



Aboriginal Two-Spirit and LGBTQ
Migration, Mobility, and Health
Research Project
Vancouver Final Report

**Aboriginal Two-Spirit and LGBTQ Migration, Mobility and Health Research Project:
Vancouver Final Report, September 2011**

Research Team

Principal Investigator: Janice Ristock, Women's and Gender Studies Program, Faculty of Arts, University of Manitoba

Co-Investigator: Art Zoccole, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations, Toronto

Vancouver Advisory Committee Members:

Ken Clement (Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network)
Karen Joseph (Community Advocate, Independent Aboriginal Contractor)
Raigen D'Angelo (Trans Alliance Society of BC)
Tia Eagles Claw (BC Persons with AIDS Society)
Lynda Gray (Urban Native Youth Association)
Robert Hong (Four Feather Society, Aboriginal Wellness Program Vancouver Coastal Health)
Winston Thompson (Healing Our Spirit)
Sarah Hunt (Community Advocate, Independent Contractor)

Research Coordinator, Vancouver: Jonathan Potskin

Layout and Design: Juliana West

The Two-Spirit logo designed for this document symbolizes the merging of three liberation movements: the medicine wheel with the four directions, the pink triangle and the pride flag (Thanks to Albert McLeod for this interpretation).

Project Funders: Canadian Institutes of Health Research and Sexual and Gender Diversity: Vulnerability and Resilience (SVR) Research Program

When referencing this document, we recommend the following citation:

Ristock, J., Zoccole, A., and Potskin, J. (2011). *Aboriginal Two-Spirit and LGBTQ Migration, Mobility and Health Research Project: Vancouver, Final Report, September 2011.*

© Copyright 2011, Janice Ristock, Art Zoccole and Jonathan Potskin. All rights reserved, but permission to duplicate freely given on request.

For more information, please contact Janice Ristock at ristock@cc.umanitoba.ca

This report is also available at www.2spirits.com





Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Purpose | 1 |
| Research Context | 1 |
| Background | 2 |
| Research Process | 3 |
| Literature Review | 3 |
| Defining Terms - Aboriginal and Two-Spirit | 3 |
| Health Concerns of Aboriginal Two-Spirit and LGBTQ Peoples | 4 |
| Forced Mobility | 5 |
| Mobility | 5 |
| Methodology | 7 |
| Research Findings | 8 |
| Demographic Information | 8 |
| Main Themes from Qualitative Interviews/Focus Groups | 12 |
| Reasons for Moving | 12 |
| Description of Identities | 13 |
| Negative Impact of Moving | 15 |
| Negative Impacts of Moving on Health | 16 |
| Positive Impact of Moving | 17 |
| Resilience | 18 |
| Conclusion | 19 |
| Recommendations | 19 |
| Conclusion | 22 |
| Glossary of Terms | 22 |
| References | 24 |
| Acknowledgements | 26 |
| Appendices | 27 |



Introduction

Purpose

This pilot project explored the trajectories of migration of Aboriginal people who identify as Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer (LGBTQ) and the impact of mobility on health and wellness. This included migration from reserves to urban centres or rural communities (and back and forth) as well as staying or moving within one place. We were interested in the intersection between sexual and gender identities with culture/Nation and other identities within the historical and present context of colonization in Canada.

More specifically this research project had the following objectives:

- to explore the migration paths and experiences of Aboriginal Two-Spirit and LGBTQ peoples, their experiences of health/wellness in that context, and their interactions with health and social services (including mainstream, Aboriginal and LGBTTTQ services); and
- to generate new knowledge that may lead to future research that will be of direct benefit to LGBTTTQ and Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal service providers and health/social service agencies.

Research Context

This exploratory pilot project was a sub-project of Sexualities, Vulnerability and Resilience (SVR), a nation-wide research project funded by the CIHR (Canadian Institutes of Health Research) under the direction of Dr. Danielle Julien, UQAM. The Aboriginal Two-Spirit and LGBTQ Migration, Mobility and Health Research Team consists of principal investigators Janice Ristock (Professor, Women's and Gender Studies Program and Associate VP Research, University of Manitoba) and Art Zoccole (Executive Director, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations, Toronto). This qualitative project was completed in consort with a similar project on migration and health outcomes among LGBTQ refugees under the direction of Shari Brotman, (Associate Professor, School of Social Work, McGill). In addition to the principal investigators, work was undertaken by research coordinators in each site: Jonathan Potskin, MA Student and formerly an educator at Healing Our Spirit in Vancouver and Lisa Passante, social worker and MSW student in Winnipeg. Each site worked with a

community Advisory Committee. This project was carried out in keeping within the principles of Indigenous community-based research (CIHR, 2007; First Nations Centre, 2007).

In Vancouver, Advisory Committee members were Ken Clement, Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network; Karen Joseph, Community Advocate, Independent Aboriginal Contractor; Raigen D'Angelo, Trans Alliance Society of BC; Tia Eagles Claw, BC Persons with AIDS Society; Lynda Gray, Urban Native Youth Association; Robert Hong, Four Feather Society and Aboriginal Wellness Program Vancouver Coastal Health; Winston Thompson, Healing Our Spirit; and Sarah Hunt, Community Advocate, Independent Contractor.

As this project was undertaken in two different Canadian cities, the research processes in each site were responsive to and driven by the differing Aboriginal communities and needs.

Background

Vancouver is home to 40,310 Aboriginal peoples or 1.9 percent of the population. British Columbia is home to 198 First Nations and has the greatest diversity of Aboriginal cultures in Canada. Linguistic groupings include Haida, Tsimshian, Salish, Athapaskan and Nisga'a.

Winnipeg is home to the largest urban Aboriginal population in the country. Reported from the latest census results (Statistics Canada, 2006), more Aboriginal people live in the city of Winnipeg than any other major city in Canada on a total number and per capita basis. In Manitoba, there are 63 First Nations, encompassing six of the twenty largest bands in the country. The predominant First Nations linguistic groups in Manitoba are Cree, Ojibway, Dakota, Ojibway-Cree and Dene. There is also a large Métis population, many who speak French as a first language.

Bearing in mind these differing contexts and socio-demographics, the research methodology was designed to create useful knowledge - by working within a community context to elicit peoples' stories and to allow for a variety of experiences to be heard (Kirby et al, 2006; Ristock & Pennell, 1996). Following principles of community-based research (CIHR, 2007; First Nations Centre, 2007), we used semi-structured focus groups and individual interviews to gather information on experiences of migration and mobility.

Vancouver is home to 40,310 Aboriginal peoples or 1.9% of the population. British Columbia is home to 198 First Nations and has the greatest diversity of Aboriginal cultures in Canada. Linguistic groupings include Haida, Tsimshian, Salish, Athapaskan and Nisga'a.

This report reviews the findings of the research conducted in Vancouver. Another report documents the findings from the research conducted in Winnipeg. (Go to <http://www.2spirits.com/MMHReport.pdf> to access the Winnipeg Final report).

Research Process

Community Consultations and Advisory Committees

From the beginning, it was important to us to engage in a process of collaboration and community building in rooting this research project to Winnipeg and Vancouver communities respectively. Before Advisory Committees were created, and before the research questions and design were finalized, each research coordinator engaged in a process of community connecting and consultation (Cahill, Sultana & Pain, 2007; Ristock & Pennel, 1996; Wilson, 2008). Key community members and stakeholders were identified and contacted to identify issues, interests and concerns related to Two-

**In Vancouver, we consulted with
15 people from
12 programs/agencies.**

Spirit people and migration. In Vancouver, we consulted with 15 people including staff from 12 programs/agencies that provide services to Two-Spirit people. All consultations occurred in person or via telephone contact. These initial consultations helped inform the questions we developed for the research project.

The Research Team and Advisory Committee discussed and adopted the Guiding Principles for Research with Aboriginal Communities and the principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP) (First Nations Centre, 2007; see Appendix A). The principles of OCAP are necessary in order for researchers to work with/within Indigenous communities in a respectful way. In accepting these guiding principles, all members committed to working together in producing and sharing meaningful knowledge in a way that respects the integrity and rights of Indigenous peoples and communities (CIHR, 2007; First Nations Centre, 2007; Kovach, 2005; Wilson, 2008).



Literature Review

Defining Terms – Aboriginal and Two-Spirit

For the purposes of this project, we use the term *Aboriginal* to refer to First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples (First Nations Centre, 2007). This definition includes all status, non-status, and people of blended ancestry that choose to self-identify as Aboriginal (Guimond, 2003; Siggner, 2003a, 2003b).

