

December 2018

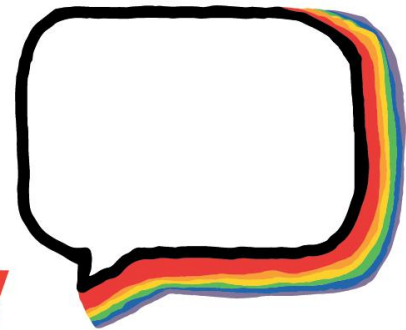
# A Place for Us:

## North Bay Positive Spaces Research Project Final Report



**Experiences of LGBTQ2S+ identified residents regarding services, programs, and supports in North Bay**

**Your story  
matters.**



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North Bay Positive Spaces  
Research Project



This report was prepared and based on the findings developed by:

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The North Bay Positive Spaces Project is a project of the North Bay Local Immigration Partnership. The North Bay Local Immigration Partnership is located in the North Bay & District Multicultural Centre.

The North Bay & District Multicultural Centre is located on the traditional territory of the Nipissing First Nation and the Robinson Huron Treaty. We especially recognize the long history of Indigenous LGBTQ2S+ existence, resistance, and contributions to this land and this place that continue to this day.

Please do not distribute without crediting the authors.

For more information please contact the North Bay Local Immigration Partnership or the North Bay & District Multicultural Centre at [www.nbdmc.ca/about-lip/](http://www.nbdmc.ca/about-lip/), [info@nbdmc.ca](mailto:info@nbdmc.ca) or (705) 495-8931.



We wish to thank the following individuals and organizations for their contributions to this project:

- Our Evaluator, Dr. Wendy Peters, Gender Equality and Social Justice, Nipissing University for the invaluable and ongoing support, expertise, dedication, and passion contributed to this project
- Our Advisory Committee for the all of the time, feedback, and important insights they contributed to shaping this project. We are grateful for your ongoing dedication and support.
- Natasha Stephenson, our undergraduate research assistant who contributed creativity, energy, and many thoughtful insights to this project
- Clark Communications, for our beautiful and meaningful marketing materials and branding.
- Chris Robinson, for our engaging promotional video.
- TG Innerselves in Sudbury and The Gilbert Centre in Barrie, for graciously hosting and sharing with us their insights, best practices, and histories of creating positive spaces.
- Miss Fits Fitness Club, for teaching us how to Zumba at Queer by the Pier.
- The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants Positive Spaces Initiative, for your ongoing support and offering the North Bay community the Positive Spaces Training Series.

We would also like to thank our funders for their generous financial support:

- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
- Summer Jobs Canada

Last but certainly not least, we wish to recognize everyone who participated in this project through the survey, focus groups, and interviews. We appreciate that so many of you dedicated hours of your time and opened yourselves up to share your experiences with us and for that, we cannot thank you enough. Your experiences, insights, and your stories were inspiring, thoughtful, brave, passionate, funny, and heartfelt. While often faced with violence, invisibility, and a distinct lack of services in North Bay, we wish to acknowledge the bravery, resilience, intelligence, humour, and creativity in your stories. We thank you for showing us the way forward, towards a city and services that truly are “a place for us”.





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## SUMMARY

We surveyed 140 people who live in North Bay or access services and / or attend events in North Bay and self-identified as a member of the LGBTQ2S+ community. LGBTQ2S+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, 2-spirit, and “+” represents other identities not explicitly represented by this acronym (e.g. pansexual, asexual, or non-binary). Further, the Research Coordinator conducted six interviews and three focus groups consisting of 18 participants overall. We asked participants about: demographics, services, support, safety, discrimination, social activities, belonging, connecting to others, and future supports and services. Participants indicated numerous challenges including: a lack of dedicated LGBTQ2S+ services and spaces, social isolation, feelings of invisibility, and uncertainty about whether local service providers are knowledgeable, safe, and/or welcoming places for LGBTQ2S+ people. Participants identified their hopes for more LGBTQ2S+ positive and inclusive spaces, service providers, events, and communities. All participants’ contributions have been anonymized.



## BACKGROUND

It is well documented that LGBTQ2S+ persons experience a myriad of challenges. For the LGBTQ2S+ community of North Bay, these challenges are exacerbated by North Bay's small, rural, and isolated location. At the time this report was written there were no services designated for LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay. The North Bay LGBTQ2S+ population has low visibility, few active community groups/hubs, and scarce as well as inaccessible educational resources. Also, LGBTQ2S+ newcomers and refugees experience additional challenges of language, cultural differences, immigration experiences, and possible trauma.

The North Bay & District Multicultural Centre (NBDMC) is a non-profit organization serving the settlement needs of newcomers to Canada in the districts of Parry Sound, Nipissing, Temiskaming, and Cochrane since 2008. Their satellite office, the Timmins & District Multicultural Centre, opened in 2011 and covers the northern region. They support the full, equal, and valued participation of newcomers in all aspects of community life. The North Bay Local Immigration Partnership (formerly known as the North Bay Newcomer Network) has been in operation since 2005 and is housed at the North Bay & District Multicultural Centre. Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) are community-wide, multi-sectoral partnerships working to strengthen a community's capacity to welcome newcomers and improve integration outcomes through enhanced economic, social, political, and civic participation. The North Bay Positive Spaces Research Project is a project of the North Bay Local Immigration Partnership.

NBDMC and the North Bay LIP have been members of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants' Positive Spaces Initiative (OCASI PSI) since 2012. OCASI's PSI aims to support the settlement sector to more effectively serve LGBTQ2S+ newcomers. The PSI encourages training, education, leadership, and resource sharing to support LGBTQ2S+ newcomers, staff, volunteers, and community members. Through the OCASI PSI membership, NBDMC and the North Bay LIP have engaged service providers and LGBTQ2S+ community members in North Bay. Through this engagement it became clear that local service providers were in need of additional training and resources to better serve LGBTQ2S+ people. The local LGBTQ2S+ community expressed a need for safer access to services in addition to a desire for more places to gather socially.

In 2016, the North Bay LIP began hosting a monthly gathering for local LGBTQ2S+ people and allies at NBDMC, with up to 80 people in attendance at some gatherings. As the group grew, it became evident that the needs of those in attendance were varied and complex, often compounded by other factors such as income, race, and/or ability. Those who attended the monthly group frequently mentioned that there were barriers to accessing much needed services in North Bay, for reasons including: a lack of knowledgeable service providers; the kind of service they required was not available in North Bay; and/or experiences of trauma when accessing services. As a result, the North





Bay LIP committed to determining the needs of the local LGBTQ2S+ community. Based on preliminary discussions, it appeared that responding to those needs would require the efforts of many different service providers and stakeholders in North Bay.

With this report, we have gathered the lived experiences, recommendations, and stories from LGBTQ2S+ identified people living in and/or accessing services in North Bay. We offer our findings to all local service providers, businesses, schools, elected officials, and community members in North Bay. We hope that you will take up the recommendations and continue to better the service provision for our diverse community, including LGBTQ2S+ people. This report is an opportunity to understand why many LGBTQ2S+ people are avoiding services and feeling anxious about being visible in North Bay. While we offer kudos to organizations recognized by participants for providing safer services and events, these recommendations are for all service providers in North Bay in order to become more effective and inclusive in service delivery. We hope that participants who freely offered their time will feel seen and heard by what is represented on these pages, while also seeing and hearing the diversity of our northern LGBTQ2S+ communities. There are intra-group dynamics within LGBTQ2S+ communities that must be understood by service providers *and* LGBTQ2S+ people as we seek greater inclusion and the creation of safer spaces. We regard this research as a tremendous opportunity for: North Bay to become a more welcoming city; local service providers to better serve LGBTQ2S+ people and communities; and LGBTQ2S+ people to better understand the diverse needs and experiences within our communities.



## RESEARCH DESIGN

This was a qualitative study and participants were recruited through snowball sampling. Participants chose to participate in an anonymous online survey, a one-on-one interview, and/or a confidential focus group. The online survey was designed and hosted by Survey Monkey, included 102 questions, and was open from June 18, 2018 through July 24, 2018. The survey consisted of multiple choice, open ended, and closed ended questions; Participants were given the opportunity to write more detailed responses for most questions. Focus groups were conducted in three different locations in North Bay and lasted two hours in length. Interviews were conducted in a private office at the North Bay & District Multicultural Centre—with the exception of one conducted at a local café—and lasted one hour in length. The focus groups and interviews were conducted between June 23, 2018 and July 26, 2018. We reached a saturation point in the surveys, interviews, and focus groups where the vast majority of new information confirmed the themes that had already emerged.

While 140 participants took the survey overall, this report specifies the number of participants who answered the individual question, as not all participants answered all questions. Survey and focus group participants were invited to enter to win a \$50 Visa gift card upon completion of the survey or focus group. Participants self-identified as living in North Bay or accessing services and/or attending events in North Bay, as well as being a member of the LGBTQ2S+ community, or as questioning their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Data analysis occurred from July 2018 through September 2018. Participants were given the opportunity to sign up for an email list in order to receive information regarding the public presentation of research results and to receive a copy of the final report.

Given the lack of ongoing and dedicated spaces or services for LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay—and no centralized online source for information—we wanted to create in-person opportunities to promote the project and connect with local LGBTQ2S+ people. We organized several events through the life of the project that we hoped would reach a wide range of people, including: a vigil and reception for Transgender Day of Remembrance; an LGBTQ2S+ trivia night at a local bar called “North Gay Trivia”; a social event at Marathon Beach called “Queer by the Pier”; and a free two day training for local service providers in partnership with the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants’ Positive Space Initiative. We were also given the opportunity to promote the project at the North Bay Farmers Market and several of the North Bay Pride events in July 2018.



