



## What we Heard

# Public Engagement on LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion in Government Services

May 2019



## Background

To ensure Government of Yukon is meeting the needs and priorities of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners, we initiated a territory-wide public engagement process in Fall 2018. The purpose was to identify ways to strengthen Government of Yukon legislation, policies, programs, services and practices.

This public engagement was designed and led by the non-profit organization, QMUNITY, which is based in British Columbia. QMUNITY focuses on improving the lives of LGBTQ2S+ individuals and has expertise working with LGBTQ2S+ communities.

The public engagement was greatly informed by findings from the [pre-engagement work](#) that took place earlier in the year. At that time, QMUNITY interviewed and met with LGBTQ2S+ community members and equality-seeking organizations to determine method, scope, duration, and design of the public engagement.

## Engagement Process

### **Purpose**

1. To provide multiple methods for LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners and allies to participate safely and with dignity, including in-person, small and large groups, online submissions, travel and daycare subsidies, on-site counselling, and one-on-one meetings and/or written feedback at drop-off locations across the territory.
2. To address and explore key topics identified in the pre-engagement work, including: health, mental health and wellness; justice, safety and employment; and LGBTQ2S+ culture and community building.
3. To support and enhance the local capacity of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners to participate in leadership positions as co-facilitators and note takers for engagement activities.

### **Process**

In November/December 2018, QMUNITY recruited LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners as co-facilitators and note takers. Each recruit went through training to orient them to the engagement and develop and refine skills.

In January 2019, QMUNITY hosted 12 focus groups and three larger community dialogues. Dialogues focused on specific topics, while focus groups were based on demographic identities and/or geographic locations.

## Groups by Demographics

- One each in Watson Lake, Dawson City and Haines Junction
- Seniors/elders in continuing care
- Youth
- Youth workers, including educators
- Trans and non-binary (and families, loved ones, significant others)
- Queer Indigenous and/or Two-Spirit
- Newcomers
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and other women who have sex with women
- Gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men
- Government of Yukon Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Working Group

## Community Dialogues by Themes

- Health, Mental Health and Wellness
- Safety, Justice and Employment
- LGBTQ2S+ Culture and Community Building

Throughout January, individuals were encouraged to contact QMUNITY to register for focus groups, provide [written submissions to pre-drafted questions](#), request one-on-one meetings, arrange travel subsidies, or to communicate other needs in order to participate.

A draft of the What We Heard report was sent to participants and community partners to check if we got it right and if we missed anything. This final version incorporates their feedback.

## What We Asked

Community dialogues and written submissions were structured to provide guided questions to generate further reflective and generative dialogue. The specific focus or questions shifted to reflect the lived experience and expertise in the room, depending on the individuals who showed up for each engagement. For a full list of questions used to generate dialogue, [you can review this document](#). Focus groups were provided an opportunity to explore topics and issues more relevant to certain demographics and/or communities. QMUNITY facilitators and local co-facilitators provided some guiding questions, but topics explored and feedback provided were ultimately based on the flow of conversation and engagement at focus groups.

## What We Heard

The information below is a high-level review of identified and recurring themes heard through the engagement process.

## Overall Feedback

- Providing education and training in LGBTQ2S+ cultural competency (e.g., respectful language; pronouns; visibly inclusive environments) is vital across many departments and sectors over the coming months and years. This can include in-person training workshops, the provision of print materials, and ongoing and recurring professional development. Some sectors identified as high-priority include educators, health care practitioners, and employers, including leadership within Government of Yukon.
- A cultural shift towards more acceptance is needed, which will require systemic and institutional leadership from Government of Yukon and associated professionals.
- Services provided to rural and remote communities outside of Whitehorse need to be person-centred, which includes mobile and active outreach to communities. Whitehorse cannot be the one and only space to access gender-affirming or queer-competent care in schools, health, and other services.
- Facilities like schools, hospitals, and other government buildings should include gender neutral washrooms with low-barrier access (e.g., a student does not need to ask for a key to get into the gender-neutral washroom).

## Health Care

- Mental health and wellness was identified time and time again as a huge gap in health care services; while the engagement focused on LGBTQ2S+ experiences, it is worth mentioning that this sentiment was expressed within and outside of LGBTQ2S+ communities. Many suggested that mental health services are severely under-funded and unable to meet the needs of individuals and families requiring access to competent, holistic mental health services, LGBTQ2S+ and non-LGBTQ2S+ alike. This was especially pronounced among youth.
- Trans-competent health care is required, including extended coverage for hormonal therapy, gender-affirming medical procedures and surgeries, psychiatrists and psychologists, and appropriate and simpler referrals to other provincial health care providers for health care needs that are highly specialized (e.g., using cancer care model and referrals to Alberta and/or British Columbia similarly for trans care).
- Health navigator positions could be created to assess and assist individuals and their families as they access required health care. A patient-centred approach would ensure that Yukoners who have pre-established relationships with health care professionals could continue in these relationships, even if updated policies establish a different protocol ('grand-parenting' as an option during policy transitions).

- Technical and advanced training for health care practitioners was suggested for those serving trans and non-binary folk, including on issues of reproductive and sexual health, hormonal therapy, and gender-affirming surgeries and required after-care.
- Resources to support education and awareness-raising campaigns to better understand the health needs of gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men to ensure they feel safe, supported and affirmed in articulating their health needs. This should include publicly funded PrEP and NPEP medications (a combination of daily medications that can either prevent the transmission of HIV, or effectively stop the transmission of HIV after potential exposure).
- Resources to support education and awareness-raising campaigns to better understand the health needs of queer women to ensure they feel safe, supported and affirmed in articulating their health needs.
- LGBTQ2S+ seniors/elders are an invisible population that could be served through awareness-raising campaigns in continuing care facilities and other services that serve an aging population.
- Access to information and resources are needed to help queer families navigate family planning, including fertility options, adoption and guardianship, and legal implications of multi-parental household arrangements (e.g., two mothers, one father).