We also use the term *Two-Spirit* to refer to all sexual and gender variance among people of Indigenous North American descent: in other words, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer identities. The term *Two-Spirit* has multiple contemporary meanings and highlights historical elements regarding the possible positions of Two-Spirit peoples in their communities and their place in the sacred circle (Wilson, 1996). The term was coined at the Third International Two-Spirit Gathering in 1990 in Winnipeg, Manitoba (Meyer-Cook & Labelle, 2004; Roscoe, 1998). Walters, Evans-Campbell, Simoni, Ronquillo, and Bhuyan (2006) emphasize the political implications for some people who have chosen to use the term Two-Spirit. They indicate that the term is used to reconnect with specific (Indigenous) Nation traditions related to sexual and gender identity; to move beyond Eurocentric binary categories of sex and gender; to state the fluidity and non-linear nature of

The term Two-Spirit has multiple contemporary meanings and also highlights historical elements regarding the possible positions of Two-Spirit peoples in their communities and their place in the sacred circle. Two-Spirit identity affirms the interrelatedness of all aspects of identity - including gender, sexuality, community, culture, and spirituality (Wilson, 1996).

identity processes; and to fight against heterosexism in Aboriginal communities and racism in LGBTQ communities. Furthermore, Wilson (1996) emphasizes that Two-Spirit identity affirms the interrelatedness of all aspects of identity - therefore including gender, sexuality, community, culture, and spirituality. However recognizing that not all Aboriginal LGBTQ people identify as Two-Spirit, we asked participants how they self-identify regarding their Aboriginal identity, sexuality, and gender. We did not impose our definitions but use the self-definitions of our participants.

Health Concerns of Aboriginal Two-Spirit and LGBTQ Peoples

It is impossible to consider research regarding the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Two-Spirit and LGBTQ people without considering the historical impacts of colonization and its contemporary effects – what Fieland, Walters and Simoni (2007) refer to as “historical and contemporary trauma”- trauma that interacts with socio-demographic vulnerabilities to negatively affect the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples (p. 268; see also CIHR, 2007; Walters & Simoni, 2002). We must also consider the marginalization, stigma, and ongoing prejudice LGBTQ people experience in their daily lives and in accessing health care. The impact of structural oppression including homophobia, heterosexism and racism are all likely to play a role in the health and well-being of Aboriginal Two-Spirit and LGBTQ people (Taylor and Ristock, 2011; Canadian Rainbow Health Coalition, 2004; Matiation, 1999).

The impact of structural oppression including homophobia, heterosexism and racism are all likely to play a role in the health and well-being of Aboriginal Two-Spirit and LGBTQ peoples (Taylor & Ristock, 2011; Canadian Rainbow Health Coalition, 2004; Matiation, 1999).

Specifically, however, there has been very little health research conducted regarding Aboriginal Two-Spirit and LGBTQ people. The most comprehensive review has been done by Fieland et al. (2007) and reflects an American context. Fieland et al. (2007) used existing data regarding American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) peoples and amalgamated it with research that has been done regarding LGBT health in an attempt to present an emerging perspective on Two-Spirit health. They focused on four key areas: morbidity and mortality; mental health; substance use; and sexually transmitted infections (including HIV). They concluded that both communities face significant health disparities in the four key areas that they reviewed and that these have not yet been adequately measured. Further, their review shows the ways in which Two-Spirit health is affected by both interpersonal and structural factors. Historical trauma, health care system inequities, hate-motivated violence, and childhood physical and sexual abuse are some of the determinants that can be linked to negative health outcomes for Two-Spirit people. In considering health concerns, we also know that both Indigenous and LGBTQ individuals move as a result of marginalization and/or to seek health care (in addition to other reasons).

Forced Mobility

It is important to acknowledge the historical context of forced mobility that existed as a result of colonization practices enacted against Indigenous nations. Residential schools and experiences of

It is important to acknowledge the historical context of forced mobility that existed as a result of colonization practices enacted against Indigenous nations ... residential schools, child welfare apprehensions, entire community relocations (Environics Institute, 2010).

foster and adoptive care in the child welfare system have been the main sources of forced mobility, although forced relocation of entire communities has also been well-documented (Environics Institute, 2010). In the most benign version, children were removed from their families, prohibited from speaking their first language, and taught ways and customs alien to their home communities. Many survivors report experiences of sexual, physical and emotional abuse resulting in shame about their Indigenous identities, an interruption in cultural development and functioning, and a substandard education to that received by non-Aboriginal children (Dickason, 2006; Ray, 2005).

The “Sixties Scoop” is a term used to describe the removal of ‘neglected’ or disadvantaged Aboriginal children and placement of these children with white families, either in foster care or as adoptees (Dickason, 2006, p. 229). This practice was very common in the 1950s and culminated in the 1960s and 1970s with as many as 15,000 Indigenous children adopted into non-Native families, 3000 from Manitoba alone. These children were placed in locales across Canada and the US with some sent even further away (Dickason, 2006).

Mobility

Beyond the history of residential schools and foster care, a considerable amount of research has explored experiences of urban Aboriginals in Canada. Many First Nation communities have provided support for their individual members to come to the city to attend colleges and universities, and over half of Aboriginal peoples today live in both an urban centre as well as within their original communities.

Obviously, we know that Aboriginal people moving to cities contend with some of the same challenges as people moving from other countries or rural and northern communities to new cities – issues such as integrating into urban economies, interacting with different people from many places, and finding suitable housing and education. Similar to the experiences of other people who immigrate to a new city or country, many Aboriginal people also maintain close links to their communities of origin. Unlike immigrants, however, Aboriginal people are moving within their traditional territorial lands (Newhouse & Peters, 2003).

Most recently, the *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study* (UAPS) found that Urban Aboriginal peoples and groups differ significantly in their degree of urbanization – the most urbanized groups include Non-Status First Nations peoples and Métis (most likely to have lived in their city 20 years or more) with the least urbanized being the Inuit and Status First Nations. Aboriginal peoples move to the city for family, education, and work opportunities, as well as the amenities and services available. One gender difference that was exhibited among UAPS participants was that women noted family and education more typically as reasons for moving, along with leaving to escape a bad family situation. Men, on the other hand, cited moving to the city primarily for work (Environics Institute, 2010).

Similar to the experiences of other people who immigrate to a new city or country, many Aboriginal people also maintain close links to their communities of origin. Unlike immigrants, however, Aboriginal people are moving within their traditional territorial lands (Newhouse & Peters, 2003).

Regarding health, the UAPS found that most respondents rated their health as excellent, very good, or good. Not surprisingly, perceptions of health are higher for younger participants, more educated participants and those with higher incomes. As well, participants in Halifax, Vancouver, Calgary and Montreal were slightly more likely than average to say they are in excellent-to-good health (Environics Institute, 2010).

While the UAPS findings are generally positive, one study conducted specifically on migration with Two-Spirit youth indicates a different reality. Teens and Travers (2006) found that Two-Spirit youth in their sample moved to the city to avoid homophobia and seek a better life. In the city, they identified a number of challenges such as finding housing and employment, dealing with racism and exploitation, and experiencing barriers in accessing services. They also found that migration could have a positive impact on Two-Spirit identity formation. Thus, more research is needed beyond this one study to understand Aboriginal Two-Spirit and LGBTQ peoples' urban experiences. In our study, we hoped to bring forward Aboriginal Two-Spirit and LGBTQ peoples' experiences of moving and the accompanying positive and/or negative impacts on health and well-being.



Methodology

This was a qualitative, community-based research project. Criteria for participation included people 19 years of age or older who self-identify as Aboriginal (including First Nations, Inuit and Métis); and who self-identify as Two-Spirit, and/or LGBTQ, or as WSW (women who have sex with women) or MSM (men who have sex with men); with experiences of migration/moving; and a minimum of conversational English.

We recruited through Advisory Committee Members, through posters at key organizations, through mass emails, also through word of mouth. All participants received a \$25 honorarium. Those participating in focus groups also received food and drinks.

Individual and small focus group interviews were held in community organizations. After securing consent, participants completed a set of background demographic questions (see Appendix B). Questions included status, gender, sexuality, age, education, forced mobility, experiences of domestic violence, health concerns, connection to traditional practices, types of moves, numbers of moves, and travel to a home community.

