

Invisible No More:

Voices from the Queer Community

Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

The [Invisible No More report](#) provides a summary and results from the 2019 study that examined the experiences and needs of 2SLGBTQ+ community members in Sudbury and districts and how they relate to public health.

Main Research Question

What are some of the social and cultural challenges experienced by 2SLGBTQ+ individuals as they relate to public health needs of this population across the life span within Sudbury and districts?

Methods

Digital storytelling was chosen for this research project to meaningfully engage members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Digital storytelling is a qualitative method of gathering data in the form of images, video, audio, and narrative samples that capture the experiences of people in their own voices. It provides group interaction and a cooperative learning process.

Data collection occurred in November 2019, with two workshops, each consisting of four sessions and two circle focus groups. The resulting data includes thirteen digital stories and recorded focus group discussions which have been transcribed.

Participants

Fourteen participants took part in the initial introductory focus groups in the fall of 2019. They ranged in age from 20 to 77 years of age. Six gay men, four transgender individuals, one lesbian and one bisexual woman. Two of the participants identified as non-binary, female leaning to male. Three participants identified as Indigenous, and one identified as Asian. They shared their stories of trauma, of resilience, and of hope for safe spaces and improved programs and services that are inclusive and accepting of the Queer population.

Results

Thematic analysis methods are used to pull themes out of the digital stories and the group discussions. Five main themes emerged from the thematic analysis. These included:

- lack of Queer community and social isolation
- the need for safe, inclusive spaces

- emotional and physical violence
- gaps in service delivery
- resilience and empowerment

Discussion and Key Recommendations

The findings of this research study point to key recommendations for Public Health that can also be applied to other health and social service sectors to begin to address the social and cultural challenges experienced by 2SLGBTQ+ community as identified by the participants.

1. Amplify the voices of 2SLGBTQ+ community members to health and social service providers.
2. Review and modify existing agency policies, procedures, and practices to become more inclusive, welcoming, and equitable for 2SLGBTQ+ community. This includes a focus on recruitment and retention.
3. Identify resources and workforce development initiatives to build internal capacity to foster safe, inclusive spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ staff and community members.
4. Identify and promote education and resources to raise awareness across communities to promote understanding, inclusion, and promote destigmatization of the 2SLGBTQ+ population.
5. Identify initiatives to enhance supports across the life course for 2SLGBTQ+ community members, including vulnerable periods like during youth and older adulthood.
6. Advocate for improved mental health supports and services for 2SLGBTQ+ populations.
7. Advocate for greater opportunities for quality social interaction within safer and more inclusive spaces to promote and enhance social connections and reduce isolation across Queer communities.

Conclusion

The key findings from these narratives demonstrate Queer people in Sudbury and districts have been under threat throughout their lives through oppressive environments and actions which impact their overall health outcomes. The findings of this work and of previous research, indicate that anti-Queer stigma and oppression can adversely impact the health of individuals, as well as the community. In addition, oppression in its various forms, imposes disparity in the access to power and resources within society. The result ensures that there is inequity in economic opportunities, social engagement, political relations, life chances, and health outcomes for Queer people.

As they seek to create safe and accepting environments, Queer people across Northern Ontario continue to demonstrate resilience. Their ideas and suggestions are essential in the ongoing effort to not only establish safe spaces, but to educate and see systematic change for the communities in which they live. This includes helping to make health care providers, institutions, and organizations more inclusive and responsive to Queer people.