



— IN Niagara —

INFORMED, INCLUSIVE, INDIVISIBLE

Collectively Advancing
2SLGBTQ+ Equality in Niagara+

Community Strengths and Needs Assessment

Executive Summary



Community Engagement Process

428 SURVEY RESPONSES

2 PARTICIPATORY MAPPING SESSIONS

7 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

1 QTBIPOC FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

3 COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

1 ARTS WORKSHOP

4 CREATIVE SUBMISSIONS

6 FEEDBACK SESSIONS

A total of 480 people participated in the OUTniagara Community Strengths and Needs Assessment. 428 people completed the online public survey, of which 392 people (92%) are 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members. 45 people engaged in other activities: two participatory mapping sessions, seven key informant interviews, one Queer and Trans Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (QTBIPOC) focus group, three community conversations, one arts workshop, four creative submissions, and six feedback sessions.

Key Strengths

An undocumented but rich queer history and the wisdom of 2SLGBTQQIA+ older adults.

The leadership of students and youth in 2SLGBTQQIA+ student groups and organizing in secondary and post-secondary settings.

Passionate and committed individual community organizers, service providers, activists, artists, parents, caregivers, and educators.

There are a number of health services, school clubs, businesses, online spaces, social services, and cultural spaces where 2SLGBTQQIA+ feel safe and welcome.

Spiritual value and health benefits of connections to land and water.

Arts, theatre and entertainment

2SLGBTQQIA+ friendships, love and solidarity.

Key Issues & Needs

Queer and Trans Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (QTBIPOC)

- Disconnection, exclusion, and isolation in Niagara region, facing racism within and outside of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community
- Racism in job interviews and workplaces
- Professional development and employment needs of new immigrants
- Trauma, mental health, and addiction challenges
- Need for sex and intimacy healing and learning opportunities
- Need for QTBIPOC physical and online spaces

Rural/Remote Communities

- Few to no rural services, supports, and spaces
- Insufficient support for children and parents
- Poor public transportation
- Lack of access to technology and rural high-speed internet
- High levels of fear and discrimination in conservative and religious communities

Health & Healthcare

- Lack of general practitioners who are knowledgeable and supportive of 2SLGBTQQIA+ health
- Distinct lack of physicians willing and trained to provide trans healthcare
- Insufficient coordination and collaboration between health centres and providers
- Lack of trauma and mental health services, such as affordable counsellors
- Lack of overdose prevention services, addiction management services, and long-term rehab programs
- Lack of addiction services competent in 2SLGBTQQIA+ identities and needs and addiction-specific queer support groups
- Lack of 2SLGBTQQIA+ sexual health education and services
- Lack of accessible and affordable family planning and fertility services
- Transphobia and heterosexism in long-term care and retirement homes

Employment & Poverty

- Employer discrimination
- Unemployment, underemployment, and lack of living wages
- Discrimination and violence in workplaces
- Limited support and advocacy from unions

Key Issues & Needs Continued...

Housing & Homelessness

- Affordable housing crisis
- Discrimination from landlords
- Homelessness particularly of youth with unsupportive families, community members struggling with addiction, and community members trying to leave abusive relationships
- Lack of 2SLGBTQQIA+ competence across shelter and homelessness services

Violence & Discrimination

- Systemic transphobia, biphobia, and homophobia, interconnected and compounded by other forms of oppression
- Elementary and secondary schools, particularly Catholic schools, are sites of systemic discrimination and violence
- Public forms of violence and explicit acts of homophobia and transphobia
- Negative impacts of local politicians
- White supremacist, racist, and anti-2SLGBTQQIA+ groups
- Police violence and discrimination
- Lateral violence within 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities

Community & Social Services

- Lack of organizational and front-line care provider knowledge and competence on 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusion
- Barriers and discrimination in disability support services, shelter and homelessness prevention services, and legal services
- Need for broader community and social service planning and implementation

Community & Culture

- Gendered bathrooms, change rooms, and sports teams
- Many recreational spaces and activities are not physically accessible
- Events are centred around cis gay men
- Need for opportunities to connect outside of party spaces in community-oriented, family-friendly, and intergenerational ways
- Limited communication, outreach and inclusion from 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations and service providers
- Issues of transparency, coordination, transphobia, racism, ageism, and accountability with 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations and groups in Niagara

Community Strengths & Needs Assessment

Key Recommendations

Community Recommendations

1. Create more 2SLGBTQQIA+ gatherings, events and spaces
2. Develop additional support groups for 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members
3. Create a list of 2SLGBTQQIA+ friendly health and social service providers
4. Create a directory of 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusive businesses
5. Create a 2SLGBTQQIA+ community hub
6. Develop public education campaigns on 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusion
7. Develop a centralized 2SLGBTQQIA+ website
8. Strengthen collaboration between union locals, labour organizations, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations, trainings, and events
9. Coordinate with collective organizing for housing
10. Create a 2SLGBTQQIA+ histories project

