



2020/21

ANNUAL REPORT

# ISMSS

Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services

Housed in the University of Alberta's Faculty of Education, 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

iSMSS 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

Working with the Canada Research Chair in Sexual and Gender Minority Studies, iSMSS studies:

- Comprehensive health, educational, and cultural concerns of 2SLGBTQ+ youth and young adults in intersections with race, class, Indigeneity, and other relational differences.
- Addressing 2SLGBTQ+ issues in educational and social policymaking, law, and legislation in Canada and its provinces and territories.
- Parameters of caring professional development and practice for teachers, nurses, police officers, social workers, counselling psychologists, and other professionals working with vulnerable 2SLGBTQ+ youth and young adults.
- Researching resilience as a construct, process, and outcome in helping 2SLGBTQ+ youth and young adults to deal with adversity and trauma.
- Advancing greater synchronicity among interdisciplinary research, policy, and practice in working with 2SLGBTQ+ youth and young adults in Canada.
- Using research to inform the ongoing development of an evidence-based C3 model for working with 2SLGBTQ+ youth and young adults, which is focused on comprehensive health education and outreach, community intervention and supports, and compassionate policing.

iSMSS offers currently engaging in the following research projects:

- Transfemme Health Outcomes
- Social Innovation Lab – Camp fYrefly Outcomes (in partnership with the University of Saskatchewan)
- Hypermasculinity and Wellness Outcomes
- Creating a National Network for Trans Health Needs (in partnership with University of Toronto)

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

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

- **Family Resilience Project:** It utilizes a holistic model to provide mental health support to 2SLGBTQ+ youth and their families and caregivers by offering free therapy with registered psychologists and also provides integrated supports and services. In 2020, we moved from one full-time psychologist to a n hourly model that contracts services from three psychologists and two QTBIPOC focused counselling services. We also began offering services out of the LGBTQ Wellness Centre.
- **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. In 2020, we offered camps virtually due to COVID-19. This was an opportunity to explore youth engagement in an on-line environment. While the youth missed the benefits of physical togetherness, they enthusiastically participated in the extended version of camp that lasted over one week. Over 250 campers, youth leaders and volunteers participated in four camps across Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario.

- **fYrefly in Schools (FINS):** An anti-homo/bi/transphobia peer-to-peer education program for all students, teachers and staff in K-12 schools. We have an Education Coordinator for the Greater Edmonton Area. In 2019, thanks to a generous donor, we were able to add a Rural Education Coordinator. In the past year, FINS workshops have been virtual due to COVID-19. Early in 2020, many workshops were cancelled. But as schools became comfortable with on-line meetings, the bookings increased. We also saw an influx of other organizations and businesses requesting training. We ended the fiscal year having reached more people than our previous year, with over 5,000 attendees. We also expanded our reach beyond Alberta and across Canada.
- **Where the Rivers Meet (WTRM):** A project that grew out of the need to address systemic discrimination and create specialized programming catering to the lived realities of Two-Spirit, and LGBTQ+ Indigenous youth. It focuses on developing and providing leadership workshops designed to combat homophobia and transphobia in K-12 schools. In the past year, the Centre for Sexuality worked to expand the South portion of this program. As with our FINS program, we saw a rush of requests for on-line workshops starting in summer of 2020. Our Coordinator delivered workshops to almost 2,000 participants overall..
- **Comprehensive Health Education Wellness Project (CHEW):** Development and delivery of research-informed, age-appropriate, non-judgmental comprehensive health education for 2SLGBTQ+ youth who are in care, homeless and/or sex-work involved. CHEW currently has over 140 registered youth and serves and see average of 25-30 per day. Through the pandemic, we have seen a rise in acute mental health crises, overdoses, and suicide attempts and completions. This has been a very difficult year for the youth we serve and thus for our staff. Thankfully, the caring and generosity of Edmontonians enabled us to not only financially survive through the pandemic but to hire one additional part-time staff person.
- **University of Alberta Pride Week:** Engaging campus communities, and coming together to build supportive, caring, and respectful campus environments for 2SLGBTQ+ students, staff, and faculty. In 2021, we hosted the week virtually. This was actually a tremendous success. We saw greater attendance at all of our events than in person, with the exception of the parade and rally. We intend to make this a blended event going forward, in order to facilitate accessibility.
- **Pride Tape:** In partnership with Calder Bateman, we are showing support to/from teammates, coaches, parents and pros to 2SLGBTQ+ players. Showing every player that they belong in the game.
- **You can Play:** Ensures safety and inclusion of 2SLGBTQ+ folks who participate or wish to participate in sport; including: athletes, coaches, and fans.
- **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:

- **Mayor's Pride Brunch:** Due to the pandemic we hosted this even on-line. It was very enjoyable and a great success with over 100 community leaders, supporters and friends of fYrefly, we celebrated camp successes and raised funds to help cover the costs of Alberta's North and South camps. We partnered with a local businesses to provide brunch meals for all attendees.
- **OUTpost:** We expanded our day shelter to provide more social and health services to vulnerable 2SLGBTQ+ youth.
  - This includes on-site virtual psychiatric services, in partnership with the Wellness Centre.
  - We also add a trans youth peer support group
- **Strategic Planning:** In 2019, we completed a strategic plan and refocused our mission, priorities, and mandate. Since then, we have been participating in ongoing anti-oppression training. We have also revised and expanded our policies and procedures for staff, students and volunteers.
- **iSMSS Scholarships:** We offer several undergraduate and graduate scholarships for UofA students focused on 2SLGBTQ+ research, leadership activities and community service.
- **Briteline:** We launched Briteline.ca in partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association –Edmonton Chapter. This is an accredited 2SLGBTQ+ dedicated 24- hour mental health support line.
- We built new community partnerships (e.g., Africa Centre, Nekem: To Change Something)

## OUR PEOPLE

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## FIND OUT MORE

Visit [iSMSS.ualberta.ca](https://ismss.ualberta.ca) for detailed information about our research, programs and services

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