# Findings



## FINDINGS

We urge service providers to read *across* this report and identify information relevant to their specific services. For example, in reading across the many sections that follow, Recreation Service providers may note that 48% of respondents use Recreation Services; 15% avoid Recreation Services; 48% avoid public change rooms because they do not feel safe as LGBTQ2S+ identified people; 33% avoid the gym and/or pool; and participants suggested trans and non-binary safe gym/fitness nights, LGBTQ2S+ sports or “fitness groups”, and outdoor adventure groups (2). This information is drawn from many different sections of this report and we ask service providers to consider which information is most relevant to their work in order to best tailor solutions, outreach, education, and programming.



## DEMOGRAPHICS

All 140 survey participants responded to our queries about their age, annual household income, education, employment, and first language. We have omitted survey options that zero participants selected. Wherever possible, the “Other” option is described in brackets using information provided by participants who selected that option. To preserve anonymity, we have been careful to avoid providing certain details in the demographics and the overall report that might readily “out” an individual in a small community. We avoid some details about first languages, countries of birth, specific First Nations, and mixed-race identifications for example, when this information might enable a local reader to suspect a certain person. While that individual may readily be “out”, we have chosen to err on the side of maintaining privacy. We offer below: a brief summary of each demographic; one example of its relevance to the overall findings; and the percentage of participants who selected that option with the precise number of individuals in brackets. We have chosen not to alter or correct spelling or sentence structure in participant responses because we believe the meaning to be clear in all cases.



### Age

Participants ranged from between “under 17” (5) to “over 69” (1) with the highest concentrations between the ages of 17-21 (21%) and 22-26 (24%). To offer one example of how these age differences appeared in the results, participants expressed desires for age targeted LGBTQ2S+ supports—especially for youth and “older adults”—while others longed for intergenerational LGBTQ2S+ events.

21%	17-21 (29)	7%	47-52 (10)
24%	22-26 (34)	3.5%	53-57 (5)
13%	27-31 (18)	3.5%	under 17 (5)
8%	32-36 (11)	3%	58-62 (4)
8%	37-41 (11)	.5%	63-68 (1)
8%	42-46 (11)	.5%	69 and older (1)

**58%**  
participants  
17-31 years old

### Annual household income

Participants’ household incomes varied widely with the highest concentrations at \$10,000-19,000 (20%), below \$9,000 (13%), and \$20,000-29,000 (12%), putting 45% of participants at an annual household income at or below \$29,000. One example of how these income disparities appeared in the results is that some participants expressed a desire to attend local LGBTQ2S+ potlucks but could not afford to bring food, while others said that they did not need local LGBTQ2S+ services because they could readily leave



North Bay to go to Pride events in other cities or take “lesbian cruises”. To be clear, we are unsure how many people are in each household and the extent to which those aged 17 and under (5), for example, will have categorized their household income based on their personal income versus their overall household income.

- 20% \$10,000 - \$19,000 (28)
- 13% \$0 - \$9,000 (18)
- 12% \$20,000 - \$29,000 (17)
- 9% \$50,000 - \$59,000 (13)
- 9% \$100,000 or more (13)
- 8.5% \$30,000 - \$39,000 (12)
- 8.5% \$40,000 - \$49,000 (12)
- 7.5% \$60,000 - \$69,000 (11)
- 5% \$70,000 - \$79,000 (7)
- 3.5% \$80,000 - \$89,000 (5)
- 3% \$90,000 - \$99,000 (4)



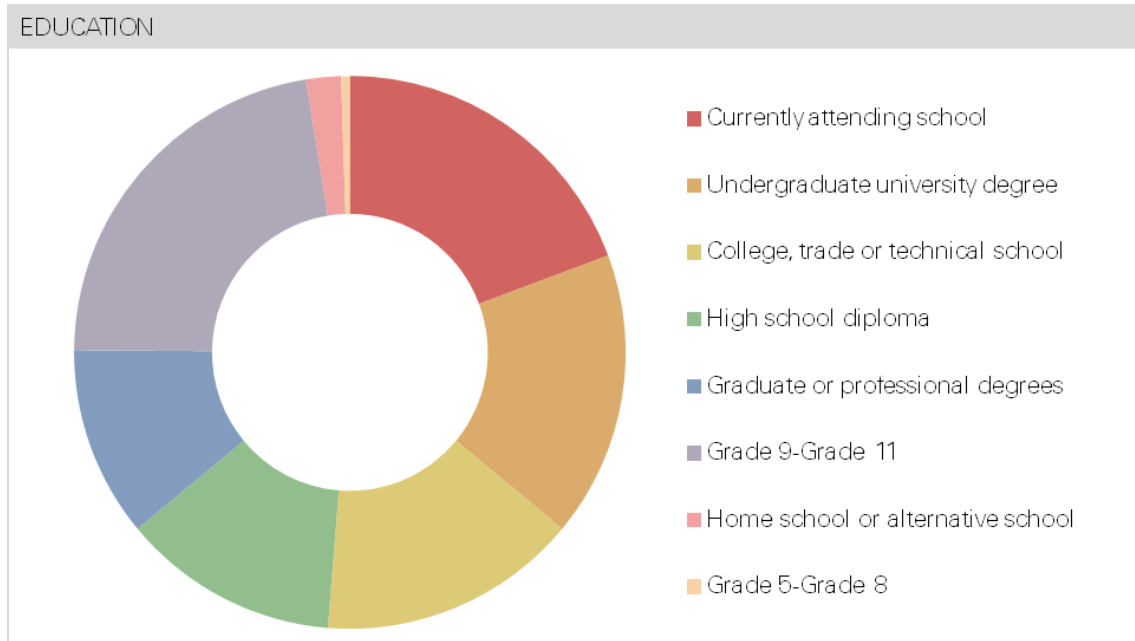
## Education

140 participants responded to the survey query about the highest level of education they have completed. 120 respondents offered their highest level of attainment as outlined below, while 38 indicated that they are currently attending school. As is evident, the total number of responses is 152, suggesting that 12 respondents selected both their highest level attained *and* “currently attending school”. Within the 120 responses that identified the highest level of education attained, 77% of participants’ highest level was high school and “above”. The unique challenges facing LGBTQ2S+ people in educational settings were evident as middle and high school students described having to change schools in North Bay due to harassment and college/university students living in residence dealt with co-tenants complaining about having an LGBTQ2S+ roommate; even after moving, some students reported dealing with further antagonism in the new space.

- 27% Currently attending school (38)
- 23.5% Undergraduate university degree (33)
- 21% College, trade or technical school (30)
- 18% High school diploma (25)
- 16% Graduate or professional degrees (22)
- 3.5% Grade 9-Grade 11 (5)
- 3% Home school or an alternative school (4)



1% Grade 5-Grade 8 (1)

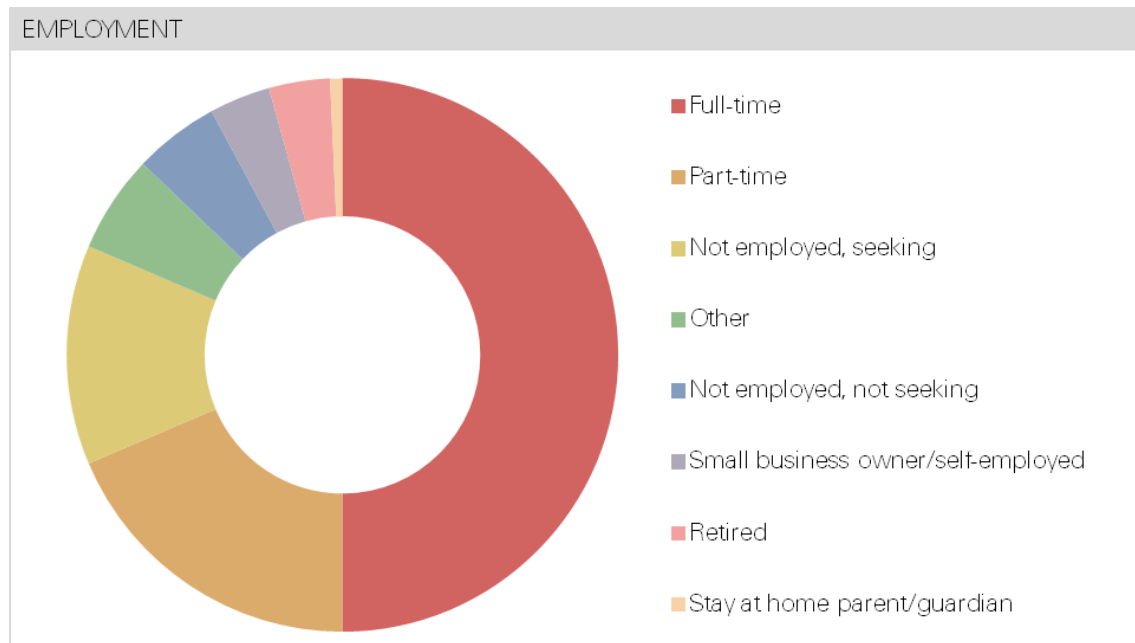


## Employment

On average, most survey participants were employed or retired (75.5%). Employment or lack thereof appeared in the survey responses when participants indicated that they did not have time or opportunity to participate in the rare LGBTQ2S+ social events in North Bay because they work full-time, have childcare responsibilities, or work evening shifts. Numerous participants indicated that a regular LGBTQ2S+ drop-in centre would better suit their lives because they struggled to be at a specific place at a designated time.

