

Annual Report 2014 – 2015

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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, comprehensive health, and providing an array of resources and supports. At iSMSS we emphasize growing into resilience as a process and an outcome. This work is about helping youth to deal with adversity and trauma as they deal with stressors and risk taking. We assist 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 works to fulfill this mandate through innovative research and research-informed educational and community programming for youth that includes Camp fYrefly with current sites in Edmonton, Calgary, and Saskatchewan and plans to expand to Ontario; fYrefly in Schools; the Family Resilience Project (FRP), and the Comprehensive Health Education Workers' (CHEW) program.

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. Adult and youth volunteers are also integral to our research-advocacy dynamic, with these individuals, providing their time, commitment, and expertise in the many efforts needed to develop, implement, and sustain our intervention and outreach that addresses the needs and concerns of SGM youth. 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.

In sum, iSMSS'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 Faculty and Core Staff Members 2014-2015

Dr. André P. Grace – Faculty Director

Dr. Kristopher Wells – Faculty Director

Dr. Alvin Schrader – Adjunct Professor and Professor Emeritus

Michael Phair - Adjunct Professor

Alison Brooks-Starks – fYrefly Program Coordinator, Edmonton

Beverly Clarke – Financial Administrator
Chris Daberer – Sexual and Gender Minority Equity Advisor
Melissa Fabrizio – Communications and Events Coordinator
Tamara Gartner – Family Resilience Project
Wendy Rodgers – Administrative Supervisor
Cory Wyness – CHEW Project Director

The Studies Dimension 2014-2015

Through its diverse research initiatives, iSMSS brings research to bear on deficiencies and absences in both 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*. Section 15 provides protections to all citizens on grounds of individual differences.

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 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 education, including social, cultural, and comprehensive health education, for SGM youth as well as SGM-inclusive preparatory education and continuing development for educators and healthcare professionals.

Dr. André P. Grace: Canada Research Chair in Sexual and Gender Minority Studies (Tier 1)

In April 2014 Dr. André P. Grace was awarded the Canada Research Chair in Sexual and Gender Minority Studies (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. Dr. Grace's research program is designed to incorporate studies of inclusive lifelong learning; SGM-focused social and cultural theorizing; sexual and gender minorities and 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.

2014-2015 CRC Research Update

This past year as Dr. Grace completed the final year of his SSHRC-funded research project entitled Growing into Resilience: Working in the Intersection of Research, Policy, and Practice to Study the Non-linear, Asset-creating Processes of Sexual and Gender Minority Youth Living in Power Intersections with Their Other Identities. This research culminated in a new book entitled Growing into Resilience: Sexual and Gender Minority Youth in Canada. Dr. Kristopher Wells, his colleague at iSMSS, was second author for chapters in Part II of the book. It is in press with University of Toronto Press, with a September 2015 release date.

In drawing on findings from his SSHRC research program in writing the book, Dr. Grace emphasized the importance of greater synchronicity in research, policy, and practice in Canadian education and healthcare focused on recognizing and accommodating sexual and gender minority (SGM) youth. He

also located resilience as a multifaceted process that advances capacity building (a solutions approach) over fixing SGM youth as a source of social disorder (a problems approach). Dr. Grace used the notion of growing into resilience to position this biopsychosocial and cultural process as one that is ultimately about discerning the personal, social, and environmental assets that SGM youth need to develop the skills to survive and thrive. Uniquely, the book highlights heterogeneous factors that impact the process whereby SGM youth grow into resilience. It demonstrates that these factors are culturally and contextually grounded, including interactions at school and in families, churches, and the larger community. The book also considers how Canadian SGM youths' experiences of adversity can be complicated by other defining characteristics including Aboriginality, ethnocultural location, ability, class, age, geographical location, and living context (such as family, group home, or street environments).

Key CRC Research Findings/Scholarly Insights and their Significance

Dr. Grace's research indicates that, for SGM youth, growing into resilience is an ecological process influenced by experiences in personal, social, and environmental contexts. To help build understanding of this process, Dr. Grace has produced an emergent typology, providing a synopsis of research on resilience from the 1980s to the present. With understandings of resilience as a process still emerging, the typology provides a synopsis of developing knowledge about stressors, risks, assets, and indicators of thriving using an ecological framework that surveys complexities impacting how vulnerable youth grow into resilience. In times when there is an increasing focus on accommodating gender minority or transgender children and youth in education and healthcare, a key focus of Dr. Grace's research is providing extensive analysis of gender identity and its endless variations along a male/female continuum. To assist educators, family doctors, social workers, and other caring professionals to address gender identity issues in education, healthcare, and community programming, his research provides extensive analysis of conservative (generally deficit-based) and progressive (affirmative) treatment modalities for transgender children and their families, and it deals with social, legal, and other complexities marking the construction of gender today. Dr. Grace's research also explicates the need for school districts and schools (as a contemporary civil rights frontier) to be proactive in initiating stand-alone SGM policymaking and its implementation in caring educational practices that make schools safer spaces for SGM students. His research also examines policymaking in healthcare as well as education, which led him to develop guidelines for ethical practices across these caring professions in schooling and healthcare. Here he emphasizes the importance of a social-solutions approach involving families and caregivers.