### **Education and Youth**

- While Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) policies have been updated to theoretically better support LGBTQ2S+ youth, many individuals, including teachers, suggested that many schools are unable, or unwilling, to implement SOGI policies, including supporting Gay-Straight Alliances.
- Bullying, misgendering (intentional and unintentional), outing youth and harassment were cited as common occurrences within school hallways and among peers. Anti-bullying initiatives are important and necessary for the well-being of *all* students.
- Extra-curricular programming, including sports and proms, reinforce the gender binary model. These extra-curricular programs can be more inclusive of queer relationships and diverse gender identities (e.g., an after-school girls' group is advertised for all self-identifying girls and/or feminine folk).
- Queer culture and programming currently happening, especially in Whitehorse, is by and for adults, but very little is available for youth.

### **Employment and Business**

- Individuals working within the Government of Yukon who strive for inclusive programs, policies and practices to support LGBTQ2S+ employees and clients must have guaranteed support from their managers, school administrators, deputy ministers and so forth. This institutional leadership will positively shift cultural acceptance for communities, families and parents, and other service providers.

## **LGBTQ2S+ Culture and Community**

- Territorial grants and government funding should include specific funds set aside to support the contributions of a lively, connected LGBTQ2S+ community.
- Specifically, provide funding to support the development of an LGBTQ2S+ resource/ community centre that is staffed to administer support and social groups, education and training services, youth programming, and other community-building activities and events.
- Make queer, trans and Two-Spirit inclusion a priority in other social service-related grants (e.g., in grants awarded to shelters, counselling, community service providers).
- In order to better support LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners living in communities, Government of Yukon should prioritize resources and supports to enable these individuals to connect with larger LGBTQ2S+ communities.

## **Additional feedback received outside of the public engagement**

### **Conversion therapy**

- Conversion therapy is the practice of trying to change someone's sexual orientation or gender identity through counselling, behaviour modification or medication. It's based on the premise that being gay or trans is abnormal and can be "cured," which is inaccurate.
- Local high school students associated with the Gender Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) presented a petition to Government of Yukon to ban conversion therapy for minors.
- In order to better protect Yukon youth, Government of Yukon should ban conversion therapy for minors in Yukon.

### **Health care**

- There is a need to develop consistency in updating forms and changing information in files and records to be more LGBTQ2S+ inclusive.

### **Education**

- Update Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity policy to ensure the use of gender pronouns, and update terminology to be trans inclusive.
- Ensure the collection, use, storage, and sharing of personal information is LGBTQ2S+ inclusive.

### **Employment**

- Improve the Human Resources process to accommodate change of gender identity.
- Enhance mechanisms to ensure that document retention and credential changes are LGBTQ2S+ inclusive.

- Enhance procedures to ensure the collection, use, storage, and sharing of personal information is LGBTQ2S+ inclusive.

### **Housing**

- Ensure Yukon Housing Corporation's Social Housing Program and loan programs are LGBTQ2S+ inclusive.

### **Policy areas**

- Review human resources, client services, internal policies and existing processes to ensure LGBTQ2S+ inclusion.
- Ensure cabinet submission templates include LGBTQ2S+ and intersectionality under the significant implications section.

### **Communications**

- Ensure use of inclusive terminology on websites and other communication materials.

### **Personal information and identification**

- Amend Motor Vehicles Act to be more inclusive of all genders.
- Resolve identification management issues related to gender-inclusive identifiers for enforcement tools (licenses and legal documents).
- Create a consistent process for collecting gender information on Government of Yukon forms.
- Ensure surveys and data collection methods are gender inclusive.

### **Collaboration with communities**

- Ensure tourism operators have access to training to make travel experiences and tourist facilities more friendly and appealing to LGBTQ2S+ travellers.

### **Participation**

#### **Engagement Methods**

- Three community dialogues were held on specific topics.
- 12 focus groups were held based along demographic and/or geographic lines.
- One-on-one interviews were held with individuals, advocates and allies when scheduling did not allow for them to attend a focus group or dialogue.
- Online and/or written submissions to questions were posed via [www.engageyukon.ca](http://www.engageyukon.ca).
- Consultations took place with the Gender Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) at Porter Creek Secondary and F.H. Collins.
- Consultations with the Government of Yukon Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity working group and Deputy Minister Steering Committee also took place.

## Participation by the Numbers

- 110 attendees over the 12 focus groups and three community dialogues
- Four one-on-one interviews with individuals/advocates/allies
- 11 online submissions to [www.engageyukon.ca](http://www.engageyukon.ca)
- Six co-facilitators who were LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners
- Seven note takers who were LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners

## Notification and Outreach

QMUNITY and the Women's Directorate reached out to a number of identified stakeholders, individuals and groups who were encouraged to share the invitation with other interested organizations and individuals. Local co-facilitators and note takers were also encouraged to spread the word within their own networks.

A news release, radio ad, print ad, posters, and Facebook and Twitter announcements directed people to community dialogue event pages, and to [www.engageyukon.ca](http://www.engageyukon.ca) with information about how to get involved.

## What's Next?

Government of Yukon will use the information in this document to inform an online survey that will ask participants to rate the specific issues/actions with respect to their importance and impact. The online survey will be open in May and be available for four weeks.

Following the survey, we will develop an action plan to strengthen LGBTQ2S+ inclusion in Government of Yukon legislation, policies, programs, services and practices.