Thereafter, a semi-structured set of discussion questions was used to help facilitate the interviews or focus groups (see Appendix C). These questions focused more specifically on participants' experiences of migration and factors that motivated them to move or stay in place, including experiences of home, community and belonging. We asked about the effects of moving on health and wellbeing, as well as use of services, and for recommendations regarding services for Two-Spirit people. The guides offered a framework yet enough flexibility to hold participants and the research coordinator in a kind of mutual conversation.

**We asked about:
the effects of moving on health and
wellbeing,
use of services, and
recommendations regarding services for**

All interviews and focus groups were audio recorded. A list of community resources was provided after each interview or focus group to offer support if needed after participation. Honoraria were provided at the end of each interview/focus group.

Project Timeline: Consultation in communities began in November 2007, advisory committees were formed in March 2008 and ethics approval was received in June 2008. Interviews and focus groups took place from September to March 2009, data analysis and writing of the report May 2009 to June 2010, sharing the report for community feedback July to December 2010, and finalizing the report January to June 2011.



Research Findings

I. Demographic Information

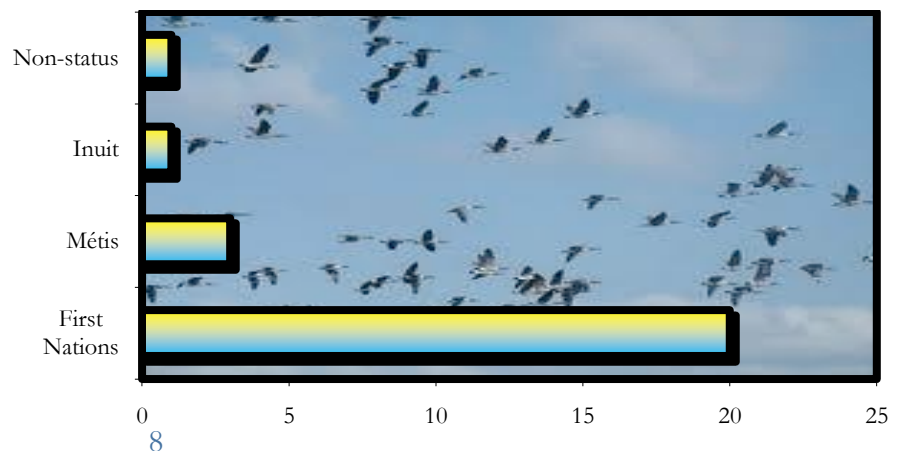
Participants

In Vancouver, we spoke with 25 participants. This included one youth focus group, one women's focus group, one open focus group, as well as individual interviews.

The following information provides a profile of the participants in Vancouver based on their self-identification.

Status

- 20 First Nations
- 3 Métis
- 1 Inuit
- 1 non-status



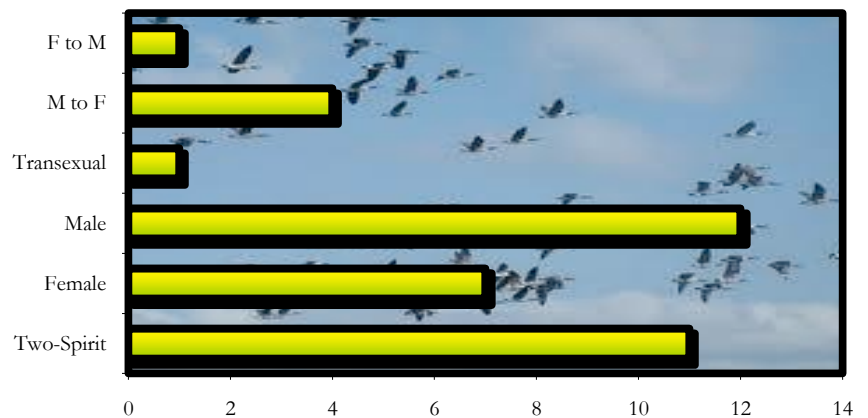
Sexuality

- 3 bisexual
- 2 lesbian
- 9 Two-Spirit
- 2 straight
- 4 gay
- 1 other
- 4 gay and Two-Spirit



Gender

- 7 female
- 12 male
- 4 male to female transgender
- 1 transsexual
- 1 female to male transgender
- 11 people also identified their gender as Two-Spirit

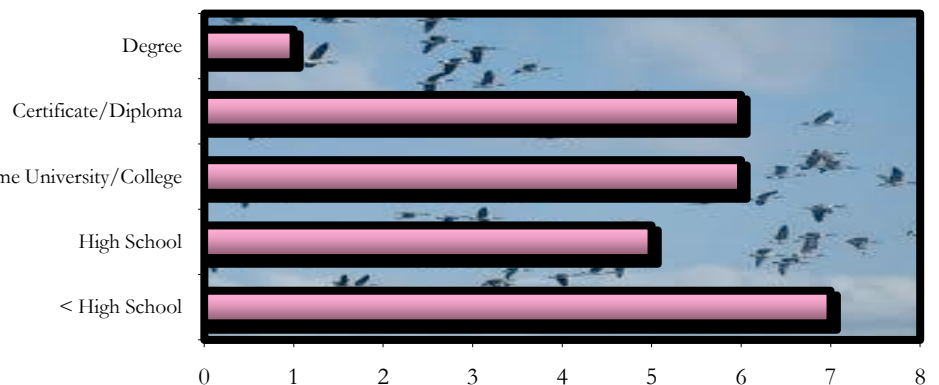


Age

- Range from 19 – 61 years
- Average age: 38 years

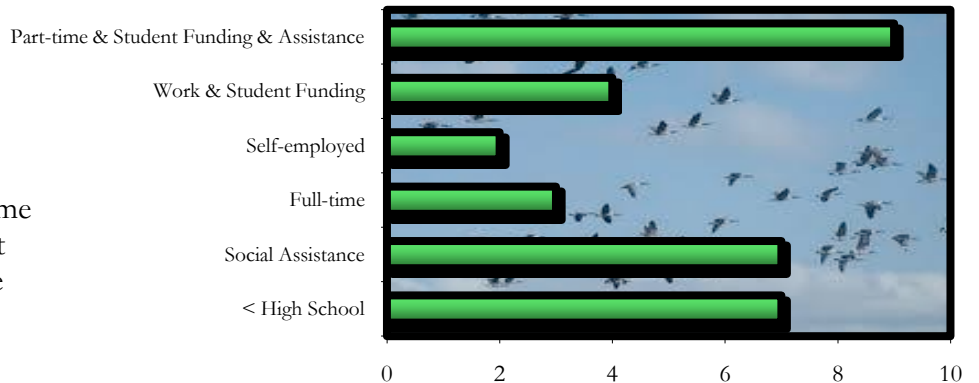
Education

- 7 people have not completed high school
- 5 have a high school diploma
- 6 have some university or college
- 6 have completed a college certificate or diploma,
- 1 person completed a university degree



Income

- 7 people receive social assistance
- 3 work full-time
- 2 self-employed
- 4 work and receive student funding
- 9 describe a combination of part-time or casual work, student funding, and assistance (of these two also mentioned working in the sex trade)



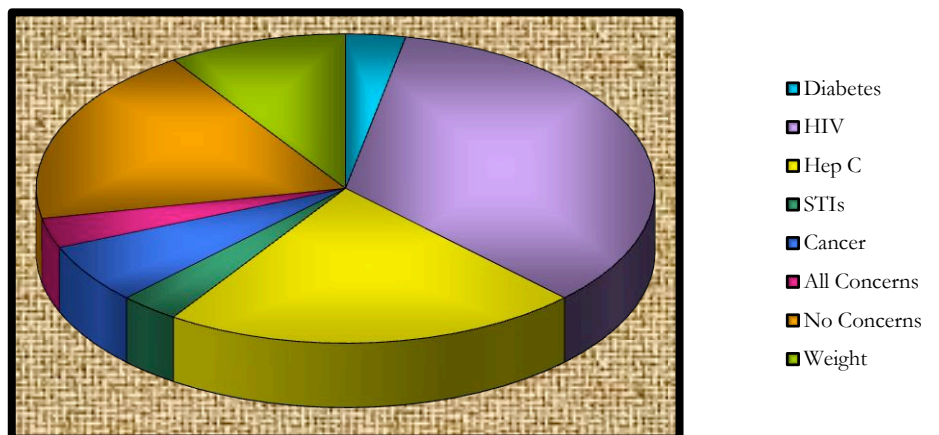
Accommodations/ Housing for the last 12 months

- 20 people rent a house or apartment
- 4 live in room and board
- 1 person owns a house



Health Concerns

- 6 people identified that they have no health concerns
- 11 people identified HIV
- 7 people identified HEP C
- 3 identified weight issues
- 2 Cancer
- 1 STI's
- 1 Diabetes
- 1 person identified that all of the above were their health concerns



Domestic Violence

Twenty-three participants indicated they had experienced domestic violence. Only two out of 25 participants have not experienced domestic violence (both were gay males).