Dr. Kristopher Wells: Research Initiatives

We Are Here: Edmonton's Queer History Project

Academic Leads: Dr. Kristopher Wells & Dr. Alvin Schrader

Project Staff: Michael Janz (Program Coordinator), Julia Grochowski (Video Editor), and Michelle Lavoie

(Curator)

Executive Sponsors: Michael Phair, Angela Bennett, Terry Harris, and Colleen Sutherland

The purpose of the *We Are Here: Edmonton's Queer History Project* is to document the contributions that queer Edmontonians and groups have made to the city over the last half-century or more. The project aims to identify key events and experiences in every spheres of life – social, nightlife, sports, religious, artistic, literary, educational, media, work, business, family, ethnic, political, legal – that have led to the development of Edmonton's queer community, and especially those aspects with ongoing civic impact.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of context examining how many gueer events and experiences came to shape Edmonton's civic, social, and cultural identity. Particularly noteworthy is how little is known or documented about pre-1960s queer history in Edmonton beyond police records and sporadic newspaper accounts of "nefarious" and "unnatural" activities. Early activities that are remembered from this period revolved around gay and lesbian owned bars as well as social and advocacy groups such as GATE Edmonton. Changes continued from the 1970s into the early 1980s with the advent of gay religious groups, sports leagues and teams, community dances. Pride recognition events, and significant political organizing and advocacy around equal rights. In the 1980s, and into the 1990s, HIV/AIDS dominated and significantly changed the queer community, and gradually altered attitudes and recognition of gays and lesbians in the broader Edmonton community. In many ways, HIV/AIDS added an important new and dramatic chapter in the development and history of Edmonton's queer community.

The goals of the We Are Here: Edmonton's Queer History Project were to research and mount a curated multi-media exhibition at the Art Gallery of Alberta (AGA) for the 35th anniversary celebrations in June 2015. This exhibition was intended to help to document and share Edmonton's "hidden history" so it "comes alive" and is accessible to citizens of Edmonton. This life history installation was cast as one of the cornerstone events to help recognize and celebrate the 35th anniversary of Edmonton's Pride Festival.

Equity Audit of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Policies in Canadian Universities

With Dr. Kristopher Wells as Principal Investigator who was assisted by graduate research assistant Anastasia Kulpa, the goal of this research project is to examine sexual orientation and gender identity best practices within Canadian postsecondary institutions. As part of this equity audit, we aim to identify gaps across institutions, highlight trends, and develop sexual orientation and gender identity inclusive policy and practice recommendations. Canadian postsecondary institutions have a legal duty to protect the rights of sexual and gender minority students, faculty, and staff. Campus wide policies and practices that are sensitive to and inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity contribute to a campus climate of equity, safety, and respect.

Major Research Grants

New

2015-2020 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Insight Research Grant (operating grant: \$256,888) – Principal Investigator: Dr. André P. Grace

Project Title: Synchronizing Research, Policymaking, and Practice to Assist Sexual and

Gender Minority Youth to Grow into Resilience

Edmonton Community Foundation (Operating Grant: \$30,000) – Principal Investigator: 2014-15

Dr. Kristopher Wells

Project Title: We Are Here: Edmonton's Queer History Project

Continuing

2014-2021 Dr. André P. Grace: Canada Research Chair in Sexual and Gender Minority Studies (Tier 1) (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada): This award recognizing research excellence is for seven years and is valued at \$1,400,000.00.

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

School of Nursing

Project Title: Reducing Stigma, Promoting Resilience: Population Health Interventions

for LGBTQ Youth

2013-2018 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Insight Research Grant: \$489,293.00 – Dr. Wells & Mr. Michael Phair are Research Collaborators with Dr. Deanna Williamson, Principal Investigator, Department of Human Ecology, University of

Alberta.

Project Title: Family Functioning in Everyday Life: The Experiences of Families with

Young Children and Diverse Compositions and Ethno-Cultural Origins

Completed

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

iSMSS's Collaborative Research Initiatives

Currently, Dr. Grace and Dr. Wells are co-applicants on a five-year CIHR-funded research project (2012-2017) that Dr. Elizabeth Saewyc, the CIHR/PHAC Applied Public Health Chair in the School of Nursing, University of British Columbia, leads as principal investigator. The project is called *Reducing Stigma, Promoting Resilience: Population Health Interventions for LGBTQ Youth.* 12 Canadian universities and two sexual and gender minority resource centres are involved. The goal of this research project on promoting resilience in youth is to use findings to inform the development of effective public-health and school-health policies, prevention strategies, and targeted healthcare and educational interventions that address the needs of sexual and gender minority (SGM) youth.

As the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services' ongoing and specific contribution to this research project, Dr. Grace and Dr. Wells are conducting a participatory evaluation study of Edmonton Public Schools with regard to the development and implementation of its policy on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. The policy is up for its 5-year review in 2016. We are investigating the degree to which the Edmonton Public Schools' Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity policy, as a comprehensive and innovative educational intervention, is creating safe and accommodating SGM-inclusive schools where sexual and gender minorities have full access to SGM-specific and larger school supports, services, and protections. This research is a participatory evaluation study. It enables us to investigate how various stakeholders involved in and/or affected by policy development and implementation monitor and evaluate actions taken, the impacts of those actions, and what next steps ought to be taken. Moreover, it enables us to investigate what stakeholders view as successes and ways to improve this process. Research began in January 2015 and will be completed in June 2015, with a draft report to follow by late fall 2015.