- 50% Employed full-time (more than 30 hours a week) (70)
- 18.5% Employed part-time (less than 30 hours a week) (26)
- 13% Not employed and seeking employment (18)
- 5.5% Other (ODSP, no work visa) (8)
- 5% Not employed and not seeking employment (7)
- 3.5% Small business owner/self-employed (5)
- 3.5% Retired (5)
- 1% Stay at home parent / guardian (1)





### ***First language and country of birth***

With five exceptions, survey respondents identified their first language as English. Because the majority of the project outreach occurred in English it is possible that Francophones and others did not hear about the project. That said, 12% (17) of respondents identified as Francophone. Overwhelmingly, participants were born in Canada, with 5.7% (8) born elsewhere, the majority in the United States of America. That percentage of newcomers maps onto North Bay census data. According to 2016 census data 5.7% of North Bay residents were born outside of Canada (Statistics Canada).

**5.7%** of participants born outside of Canada

5.7% of North Bay residents were also born outside Canada

### ***First Nations and Métis***

129 survey participants responded to the question of whether they are First Nations (status or non-status), Métis, or Inuit. 15% (19) indicated that they are First Nations and 4% (5) are Métis. In the "other information" section of the surveys, local nations were identified, as well as some from east, west and north of Ontario. While this does not appear in the survey data, one interviewee indicated that their mother is Inuit and that they have growing ties to this identity.

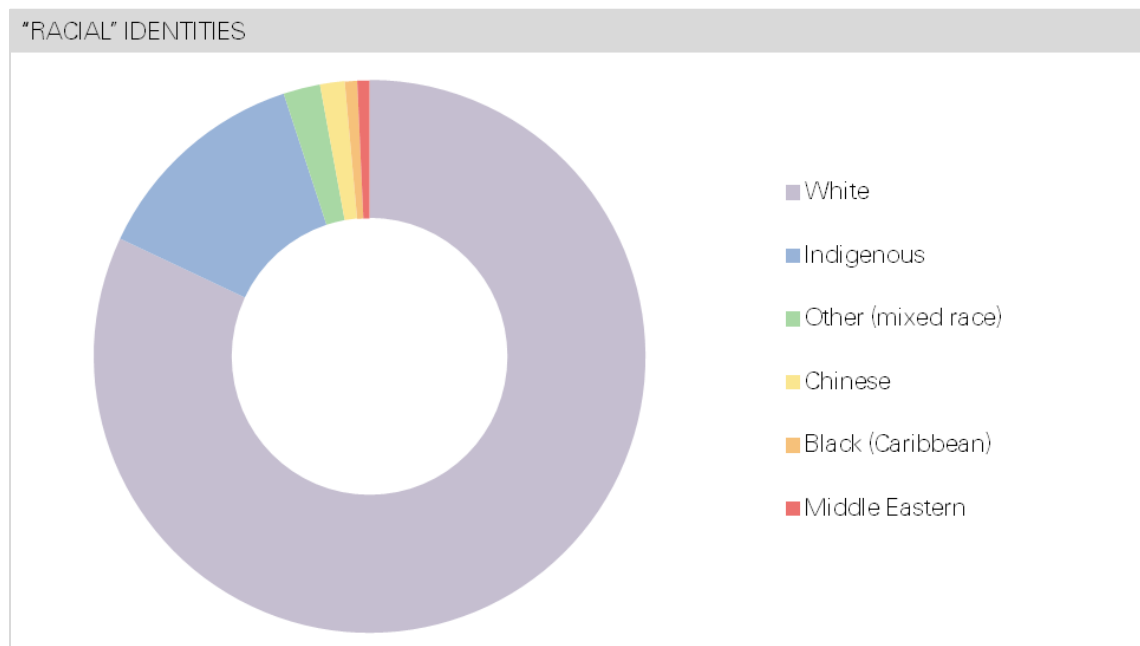




## “Racial” Identities

129 participants answered this question and 88% (114) identified as white. Because participants were asked to “select all that apply” the total number of responses is 139. Racialization and Indigeneity appeared in the survey as some participants indicated that being Indigenous was most salient in their minds in dealing with police services, rather than their LGBTQ2S+ identities. Relatedly, some white identified respondents perceived that their racial privilege meant that they received better treatment at some service providers than other LGBTQ2S+ people.

88%	White (114)	1.5%	Chinese (2)
14%	Indigenous (18)	1%	Black (Caribbean) (1)
2.5%	Other (mixed race) (3)	1%	Middle Eastern (1)



## 2-Spirit/Two Spirit

Of the 129 participants who answered this question, 10% (13) identified as 2-Spirit/Two Spirit and 4% (5) selected “unsure”. We are uncertain of whether the latter five participants were aware of this identity and struggling to place themselves or whether the category was entirely new to some respondents. In one interview, a participant who identified as having a “mixed First Nations heritage” indicated that she recently came to identify as 2-Spirit after learning more about the identity through local events. She said, “the more I got involved in it, I realized that it fit me perfectly”. Such an experience speaks to the tremendous importance of community-driven and culturally-specific 2-spirit events in identity formation and increasing feelings of belonging.



## Gender Identity

In terms of gender identity, participants were asked to select all that apply and, as such, the number of responses from 129 respondents totals 187. The category of cisgender women made up the largest percentage at 36% (46) with non-binary as the second most commonly selected option at 17% (22). Importantly, transgender-identifications were very significant at 28% when grouped together: 14% (18) transgender/trans; 3% (4) transgender woman; and 11% (14) transgender man. Gender identification was relevant in the survey in a myriad ways. For example, trans-identified participants frequently cited healthcare challenges in North Bay, especially regarding transitioning. Further, gay-identified men who were “read” as gay by strangers in public—often because of perceived femininity in speech or attire—cited this as a risk factor for violence. While this latter example is not necessarily a matter of gender identity, it is inarguably relevant to hegemonic gender norms, as well as homophobic and transphobic violence. We have aimed to capture these elements in our understanding of gender identity.

We suspect there *might* be underreporting of cisgender identities, particularly if participants were unfamiliar with the term. Of the 25 participants who chose “other”, four specified “gay male”, one “gay man”, and one as “male”. In addition to these six respondents, eleven other participants offered responses that included: “I consider myself as gay”; “female” (2); “gay”; “identifies as female”; “gay woman”; and “female body parts and feel very female”. We are unsure if these participants also selected cisgender woman or cisgender man, but we suspect that they—especially those who used the language of “male”, “female” and “female body parts”—likely fit these categories whether they selected them or not.

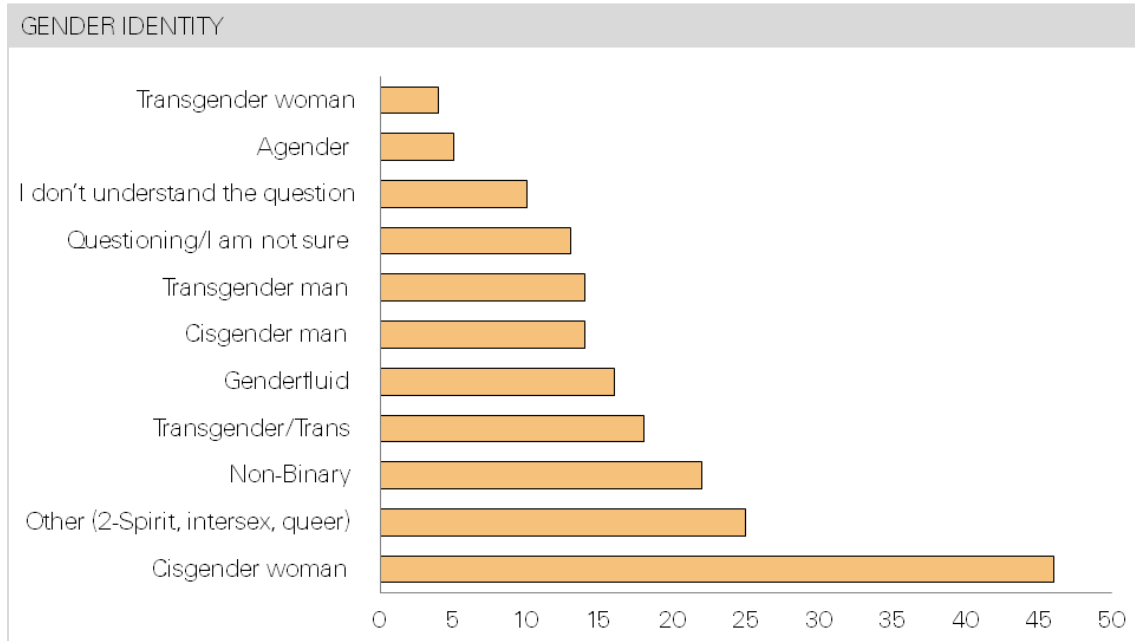
“Other” respondents identified as 2-Spirit (2), intersex (1), queer (1), and “BIG BUTCH” (1), while others thoughtfully complicated the categories that were presented. For example, one participant explained, “I never really chose a specific identity for my gender – I was assigned male at birth which I’m fine with but I also love exploring my femininity and I definitely feel like I live in a queering of gender which I find interesting to unpack...”.