Language

Six out of 25 participants report having no knowledge of their traditional language; 19 participants have knowledge of their traditional language.

Cultural Practices

Most (20) report engaging in some cultural practices but five participants do not practice any cultural traditions.

Forced Moves

- 14 people identified that they were taken away from their families as children:
 - 4 people indicated they had been to a residential school
 - 22 participants identified a relative that went to Residential school (Mother, Father, Grandparent, Aunt, Uncle, and 1st Cousins)
 - 3 didn't know if they had a relative that went to residential school
- 16 people identified that they felt they were forced out of their Aboriginal community because of their gender or sexual identity

Moves as Adults

All participants reported having moved many times throughout their lives.

To the city from First Nations communities or rural communities (with parents, alone, with a partner): Sixteen people identified that they moved from their reserve communities to the city: three moved only once in their lives, three moved twice in their lives, while the rest reported moving four or more times from the First Nation communities to the city.

Back and forth between city and First Nation communities and/or rural communities: All participants live in Vancouver most of the time. Two reported going to their First Nation community and living there some of the time, while one person indicated that they sometimes live in Kamloops and go back and forth between Vancouver and Kamloops.

19 people identified that they have lived in a town with the average of people moving more than five times from towns to the city or back to their reserve.

Within the city multiple times: 15 people identified that they moved around the city more than four times with most reporting that they moved over 10 times within the city.

Other: In this sample, 19 of the participants moved inter-provincially (most were from Manitoba). Only one person reported that they were born and grew up in Vancouver. Five people have lived internationally at some time.

II. Main Themes from Qualitative Interviews/Focus Groups

Reasons for Moving

There were many reasons as to why people moved to Vancouver. Participants shared stories about moving to Vancouver for higher education. They felt that obtaining a higher education would assist them in leaving their small communities. There were also many stories of participants leaving their homes to come to the city to be a part of a larger LGBT*IQ community and in order to come out of the closet and be open about their sexual and/or gender identity.

Two participants talked about growing up in care and at one time being sent to Vancouver to live in foster care or with another family. A couple of participants spoke of coming for a visit and then not leaving.

Many Transgender participants moved because of the availability of gender reassignment services in the city.

Participants living with HIV often moved to Vancouver because of their health status and the range of treatment options and programs that are offered in British Columbia.

Two participants left relationships and came to the city to live anonymously, both leaving domestic violent relationships; one of these participants was leaving an abusive straight relationship.

Vancouver's climate also played a huge role in why people moved since it is a warm environment in the winters compared to other Canadian cities. Further, the strong First Nations presence was something that was discussed by participants that came originally from eastern Canada.

The following quotations are from the participants and reflect the range of reasons for their moves:

I guess in short I moved to Vancouver because I was in care of the Ministry for a brief period of time, so I was placed here and then this last move, I moved back for school and employment basically (Two-Spirit woman, age 19).

I had to get out of this abusive relationship that I was in and I chose Vancouver because my sister, my older sister lives here, and if I went back to Edmonton, my ex would have found me and it would have been really horrible (Two-Spirit Woman, age 41).

For me, I ended up here by default and strangely enough, I ended up making this my home. And I did that, I gave up the love of my life, (name), big saucer doe eyes (Two-Spirit trans female, age 38).

I left Edmonton because Surrey was way more spiritual (Two-Spirit trans female, age 34).

I moved to Vancouver so I could attend the Community College, and plus also living in the Hazelton area, it's very rural and there's no work and no other school (Two-Spirit male, age 59).

It was pretty hard to get away, but I'm a survivor of abuse and incest and when I finally got away, I moved to Prince George and went to high school, and then entered Simon Fraser University, so that's how I came to Vancouver (Two-Spirit woman, age 61).

I grew up in Binche, and later went to camp 24, when the residential schools came to get me I went to Fort St James. I spent 13 years in Residential schools. Went to college in Prince George then moved to Vancouver for university. Because I knew I was a lesbian, and wanted to come to Vancouver to explore this side of me. While in residential schools I saw a lot of sex. It was all hidden, and there were a lot of girls exploring with each other (Two-Spirit woman, age 51).

The pursuit to further my education at UBC was to become a teacher in the Native Indian Teacher Education program, and actually it was quite an eye-opening experience coming to the city (Two-Spirit man, age 25).

Description of Identities

Moving to Vancouver assisted participants in finding a personal identity either with their sexuality and/or gender identity and/or Aboriginal identity.

Having an LBGTTQ Identity was also a factor that most participants mentioned when discussing moving to and within Vancouver. Many people described that in First Nations communities and/or small or rural towns they could not fully be themselves as a LBGTTQ person. Moving to Vancouver assisted participants in finding a personal identity either with their sexuality and/or gender identity and/or Aboriginal identity.

For those participants that were facing issues with their sexuality they moved to Vancouver to explore the anonymity that a big city like Vancouver can offer when it comes to exploring the “gay lifestyle”. The participants found that they could come to Vancouver and explore the feelings that they were suppressing from being a part of a small Aboriginal community, First Nation, or a big family.

Gender reassignment was another reason cited by some participants for their move to Vancouver. At one time, there was a Gender Clinic offered in the Vancouver Hospital that assisted men and women. The Clinic no longer exists and there is only a program called Trans Health to assist people across British Columbia.)

Aboriginal identity was another factor in peoples move to Vancouver. There is a strong presence of West Coast First Nation culture around Vancouver. The Squamish Nation also has a space within their sweat lodges that has been offered to the Two-Spirit Community. There is a Two-Spirit Sweat Lodge and prayer area with a Traditional Medicine Wheel. Having many Aboriginal community services and programs in place in Vancouver assisted participants in receiving help when moving to the city as well as created opportunities for bonding with the Aboriginal community of Vancouver. Within the city, several participants compared the West End of Vancouver to East Side Vancouver. Most of the youth felt most comfortable living in East Vancouver, around the Commercial Drive area and spoke only of going to the West End for the bar scene. Commercial drive gave the youth a more comfortable setting to live in with being Aboriginal, and also a feeling of safety as a Two-Spirit person. The West End is a gay neighbourhood but many youth felt there is evidence of racism within the gay community.

The following are examples of how some participants spoke about their identities:

Like I was raised very white, and how I totally kept my lifestyle that way, not realizing, and being Métis, of course, we never, at least from my experience, but I know of other Métis families that grew up in 100 Miles, we didn't live on the res. That was not our community, so even when we went to school with all the other kids who were from the rez, Cameron Lake, they weren't us. Even when we went to school and we started migrating into school, it was strange because we didn't know how to connect, even though we have something in common, being the first people of Canada (Two-Spirit woman, age 38).

... like what it means to be Two-Spirit ... it's like a new word for a very old feeling. That's always stuck with me, it being defined like that (Two-Spirit woman, age 19).

Choosing my own identity and sexuality just seemed like the more that chances were I was going to be able to find others like me (Two-Spirit women, age 55).

Yeah, and also learning more about myself, like what it means to be Two-Spirit and I think that, like the way it was described to me when I first talked to somebody about it, was he said, it's like a new word for a very old feeling. That's always stuck with me, it being defined like that (Two-Spirit woman, age 19).

I choose the physical appearance of a butch identity specifically so that no one is able to misconstrue who I am and can clearly see I am a First Nations Indian and that I am a queer/lesbian/dyke/Two-Spirited person and I, I am really open about all of that and really, really free to be engaged. I'm more comfortable on a one to one situation than in these sort of group forums and activities like this, and I really hide out in the background (Two-Spirit woman, age 51).

I think racism, like and prejudice from the other sisters in the community, not the First Nations community but the non, gay and lesbian community for sure. Being very fem, being who I am and not conforming, yeah definitely, I get pegged for passing as straight (Two-Spirit woman, age 38).

But the more I know about myself and how to live with this, as an Aboriginal person, as an Aboriginal Two-Spirited person, as an Aboriginal Two-Spirit person with HIV, I become more, better to adapt to it (Two-Spirit man, age 48).