On the national scale as another element of the CIHR research during 2014-2015, Dr. Grace and Dr. Wells were involved in Canada's first national trans youth health survey. The public report was just released and is entitled *Being Safe*, *Being Me: Results of the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey*. The research involved a national on-line survey conducted by researchers from several Canadian universities and community organizations. The survey had 923 trans youth participants from all 10

provinces and one of the territories. The survey included somewhat different questions for younger (14-18 years) and older (19-25 years) trans youth about a wide range of life experiences and behaviours that influence young people's health. The national report provides a first snapshot of survey results.

Dr. Grace and Dr. Wells are also co-researchers for a national inventory study undertaken in order to develop a detailed picture of the forms and extent of school system interventions made in support of LGBTQ student wellbeing in school districts across the country. The ongoing study, which involves researchers from several Canadian universities and community organizations, began in 2014-15. It is also designed to contribute to our knowledge of the particular outcomes that school district officials associate with particular interventions so that we can select the intervention/outcome relationships that would be important to test in other phases of the larger project. These phases involve systematic assessment of intervention outcomes through analyzing available population health data for districts or regions where these interventions have been widely implemented, and through onsite intervention evaluations and case studies. By comparing school district beliefs about intervention outcomes (say, reduced harassment from implementing Gay Straight Alliances [GSAs]) with evidence of actual intervention outcomes (say, reduced suicidality) identified through population health data analysis and on-site program evaluations, our hope is that the larger study will contribute to evidence-based school system decision-making about which interventions to implement to achieve what results.

Collaboration with the Canadian Teachers' Federation

This year Dr. Grace and Dr. Wells completed Sexual and Gender Minorities in Canadian Education and Society: A National Handbook for K-12 Educators. The Canadian Teachers' Federation is publishing this handbook in English and French versions. It is a national compendium of policies. practices, and resources that provides K-12 educators and other professionals who work with children and youth with a review of the efforts of individuals, educational and community interest groups, the legal system, and governments to advance recognition and respectful accommodation of sexual and gender minorities in Canadian education and society. The handbook is useful for teachers, school administrators, guidance counsellors, policymakers, and other educational interest groups; parents and other caregivers; providers of child and youth services; and psychologists, social workers, and other caring professionals and community workers. As a timely resource to assist work with sexual and gender minority (SGM) children and youth and their families in schools and communities, this handbook is a rich account of efforts to accommodate sexual and gender minorities in provincial, territorial, and federal contexts. It includes: 1) a selected chronology of moves forward to advance recognition and accommodation of sexual and gender minorities, 2) a review of pivotal legal cases, 3) a review of government initiatives and ground-breaking legislation, 4) a review of transformative educational policy and a listing of exemplary policy statements, 5) a synopsis of grassroots educational and cultural work, 6) a listing of moments of resilience in individual and institutional contexts, 7) a listing of moments of homophobia in individual and institutional contexts, 8) a listing of Canadian educational and cultural heroes, and 9) a resource listing.

iSMSS Scholarships

Michael Phair Leadership Award

The Michael Phair Leadership Award is the first SGM-specific undergraduate award in the history of the University of Alberta. Selection is based on demonstrated leadership qualities and involvement in extracurricular and community activities. Preference is given to undergraduate students who have demonstrated commitment to the advancement of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified, two-spirited, and queer communities. Value: \$1000. Two awards are given each year. The 2014 recipients were: Billy-Ray Belcourt, Faculty of Arts and Ian Armstrong, Faculty of Medicine

Stephen and Lynn Mandell Graduate Scholarship in Sexual and Gender Minority Studies

The Stephen and Lynn Mandel Graduate Scholarship in Sexual and Gender Minority Studies is the first SGM-specific graduate scholarship to be offered in the history of the University of Alberta. Thanks to an anonymous founding donor this scholarship is awarded annually to a graduate student at the University of Alberta with superior academic achievement and quality research focused on sexual and gender minority studies and their application in advocacy work in educational and community contexts. Value: \$1,000. The 2015 recipient will be announced in Fall 2015.

Two New iSMSS Scholarships

The Ronald Gordon Rowswell Graduate Award and the Orlando Books Collective Entrance Award are two new scholarships created this past year. The first awards will be given in Fall 2015. The Ronald Gordon Rowswell Graduate Award will be awarded to a full-time or part-time student with satisfactory academic standing registered in a graduate degree program. Selection is based on the significance of their program of studies and/or research to the advancement of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified, or queer communities. Value: \$4000.

The Orlando Books Collective Entrance Award is awarded to a student entering first year in any undergraduate degree program at the University of Alberta. Selection is based on demonstrated leadership qualities and involvement in school and community activities. Preference is given to a student who has demonstrated commitment to the advancement of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transidentified, two-spirited, or queer communities. Value: \$1000.

Graduate and Undergraduate Research Assistantships

During 2014-2015 Dr. Grace employed two graduate research assistants (Jeffrey Hankey and Clarissa Cheong) and four undergraduate research assistants (Kaz Lim, Phillip Hua, Timothy Lenk, and Brent Saccucci). Brent Saccucci received a Roger S. Smith Undergraduate Student Research Award and Timothy Link received an iSMSS Undergraduate Student Research Award to work on research and programming components of the Comprehensive Health Education Workers' Project.

During 2014-2015 Dr. Wells employed one graduate assistant for Fall and Winter terms (Anastasia Kulpa) who worked on research entitled *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Equity Audit of Canadian Postsecondary Institutions*. Dr. Wells also employed one undergraduate research assistant, Faqueeha Mansoor, who received a Roger S. Smith Undergraduate Student Research Award.