- 36% Cisgender woman (46)
- 19% Other (2-Spirit, intersex, queer) (25)
- 17% Non-Binary (22)
- 14% Transgender/Trans (18)
- 12% Genderfluid (16)
- 11% Cisgender man (14)
- 11% Transgender man (14)

Cisgender  
Transgender  
Non-Binary  
Genderfluid  
Cisgender woman  
woman  
queer  
2-Spirit man  
intersex  
Trans man  
Unsure  
Questioning  
Transgender  
Agender

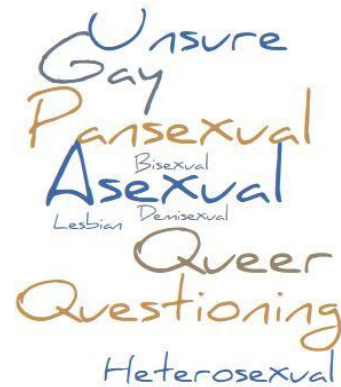


- 10% Questioning/I am not sure what my gender identity is (13)
- 8% I don't understand the question (10)
- 4% Agender (5)
- 3% Transgender woman (4)

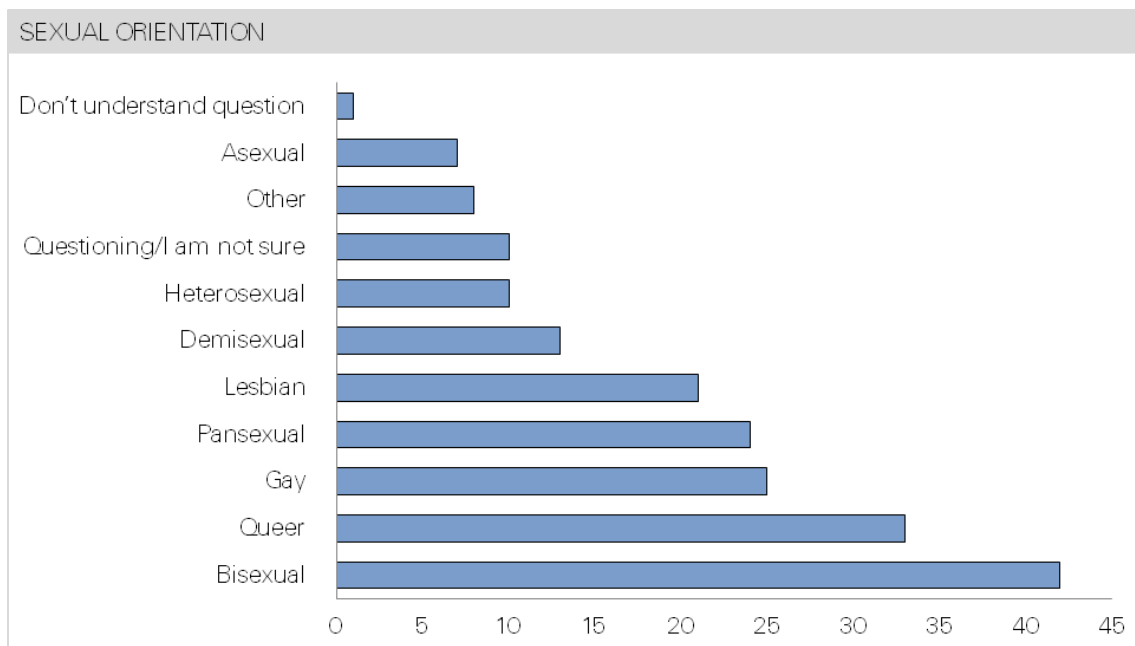


### Sexual Orientation

129 participants responded to the query “what is your sexual orientation” and were asked to select all that apply. As such, the total number of responses is 194 and reflects how some individuals have multiple sexual identifications. Bisexual was the most frequently selected identification at 32.5% (42) with queer second at 25.5% (33). As expected, sexual orientation and identities appear throughout the survey in ways that highlight intra-group dynamics, such as bisexual-identified participants in “other-sex” / “straight-passing” relationships feeling unwelcome in LGBTQ2S+ spaces. Similarly, people who claimed asexual identification expressed feeling marginalized within LGBTQ2S+ spaces as well as the larger LGBTQ2S+ community. Further, heteronormative social norms left many non-straight respondents feeling anxious about how their sexual orientation, practices, desires or lack thereof, might influence how they are treated by friends, family, employers, religious groups and service providers. These are only a few of the ways in which sexual orientation and sexuality appear in the survey.



- 32.5% Bisexual (42)
- 25.5% Queer (33)
- 19% Gay (25)
- 18.5% Pansexual (24)
- 16% Lesbian (21)
- 10% Demisexual (13)
- 8% Heterosexual (10)
- 8% Questioning/I am not sure what my sexual orientation is (10)
- 6% Other (sexual attraction to masculinity, polyamorous (2), no labels) (8)
- 5.5% Asexual (7)
- 1% I do not understand the question (1)



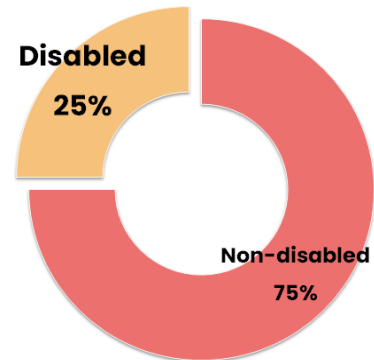
### **Intersex**

Two respondents (1.5%) identified as intersex and nine (7%) said that they were unsure. While we are unsure whether the latter were unfamiliar with the category or genuinely wondering if they fit into it, we are sure that intersex people are often not aware that they are intersex for a host of reasons, including a society that has held tenaciously to the belief that there are only two sexes.



## Disabilities

25% (33) of the 129 participants who answered this question identified as having a disability. These identifications varied widely, including: mental health diagnoses (16); learning disabilities (3); Deaf (3); Aspergers (2); Autism (2); hard of hearing; back problems; chronic illnesses; and auto-immune diseases. These diagnoses appear as relevant in the survey data as 27% (16 of 60 respondents) avoid mental health services and 28% avoid healthcare services (17 out of 60 respondents) in North Bay because they feel unsafe or unwelcome as an LGBTQ2S+ person. If LGBTQ2S+ people feel marginalized in relation to mental health and healthcare services their health and wellbeing will suffer. This marginalization may be most detrimental to those with significant health challenges.



## INTERSECTIONALITY AND INTRA-GROUP DIVERSITY

As should be clear from the demographics, the LGBTQ2S+ people who participated in this study represent a very diverse group and some find themselves positioned on the margins of the margins. As one participant explained:

This respondent renders intersectionality and its consequences in vivid terms. Not only are these identities points of pride, they are also socially marginalized and stigmatized, thus in need of support. Intersectionality is relevant to our research findings in a range of ways, including: intersectionality of identities; intra-group differences in what individual LGBTQ2S+ people want in order to feel that their needs are being met in North Bay; and intra-group differences between LGBTQ2S+ identities. Each of these factors are informed by patterns in the research data and, in turn, inform our recommendations.

*"I am: -intersex -transfeminine - demisexual / lesbian -Aboriginal / First People -2-spirit Each of these is a very small minority with little to no support. The intersectionality of these makes it that much more difficult to find any sense of belonging, while each leads to alienation and discrimination within society as a whole; more so in North Bay than in larger or less isolated communities."*



## ***Intersectionality***

While we have strategically selected to focus on LGBTQ2S+ identified people in the North Bay area, we wish to foreground that each participant is unique and has very distinct experiences. These experiences are shaped not only by personalities and temperaments, but by race, class (including finances, education, and cultural capital), gender identity, the ways that others perceive their gender and sexuality, immigration experiences, employment, housing, abilities and medical needs, to name only a few of the factors that intersect within any given person. In turn, these factors offer individuals access to privilege or burden them with systemic challenges and, sometimes, violence. As one participant indicated in relation to a question about class, “Can you be discriminated for? I feel like I am treated better than I should be for no particular reason, except possibly socioeconomic status?” We recommend that service providers (and everyone) be as astute as this respondent in recognizing how unearned privileges may influence engagement, interactions, perceptions, treatment, harassment, visibility, and so on.

The ways in which multiple factors and identities impact individual’s lives were notable in almost every response given by participants. Community responses need to be designed to respond to broad themes across the surveys, interviews, and focus groups, while also attending to other factors that may be influencing the engagement of LGBTQ2S+ people. For example, in responding to questions about experiences with local police services one respondent wrote, “I feel unsafe because I am First Nation, and I feel like they care less because of that. A lot of people (especially police) still believe the stigma of ‘lazy drunk indians’ and it is very harmful”. Given that 30% of respondents (18 of 60) indicated that they avoid accessing local police services because they feel unsafe or unwelcome, police may choose to implement some of the recommended changes to their practices, but always with the recognition that there are a myriad reasons that an LGBTQ2S+ identified First Nations person may distrust the police that go beyond a single identity category. The individual is never just First Nations, or just LGBTQ2S+, at any given moment. Further, participants took pains to clarify that while they did not have a non-normative gender identity they still experienced sexism, misogyny, and sexual violence. This reminds us that feminine presenting LGBTQ2S+ identified people face their own distinct, yet also regrettably predictable, challenges.

We raise the fact of intersectionality so that service providers continue to be aware of these mutually constitutive factors. We also ask that LGBTQ2S+ identified people in North Bay recognize that their experiences are not always comparable to others within the community for reasons of race, class, age, gender, and so on. We intend that our recommendations be taken in concert with other transformations and considerations, including the recognition of intersecting identities and histories that produce privilege and penalty, as well as broader social change and anti-oppressive practices.



## ***Intra-group diversity and differences***

Much as there are incontrovertible patterns across the research data, we wish to highlight how the diversity of the participant responses reveals just how different LGBTQ2S+ people are from each other, even within this relatively small qualitative study. In order to illustrate this point and its relevance we focus here on respondents' desires for LGBTQ2S+ community events. In response to the question of what kinds of LGBTQ2S+ social activities respondents would like to have in North Bay, one participant wrote, "social gatherings without alcohol". In contrast, when asked what would make it more likely that you would attend and/or participate in LGBTQ2S+ activities, events, and services, another wrote, "serve alcohol!" Similarly, in envisioning the kinds of social opportunities that LGBTQ2S+ people might like, the responses ranged from "support group", to "karaoke", to "orgies". While many participants wished for more drag events in the city, one trans identified person wrote, "I am highly offended at drag performance". In relation to social events, we draw attention to the diversity of responses in order to illustrate the necessity of developing a range of LGBTQ2S+ activities in North Bay; we cannot reasonably expect everyone to have common interests and one type of event will not interest all LGBTQ2S+ people, and nor should it. With more diverse social offerings, we expect to see greater community engagement and decreasing social isolation. To extrapolate beyond the social realm, the diversity within the LGBTQ2S+ community means that a range of supports, services and programming may be needed in order to reach youth, parents, those who are questioning or come out later in life, to name only a few examples. A diversified approach will be more likely to appeal to a wide range of LGBTQ2S+ people.