The Native side of my family, there's a heavy amount of spirituality and I've never been in touch with that, and to be able to link that with my sexuality, that brings more comfort to being a gay adult (Two-Spirit male, age 31).

What I would like to see is Two-Spirit to use the term, it's how I identify it, that it allows for certain understanding, for Two-Spirited people (Two-Spirit women, age 42).

In Vancouver, in the Aboriginal, Two-Spirited, gay, lesbian, transgendered and bisexual community, I would have to say yes. On the other hand, I'd have to disagree with having a sense of belonging in the gay community as a whole. I would have to say that the stereotype of the Indian male is still there when you go and approach other non-Aboriginal people and at times it is uncomfortable that (Two-Spirit male, age 27).

Going out to clubs was the way I explored my sexuality, it was where I found other women to be with sexually. At this time I only met three other lesbians that were Native, and I met them at the club. There are no resources for First Nations women at all. I got involved with the Wagon Burners; there was a lot of alcohol and drugs done during this time (Two-Spirit woman, age 51).

I had my surgery. I'm really happy about having done that, you know, now it's just begun. The surgeries have just begun. Now it's a matter of getting the funds to go further (Two-Spirit trans female, age 44).

Negative Impact of Moving

Negative impacts of moving mostly come in the forms of experiences of racism and discrimination based on gender and sexuality.

People reported that they faced racism when looking for housing, employment and health services. When looking for housing there was stories of tenant managers either not renting due to their ethnicity or being harassed by tenant managers and owners based on social and cultural practices.

Discrimination in housing came from participants mostly having to use short-term housing institutions (shelters). The female transgender community, for example is often in a paradox of service and programming. Most are accepted into women's shelters but feel discriminated against from other service users. There was one female to male trans participant that was put into a male housing program but was socially excluded and harassed by the tenants so that he then felt he had to leave.

When looking for employment there were stories of participants receiving interviews but experiencing racism throughout their interview process. There was a story of one of the participants who went for an interview as a cook, but when he showed up for the interview the Manager took a look at him and told him the position was filled.

There is racism that is felt when Aboriginal people living with HIV use services from the non-Aboriginal HIV/AIDS service organizations. They also spoke about being talked down to and being mistreated by pharmacists when having to get their prescriptions filled.

The following quotations speak to these experiences of discrimination:

There's the cost of the move and it's, like the move from Van, like when I had to move from Vancouver to Burnaby, that was a frigging horrendous one. Not only that, from Burnaby back to Vancouver again. I went to through it all again less than a year later. This time I was totally without and feeling suicidal again, and just by the luck of my hair on my chinny-chin-chin, I got into the shelter, cause otherwise, I don't know. I've been so close to death so many times. My life, you know, my life is just up and down like a roller coaster (Two-Spirit trans female, age 44).

Negative impacts of moving mostly come in the forms of experiences of racism and discrimination based on gender and sexuality.

I think everywhere you go you're gonna be discriminated against your sexuality as being a gay male (Two-Spirit male, age 19).

"Well, the only problem I found too was that for those still eligible to work, and I have worked for a lot of catering companies, and I have applied for work at a various number of restaurants, and I found to that they are very racist and prejudiced. I applied for this one particular job one time. I went there at a specific time for an interview and they said, the waitress was saying the chef was busy at the time. Come back in 15 minutes. So I did. I went back and returned a few minutes later and she went to the kitchen, and the chef was looking through the window by the kitchen, way over whatever, and when I was there, he looked out, looked over at me and seen that I was a Native, and he said, the waitress came back and said, oh the job was taken just now (Two-Spirit male, age 59).

Living in Vancouver, I'd have to say that I did experience some homophobia and the obvious discrimination of being a First Nations person. In particular, I would say in my own housing complex with neighbours who discriminate against me and my partner because we are in a gay relationship. Otherwise, there's nothing else that comes to mind (Two-Spirit male, age 25).

Negative Impacts of Moving on Health

Physical: The negative impacts on health come in many forms. Participants spoke about the constant rain in the winters causing depression (but the upside was that they were not living in the cold winters that other part of Canada has to offer). Other spoke about experiencing physical abuse from partners. HIV was something that some participants contracted while living in Vancouver.

The problems I'm dealing with now, my diagnosis, my health diagnosis, HIV, that was a problem, because if I go into any organization, particularly my community. I talked to them about my HIV status, wham, the door's shut. Here it's not so much focused on my Aboriginal heritage or traditional needs or anything like that, but a lot of it is focused on the disease (Two-Spirit man, age 48).

Emotional: Some participants revealed that they had had suicidal feelings because of little opportunity for housing or employment.

Loneliness from being away from home was an emotional setback that some experienced. Loneliness from being without a partner was also mentioned. PTSD was mentioned a couple of times by women that attended Residential schools. Another participant spoke of watching her Two-Spirit brothers pass away of AIDS in the 80s and early 90s and the impact that had on her life.

A lot of it, to me at the time, was basically getting out of that loneliness. I mean I can go to resources like the hospitals or doctors or psychiatrist or whoever to help me deal with the reasons why I moved out here, but initially, it's, I needed someone to be with. I needed some other Aboriginal person or community or resource that can help me transition from the reserve, which is very limiting, to me is very limiting to understanding what the city is all about. How can I adapt to the city life? The transition period to me was, I almost wound up on the street. I almost wound up just selling myself just to get money. I had no alternative at that point. I just about did it (Two-Spirit male, age 42).

Youth need a lot of help when it comes to coming out. I lost many friends to suicide. About 95% of my male friends died of AIDS. A lot of people still live in addictions, I choose to live a clean lifestyle (Two-Spirit woman, age 55).

Positive Impact of Moving

Yeah, definitely. Moving down to Vancouver, I feel like I'm more free to be whoever I am, but I can be whoever I want and it's acceptable. I don't feel like I have to put myself on hold anymore to be and, or anything, like I feel I can be anything I want to be now and it's completely acceptable. I don't need to hide it (Two-Spirit male, age 31).

Participants reported many positive impacts of moving. Participants found a home that is less intrusive to the lives they lived in their home communities. There is a pride that comes from the participants when they can tell people from back home that they are living in Vancouver. Having a variety of Aboriginal organizations to assist with their transition has made their moves more positive (Native Housing programs, shelters, food banks, Friendship Centre, Two-Spirit Sweatlodge, youth programs, HIV/AIDS services organizations, gender reassignment programs, the LGBT services).

What I found positive about living in Vancouver was there was a meeting up with other Two-Spirit people to the point of interacting socially with some of them and we, we would go down to the Two-Spirited gatherings, so you got to know people and they would share information (Two-Spirit woman, age 61).

Also a strong gay community here creates a more stronger well-being for Two-Spirited people in general because they have a place to be gay or lesbian or bi-sexual where back home they were very isolated (Two-Spirit woman, age 38).

Resilience

All participants showed resiliency in many different ways. Despite many struggles with racism when seeking housing or employment they never gave up. All participants in this study were living in strong housing units at the time of the interviews. There were participants that were able to quit their addictions to drugs and alcohol while living in Vancouver as they found a healthier community that supported them. There were also participants that came to Vancouver homeless and managed to get themselves off the streets and into careers and rental apartments. The resilience showed in the transgender community was enormous, not only did they physically change their living environments, they also changed their physical selves; some going on this journey without family support. Many participants found culture in their journey in Vancouver through places like the Friendship Centre, and the Sweat lodge. Not all participants in this study are actively involved in the LGBTQ community but many felt an affirmation of their identity just in knowing that there is a large LGBTQ community in Vancouver.

The Dufferin bar was brought up a few times in focus groups. The Dufferin was the bar that most Two-Spirit People went to for leisure and to meet other Two-Spirit people. Since this place has closed there has been a loss of connection for some Two-Spirit people in Vancouver. This was discussed in the Youth Focus Group, The Women's Focus Group, and the Transgender Focus Group; but was not brought up in the individual interviews.

Examples of resilience:

I came here with \$99 in my pocket, kind of thing, almost wound up on the street but I knew where my resources were and that's where Vancouver came in. There's a lot of resources here and that's, for me, so I stayed (Two-Spirit male, age 48).

My sense of belonging is that I'm appreciated by all societies, be it straight, gay, lesbian, or transgendered, whatever. I'm accepted by all of the societies and they feel, a lot of them make me feel real welcomed and feel protected, like that I never have to look over my shoulder (Two-Spirit trans female, age 40).