QTBIPOC-Specific Recommendations

1. QTBIPOC-specific spaces and services
2. Strengthen outreach to QTBIPOC and underrepresented groups, including but not limited to sex workers, documents people, migrant workers, and incarcerated people
3. Anti-racism and anti-colonialism education and training
4. Professional development and employment coaching for new immigrants
5. Community accountability and reporting process
6. Uniformed police removed from all Pride and 2SLGBTQQIA+ events in Niagara and replaced with a community safety marshaling program

Community Strengths & Needs Assessment Key Recommendations

Wisdom2Action Recommendations

1. Establish a formal 2SLGBTQQIA+ service providers network
2. Develop a regional planning table for 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusion and health
3. Develop a trans health navigation program
4. Develop funding mechanisms for community events and spaces, with a focus on QTPGM and rural communities
5. Develop a dedicated 2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusion capacity building program

Lateral Violence and Conflict Transformation Sub-Report Recommendations

1. Develop/revise and implement conflict prevention and resolution policies and processes across all 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations and organizations serving 2SLGBTQQIA+ people
2. Seek organizational commitments and funding for a community Safety Lab project
3. Refer interpersonal conflicts to relevant mediation services



سناس (Breathe)
Rabia Choudhary

Project Background

The Informed, Inclusive, Indivisible: Collectively Advancing 2SLGBTQ+ Equality in Niagara+ project was funded through an application to the LGBTQ2 Community Capacity Fund under Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) in early summer 2020, and was awarded \$299,941 (the full amount of the proposed budget), starting in late fall 2020. Through this funding, OUTniagara was able to bring on two staff members, as well as work with a range of contractors and consultants.

To provide feedback and community insights on the various phases of the Community Strengths and Needs Assessment, as well as the implementation process for the project's outcomes and recommendations, OUTniagara formed its regional advisory committee, OUT IN Niagara. This committee is composed of individuals living and working across the various municipalities in the Niagara region. Each member of OUT IN Niagara received a monthly honourarium for their involvement, which included a monthly full committee meeting, as well as various Working Group meetings.

This process also included the formation of an Agencies & Partners Working Group, which included the following agencies and organizations:

- Brock Social Justice Centre
- Bridges Community Health Centre
- Centre de Santé Communautaire
- Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre
- John Howard Society of Niagara
- Niagara Community Legal Clinic
- Niagara District CUPE Council
- Niagara Health System
- Niagara Falls Community Health Centre
- Niagara Folk Arts & Multicultural Centre
- OPIRG Brock
- PFLAG St. Catharines Niagara
- Pathstone Mental Health
- Positive Living Niagara
- Quest Community Health Centre
- Senior Pride Network Niagara
- Silver Spire Church
- Suitcase In Point
- YMCA Employment & Immigrant Svcs
- Youth Wellness Hub (Contact Niagara)
- Underdogs Boxing Gym
- Willow Arts Community

Throughout the feedback process, the Board of Directors, OUT IN Niagara, the Agencies & Partners Working Group, as well as various community groups and individuals, have been active in reviewing drafts and providing insights and data validation.

Community Engagement Process

Approaches

Wisdom2Action's approach to this Community Strengths and Needs Assessment is guided by our values. We strive to align every aspect of the assessment with our fundamental values of anti-oppression, appreciative inquiry, community development, and collective impact.

Limitations

While many 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members participated in the Community Strengths and Needs Assessment, there are communities and important voices that are not represented or underrepresented. Ongoing efforts were made to make it possible for incarcerated folks, people with lived experience of homelessness, sex workers, intersex people, newcomers and immigrants, migrant workers, and non-English speakers to participate. Outreach to these groups was done in various ways but was met with many roadblocks and was largely unsuccessful. We also recognize that the summer and fall of 2021 was a particular time of mourning for many Indigenous communities, with the recovering of thousands of unmarked graves at former Residential Schools and the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

Engagement with various workers and labourers, both unionized and non-unionized, and working in the formal and informal economies, varied across the research process. Engaging with workers in the context of their work environment was limited by COVID-19 safety restrictions and was highly dependent on the context of the work environment. For example, migrant workers were in the middle of their season during the COVID-19 pandemic when the survey launched and consultations began. In the case of labour unions, promotional materials were widely circulated on social media. The Niagara District CUPE Council was highly engaged, however, this does not encompass the many different union locals, or necessarily the experiences of their membership. Web promotion, rather than presentations at the union locals' meetings, may have resulted in many unionized workers missing the opportunity to participate in the survey.

Community Engagement Process cont'd

Youth perspectives are also not as well represented as they could be in this report. Secondary schools and 2SLGBTQQIA+ student groups were off for the summer, and some student groups actually haven't been meeting regularly since before COVID-19. Niagara has a large population of transient post-secondary students, many of whom do not stay in Niagara over the summer and may have missed the opportunity to participate in the survey.