An issue related to intersectionality and intra-group differences, but bears its own mention is that LGBTQ2S+ communities have their own internal fractures and factions. One frequently perceived schism is summarized by one respondent who wrote: "I feel very judged by other community members when I am with my opposite-sex partners. Feeling like LGBTQ2S+ community members didn't forget the B in the acronym would be nice." Similarly, asexual identified people, a more recent addition to the LGBTQ2S+ "acronym", struggled to find space in LGBTQ2S+ communities that sometimes, understandably, foreground sex and sexual desire. Another recurring request was for trans-specific spaces, supports, and services. Organizers and service providers may wish to familiarize themselves with these perceptions in order to target sub-groups in ways that will maximize participation, comfort, and efficacy. Much as we do not seek to entrench such divisions, diversified programming may be helpful in reaching the largest number of LGBTQ2S+ people by addressing distinct needs and concerns.



## SERVICES

***“Simply being gay in North Bay is enough to make one pause before accessing services”.***

We asked participants to share their experiences of accessing services in North Bay. We asked survey participants to identify: the services they use in North Bay; whether they avoided any of the services listed; if they felt safe disclosing their LGBTQ2S+ identity/identities when accessing services; what would prevent or discourage them from accessing services; and what would make them feel safer when accessing services.

### **Services Used in North Bay**

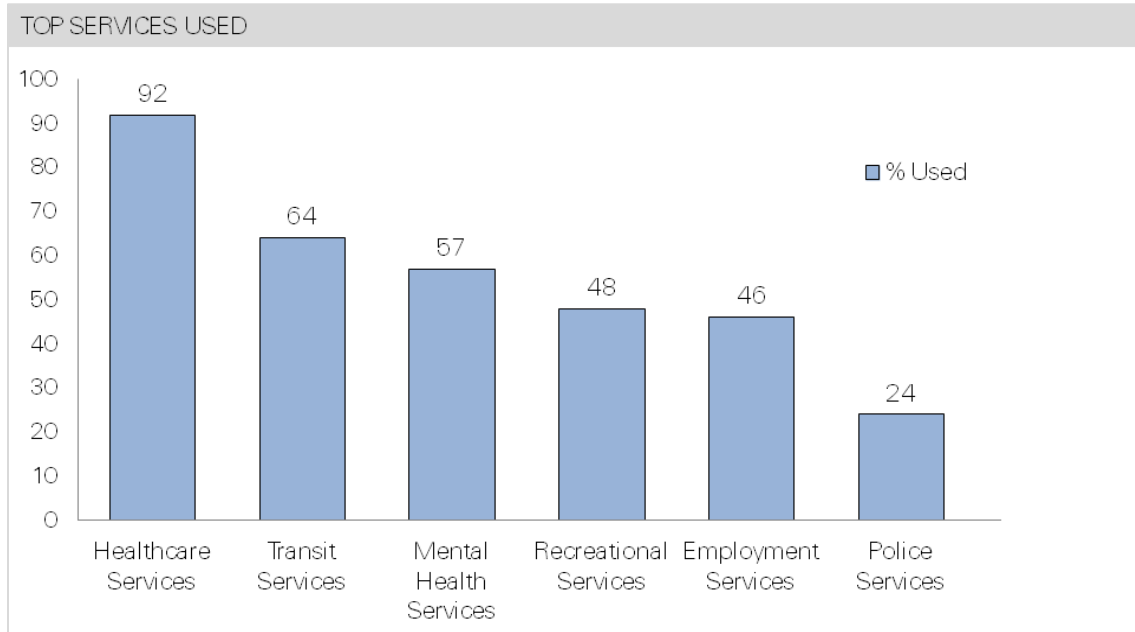
128 survey participants responded to the question of which services they have used or currently use in North Bay. They were asked to select all that apply:

- 92% Healthcare services (119)
- 64% Transit services (82)
- 57% Mental Health services (73)
- 48% Recreational services (62)
- 35% Employment services (46)
- 24% Police services (31)
- 19% Financial support services (25)
- 17% Faith and/or spiritual services (22)
- 14% Food banks and/or community soup kitchens (18)
- 13% Legal services (17)
- 13% Children’s services (17)
- 10% Housing services (14)
- 10% Sexual assault support services (14)
- 9% Indigenous cultural services (12)
- 7% Substance use/addictions services (9)
- 5.5% Other—library, arts, & culture services (7)
- 3% Disability services (5)
- 3% Domestic violence support services (5)
- 3% Shelters and or warming centres (4)





- 3% Small business support (4)
- 3% Language and literacy services (4)
- 1% Ethnocultural services (2)
- 1% I do not currently access these services in North Bay (2)



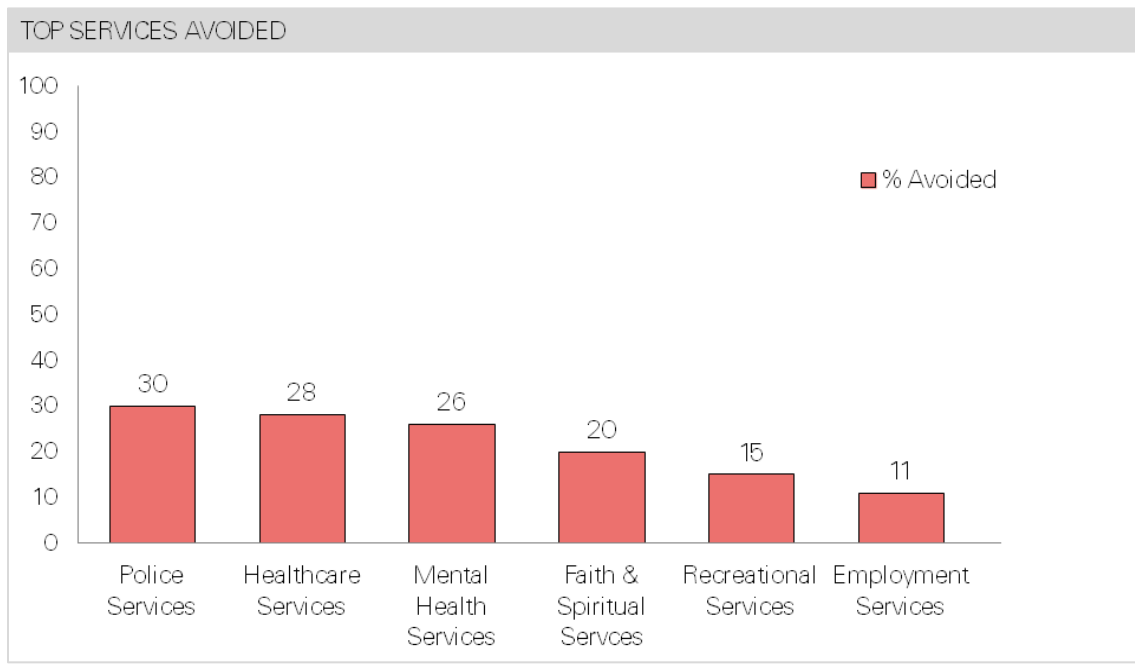
### **Services Avoided in North Bay**

60 participants responded when asked if they avoided any of those same services in North Bay because they felt unsafe or unwelcome as an LGBTQ2S+ person. We defined unsafe as “when you feel as though sharing your identity may put you at risk of experiencing harm, harassment, exclusion, danger, etc. A place or a person could be considered unsafe for you to share your identity if, for example: negative comments are made about your identity, your identity is not taken seriously, you’re threatened or harmed because of your identity, etc.” Respondents were asked to select all that apply

- 30% Police services (18)
- 28% Healthcare services (17)
- 26% Mental Health services (16)
- 20% Faith and/or spiritual services (12)
- 15% Recreational services (9)
- 11% Employment services (7)
- 11% I do not currently access these services in North Bay (7)
- 10% Sexual assault support services (6)