I left Toronto, leaving behind what I was hoping, some difficult patterns and moving out here to Vancouver as the first leg of traveling and recognizing opportunities to change, to create and make change and the idea was to come to Vancouver as a new beginning and a home base to do some more world traveling, which is some of what I have done and I still continue to grow up from that, from that history but it has in fact come with me here (Two-Spirit trans female, age 42).

We're a tight-knit family. Whatever happens to me is happening to my brothers and my sisters ... (Two-Spirit trans female, age 38).

Just in general to live in Vancouver I was able to begin on my healing journey from the incest and the violence I suffered as a child. It's unfortunate but if you're in the rural area, you're not, you find that they're not accessible. Groups are not there and usually on a reserve, there's very much a silence about it (Two-Spirit woman, age 61).

Conclusion

Overall two main themes stand out from the interviews and focus groups:

A theme of seeking “home”, community and belonging: Most people moved many times in their lives and often they moved because of their sexual and/or gender identity and hoped they could move to find and create a community. Everyone described the sense of belonging that can come with finding a safe and accepting community. Community is rooted in relationships and the connections that people have with each other and with geography.

A theme of disconnection: Colonization, abuse and discrimination can cause people to be disconnected from Indigenous languages, culture and positive Aboriginal history leading to disconnection in themselves as LGBTQ and as Aboriginal peoples. In this study the impact of forced mobility through adoption/foster care, and/or residential schools was evident and are part of a theme of disconnection as are the experiences of homophobia and transphobia in home communities and experiences of racism in LGBTQ communities.



Recommendations

From Participants:

There is a need for more specific services, for education, for housing.

People talked a lot about Vancouver's LGBTQ resource centre needing to be more involved with the Two-Spirit community. There were suggestions to have a specific Two-Spirit room, resources, and staff on site. Some spoke of the need for a separate and specific Two-Spirit centre as a safe space with programming specific to Two-Spirit needs. There was also a suggestion that the Friendship Centre should have a Two-Spirit program and/or room available.

The **youth** all felt that there were not enough resources for them in the city or at home with being a Two-Spirit Individual. They brought up organizations like UNYA (Urban Native Youth Association) and Healing Our Spirit as places that are Two-Spirit friendly, but still don't feel a complete connection with the programs offered. A recommendation one youth made was to create a Two-Spirit organization like the one in Toronto (2 Spirit People of the 1st Nations).

Many **women** talked about needing specific services for them. In particular, there is nothing out there to assist the aging lesbian community. Further there are specific health needs that women have that are not being met or that adequately address Aboriginal lesbians.

Participants from the transgender community talked about having services for them in the housing and employment field. There was also a recommendation to have a "one stop shop" as there was in the past in Vancouver for sex changes.

It would be a good idea to have a Two-Spirited section in that new LGBTQ centre, a room, a spiritual access point where, or a first point of reference (Two-Spirit woman, age 42).

Participants living with HIV talked about having to deal with a lot of racism in non-Aboriginal HIV/AIDS organizations, but need to use the services that are offered at these organizations. They recommend that more work has to be done to work against racism in these settings.

Employment programs need to be created to assist Two-Spirit people in gaining valuable work experience. There is a high volunteer population that needs paid employment.

Education was another strong theme in the recommendations. There needs to be programs, funding, scholarships and supports to get more Two-Spirit youth and adults educated. Post-Secondary education was identified by participants as the key to improving the Two-Spirit communities needs.

All groups talked about **housing** as an issue for many people. There needs to be a safe housing complex for Two-Spirit elders, youth, low income people and people living with HIV/HEP C and other chronic diseases. There are specific needs for each group and housing for the Two-Spirit population cannot be addressed by one housing system.

Need for more specific LGBTQ services: education, housing, youth, women, aging, HIV, employment, education.

There needs to be a youth mentorship program and another program to teach youth about Two-Spirit people and traditions (Two-Spirit woman, age 55).

Education, I think if there was more educational opportunities for Two-Spirited people, like programs and that, specifically for Two-Spirited people, I think it would help a lot with a lot of the sex trade workers, Aboriginal sex trade workers out there, give them something more positive to look at (Two-Spirit trans woman, age 42).

It would be a good idea to have a Two-Spirited section in that new LGBTQ centre, a room, a spiritual access point where, or a first point of reference. 'Cause I remember when I first, actually the second time that I returned to Vancouver and that's when I started to look for Two-Spirited people and as well as getting to know the services and what's available here in the city, I'd take, it took me at that time about 6 months to get a handle on the different services available for Two-Spirited people or LGBT people, or to learn what's going on here in Vancouver (Two-Spirit women, age 42).

... the LGBT community is basically dominated by white people and it makes it hard for the Two-Spirited people to, you know, feel that connection. We're the outsider ... it's the way it is in Canadian society in general, the Natives are always on the outside and so what we should do is yeah, have our own gathering spot, our own place, yeah, where we can have ceremonies, and where we can, you know, have our own space to be ourselves. It's important (Two-Spirit woman, age 42).

people and other people of other ethnic minorities, because for the most part, yeah, the LGBT community is basically dominated by white people and it makes it hard for the Two-Spirited people to, you know, feel that connection. We're the outsider and that's always, I just notice that at different functions and different events. And it's the way it is in Canadian society in general, the Natives are always on the outside and so what we should do is yeah, have our own gathering spot, our own place, yeah, where we can have ceremonies, and where we can, you know, have our own space to be ourselves. It's important (Two-Spirit trans female, age 42).

Encouraging younger people to do post-secondary education, and for our young people too to be picking up ways of helping each other to access these very same, what resources are available. And, hmm, I think this sweat lodge over here on the west coast, here on Capillano reserve, I'm hoping is going to really bring along the spirits of Two-Spirited people and strengthen us for the move forward that we're gonna make and these kind of forums I think are a great idea (Two-Spirit woman, age 51).

So I think the biggest issue for me, for us as Two-Spirited people is to look after our aging Elders (Two-Spirit woman, age 61).

Yeah, there should be. I think so. Cause the difference I know, I noticed, like growing up, just being Native and Two-Spirited and different is that in the community, it's, in the LGBT community, dominated by the white people, which makes it hard on Native

From The Advisory Committee:

More research is needed to explore Aboriginal Two-Spirit LGBTQ people's experiences of domestic violence in their relationships, given the findings in this study.

Other research projects and surveys should be encouraged to include the experiences of Two-Spirit people more explicitly.

The committee hopes this pilot study can be expanded to interview more people in other provinces across Canada to learn about their experiences.



Conclusion

This study was small and exploratory in nature and has many limitations including the small and non-representative sample. Much more research is needed to understand the specific contexts and factors affecting the health and well-being of Aboriginal Two-Spirit LGBTQ. However, the findings and recommendations offered are lessons in building good and safe communities for everyone, so that all members can participate and fulfill their place in the sacred circle. We hope these findings can be used so that Aboriginal Two-Spirit and LGBTQ people moving to and within the city can have help with difficult transitions and can more easily find a place to call home, find people and places to call community, and can feel a sense of well-being and belonging.

Glossary of Terms

These definitions are not fixed and are always changing in meaning in society. The definitions seek to provide further clarity to the final report. Readers should be aware that many individuals might have different definitions for their own identities, which are theirs to define.

Anti-oppression work: work that is committed to ending oppressive hierarchal social relations (centre/margin social relations) and larger systems of oppressions such as racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism.

Biphobia: the negative attitudes, prejudices and stereotypes that exist about people whose sexual attraction to others cannot be contained fully within the categories gay or lesbian or heterosexual.

Bisexual: a person who is physically and emotionally attracted to females and males or who expresses fluidity in their attraction to a particular gender. Some people who identify as bisexual define their sexuality as one in which they are attracted to people of all genders to include those who identify their gender to be beyond the gender binary of female and male.

Gay: a man who is physically and emotionally attracted to other men. It can also be used to describe men and women who have primarily same-sex desires.

Heterosexism: the assumption that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexual relationships are natural, normal and worthy of support. These assumptions are systemic and institutionalized.

Heterosexual: a person who is physically and emotionally attracted to people of a different sex and not to people of the same sex.

Homophobia: the negative attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices that still exist in society about individuals who are not heterosexual. It is most often directed at individuals who are gay or lesbian or thought to be gay or lesbian.

Intersex: a general term used to cover many different situations in which a person is born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not seem to fit typical definitions of male or female. Often they are subjected to surgical procedures to remove sexual ambiguity. This procedure can negatively alter and affect their adult lives. Although intersex is a fairly common anatomical variation, the existence of intersex people has been obscured by societal fear and prejudice.