Queer Studies in Education and Culture Special Interest Group, Canadian Society for the Study of Education

In 2012 Dr. Grace received support from the Canadian Society for the Study of Education to establish a special interest group called the Queer Studies in Education and Culture within the society. This SIG has helped iSMSS to build a network of scholars engaged in sexual and gender minority studies. 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), Dr. Grace chairs the QSEC SIG. He did the Call for Papers, chaired the peer review of proposals, and arranged sessions for the Queer Studies in Education and Culture SIG at CSSE 2015. Dr. Grace, Dr. Wells and three iSMSS graduate students all presented papers at QSEC 2015.

Inside/OUT Speakers' Series

The Institute plays a vital role in campus knowledge mobilization through ventures such as its Inside/OUT Speakers' Series. iSMSS hosts monthly seminars during the academic year that focus on SGM research in education and culture. These seminars are designed as an interdisciplinary forum for academics, postdoctoral fellows, undergraduate and graduate students, and community members. The 2014-15 Inside/OUT Speakers' Series Program featured these presentations:

September 18 - Forming Identity

Presented by Jan Buterman, Masters Student, Department of Educational Policy Studies, Faculty of Education

September 25 – She of the Mountains Book Launch

Toronto-based author, Vivek Shraya, read from his latest work - illustrated novel *She of the Mountains*. The reading was followed by a question and answer session with the audience. Three Edmonton-based authors – Cato Taylor, Laurie MacFayden, and Simon Crowley – joined him.

October 16 - Teachers' Resistance to LGBT Literature and Issues

Presented by Dr. Lynne Wiltse (Associate Professor), Department of Elementary Education and Theresa Boyko (Doctoral Student), Department of Educational Policy Studies, Faculty of Education

November 20 - Trans* Day of Remembrance

Trans* Day of Remembrance (TDoR) is a day for campus and community members to memorialize and honour the many trans* lives lost during the year due to gender-based violence. Held in partnership with The Landing and APIRG, a yarn-bomb styled art installation featured the names of the hundreds of trans* individuals whose lives were taken. A candlelight vigil at the tree was followed by a group discussion. Participants were also invited to travel as a group to the Edmonton-wide TDoR event hosted by Edmonton community members downtown.

December 4 - Abundantly Invisible: Fat Oppression as a Framework for Sexual Violence Against Women

Presented by Melissa Fabrizio, Undergraduate Student, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts

January 15 - A Queer Voice: Don't Dream It, Be It

Vocal Instructor/Actor/Singer-Songwriter Evan Westfal explored using arts as a form of queer activism through an interactive session merging storytelling with a music recital.

March 5 – Queering Self: Embracing the Figures Within

Presented by Dr. Alexandra Fidyk, Assistant Professor, Department of Secondary Education, Faculty of Education

March 26 - Comics Creation, Queer Youth and Community Education

Presented by Michel Levesque, Doctoral Student, Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education

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

Dr. Wells developed and taught a new undergraduate course entitled *EDPS 401-B3: Sexuality, Gender, and Culture in Education.* This course explored, in theory and practice, contemporary issues related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in K-12 schools. It drew upon critical scholarship to explore issues related to the construction and regulation of teacher and student identities, school leadership, bullying, violence, and discrimination. The course also considered the

implications of policy and other targeted educational interventions in helping to create safe, caring, and respectful teaching and learning environments.

The Services Dimension 2014-2015

iSMSS research is inextricably linked to service in school, other institutional, and community contexts. iSMSS intervention and outreach focuses on meeting the multiple needs of sexual and gender minorities, especially vulnerable youth, so all have their individual, social, educational, and healthcare needs met as part of caring and holistic support across life, learning, and work contexts.

Service Awards and Recognition in Community Outreach and Networking Contexts

iSMSS Service Awards and Recognition

Salvos Prelorentzos Peace Award. Presented by Project Ploughshares to Camp fYrefly in recognition of the promotion of peace and human rights.

Dr. Kristopher Wells's Service Awards and Recognition

Workers' Program

Edmonton's Power 30. Named as one of the Edmonton Journal's most influential people in 2014. Champions of A Safe and Caring World. Selected by The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities for the month of November.

Edmonton's Global News 2014 Game Changer. Named by the Game Changer television series for October.

Major Service Grants for Community and Educational Outreach

New	
2015-16	Government of Alberta, City of Edmonton, and the United Way (Service Grant: \$146,375.00): Funding for Family Resilience Project.
2015-16	ATB Financial (Service Grant: \$75,000): Funding for the <i>Camp fYrefly Program</i> in Edmonton and Calgary.
2015-18	Calgary Community Foundation (Service Grant: \$75,000): Funding for <i>fYrefly in Schools</i> in Calgary and area.
2015-18	Edmonton Community Foundation (Service Grant: \$75,000): Funding for <i>fYrefly in Schools</i> in Edmonton and Area.
Continuing	
2014-16	Alberta Community HIV Fund, Public Health Agency of Canada, and Government of

Camp fYrefly

Alberta (service grant: \$263, 752.00): Funding for Comprehensive Health Educator

Camp fYrefly emphasizes helping youth to address issues and concerns regarding sexual identity and gender identity in intersections with other issues and concerns so they grow into resilience. The camp

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focuses on individual development, socialization, learning leadership skills, being safe and healthy, and growing into resilience. In 2014 Camp fYrefly operated three annual summer camps for SGM youth. These camps took place in Edmonton (year 11), Calgary (year 2), and Saskatchewan (year 6 in Regina).

