables affecting this target population. Analysis of survey results will be used to improve social policy and practices in education and healthcare. Survey items focus on interactions at school and in healthcare, families, churches, and the larger community. This survey is designed so SGM youth can talk about the factors that affect their comprehensive health and happiness; that is, the factors that affect how SGM youth grow into resilience.

**Major Research Grants (Continuing)**

2011-2014 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Standard Research Grant (operating grant: $113, 060) – Principal Investigator: Dr. Grace
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*

2012-2017 CIHR operating grant: $1,977,930 or $399,586 per year for 5 years – Dr. Grace and Dr. Wells are Co-Investigators with Dr. Elizabeth Saewyc, Principal Investigator, UBC School of Nursing

Project Title: *Reducing Stigma, Promoting Resilience: Population Health Interventions for LGBTQ Youth*

**Graduate and Undergraduate Research Assistantships**

During 2013-2014, I employed two graduate research assistants (Jeffrey Hankey and Lindsay Herriot) and one undergraduate research assistant (Kaz Lim).

**Scholarly Publications and Presentations**

**Books**

- Grace, A. P., with Wells, K. (forthcoming). *Steeling life: Sexual and gender minority youth in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. [This book, enabled by research funding that I received from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, is completed and is currently in the final stage of a national peer review process.]
- Grace, A. P. (2013). *Lifelong learning as critical action: International perspectives on people, politics, policy, and practice*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press. [This book became available in early Fall 2013 and focuses on learning for sexual and gender minorities and other vulnerable populations across the lifespan, exploring contexts in Canada and an array of developed and developing nations.]

**Journal Articles**


**Book Chapter**

Scholarly Presentations (Published in Proceedings)


Scholarly Presentations (Unpublished)


- Grace, A. P. (2014). *How sexual and gender minority youth grow into resilience: Parameters of an asset-based ecological process and outcome*. Invited keynote presentation at the 7th Annual G. M. Dunlop Educational Psychology Graduate Student Colloquium, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB.

Professional Resources, Community Presentations, and Media Interviews Emanating from iSMSS Research

National Resource Book for Educators and Other Caring Professionals

- Grace, A. P., & Wells, K. (in press). *Sexual and gender minorities in Canadian education and society: A national handbook for K-12 educators*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Teachers’ Federation. [This extensive resource book, developed using research funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, is completed and is being published in English and French by the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, with support from provincial/territorial teachers’ associations, including the Alberta Teachers’ Association, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association, the Nova Scotia Teachers’ Union, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers’ Association.]

Community Presentations

- Grace, A. P. (2014, May). *LGBTIQQ2SA films as queer public pedagogy*. Invited presentation at the Educated Reel event hosted by the queer alumni chapter, University of Alberta Alumni Campus Chapters Program, Edmonton, AB.
- Grace, A. P. (2014, March). *Camp fYrefly in Saskatchewan: A 5th anniversary retrospective*. A presentation at the 18th Breaking the Silence Conference, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK. [This presentation was part of the 18th annual Breaking the Silence Conference that focuses on education and social justice for LGBTTIQQ2SA persons. In addition to this presentation I hosted a Camp fYrefly lunchtime celebration plus held meetings with the SK Ministry of Education and the Camp fYrefly SK team. Dr. Fern Snart and Dr. James McNinch, Dean of Education, University of Regina also attended these events.]

- Grace, A. P. (2014, March). *Researching queer in educational and community contexts at the University of Alberta*. Invited presentation at the Intersections of Queer Symposium hosted by the Alberta Public Interest Research Group, Edmonton Pride Festival Society, and iSMSS during University of Alberta Pride Week, Edmonton, AB.


- On July 22, 2013 I participated in the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation Story Room Project, sharing the history of developing and implementing Camp fYrefly.

### Media Interviews


### Positions Held/Invitations in Academic, Consultative, and Community Contexts

- Member of the Executive of the Canadian Association for the Study of Women and Education (CASWE) within the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) (2011 – present). In this role I chair the Queer Studies in Education and Culture Special Interest Group that I initiated and had unanimous support to establish within CASWE. QSEC had its inaugural meeting at CSSE 2012. This work has helped iSMSS to build a network of scholars engaged in sexual and gender minority studies.