Intersectionality: an analytical framework used to understand the way multiple identities (for example, gender, race, class, sexuality) shape people's experiences of oppression and privilege. The analysis exposes the different types of discrimination and disadvantage that occur as a consequence of multiple identities.

Lesbian: a woman who is physically and emotionally attracted to other women

Queer: a formerly derogative term that has been reclaimed in a positive way to reflect the diversity and breadth of sexual and gender identities. This can include transgender, intersex and questioning people as well as people who consider themselves heterosexual and engage in same-sex sex even though they do not identify as bisexual or gay.

Transgender: a person who feels their gender identity does not match their biological sex and/or who feels the gender they were assigned at birth does not match the gender with which they identify. The term transgender is used in many different ways. Other possibilities include people who perform genders or deliberately play with/on gender as well as being gender-variant in other ways. "MtF" (male-to-female, masculine-to-feminine) and "FtM" (female-to-male, feminine-to-masculine) are two of the common ways trans people describe themselves.

Transphobia: the negative attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices that exist about individuals whose gender identity does not conform with the gender traditionally assigned to their biological sex.

Two-Spirit : conceptually the term "Two-Spirit " has multiple meanings and covers a range of identities from non-conforming gender identities to sexual orientation, to a spiritual designation. Naming oneself as Two-Spirit is often a political statement of belonging.

References

- Cahill, C., Sultana, F., and Pain, R. (2007). Participatory ethics: Politics, practices, institutions. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 6 (3), 304-318.
- Canadian Institutes for Health Research. (2007). *CIHR guidelines for health research involving Aboriginal people*. Ottawa, ON: Author.
- Canadian Rainbow Health Coalition. (2004). *Health and wellness in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and Two-Spirit communities: A background document*. Retrieved from www.rainbowhealth.ca.
- Dickason, O. (2006). *A concise history of Canada's First Nations*. Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press Canada.
- Enviroinformatics Institute. (2010). *Urban Aboriginal peoples study, Main report*. Retrieved from <http://www.uaps.ca/>.
- Fieland, K. C., Walters, K. L., & Simoni, J. M. (2007). Determinants of health among Two-Spirit American Indians and Alaska Natives. In I. H. Meyer and M. E. Northridge (Eds.), *The health of sexual minorities: Public health perspectives on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender populations*. New York: Springer.
- First Nations Centre. (2007). *OCAP: Ownership, Control, Access and Possession*. Sanctioned by the First Nations Information Governance Committee, Assembly of First Nations. Ottawa, ON: National Aboriginal Health Organization.
- Guimond, E. (2003). Fuzzy definitions and population explosion: Changing identities of Aboriginal groups in Canada (pp 35-49). In D. Newhouse and E. Peters (Eds.) *Not strangers in these parts, urban Aboriginal peoples*. Government of Canada Policy Research Initiative. Retrieved from http://www.horizons.gc.ca/doclib/AboriginalBook_e.pdf
- Kovach, M. (2005). Emerging from the margins: Indigenous methodologies (pp. 19-36). In L. Brown & S. Strega (Eds.), *Research as resistance - Critical, Indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches*, Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press.
- Matiation, S. (1999). *Discrimination, HIV/AIDS and Aboriginal people* (2nd ed.). Montreal QB: Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network.
- Meyer-Cook, F. & Labelle, D. (2004). Namaji: Two-Spirit organizing in Montreal, Canada. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services*, 1(1), 29-51.
- Newhouse, D. R. & Peters, E. J. (2003). Introduction (pp. 5-10). In D. Newhouse and E. Peters (Eds.) *Not strangers in these parts, urban Aboriginal peoples*. Government of Canada Policy Research Initiative. Retrieved from http://www.horizons.gc.ca/doclib/AboriginalBook_e.pdf

- Norris, M. J. & Clatworthy, S. (2003). Aboriginal mobility and migration within urban Canada: Outcomes, factors and implications (pp. 51-78). In D. Newhouse and E. Peters (Eds.) *Not strangers in these parts, urban Aboriginal peoples*. Government of Canada Policy Research Initiative. Retrieved from http://www.horizons.gc.ca/doclib/AboriginalBook_e.pdf
- Ray, A. J. (2005). *I have lived here since the world began: An illustrated history of Canada's native people*. Toronto, ON: Key Porter Books.
- Ristock, J. L. & Pennell, J. (1996). *Community research as empowerment: Feminist links, postmodern interruptions*. Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press.
- Siggner, A. J. (2003a). The challenge of measuring the demographic and socio-economic conditions of the urban Aboriginal population (119-130). In D. Newhouse and E. Peters (Eds.) *Not strangers in these parts, urban Aboriginal peoples*. Government of Canada Policy Research Initiative. Retrieved from http://www.horizons.gc.ca/doclib/AboriginalBook_e.pdf
- Siggner, A. J. (2003b). Urban Aboriginal populations: An update using the 2001 Census results (pp. 15-22). . In D. Newhouse and E. Peters (Eds.) *Not strangers in these parts, urban Aboriginal peoples*. Government of Canada Policy Research. Retrieved from http://www.horizons.gc.ca/doclib/AboriginalBook_e.pdf
- Statistics Canada. (2008). *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census*. Retrieved from <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-558/p3-eng.cfm#01>
- Taylor, C., and Ristock, J. (2011). We are all treaty people: An anti-oppressive research ethics of solidarity with Indigenous Two-Spirit and LGBTQ people living with partner violence (pp. 301-320). In J. Ristock, (Ed.), *Intimate partner violence in LGBTQ people's lives*. New York: Routledge.
- Teengs, D. O. & Travers, R. (2006). River of life, rapids of change: Understanding HIV vulnerability among Two-Spirit youth who migrate to Toronto. *Canadian Journal of Aboriginal Community-Based HIV/AIDS Research*, 1, Summer, 17-28.
- Walters, K. L., Evans-Campbell, T., Simoni, J. M., Ronquillo, T., and Bhuyan, R. (2006). *My spirit in my heart: Identity experiences and challenges among American Indian Two-Spirit women*. Retrieved from <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/haworth-journals.asp>
- Walters, K. L. & Simoni, J. M. (2002). Reconceptualizing Native women's health: An "Indigenist" stress-coping model. *American Journal of Public Health*, 92 (4), 520-524.
- Weston, K. (1991). *Families we choose - Lesbians, gays, kinship*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wilson, A. (1996). How we find ourselves: Identity development and Two- Spirit people. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66 (2), 303-317.
- Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing.

Acknowledgements

In addition to the work of our Advisory Committee members, the project team would like to thank all of our original community consultants and specifically Healing Our Spirit that offered space and staffing support for our research team meetings. We also thank Cindy Holmes for her initial work as a research coordinator on this project. Finally, we thank all of the participants who shared their experiences and stories with us.

Appendix A: Principles of Research Collaboration

Aboriginal Two-Spirit /LGBTQ People, Migration and Health Research Project Guiding Principles of Research

The Research Team and Advisory Committees

The Research Team consists of: Janice Ristock (Principle Investigator), Art Zoccole (Co-Principle Investigator), Jonathon Potskin (Research Coordinator –Vancouver).

The Research Team works with an Advisory Committee comprised of key stakeholders representing Aboriginal and Two-Spirit community organizations and individuals, and non-Aboriginal allies working with Two-Spirit people.

Guiding Principles: Ownership, Control, Access and Possession

The research team recognizes the highest standards of research practice and will ensure that the principles of OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) will be respected as outlined below (a definition of OCAP follows). The following statement of principles is based on and adapted from the guiding principles from the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN).

The research team and advisory committee agree to the following principles:

- Members of the research team acknowledge and respect the Aboriginal right to self-determination, including the jurisdiction to decide about research in their communities. In doing so, the research process shall be built upon meaningful engagement and reciprocity between the research team and Aboriginal communities. Further, the research team agrees they will strive to respect the privacy, dignity, culture and rights of Aboriginal peoples.
- The research team will strive to include meaningful and equal participation with Aboriginal community members. Therefore, the parties agree that Aboriginal community members will be involved from beginning to end in the research process, from research question formulation, through data collection, analysis and sharing of research findings.
- The research team agrees that they will collectively make decisions with the advisory committee about the research questions, recruitment of participants, data collection and interpreting results.
- The research questions must not only reflect academic interests but ensure that the research is meaningful, relevant and beneficial to Aboriginal communities.
- In sharing the findings of the research with Aboriginal communities, the research team agrees that the language and manner of sharing research will be appropriate.
- The purpose of the research project will be explained to all stakeholders (interview/focus group participants and advisory committee members) in a language that is appropriate to the

Aboriginal community. Likewise, the research team will explain potential risks and benefits in a similar manner.