Camp fYrefly Alberta Fundraising: Key Events 2014-15

In 2014-15, Camp fYrefly held fundraising events in Edmonton and Calgary, which included the 10th Annual Camp fYrefly Gala Wine Tasting and Silent Auction (March); the 10th annual Mayor's Pride Brunch in Support of Camp fYrefly (June); and the 2nd Annual Premier's Pride Brunch in Support of Camp fYrefly (September). Collectively, almost 1000 people attended these three events, with proceeds designated to support Camp fYrefly programs in Edmonton and Calgary. For more information, including a list of sponsors, please visit: www.fYrefly.ualberta.ca.

Camp fYrefly Calgary 2014

Camp fYrefly Calgary celebrated its second successful camp in Southern Alberta with 56 campers, 14 of whom served as youth leaders, and 24 adult mentors/volunteers. Ages of participants ranged from 13 to 23. As one highlight, Artist-In-Residence Kate Reid worked with a youth camper to write and perform a new Camp fYrefly theme song. The development and implementation of Camp fYrefly was supported by the Calgary Sexual Health Centre and an outstanding group of volunteers who served on committees including: Outreach, Fund Development, Education and Planning, and Food and Logistics. Camp highlights included an amazing talent showcase and whitewater rafting and hiking in the Canadian Rockies. Camp fYrefly Calgary is operated in partnership with the Calgary Sexual Health Centre.

Camp fYrefly Edmonton 2014

Camp fYrefly Edmonton was a huge success, celebrating its 11th year in operation. In 2014, 62 campers, 14 of whom served as youth leaders, and 25 adult mentors/volunteers participated. Camp fYrefly Edmonton featured over 25 workshops and Ainsley Hillyard served as Artist-in-Residence. One youth camper shared this poignant learning that goes to the heart of what growing into resilience is about: "Knowing I am awesome because of who I am, no matter what anyone else says." On our camp evaluation survey, 100% of campers agreed that they enjoyed attending Camp fYrefly. One youth leader described the individuals who comprise the Camp fYrefly community as "the greatest people I have ever known."

Camp fYrefly Saskatchewan 2014 in Regina

Camp fYrefly Saskatchewan 2014 took place at the Lumsden Beach Camp near Regina from August 1st to 4th. Carla Blakely and Russell Mitchell Walker co-directed the camp. In her report to iSMSS, Camp fYrefly Saskatchewan Coordinator Laurie Sampson noted that the 2014 camp involved 39 campers, 8 of whom served as youth leaders, as well as 8 adult volunteers. An array of other volunteers was integral to the development and delivery of the camp and included committee chairs, committee volunteers, and volunteers who provided parent/guardian/family support. The programming team included Jeff Moser, Britt Heisler, Lois-Anna Kaminski, and Jessica Boyer. Elder Marjorie Beaucage assisted Carla and Russell in providing spiritual support, while Mike White (registered psychologist) and Karen Pedskalny (registered social worker) provided counselling support. J. Mase III, a Black/trans/queer poet, educator, activist, and advocate from Brooklyn, USA was artist in residence.

fYrefly in Schools

fYrefly in Schools is an educational initiative operating in Edmonton and Calgary that aims to a) increase student awareness of the lived realities and challenges of SGM youth, b) increase student knowledge of SGM social supports and community resources, c) equip students with the skills to become human rights allies and minimize the negative impacts of homophobia and transphobia in their schools, d) decrease feelings of isolation, alienation, and helplessness that SGM youth often experience, and e) promote safer and more respectful and inclusive schools communities.

Across the two cities in 2014, fYrefly in Schools engaged over 3,100 students, provided 144 workshops, and supported over 50 youth panelists. Here are examples from our surveys of what students said they learned during sessions: "That you don't let anyone ever label you, you're your own person." "Accept people no matter what and support them." "My best friend is bisexual, so this really helped me understand what she goes through and how I can help her out."

Family Resilience Project

The Family Resilience Project, based in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, focuses on providing research-informed professional supports for SGM children, SGM youth (under 25 years), their families (as they construct them), and community agencies in the Edmonton region. We offer individual and family counselling; a PFLAG monthly support group; a trans and gender questioning youth support group; professional development presentations; and consultation. Between July 2014 and June 2015 we received and accommodated a total of 83 intakes for individuals and/or family counselling.

Safe Spaces Initiative, University of Alberta

The Safe Spaces Initiative (SSI) is a University of Alberta project that iSMSS developed and implemented. This Initiative, which began in Summer 2011, is built on the premise that our University campuses should be safe places – physically, emotionally, and intellectually – for SGM students, faculty, and staff. This means that all students, faculty, and staff are recognized, respected, and accommodated across identities and differences in all aspects of University life. SGM individuals on campus 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.