- Invited appointment to the Canadian Teachers’ Federation Panel of Academic Experts (Fall 2010 to present), serving as national consultant on SGM issues in schooling.

- I participated as Director of iSMSS-EDPY in an adult education institute sponsored by the Catherine Donnelly Foundation in Toronto to assess ways this funder could strengthen the capacity of adult educators working with youth, young adults, and older adults. The aim of the review was to meet the needs of vulnerable populations, with an emphasis on sustaining positive outcomes (March 12-14, 2014).
Queer Studies in Education and Culture Special Interest Group, Canadian Society for the Study of Education

As a member of the Executive of the Canadian Association for the Study of Women and Education (CASWE) within the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) (2011 – present), I chair the Queer Studies in Education and Culture Special Interest Group (QSEC SIG). I did the Call for Papers for CSSE 2014, chaired the peer review of proposals, and arranged sessions for the Queer Studies in Education and Culture SIG at CSSE 2014.

Teaching: SGM-Inclusive Course Development in the Faculty of Education

In addition to including foci on (i) my SSHRC-funded resilience research and (ii) SGM youth and their issues in my regular graduate and undergraduate teaching during 2013-2014, I worked with Dr. Lia Daniels to contribute to the development of the new version of EDPY 304, which is entitled Adolescent Development and Learning, for the revised teacher education program. I am delighted that LGBTQ issues are now significantly addressed in a core course for students in our Faulty of Education preparing to teach in junior and senior high schools.

Specifically, I developed Topic 7: Understanding Gender, which includes foci on sexuality and gender identity. I also developed Topic 11: Resiliency, which draws on my SSHRC-funded research on growing into resilience. The topic also considers the role of iSMSS in the Faculty of Education. Each topic includes a research-informed lecture, activities to enhance student learning, and opportunities to integrate face-to-face and cyber learning to build on what the textbook offers.

The Services Dimension 2013-14

Service Grant for Community and Educational Outreach

2014-16 Alberta Community HIV Fund, Public Health Agency of Canada, and Government of Alberta (service grant: $263, 752.00): Comprehensive Health Educator Workers’ Program

The Comprehensive Health Education Workers’ (CHEW) Program

iSMSS-EDPY has just begun a research-informed community and educational outreach program grounded in caring professional practices. Named the Comprehensive Health Education Workers’ Program (using the acronym CHEW), this program is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Alberta Community HIV Foundation, and the Government of Alberta. The CHEW program utilizes an encompassing ecological approach that focuses on SGM (sexual and gender minority) youth, parents/other caregivers, caring professionals, and the community, educational, and healthcare environments they navigate. As its primary focus, the CHEW program aims to educate SGM youth as a multivariate population in order to improve their comprehensive health and happiness. The CHEW program will also assist in educating the diverse population of significant adults who have relationships with youth (for example, biological / foster parents and other caregivers) or who are
caring professionals with the capacity and ability to support youth (for example, school- and community-based counsellors, social workers, psychologists, and youth workers).

During Spring 2014 I was specifically approached to develop and implement the CHEW program because, as a core function of iSMSS’s intervention and outreach work, we have a history of developing and conducting highly successful research-informed, age-appropriate, and non-judgmental comprehensive health-education workshops in educational and community settings. The CHEW workshops take an integrated approach, with 80 percent of workshops and activities targeting SGM youth, 10 percent targeting parents and other caregivers, and 10 percent targeting caring professionals who work with SGM youth. In reaching SGM youth and their families and caregivers, iSMSS-EDPY utilizes a holistic model to provide integrated supports and services. Everyone can benefit from learning about research outcomes, resilience factors, and helpful behaviours that specifically support the overall health, happiness, and wellbeing of SGM youth. Regarding the collective of caring professionals in education and healthcare, iSMSS recognizes the need to educate and connect caring professionals so they can work collaboratively to help SGM youth. In assisting healthcare workers and other caring professionals, iSMSS, working collaboratively with a team of experts, helps them to (i) address the lack of knowledge that health educators, clinicians, and other caring professionals have about SGM youth health issues, and (ii) address the unequal health status of SGM youth associated with social factors (like family, school, and street violence) and medical factors (like lack of youth knowledge of STIs and clinician misunderstanding, bias, and even homophobia and transphobia). This work is informed by findings in the 2011 and 2012 Annual Reports on the State of Public Health in Canada for the Chief Public Health Officer’s Reports Unit. I served as an external reviewer and contributor for both reports.