- The research team agrees they will not sensationalize problems in Aboriginal communities. Rather, they will strive to present a balanced portrait that also focuses equal attention on more positive aspects. As such, the research team understands that they will collaboratively prepare draft findings with input from the advisory committee. The parties agree to review findings in a timely manner (e.g. two weeks).
- Given that all members of the research team and advisory committee will be provided the opportunity to review and comment on findings, any one member of the research team may not, particularly once initial dissemination has occurred, further analyze, publish or present findings resulting from the above mentioned research project unless the entire research team reaches a consensus.
- The Principle Investigator is responsible for maintaining the integrity of all data collected, such as storing participant consent forms, etc. However, once privacy and confidentiality of participants has been demonstrated, data sets in the form of computer files may be shared with all members of the research team. In cases of disagreement over transfer of data sets (as described above), the research team will strive to achieve a significant degree of consensus.
- The research team agrees to provide meaningful and appropriate research capacity-building, as indicated by the advisory committee.
- The research team agrees that Aboriginal communities have the right to follow cultural codes of conduct and community protocols. However, rather than end a research relationship, in situations where Aboriginal community members are in disagreement, the research team will strive to resolve conflict towards achieving a significant degree of consensus.
- The research team agrees that it may be necessary for Aboriginal community members (investigators and participants) to seek advice and support from community elders and other community leadership. The involvement of Aboriginal elders in the project will be discussed and decided by each advisory committee with the research team.

OCAP has been defined by the National Aboriginal Health Organization and the First Nations Centre as followsⁱ:

Ownership: The notion of ownership refers to the relationship of a First Nations community to its cultural knowledge/data/information. The principle states that a community or group owns information collectively in the same way that an individual owns his or her personal information. It is distinct from stewardship or possession (see Possession).

Control: The aspirations and rights of First Nations to maintain and regain control of all aspects of their lives and institutions include research and information. The principle of “control” asserts that First Nations, their communities and representative bodies are within their rights in seeking to control research and information management processes that impact them. This includes all stages

of research projects, and more broadly, research policy, resources, review processes, the formulation of conceptual frameworks, data management and so on.

Access: First Nations people must have access to information and data about themselves and their communities, regardless of where these are currently held. The principle also refers to the right of First Nations communities and organizations to manage and make decisions regarding access to their collective information.

Possession: While “ownership” identifies the relationship between a people and their data in principle, the idea of “possession” or “stewardship” is more literal. Although not a condition of ownership, possession (of data) is a mechanism by which ownership can be asserted and protected. When data owned by one party are in the possession of another, there is a risk of breach or misuse. This is particularly important when trust is lacking between the owner and possessor.

Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview and Focus Group Guide

Before focus groups and interviews are conducted, participants will be requested to complete a short demographic questionnaire as follows:

Part A: Background/Demographic Questions

1. What is your status as an Aboriginal person?

- ☐ Non-Aboriginal (**Stop Here**)
- ☐ Inuit
- ☐ Innu
- ☐ Métis
- ☐ First Nations (status) – please specify Nation/band _____
- ☐ First Nations (non-status) – please specify Nation/band _____
- ☐ Other (please specify – e.g., Bill C-31, etc.) _____

2. What term would you use that best defines your sexuality?

- ☐ Heterosexual/Straight (**Stop Here**)
- ☐ Gay
- ☐ Lesbian
- ☐ Bisexual (like both sexes)
- ☐ Two-Spirit
- ☐ Queer
- ☐ Unsure of my sexual orientation
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____
- ☐ No answer

3. What word best describes your gender?

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Two-Spirit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male | <input type="checkbox"/> Gender Queer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transgender (male to female) | <input type="checkbox"/> Transsexual |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transgender (female to male) | <input type="checkbox"/> Intersex |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ | |

4. What year were you born? (Please specify) _____

5. Where do you live? (i.e. Vancouver, Reserve)

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Most of the time _____ | How long have you lived here? _____ |
| Some of the time _____ | How long have you lived here? _____ |

6. Have you moved from:

- Reserve/settlement/hamlet to city? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- If yes, how many times as an adult? _____ As a child (under 16) _____

Within the city? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, how many times as an adult? ☐ As a child (under 16) ☐

Town or other city? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, how many times as an adult? ☐ As a child (under 16) ☐

A different province? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, how many times as an adult? ☐ As a child (under 16) ☐

A different Country? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, how many times as an adult? ☐ As a child (under 16) ☐

7. Was it your choice to move to Vancouver?

☐ Yes ☐ No

8. What is your highest level of education?

| | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 9 or less | <input type="checkbox"/> High School Diploma |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 10 | <input type="checkbox"/> Some College/University |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 11 | <input type="checkbox"/> Completed College Certificate/Diploma |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 12 | <input type="checkbox"/> Completed University degree |

9. How do you make money? (Check all that apply to you)

☐ Federal /Provincial Assistance (E.I, Social al Assistance)
☐ Full-time Work
☐ Part-time Work
☐ Casual Work
☐ Student Funding (Band funding, Student Loan)
☐ Sex Trade
☐ Drug Trade
☐ Supported by Spouse or family
☐ Self-Employed
☐ Other

10. What were your living arrangements for the past 12 months?

| | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Renting an house or apartment | <input type="checkbox"/> Room & board |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Own a house or apartment | <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping on a couch |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Streets | <input type="checkbox"/> Bed in a hostel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Correctional Institution | <input type="checkbox"/> Live with family/friends |

11. I have children who live with me

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Some of the time

12. Have you ever been taken from your biological parents? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, ☐ adopted
☐ placed in foster home How many times? ☐

13. Were you ever abandoned by your biological parents?

☐ Yes ☐ No

14. Did you attend a Residential School?

☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, for how long? _____

15. Did your parents, guardians, grandparents or other relatives attend a Residential School?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know _____

☐ Mother ☐ Father ☐ Guardian(s)
☐ Grandparents ☐ Other relative

16. Have you ever been forced out of your community because of your sexual or gender identity?

☐ Yes ☐ No

17. What are your short/long term health concerns?

☐ None ☐ Diabetes
☐ HIV ☐ Hep C
☐ Cancer ☐ Tuberculosis
☐ Weight Concerns ☐ STI's
☐ Other

18. Have you ever-experienced domestic violence in a same-sex/LGBTQ relationship?

☐ Yes ☐ No

17. Do you speak your traditional language?

☐ Fluently
☐ Knowledge of some of my traditional language
☐ No

18. Do you participate in traditional cultural practices? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please check all that apply:

☐ Dancing ☐ drumming
☐ Singing ☐ Spiritual practices
☐ Living on the land (hunting/gathering)
☐ Medicines ☐ ceremonies
☐ language ☐ Art
☐ Other _____

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Introduction: Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study. As you know, this study is looking at the experiences of Aboriginal people who identifies as Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-gender, queer, men who have sex with men (MSM) and women who have sex with women (WSW).

We want to learn more about your experiences of moving and the impact on your health and well-being. Please remember that you can stop at any point in the interview or focus group, just to gather your thoughts or to completely end your participation. Either way, you will still be compensated \$25 for your time.

1. Where did you live before moving to Vancouver?
 2. Why did you move?
 3. Why did you choose to move to Vancouver?
(probe around violence, discrimination, lack of Two-Spirit resources in your community, etc)
 4. Has moving had an impact on your health and well being (positive or negative)? Can you give us some examples?
 5. Have you had any problems while living in Vancouver?
(Probe—have you experienced any discrimination—racism, homophobia, transphobia, violence housing, health?)
 6. What are some good/positive things about living in Vancouver?
 7. Do you feel that you have a sense of belonging in Vancouver?
(Probe—what does community mean to you?) Why or why not?
 8. Do you feel that you can move freely through the different communities in Vancouver? Are you the same person / does your identity change in each community? Can you give us some examples?
 9. How do you reach out to people/how do you connect with others?
 10. Does your family support you? If yes, how? If no, why?
 11. What are some services that would be helpful to you and other Aboriginal Two-Spirit, LGBTQT peoples? (housing, healthcare, education, spiritual)
-