



2021/22

ANNUAL REPORT

FIGSD

fYrefly Institute for Gender and Sexual Diversity

(Formerly known as the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services)

Housed in the University of Alberta’s Faculty of Education, the **fYrefly Institute for Gender and Sexual Diversity (FIGSD)**, formerly known as the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMSS), provides direct services and leads ground breaking research that affects policy development, intervention, education and community outreach for 2SLGBTQ+ people.

Bringing together research, teaching, wellness services, and community outreach under one umbrella enables us to combine our studies and services in ways that create opportunities for innovative intellectual work and sustained educational and community outreach.

Our advocacy and research not only helps youth at large, but also guides professional development and education for teachers, social workers, family physicians, psychologists, guidance counsellors and other caring professionals, enabling them to be better resources and advocates for 2SLGBTQ+ youth and their families.



MISSION

FIGSD works to create a society where all queer and trans people are free of discrimination. Through our education programs, research, policy development, advocacy, and community services, we strive to:

- Empower the LGBTQ2S+ community to thrive
- Build leaders, particularly among youth
- Build public awareness and allyship
- Advance sexual and gender diversity studies to the forefront
- Create hope

We are unique in that we utilize research to inform our services, and our services drive the direction of our research.

RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

Current research projects include:

- *Social Innovation Lab – Camp fYrefly Outcomes* (in partnership with the University of Saskatchewan)
- *Journey Mapping Across Canada – Black LGBTQ+ Justice, Sexual, & Mental Health* (in partnership with the Ribbon Rouge Foundation)

PROGRAMS and SERVICES

FIGSD offers a variety of innovative programs and services, including:

- **Family Resilience Project:** We utilize a holistic model to provide mental health counselling services to 2SLGBTQ+ youth and their families and caregivers by offering free therapy with registered mental health professionals and also provides integrated supports and services. In 2020, we moved from one full-time psychologist to an hourly model that contracts services from multiple certified psychologists and social workers.
- **Camp fYrefly:** A national leadership and wellness camp for 2SLGBTQ+ youth that focuses on their individual needs, socialization, health, and wellness as well as ways to help youth grow into resilience. Camp fYrefly continued to be offered on-line in Summer 2021. On-line programming was offered on Zoom and Discord. The use of Discord was also encouraged throughout the entirety of camp, as a way to foster a sense of connection and community amongst campers.
- **fYrefly in Schools (FINS):** An anti-homo/bi/transphobia education program for all students, teachers, and staff in K-12 schools. This past year, Edmonton Metro expanded its focus to encompass professional development for teachers, this included individual consultation, and workshops which empowered teachers to build and deliver lesson plans that focus on 2SLGBTQ+ diversity and allyship. Additionally, metro FINS expanded to offer workshops to GSA students and teachers, GSA Workshop curriculum was developed to serve the topics of: Coming Out & Self Acceptance, Mental Health for GSAs, Queer History, and Queer Music History. Between January and June of 2022 more than 20 GSA Workshops were delivered. Due to COVID-19, FINS workshops have been offered virtually. However, as public health restrictions were lifted in 2022, we offered more workshops in person. We also continued to see the influx of other organizations and businesses requesting training this year.
- **Comprehensive, Health, Empowerment, & Wellness Project (CHEW):** CHEW provides a safe environment and free, front-line support for 2SLGBTQ+ youth and young adults under age 29, who face barriers. These barriers include mental health, poverty, houselessness, substance use, sexual health, and more. Some services offered at CHEW include counselling, crisis intervention, Indigenous Peer Support, and drop-in for basic needs (e.g. showers) and support. The CHEW Family now consists of over 200 registered youth and emerging adults and serves an average of over 30 youth per day. In 2021, CHEW established a formal partnership with Boyle Street Community Services, including a shared Counsellor position. We also were fortunate to partner with Nekem: To Change Something, to provide hot meals for CHEW youth and conduct street outreach.