The CHEW program will place a key emphasis on MSM (males who have sex with males) youth and young adults since Alberta Health 2013 statistics indicate that age-gender-specific rates of newly diagnosed HIV cases among 15 to 29 year olds in our province are alarmingly high. Moreover, consecutive 2010 to 2012 rates as well as the 2013-annualized rate of HIV for Edmonton are the highest among the five Alberta zones for which data have been generated. Statistics for these years also indicate that MSM are the predominant at-risk group vulnerable to HIV infection. These statistics point to the significant need for the CHEW program so SGM, and notably gay and other MSM youth, can build the knowledge, skills, capacities, understandings, personal insights, and motivations necessary to focus on their comprehensive—physical, mental, sexual, and social—health and grow into resilience as healthy, happy, and hopeful individuals.

Camp fyrefly Saskatchewan 2013 in Saskatoon

In 2013 Camp fyrefly operated three annual summer camps for SGM youth. They took place in Edmonton (the milestone year 10), Calgary (year 1), and Saskatchewan (year 5 in Saskatoon). The first Camp fyrefly Saskatchewan was held in Saskatoon in 2009, with the second held in Regina as alternating host city in 2010. Camp fyrefly emphasizes helping youth to grow into resilience with foci on individual development, socialization, learning leadership skills, and being safe and healthy.

Camp fyrefly Saskatchewan 2013 was held at the Queen’s House retreat and renewal center in Saskatoon from August 15th to 18th. I provided direction and supports that included co-facilitation of
the Camp fYrefly Family and Supports Session on the last day of camp. Fran Forsberg and Kay Williams from PFLAG Canada – Saskatoon Chapter co-facilitated this session. Lynne Lacroix assisted us. In addition to Lynne, the Camp fYrefly SK team included Anthony Bidulka and Herb McFaul (Organizing Committee Co-Chairs); Kobie Spriggs (Camp Coordinator); Jackie Morley (Volunteer Coordinator); Jill Bergdahl, Emmett Brown, Rebecca Hoiseth, Victoria Iris, Sean Helquist, and Merrill Lemaigre (Youth Leaders); Leanne Menzie, Jennifer Boyle, Ezra James, Kris Skidmore, Jolie Brewer, and Jett Brewer (Pod Support Adult Volunteers); Rev. Russell Mitchell-Walker and Elder Marjorie Beaucage (Spiritual Advisors), and Michael White and Karen Pedscalny (Counselling Psychologists). In sum, the camp program incorporated a variety of workshops reflecting the arts-based focus of the camp and emphasizing individual development, socialization, leadership skill-building, comprehensive health, safety, and growing into resilience.

Camp fYrefly SK 2013 Artist-in-Residence

Each year, as part of the Artist-in-Residence Program, Camp fYrefly welcomes an emerging or established contemporary Canadian artist who has shown a commitment to innovation, exploration, community outreach, and building public understanding of sexuality and gender identity. Kate Reid, a critically acclaimed, professional musician and activist from Bowen Island, British Columbia was the artist in residence for Camp fYrefly 2013 in Saskatoon. Kate is a self-described “guitar-playing, harmonica-slinging singer-songwriter and bona-fide storyteller …, with a style she describes as ‘slam-storytelling meets folk- music’.”

iSMSS Endowment Campaign

Currently, with support from President Indira Samarasekera, the University of Alberta is running a $5 million dollar campaign to enhance iSMSS’s core operations and sustainability. The Campaign is intended to support:

- further expansion of Camp fYrefly – our summer leadership camp for SGM youth – as a national program;
- creation of an endowment to enable fiscal stability and provide partial support for core operations and innovative programming; and
- expansion of the iSMSS research program by providing funding for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to investigate SGM issues and the dynamic interactions that can be established through innovative research, policy development, community outreach, and service provision.
Sean Mowat, Director of Advancement, Faculty of Education, manages the increasingly successful campaign. This past year we were involved in fund development initiatives in several Canadian cities, including Vancouver and Toronto during World Pride. For more iSMSS Campaign details, go to http://www.ismss.ualberta.ca/ourcampaign.htm.