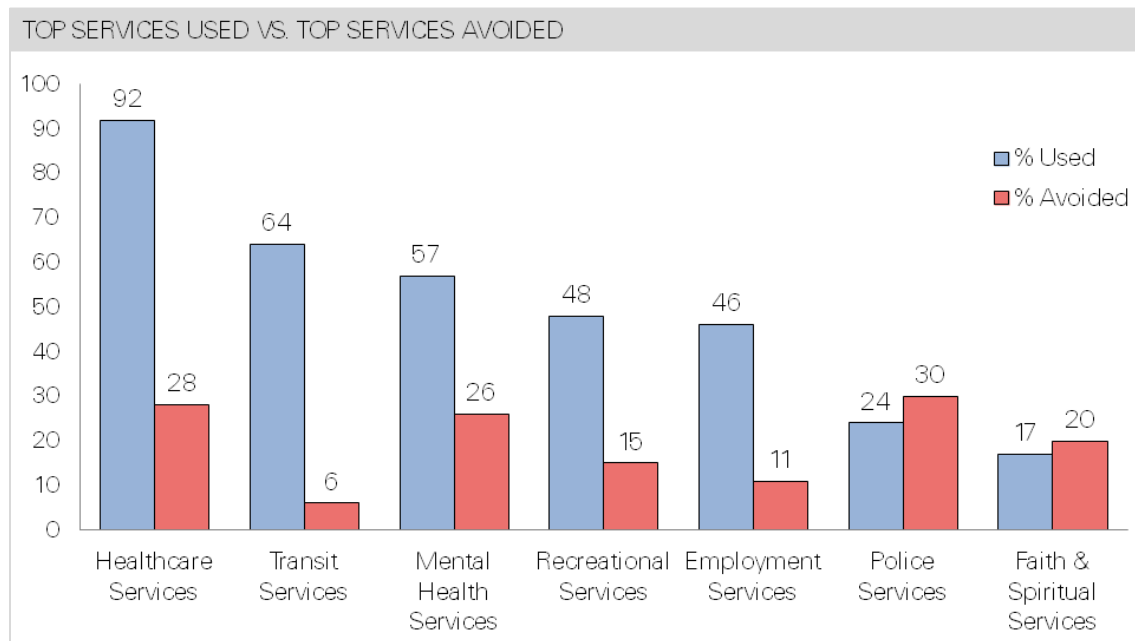
- 8% Indigenous cultural services (5)
- 6% Housing services (4)
- 6% Ethnocultural services (4)
- 6% Legal services (4)
- 6% Domestic violence support services (4)
- 6% Shelters and or warming centres (4)
- 6% Transit services (4)
- 5% Disability services (3)
- 5% Children’s services (3)
- 5% Financial support services (3)
- 3% Language and literacy services (2)
- 3% Settlement services (2)
- 1% Food banks and/or community soup kitchens (1)
- 1% Small business support (1)
- 1% Substance use/addictions services (1)
- 28% Other (17 “Don’t require assistance from any currently, but unsure if would truly feel welcomed when needed”. “No, I feel very welcome in all of these services”)



Based on the responses above, many of the services most frequently used by LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay are the same services that LGBTQ2S+ people are avoiding.



Importantly, the number of people avoiding these services should be zero *and* the numbers above demonstrate some clear patterns that cannot be explained by individual idiosyncrasies. Certain North Bay services—especially Police, Healthcare and Mental Health services—have an image problem with a significant number of LGBTQ2S+ identified respondents and/or participants have had experiences that resulted in avoidance. In either case, there are ways to improve a service provider’s image and service provision via community outreach, staff education, and other concerted efforts.



While the number of LGBTQ2S+ respondents avoiding essential services is notably high in certain areas, we want to highlight that participants using a service and not avoiding it, does not mean that they feel safe doing so. In the “Other” response section, one participant explained, “I used to avoid services, I don’t anymore, but that doesn’t mean I’m comfortable about doing it”. Other participants may share this sentiment, as many of these services are essential, regardless of whether that service feels safe or welcoming. For example, 64% of participants said they use transit services (82), while only 6% said they avoid transit services (4). It is possible that the reason so few avoid transit services is because they have no alternative means of transportation. When asked about negative experiences they have had while accessing services, one participant shared that they “observed homophobic harassment of a person who could be described as stereotypically queer looking at the bus station downtown”. This story suggests that some LGBTQ2S+ people are still using services in which they witness homophobia, as are others who are the object of homophobic harassment, possibly because there are no other options available. As such, avoidance is important and notable, but is only one part of the picture. Additionally, for service providers, this experience highlights that services may be perceived or experienced as unsafe or unwelcoming because of the actions of other service users, and not always as a result of the service provider themselves.

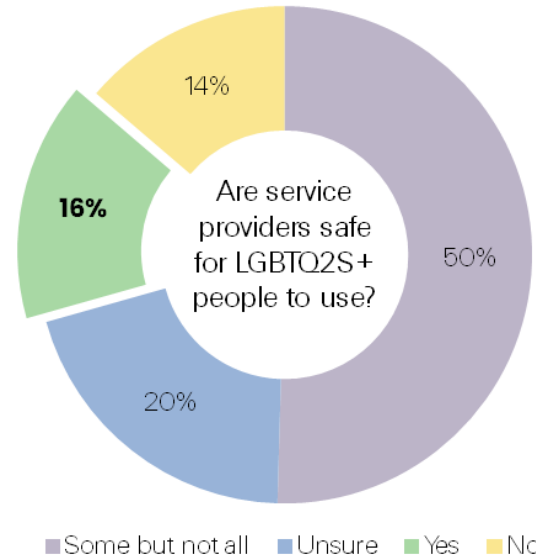


## Perceptions of Local Service Providers

109 participants responded to the question “Do you think that current service providers in North Bay are safe for LGBTQ2S+ people to use?”

50%	Some but not all (55)	16%	Yes (17)
20%	Unsure (22)	14%	No (15)

That only 16% of respondents indicated that they think current service providers in North Bay are safe for LGBTQ2S+ people speaks to an overall uneasiness and lack of confidence in service providers. There was an almost identical response trend when we asked if service providers in North Bay were welcoming for LGBTQ2S+ people with 51% of the 109 who responded indicating that “some but not all” (56) service providers are welcoming places for LGBTQ2S+ people. We address the equivocal nature of the 50% who indicate “some but not all” and 20% who are “unsure” in our recommendations. Such responses express uncertainty and unevenness in how LGBTQ2S+ people are treated by different staff members within the same organization, and how some organizations in North Bay are creating safer spaces than others. The sections that follow offer positive and negative experiences communicated by survey respondents, as well as practices that they believe would help them to feel more welcome. We believe this information is helpful to service providers in making changes to their specific organization in order to increase the comfort, certainty, and participation of LGBTQ2S+ people.



## Negative & Positive Experiences of Accessing Services

We asked participants in the survey, focus groups, and interviews to share with us both their negative and positive experiences of accessing local services as LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay. This question was open ended and allowed participants to write out their response.

When asked to describe any negative experiences they had with local service providers, participants shared the following:

- “Staff using the wrong pronouns, not asking for pronouns, lack of safe washrooms or change rooms. Filling out forms that only have binary options”.
- “The clinic I attended did not know how to assist me, they acted like I was asking



*for too much and did not understand what I was asking of them, which was to give me my injection without issue”.*

- *“None, I am just too scared to see what will happen”.*
- *“I’ve been outed in multiple different places, I’ve been refused service, asked to leave places, and have been treated like a lesser person”.*
- *“Uncomfortable looks in public change rooms and washrooms when my sexuality is known as well as at the beaches in town”.*

We have selected only a few of the stories that participants shared about negative experiences they have had when accessing services. We have selected these responses because they highlight many of the themes that emerged in our findings about access to services: service providers that lack the knowledge or experience in working with LGBTQ2S+ people; the apprehension or uncertainty that many LGBTQ2S+ people have when accessing services; and feelings of mistreatment and/or judgement. The details in these experiences also speak to specific changes that service providers might consider making in order to better serve LGBTQ2S+ people, such as not assuming pronouns and non-binary sex/gender options on forms.

We also asked participants to share any positive experiences they have had when accessing services. As above, here is a selection from the many stories that were shared with us:

- *“I am open about my identity to my doctor, my dentist, and it does not seem to have influenced their attitudes, behaviour & care of me”.*
- *“My family therapist understands my gender identity and speaks freely and confidently with me, never making me feel wrong”.*
- *“...I was able to come out to my worker [name redacted] who made sure that I would have access and the same opportunities others had”.*
- *“I find most professional persons are completely comfortable with same-sex partners”.*

We want to note that many participants mentioned specific service providers by name or as being “extremely respectful”, “open-minded and non-judgemental”, and “very well-educated and supportive”. We have left out those names in order to respect privacy but we deeply acknowledge that there are individuals providing services in North Bay who are creating positive spaces and interactions for LGBTQ2S+ people, and we thank you for that. It is notable here that positive experiences are sometimes created through minimal gestures—such as not assuming the sex/gender of a person’s partner—while others require more training and education.



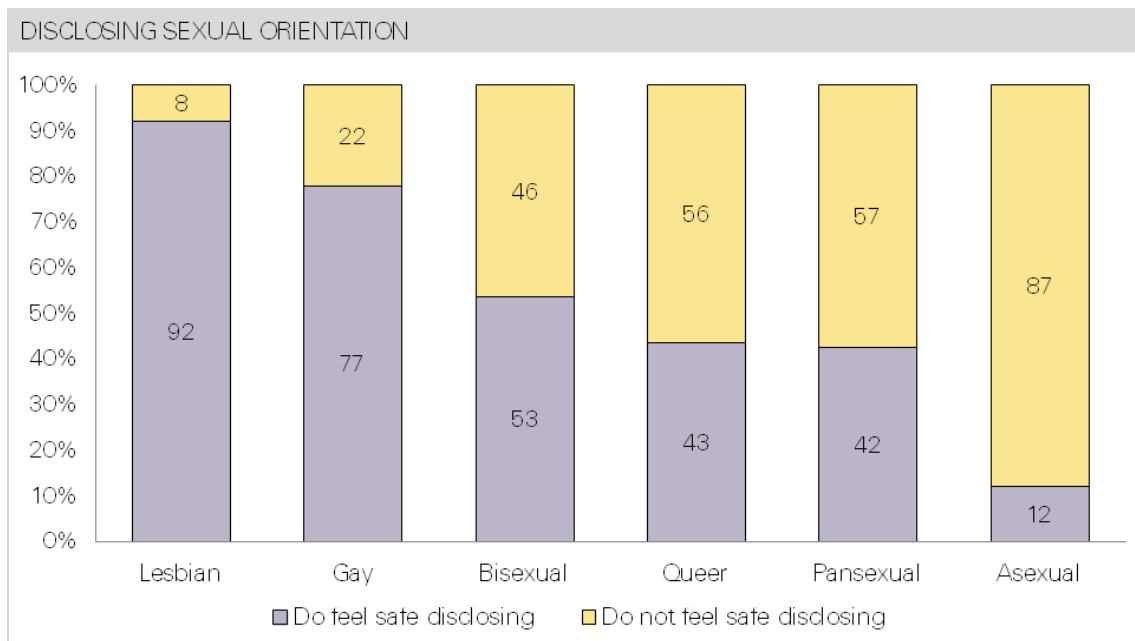
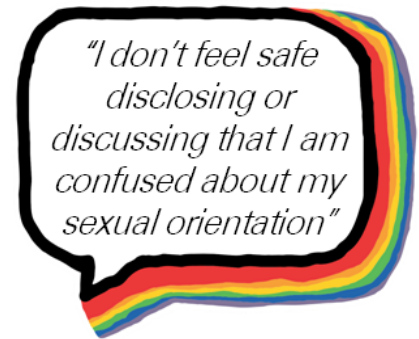
## Disclosing Identities

Participants were asked to share if they felt “safe” or “not safe” disclosing their sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or 2-Spirit identities when accessing services in North Bay. For the questions about sexual orientation and gender identity, the responses were broken down to allow participants to express which of their identities they felt “safe” or “not safe” disclosing when accessing services. The available responses to the question about 2-Spirit identity were “Yes”, “No”, or “Sometimes”. The percentages are calculated according to the number of participants who selected a particular identity. For example, 92% of those who selected the sexual orientation “Lesbian” felt safe disclosing that identity when accessing services.