- **Where the Rivers Meet (WTRM):** A project that grew out of the need to address systemic discrimination which eventually developed into an educational initiative through fYrefly in Schools. WTRM supports and celebrates Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer folks through culturally relevant teachings based on Indigenous ways of knowledge. Our outgoing Coordinator, Gabe Calderon, served over 4000 students and professionals in 2021/22.
- **University of Alberta Pride Week:** Pride Week engages UAlberta's campus communities to come together to build supportive, caring, and respectful campus environments for 2SLGBTQ+ students, staff, and faculty. Due to the University's announcement that classes would remain virtual until February 28, 2022, we chose to prioritize the safety of our attendees and held all events on-line. This year, we hosted the week virtually on March 9 - 17, 2022. We were able to hold approximately 30 events, which is the largest number of events ever coordinated for Pride week. Some of the events offered were LGBTQ+ Pop Culture Trivia Night and educational workshops like 2SLGBTQ+ Education and Allyship in a Rural Context which was facilitated by our Rural fYrefly in Schools Education Coordinator, Alex Marshall.
- **Mayor's Pride Brunch:** The Pride Brunch was held virtually on Zoom and garnered a large number of attendees. The food was provided by local Edmonton business, Our Table. To facilitate a sense of engagement and novelty for the brunch attendees, three contests were created that were not offered the year before. There was also a Queer History Trivia game. MLA Janis Irwin emceed the event, which featured a performance by Evan Westfal, remarks from UAlberta President Bill Flanagan, Mayor Don Iveson, and our Executive Director, Dr. Glynnis Lieb. The event successfully raised awareness about our initiatives and raised funds for the vital programming that we offer.
- **Alberta GSA Conference:** An annual conference that offers educational workshops and presentations on 2SLGBTQ+ topics to students and teachers. It provides students with vital resources, resiliency skills, and access to safer spaces. In 2021, the conference was held from November 22 to 26. Due to COVID-19, the conference was held virtually and 17 workshop sessions were offered throughout the week. Participants gathered from more than 70 cities and towns across Alberta, 623 students and teachers registered, with 595 sign-ins being logged throughout the conference.
- **Pride Tape:** In partnership with Calder Bateman, we created rainbow hockey tape. Through use of this tape we are showing support to/from teammates, coaches, parents and pros to 2SLGBTQ+ players. Pride tape shows every player that they belong in the game.
- **nohomophobes.com:** A website that actively tracks how often homophobic language is used in social media on a daily basis. This is an educational tool, used to raise awareness about the prevalence of homophobia.

PROJECTS and ACTIVITIES

Highlights of some major activities from the past year include:

- **Pride Week:** This year, we shared the Safer Spaces survey before and during Pride Week. The survey gathered data on the campus community's feelings of safety regarding self-expression and identity. The survey was shared before and during the entirety of Pride Week, and there were 62 responses.
- **fYrefly in Schools:** The program also expanded its reach beyond Alberta and across Canada, offering lectures at the Winnipeg Pride Human Rights Conference (Trans Athletics & Inclusion, and Queer Music History), and offering a professional development workshop to teachers in Ontario.
- **Alberta GSA Conference:** The conference had several successful fundraising initiatives, such as grassroots fundraising, grant applications, and community donations. As a result, \$10,520 was raised to support operational costs for the conference.
- **Rebranding:** To better reflect the work that we do, which is ingrained in community, collaboration, and creating a more equitable society for 2SLGBTQ+ folks, rebranding discussions were held amongst our stakeholders. The name fYrefly Institute for Gender and Sexual Diversity was selected. The new name has also received formal approval from the University, and we are working on developing complimentary graphics.
- **Scholarships:** We offer scholarships for University of Alberta students focused on 2SLGBTQ+ research, leadership activities, and community service.
- **Briteline:** We continued our partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association - Edmonton Chapter for the accredited 24-hour crisis support line.

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