



2022/23

ANNUAL REPORT

# Fyrefly

Institute for Sexual and Gender Diversity

Housed in the University of Alberta's Faculty of Education, the **Fyrefly Institute for Gender and Sexual Diversity (Fyrefly Institute)**, 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

Fyrefly 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 2SLGBTQ+ 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, which often involve community partnerships.

## 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 Ribbon Rouge Foundation)
- Outcomes Evaluation - CHEW Project (In partnership with MacEwan University)

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Fyrefly 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. In 2020, we moved from one full-time psychologist to an hourly model that contracts services from multiple certified psychologists and social workers. In 2022/23, we added a referral coordinator to help match youth with the most suited therapist. 100 hours of free counseling provided in 12 months.
- **Camp fYrefly:** A national camp for 2SLGBTQ+ youth focusing on community, leadership, education, arts, and resilience. Camp fYrefly Alberta North offered a blend of online and in-person day camps in 2022. Online 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. In 2022, 93% of campers for Alberta North who responded to our survey believe they are more capable of supporting 2SLGBTQ+ youth and 88% felt empowered to make a difference in their community. Alberta South, Ontario, and Saskatchewan locations returned to in-person overnight camp! In 2022, 93% of campers who responded to our survey believe they are more capable of supporting 2SLGBTQ+ youth and 88% felt empowered to make a difference in their community.
- **fYrefly in Schools (FINS)** is a Fyrefly Institute educational initiative developed to help reduce discrimination against 2SLGBTQ+ youth, increase awareness of the impacts of homo/bi/transphobia, and equip students and teachers with the tools they need to become effective allies for diversity, equity, and human rights within their schools and communities. In the 2022-2023 year FINS educators presented to over 8,623 teachers, students and community members in 233 sessions.
- **Where the Rivers Meet (WTRM):** A project that grew out of the need to address systemic discrimination of Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer peoples which has developed into an educational initiative through fYrefly in Schools. WTRM provides education on Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer histories and experiences through culturally relevant teachings on Indigenous ways of understanding gender and sexuality. Our incoming Coordinator, Rae Madge, served over 500 students, teachers, and professionals in 2022/23 through workshops, lectures, and events.
- **Community, Health, Empowerment & Wellness (CHEW) Project:** CHEW provides support and resources for Rainbow youth and emerging adults ages 14 to 29 who face barriers of mental health, houselessness, substance use, poverty, and oppression. CHEW has 300 registered clients, with 60 regularly accessing services

- **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. This year, we hosted the week in person from March 13-17, 2023. We were able to offer 19 events and activities, including a highly attended parade.
- **Mayor's Pride Brunch:** In 2022, We had our first in-person Pride Brunch since 2019. The event featured Greetings by Elder Ed Lavallee, remarks by MLA Rachel Notley, City of Edmonton's Mayor Amarjeet Sohi, and Fyrefly Institute Executive Director, Dr. Glynnis Lieb, and a drag performance by Melinda Verga. In 2023, the Pride Brunch was held at the Edmonton Convention Centre. There were opening remarks by Roxann Roan and also speeches from Fyrefly Institute Executive Director, Dr. Glynnis Lieb, UAlberta President, Bill Flanagan, Mayor Amarjeet Sohi, RARICANow Founder and Director, Chris Adebayo Katiiti. The event also featured our CHEW Project YEG performers, Etherea, Gurlquisha, and Desiré Devine. The event was hosted by Canadian TV and Radio personality, Mike Chalut. At our event this year, Mayor Sohi officially proclaimed June as Pride Month in Edmonton.
- **Alberta GSA Conference:** The Alberta GSA (Gender & Sexuality Alliance) conference is a free conference available to K-12 students and teachers across the province of Alberta. The conference offers vital resources, skill development, and learning opportunities for 2SLGBTQ+ students and teachers. Each year hundreds of students and teachers attend the GSA Conference receiving vital information and resources required to make their schools safer and more inclusive to 2SLGBTQ+ identities. The conference strives to make schools a safer place for gender and sexual diversity by empowering students and teacher with new skills, resources, and information that they can bring back to their local schools and communities. This year the Fyrefly Institute offered two GSA Conferences, as well as 20 visits to GSAs to offer direct support in schools. This work supported 595 students and teachers through these endeavors.
- **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:

- **CHEW Project:** We received funding from the Calgary Community Foundation to establish a CHEW OUTpost in Calgary.
- **Rebranding:** To better reflect the work that Fyrefly does, which is ingrained in community, collaboration, and creating a more equitable society for 2SLGBTQ+ folks, rebranding discussions were held amongst Fyrefly' stakeholders. A new name was selected. We completed our rebrand with our new logo and look.
- **Fyrefly Open House:** We hosted a Happy Hologays Mixer at the Upper Crust Café to announce our rebrand to the Fyrefly Institute. At the event, Dr. Glynnis Lieb was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Award.
- **Fyrefly Monthly Events:** The Fyrefly team started coordinating themed monthly events on the University of Alberta North Campus to connect with students and to increase our presence within the campus community.
- **Pride UA Merchandise Fundraiser** This year, we collaborated with the Pride Alumni Chapter, the UAlberta Bookstore and UAlberta's creative team to create a Pride UA logo for our UA Pride-themed merchandise for UAlberta's Pride Week. The merchandise was sold at the university's bookstore as a fundraiser for the Fyrefly Institute. The merchandise was also sold at the 2023 Mayor's Pride Brunch in June, with a special event discount.
- **Oil Kings Pride Night Fundraiser:** The Oil Kings team worked with us alongside several local organizations to coordinate a Pride Night, which raised funds and awareness for local 2SLGBTQ+ organizations and groups.
- **Fyrefly Scholarships:** We offer scholarships for University of Alberta students focused on 2SLGBTQ+ research, leadership activities, and community service.
- **Brite line:** we continued our partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association -- Edmonton Chapter for the accredited 24-hour crisis support line.

## OUR PEOPLE

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## FIND OUT MORE

Visit [uab.ca/fyrefly](http://uab.ca/fyrefly) for detailed information about our research, programs and services

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