### Sexual Orientation

104 responded to the question of whether they “Do” or “Do Not” feel safe disclosing their sexual orientation when accessing services in North Bay.

Lesbian:	92% Do (23),	8% Do Not (2)
Gay:	77% Do (21),	22% Do Not (6)
Bisexual:	53% Do (17),	46% Do Not (15)
Queer:	43% Do (14),	56% Do Not (18)
Pansexual:	42% Do (8),	57% Do Not (11)
Asexual:	12% Do (1),	87% Do Not (7)

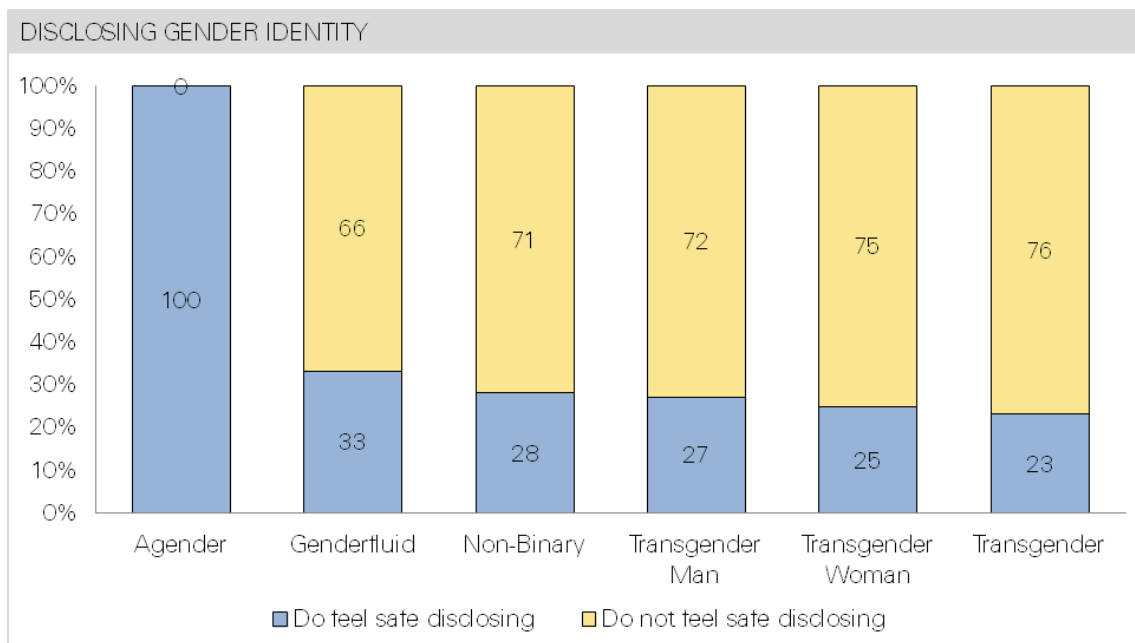


It is notable that those with lesbian and gay identities felt most comfortable disclosing their sexual orientation, while those with less fixed or binary identities—bisexual, queer, and pansexual—felt less safe in disclosing. It may be that fluid sexualities are still perceived and experienced as less understood or accepted by local service providers. Expanding understandings of LGBTQ2S+ identities beyond straight and gay would be a good start for any service provider. In practice this might mean not assuming that a person with a “same-sex” partner is lesbian/gay and a person with an “other-sex” partner is straight. Leaving space for them to identify as bisexual, queer, or pansexual might help to better include these LGBTQ2S+ people. Further, asexual identified participants were least comfortable disclosing, perhaps pointing to a perceived lack of understanding of this identification altogether. Again, making space for this identification in our understandings could be a first step in helping asexual-identified people feel comfortable disclosing their identities and specific needs.

**Gender Identity**

37 responded to the question of whether they “Do” or “Do Not” feel safe disclosing their gender identity when accessing services in North Bay.

Agender:	100% Do (3)	
Genderfluid:	33% Do (4),	66% Do Not (8)
Non-Binary:	28% Do (4),	71% Do Not (10)
Transgender Man:	27% Do (3),	72% Do Not (8)
Transgender Woman:	25% Do (1),	75% Do Not (3)
Transgender:	23% Do (4),	76% Do Not (13)

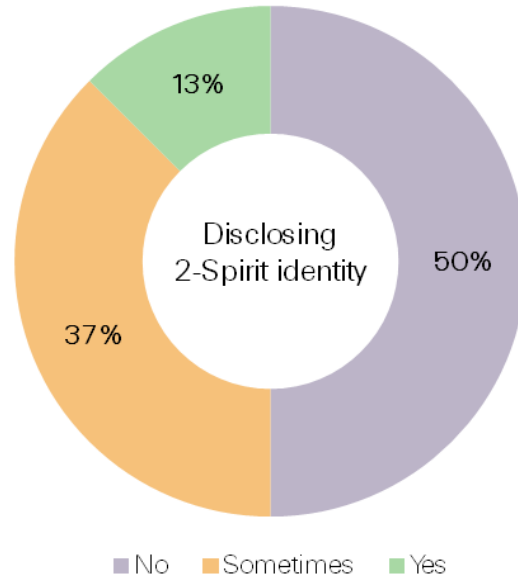


It is significant that roughly three-quarters of all transgender, non-binary, and genderfluid identified people do not feel safe disclosing their gender identity to service providers. Making space for, and seeking information regarding, identities outside of cisgender and/or binary sex-gender categories might be helpful in supporting disclosures and opening up conversations regarding needs and services specific to these individuals and identities.

**2-Spirit Identity**

16 responded to the question about if they felt safe disclosing their 2-Spirit when accessing services in North Bay.

- 50% No (8)
- 37% Sometimes (6)
- 13% Yes (2)



That only two respondents out of 16 felt safe disclosing their 2-Spirit is significant. Again, expanding options, understandings, and culturally-relevant services to include 2-Spirit is essential.

**Barriers to Accessing Services**

99 participants responded to the question “What might discourage and/or prevent you from accessing services in North Bay?” and were asked to select all that applied to them. This information is integral to understanding patterns in service provision that may alienate, exclude, and/or worry some LGBTQ2S+ people. In turn, altering or ending these practices may help service providers reduce barriers to service and earn the trust of LGBTQ2S+ people.

- 51% It costs money/too expensive (51)
- 51% Hearing offensive/harmful language used (51)
- 49% There are no LGBTQ2S+ specific programs available (49)
- 45% Staff are not experienced and/or skilled in working with LGBTQ2S+ people (45)
- 43% Staff have no positive space training (43)
- 42% Not anonymous/private (42)
- 41% No LGBTQ2S+ identified staff (41)
- 37% There aren't any LGBTQ2S+ resources available (37)
- 36% There is no positive/safer space policy posted (36)
- 32% Intake/registration forms do not include a space for me share my pronouns, gender identity, and/or preferred name, etc. (32)





31% staff do not ask me what my pronouns are and/or use the correct pronouns for me (31)

28% Confidentiality is not discussed and/or staff may “out” me to others (28)

24% Only “men’s” and “women’s” washrooms and/or change rooms available (24)

18% Services do not have an intersectional approach to services/they don’t understand my unique, intersectional, and/or complex needs (18)

4% Services not available in my language (other than English or French) (4)

It makes sense that 51% identified cost as a barrier to accessing services (51), given that 20% of participants indicated that their annual household income is \$10,000-19,000 (28) and the next largest grouping was 13% of participants indicated their household income as \$0-9,000 (18). “Hearing offensive/harmful language used” was also identified as a barrier by 51% of participants (51). As discussed above, when many participants do not feel safe disclosing their identities when accessing services, we can imagine that hearing service providers or other patrons/clients using offensive or harmful language would reasonably contribute to that. We also wish to highlight that 45% of participants expressed that staff lacking experience and/or skills in working with LGBTQ2S+ people (45) and 43% said that staff lacking positive space training (43) would prevent or discourage them from accessing a service. This makes sense given the fact that, as discussed previously, many participants shared negative experiences when accessing services that resulted from a lack or perceived lack of education and/or experience in working with LGBTQ2S+ people.

### **Police Services & Healthcare Services**

There were questions in the survey that asked participants specifically about their experiences with local police services and healthcare providers as it is well documented that these two areas of service can often be unsafe and/or sources of trauma for LGBTQ2S+ people. As we discussed earlier, these are also services that LGBTQ2S+ people avoided, with 28% of participants saying they avoided healthcare services in North Bay and 30% of participants saying they avoided police services in North Bay.