It is not possible for this report to fully encompass every need and experience of Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community in all its diversity, but rather to provide a high-level overview of key strengths, needs, gaps, and recommendations with as much attention to equity, intersectionality, and detail as possible.

We also recognize that trust and past harm is a consideration and barrier to community members who have been exploited by researchers in the past or who have not felt seen, heard, or valued by OUTniagara or Niagara's 2SLGBTQQIA+ community more broadly. Trust takes time and consistency, and we hope that this CSNA process and report is a step in rebuilding relationships and trust that have been lost or damaged.



Health & Healthcare
Lisa Forstinger

Glossary of Terms

Refer to the Community Strengths & Needs Assessment for the full Glossary of Terms.

2SLGBTQIA+: 2-Spirit (Two-Spirit), lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual. The + where used denotes the diversity of remaining identities not covered in the acronym.

Ally: Rooted in the term "alliance", an ally is an individual in a position of privilege or power who makes consistent efforts to understand, uplift, and support equity-deserving groups. An ally is not a member of the group, but seeks to act in solidarity to end oppression, discrimination and/or prejudice.

Asexual: A person who experiences little or no sexual attraction to people of any gender.

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to people of more than one gender.

Cis(gender): A person whose gender identity is in alignment with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Demisexual: Someone who has little to no sexual attraction to others unless a strong emotional connection is formed, while romantic attraction may form more easily

Dead Name: The name that a person was given when they were born but they no longer use, usually a trans or non-binary person. Some people use the term 'birth name', but the word 'dead' is used to emphasize the seriousness of not using the person's birth name. Use of someone's 'dead name' is offensive and, in the case of a trans person, generally misgenders them.

Endosex/Dyadic: A person whose chromosomal, hormonal, or anatomical sex characteristics fall within the conventional classifications of male or female.

Gay: A person who is attracted to people of the same gender.

Gender Expression: How someone publicly shows or presents their gender through their appearance, name, preferred pronouns, speech, and behaviour. Gender expression can align with gender identity but is separate.

Genderqueer/Non-binary: Individuals who do not follow gender stereotypes based on the sex they were assigned at birth. They may identify and express themselves as "feminine men" or "masculine women" or as androgynous, outside of the categories "boy/man" and "girl/woman." People who are non-binary may or may not identify as trans.

Gender Identity: A person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person's sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither or anywhere along the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be the same as or different from their sex assignment at birth.

Glossary of Terms cont'd

Indigiqueer: An identity term that may be used by someone who is both Indigenous and queer that emphasizes the intersections of both identities. The term is described by Joshua Whitehead, a Two-Spirit, Oji-nehiyaw Indigiqueer scholar from Peguis First Nation who popularized the term, as "a braiding of two bridges" - indigeneity and queerness - and "the forward moving momentum for two-spiritness". Someone who identifies as Indigiqueer may or may not also identify as Two-Spirit.

Intersectionality: A term coined by black feminist legal scholar Dr. Kimberle Crenshaw to describe the ways in which our identities (such as race, gender, class, ability, etc.) intersect to create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Intersex: A person born with sex characteristics (chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, or genitals) that do not fit the typical medical definitions of male or female bodies.

Lesbian: A woman who is attracted to women.

Misgender: The act of referring to someone, intentionally or not, with a term that does not align with their gender identity. This includes using the wrong pronouns, using a trans person's dead name, or using a gendered term (sir or ma'am, husband or wife, etc.).

Pansexual: A person who is attracted to other people regardless of gender.

Pronouns: Words that refer to a person when not using their name. Gendered pronouns include she/her and he/him. Gender-neutral pronouns include they/them or neo-pronouns such as ze/zir and ey/em.

Queer: An umbrella term used and reclaimed by some whose sexual orientations and/or gender identities fall outside of cisgender/straight norms.

Questioning: A period where a person explores their own sexual identity, orientation, and/or gender.

Trans: An umbrella term referring to people whose gender identities differ from the sex they were assigned at birth. "Trans" can mean transcending beyond, existing between, or crossing over the gender spectrum. It includes but is not limited to people who identify as transgender, transsexual, non-binary or gender non-conforming (gender variant or genderqueer).

Two-Spirit: A pan-Indigenous term used by some Indigenous LGBTQQIA+ people that honours male/female, and other gendered or non-gendered spirits, as well as spiritual and cultural expressions. The term may also be used interchangeably to express one's sexuality, gender, and spirituality as separate terms for each or together as an interrelated identity that captures the wholeness of their gender and sexuality with their spirituality.



Untitled
Melissa Montovani

All artwork shown are commissioned pieces by Niagara artists involved in the project.

This OUTniagara Project was generously funded
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To read the full version of this report, learn how OUTniagara is putting
recommendations into action, and to partner with us in
our work refer to our website
www.outniagara.org

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