To coincide with UAlberta Pride Week 2015, a Report Card was published and distributed to indicate progress made on the 26 recommendations that came out of *The University of Alberta Safe Spaces Campus Climate Report*, which was released in Fall 2013 (Kinkartz, Wells, & Hillyard, 2013). The Report Card highlights that out of the 26 recommendations, only 5 have not yet been achieved. Importantly, 21 recommendations are either achieved, in progress, or receiving ongoing attention. Significant progress has been made across all recommended areas: (1) Institutional Supports; (2) Academic Resources; (3) Student Services; and (4) Campus Protective Services. The full Report Card can be found online at: http://www.ismss.ualberta.ca/SafeSpacesReportCard. During the 2014-15 academic year, the Safe Spaces Initiative included:

Safe Spaces Training and Workshops: Diverse professional development workshops were provided to University of Alberta groups. All workshops were customized to meet the individual needs and contexts of each campus group. SSI workshops highlighted meaningful strategies for creating an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere for students and staff of all sexual orientations and gender identities within the

university community. Four training sessions, with the Wellness Staff, Human Ecology Students' Association, Psychology, and Guest Services as participants, were held last year. The UofA Safe Spaces Network now has 161 trained members.

Gender Inclusiveness at the University of Alberta: Over the past year iSMSS, along with other UofA stakeholders, has been working to improve and expand University of Alberta's gender inclusive practices and procedures on our campuses. The work has included the following outcomes:

- UAlberta Sexual and Gender Diversity Webpage: Created in partnership with the Office of The Dean of Students and The Landing, the UAlberta Sexual and Gender Diversity webpage launched in October 2014 and serves as a "one-stop shop" where students and staff can access information on sexual and gender inclusivity, support, campus and community involvement, and scholarships and academic resources. The website can be found online at: http://uofa.ualberta.ca/sexual-gender-diversity.
- ✓ The Landing: A Student Space for Gender and Sexual Diversity: Launched by the U of A Students' Union in the fall of 2014, The Landing provides much-needed peer-led support and leadership for SGM students and their supporters. The realization of The Landing has helped the campus achieve two Student Services recommendations of the Safe Spaces Campus Climate Report, which are (19) establishing a centralized SGM student resource centre, and (20) providing mentorship opportunities for SGM students on campus. The Landing has proven to be a hub of creativity and an incredibly valuable peer-led resource, with an abundance of services (drop-in hours, Rainbow Peers, Trans Meet-ups, Creative Jams, a resource library, and referral service) educational and awareness opportunities (workshops, awareness campaigns, inclusive practices, Ask My Pronouns), events and programming, collaborations (including Gender-Based Violence Prevention Project, iSMSS, OUTreach, Feminists at the U of A, Project FU), and volunteer opportunities.
- ✓ Name and Gender Marker Changes: Since January 2015 OneCards are now first printed with preferred name as the default name to appear on the card. Continuing to support gender inclusivity on campus, the Office of the Registrar has been instrumental this year in assisting with troubleshooting instances where preferred names are not showing up as the default name when student data is accessed via lab instructors and other services (such as Student Accessibility Services). A process was set up with staff at the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) in March 2015 whereby students could request they be addressed by their preferred name in instructor evaluation e-mails. USRI is currently in the process of considering using preferred name as the default name used in future communications.
- ✓ Gender Inclusive Washrooms: iSMSS, OUTreach and The Landing collaborated to provide Washroom Awareness Week in the 2014 fall term, with the aim of promoting awareness of the all-gender washrooms available on campus, to further identify any all-gender washrooms that were not currently mapped online and to raise awareness campus-wide about washroom accessibility, especially for trans-identified and genderqueer individuals on campus. iSMSS partnered with TELUS for the TELUS Day of Giving in May 2015. TELUS staff scanned the campus to locate any all-gender washrooms that had not yet been identified and mapped. A total of 58 all-gender washrooms have been identified on campus to date 52 on North Campus, and 6 at Augustana. Progress continues with the All-Gender Washroom Signage Consultation Committee, with plans for installing signage for all-gender washrooms campus-wide and exploring the feasibility of multistall all-gender washrooms and all-gender changing and shower facilities (with a pilot of the latter expected in 2015-16).
- ✓ Gender Inclusive Housing: Work continues with Residence Services on their process for providing gender inclusive housing. Gender Inclusive Housing is a housing option in which students are assigned a unit regardless of their sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or gender expression. Residence Services is committed to working with all students to meet their housing

needs in an environment that values diversity and promotes dignity of all people. This past year Residence Services converted all 4 of the single-stall washrooms in International House and the

adjoining East Campus Commons community space to all-gender washrooms (Note: These do not appear on the all-gender washroom campus map because these washrooms are only accessible to folks living or working in residence.)

University of Alberta Pride Week

University of Alberta Pride Week was held February 28th through March 7th, 2015 and was a tremendous success. The 3rd annual pride week celebrations demonstrated growth over the previous year, featuring 32 core events on 3 campuses (Augustana, Campus Saint-Jean, and North Campus). Notably, U of A residences organized and held over 37 additional pride week events. Key contributing factors to the growth and success of UAlberta Pride Week included key learning from the two previous Pride Weeks. There were over 120 volunteers who donated multiple hours of their time. There was also increased engagement with individuals at Augustana (especially Augustana Queers and Allies) and Campus Saint-Jean (especially the Association des universitaires de la Faculté Saint-Jean [AUFSJ]). The 2015 Pride Week included diversifying the nature and variety of events to cater to multiple interests, audiences, and campus needs.

Rainbow Welcome

As a fall term precursor to UAlberta Pride Week, Rainbow Welcome was a series of LGBTQ+ focused events hosted by The Landing, OUTreach, and/or iSMSS. Fall events included:

- Inside/OUT Speaker Series: Forming Identity (iSMSS)
- She of the Mountains Book Launch by Toronto-based artist Vivek Shraya (iSMSS & The Landing)
- Washroom Awareness Week (The Landing, iSMSS, & OUTreach)
- The Landing Launch Party (The Landing)
- Inside/OUT Speaker Series: Teachers' Resistance to LGBT Literature and Issues (iSMSS)
- Cake Day: Asexuality Awareness (The Landing)
- Inside/OUT Speaker Series: Abundantly Invisible: Fat Oppression as a Framework for Sexual Violence Against Women by Melissa Fabrizio, Landing volunteer (iSMSS)

Lighting Tributes

Through the City of Edmonton's Light The Bridge initiative, the High Level Bridge was lit in rainbow colours on March 2nd, 2015 in honour of UAlberta Pride Week and sexual and gender diversity. Through a partnership with Residence Services, the HUB Mall ceiling was lit up throughout the week, featuring a different pride flag colour scheme honouring and celebrating different SGM people and communities each night (asexuality, bisexuality, pansexuality, trans*, genderqueer, gender fluid, LGBTTQQPIANU+ (rainbow flag), and intersex people and communities). Nightly social media posts helped evoke pride and promote awareness.

The Comprehensive Health Education Workers' (CHEW) Program

The Comprehensive Health Education Workers' (CHEW) Project, which began in Fall 2014 under the direction of Dr. André P. Grace, is a community-based initiative supported by the Alberta Community Council on HIV and enabled by Alberta Health and Wellness and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) through the Alberta Community HIV Fund. Its core function within iSMSS's intervention and outreach work is to develop and deliver research-informed, age-appropriate, and non-judgmental comprehensive health education for SGM youth, especially gay and other MSM (males who have sex

with males) youth and trans-spectrum youth. The project's key goals are to (1) provide sexual, mental, physical, and social health education and (2) support and empower participating youth to be change agents in their own lives and the lives of their peers. For some time now, iSMSS has been offering supports to trans-spectrum youth through our Family Resilience Project. The CHEW Project complements this work to abet trans youth health and wellbeing. What is particularly new for iSMSS is the project's focus on MSM youth who comprise a key needs group. Alberta Health (2013) indicates 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 indicate that MSM individuals are the predominant at-risk group vulnerable to HIV infection. This aligns with the Public Health Agency of Canada's listing of MSM as the at-risk population most affected by HIV. As PHAC (2010) asserts, youth need to be a primary concern since individuals aged 15 to 29 years olds have accounted for 26.5 percent of all positive HIV test reports since reporting began in 1979. These statistics point to the need for the CHEW Project so the youth we serve can build the knowledge, skills, capacities, understanding, personal insight, and motivation necessary to focus on their comprehensive health, which is crucial for surviving, thriving, and growing into resilience. The project is helping to fill a gap in mainstream institutional service provision for MSM and trans-spectrum youth. To continue to support these youth, iSMSS is using its resources and supports to bring MSM and trans-spectrum youth into our 3H Club of happier, healthier, and more hopeful youth (Grace, 2014).

Regarding MSM youth, our research indicates there is a significant population in Edmonton, many of whom are street-involved and homeless. These youth seek mentors and supporters cautiously, valuing the presence of nonjudgmental caring adults who welcome them into safe spaces to have some food, do arts-based projects, and talk about harm reduction among other issues. These youth often turn to sex work to survive. It's a way to get a place to sleep and earn some money. Having had to navigate life in contexts marked by danger, fear, hunger, and homelessness, these youth often take risks. They deal with addictions and engage in unsafe sexual practices like bareback sex (anal sex without using a condom). Still these youth have degrees of agency. They look out for one another in their street family, and many like to be peer mentors. They are tech-savvy, with many using disposable income from sex work to have cell phones with Internet access. Since they are connected in cyberspace, CHEW staff can use this medium as a community educational space for them where participating youth can engage in research-informed, arts-based social learning activities The goal is to have MSM and other SGM youth share messages that help educate their peers about HIV and other STIs (sexually transmitted infections) and harm reduction. The goals and objectives of the CHEW Project are summarized in the following work plan:

Work Plan for the Comprehensive Health Education Workers' Project

Overall Goal: The Comprehensive Health Education Workers' (CHEW) Project provides sexual, mental, physical, and social health education and outreach to SGM youth, with special foci on MSM (males who have sex with males) and trans-spectrum (transgender and gender nonconforming) youth subpopulations. Key emphases include HIV and STI awareness, harm reduction, and prevention; addressing risk behaviours; gender and sexual identity development; coming out, suicide ideation, body image, and depression; and testing and sex positivity.

Objective 1: To provide ongoing training and development for CHEW staff using a holistic and inclusive approach to comprehensive health education based on a resilience typology that addresses stressors, risk taking, asset building, and indicators of thriving (Grace, 2015). In order to gain firsthand knowledge and build skills sets in relation to targeted youth subpopulations during program initiation, CHEW staff members job shadow with knowledgeable staff involved in frontline intervention outreach activities at community sites and youth agencies. Staff members also participate in weekly meetings to plan, develop, implement, monitor, and formatively evaluate CHEW project activities.

Objective 2: To provide comprehensive health education and resources for SGM youth, especially those in vulnerable subpopulations. To maximize outreach, CHEW staff members created a website (www.chewproject.ca) where youth are collaborators. Projects include creating (1) zines (online comic magazines) for peers where topics include body image, HIV 101, STI 101, HepC 101 testing, online cruising, depression, and communication; (2) digital comics, which comprise a popular media form used for expression and information sharing regarding trans-spectrum, MSM, and other identities as well as sexual-health issues like HIV; and (3) video projects where youth have opportunities to share their stories and be involved in creative arts-based approaches to health topics. Youth also engage face-to-face in Q (queer) knowledge building and empowerment projects. This includes Totally Outright workshops for MSM and other SGM youth participants that focus on training mentors and peer education. Other core comprehensive health workshops include HIV/STI 101, gender/identity, coming out, and mental-health first aid. Youth can also participate in three other outreach projects: (1) monthly bar and condom patrols at local queer clubs and social events; (2) a weekly drop-in and resource depot; and (3) a monthly social event for queer youth such as a movie night and art jam night. Some workshops and outreach projects are conducted in partnership with other community agencies focused on the comprehensive health of youth.

Objective 3: To provide access to and a safe space for testing for HIV and other STIs since the majority of vulnerable youth are not accessing, or are not consistently accessing, testing due to stigma, fear, and lack of knowledge. Utilizing the CHEW office and the downtown MSM outreach office in a local bathhouse, CHEW staff members support the provision of weekly testing opportunities for HIV and STIs. They provide pre- and post-testing education and support while nurses from the downtown STI clinic do testing at each location. CHEW staff members work with the STI clinic and city's HIV agency focused on harm reduction to assist with regular testing and events highlighting testing.

Objective 4: To provide information presentations on the CHEW Project, knowledge sharing opportunities, and sexual health education. CHEW staff members provide community presentations for various youth-serving agencies and community groups. Outreach is also provided, as resources permit, to the project's target populations navigating schooling and higher learning contexts.

Objective 5: To build a network of community partners and agencies also serving CHEW's key youth subpopulations. CHEW staff members host periodic meetings inviting community service providers doing complementary work. They also engage in agency visits and conduct presentations at staff meetings when invited.

References

Alberta Health. (2013). HIV in Alberta: A brief epi update. A PowerPoint prepared by Kimberley Simmonds, Epidemiologist, Alberta Health.

Grace, A. P. (2014). 3-H clubs for sexual and gender minority youth: Working at iSMSS to make it better now. In D. Gosse (Ed.), *Out proud: Stories of pride, courage, and social justice* (pp. 313-315). St. John's, NL: Breakwater Books & Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.

Grace, A. P., (2015). *Growing into resilience: Sexual and gender minority youth in Canada.* Part II with K. Wells. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Public Health Agency of Canada. (2010, July). HIV/AIDS epi update: HIV/AIDS among youth in Canada. Ottawa: Author.

Educational Outreach Programming

During the 2014-2015 academic year, iSMSS maintained its strong commitment to educational outreach in the Faculty of Education and across other faculties and professional bodies at the University of Alberta. Sessions that iSMSS provides are 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.

Total number of educational outreach sessions delivered: 39 Total number of participants reached: 1,965+

iSMSS has also maintained a strong commitment to volunteerism over the past academic year. In 2014/2015, iSMSS hosted 12 student volunteers from the U of A's Community Service Learning Program. Dr. Wells' new undergraduate course also featured a mandatory CSL component in partnership with Edmonton Public Schools.

Knowledge Mobilization Activities

Alberta Gay-Straight Alliance Conference: The 3rd annual provincial GSA Conference took place in Edmonton at the University of Alberta as part of the province's Bullying Prevention Awareness Week. Each year the GSA conference is organized by the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services and is supported by the Faculty of Education, UofA; Alberta Teachers' Association; Calgary Public School Board; Calgary Police Service; Calgary Sexual Health Centre; Edmonton Public Schools; Edmonton Police Service; Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities; and the Canadian Institutes for Health Research. The conference rotates each year between Calgary and Edmonton. In 2014, the GSA conference hosted close to 200 participants and featured over 20 workshops and a keynote performance from Ivan Coyote.

iSMSS Endowment Campaign

As a University of Alberta fund development priority, iSMSS continues to work towards the goal of raising at least \$5 million dollars to support and sustain core operations of the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services. The fund development campaign will support:

- Expanding Camp fYrefly into a national program: An overwhelming number of youth are currently
 applying to attend. Funds would go to hire a national outreach coordinator to work with local
 communities to set up and operate their own camps, travel, and produce and disseminate
 educational materials. Currently, each time a new camp is established, our two faculty members
 must dedicate weeks of their time to set up, including working on camp curriculum, training staff,
 and setting up a community group network.
- Expanding research programs and services: Funding would support programming, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers.
- Training the next generation of researchers to focus on the intellectual sphere of ideas (the studies function) and the organic sphere of action (the service function). iSMSS will continue to recruit master's, doctoral, and postdoctoral students from across Canada and the world to explore the dynamic interactions that can be established between innovative research, policy development, community outreach, and service provision.
- Creating an endowment to partially support core operating funding in order to provide stability and enable reallocation of resources to continue to develop innovative programming.

Sean Mowat, Director of Advancement, Faculty of Education, manages the increasingly successful campaign. Elizabeth Young assists him in this initiative. For more iSMSS Campaign details, go to http://www.ismss.ualberta.ca/ourcampaign.htm.