#### *Police Services*

We asked survey participants the following questions about local police services and 108 participants responded to each of the following:

As an LGBTQ2S+ person do you feel that our local police services are here to protect and help you?

49% Unsure (53)

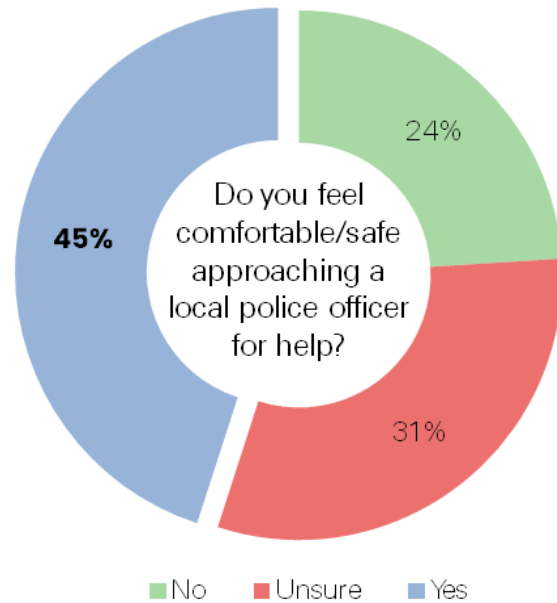
27% Yes (29)

24% No (26)



As an LGBTQ2S+ person do you feel comfortable and/or safe approaching a local police officer for help?

45% Yes (49)  
 31% Unsure (33)  
 24% No (26)



It is notable that in each case “No” and “Unsure” exceed 50% of responses. While 73% do not feel confident or certain that our local police services are here to serve and protect them as an LGBTQ2S+ person, it is *somewhat* encouraging that 45% felt comfortable and/or safe approaching a local police officer. When asked to elaborate on their experiences with local police services participants shared a range of positive and negative experiences. One participant indicated that a local police officer asked a victim of gay bashing if they “had made a pass” at the person who attacked them, while another described a positive experience of initially being worried about reporting an incident but the police “seemed un-phased by the queer aspect of it and took it all very seriously”. In relation to being worried about reporting, others said that they would be “cautious” about disclosing their identity to local police officers, or that other aspects of their identity impacted their relationship to police. One participant wrote, “I feel unsafe because I am First Nation, and I feel like they care less because of that”. We want to highlight that only 27% of participants feel that local police services are here to protect and help them as LGBTQ2S+ people and that 55% were either not comfortable or unsure if they felt comfortable and/or safe approaching a local police officer for help. We encourage local police services to consider these statistics and our recommendations, while taking steps to continue consulting with LGBTQ2S+ people who represent a wide range of intersectional identities.

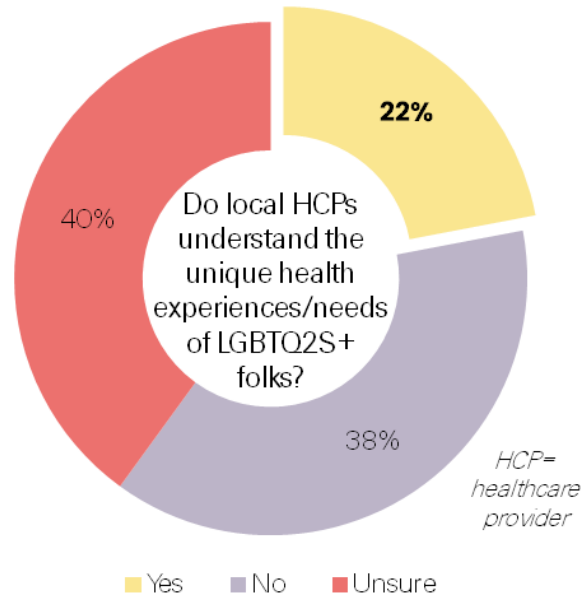
**Healthcare Services**

We asked survey participants the following questions about local healthcare providers; 108 participants responded to the first question and 106 answered the second:

Do you feel that healthcare providers in North Bay understand the unique health experiences/needs of LGBTQ2S+ folks? Some examples of healthcare providers are: family doctor, walk-in-clinic, mental health services, hospital, sexual health clinic, etc.

40% Unsure (43)                      38% No (41)                      22% Yes (24)





Have you ever avoided or delayed accessing medical treatment in North Bay because you were worried about discrimination/how you'd be treated/mistreated/not understood as an LGBTQ2S+ person? (e.g. doctor's appointment, hospital emergency visit, walk-in-clinic, STI testing).

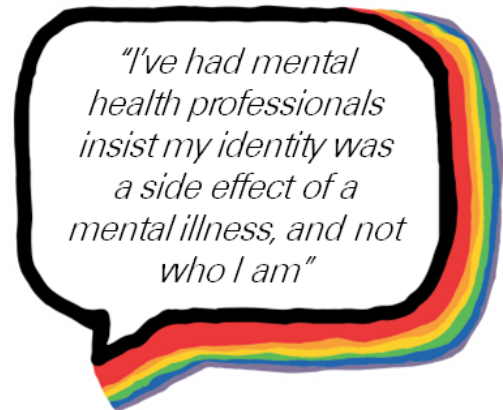
63% No (67)

37% Yes (39)

Less than a quarter of respondents feel that healthcare providers understand the health needs of LGBTQ2S+ people and 37% avoid or delay accessing medical treatment because they worry about facing discrimination or not being understood specifically because they are LGBTQ2S+. When asked to elaborate on their experiences with healthcare providers in North Bay participants shared negative experiences which included: encountering service providers who were "uneducated" about LGBTQ2S+ people and their healthcare needs or held "out dated ideas", and overt experiences of discrimination including "...negative reactions to my identity" and multiple instances of participants being outed by healthcare providers. It was also frequently mentioned by many participants that they feel healthcare providers lack the necessary education and training in regards to LGBTQ2S+ healthcare, and that the burden of education often falls on those seeking service. Several participants expressed avoiding health care services with many citing a desire to "avoid experiencing trauma" or worrying about being "treated differently or not well due to my identity". Given the necessity of healthcare services, it is concerning that LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay experience a lack of adequate care when they access such services, or that they avoid healthcare services completely. There were also several healthcare providers who were described as: "really great and understanding"; "they listen and only care about how I am doing and not my identity"; and "great at helping navigate non-standard relationships without judgement or issues". While there are some



encouraging findings in this area, it is safe to assume that the lack of safe, inclusive and informed healthcare may be causing a plethora of harmful impacts on the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay. When combined with other determinants of health, including violence, discrimination, marginalization, low incomes, disability and chronic health diagnoses, and a general sense of uncertainty surrounding safety, it is incumbent on healthcare providers to find ways to reach and reassure LGBTQ2S+ people by educating themselves on their varied and distinct needs.



### **Access to Indigenous Cultural Supports**

We asked participants who identified as both Indigenous and LGBTQ2S+ if they currently have access to cultural supports. 16 participants responded.

25% Yes (4)

25% Yes, but I do not want to (4)

25% No (4)

25% No, but I want to (4)

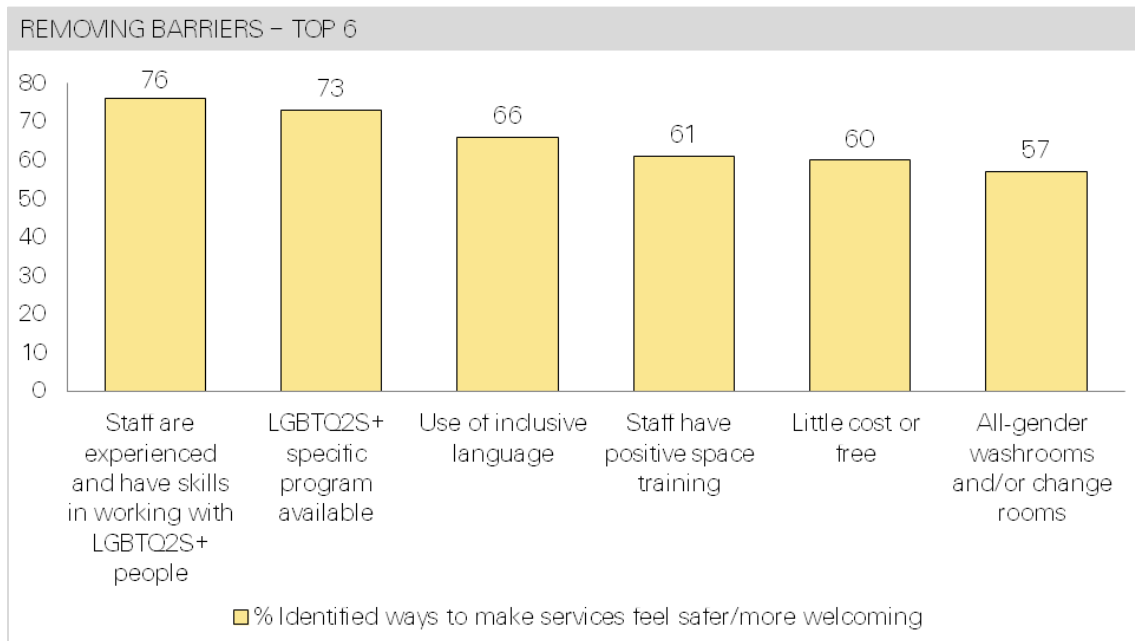
The relatively small number of participants who met the criteria for the question coupled with the equal number of participants who selected each response makes it impossible to establish a trend. Participants had space to elaborate on their answer. One said “Yes, but I am unsure where and how”, while another said “It would not be the first thing I share in an Indigenous space”. These responses highlight the complexity of experiences of Indigenous LGBTQ2S+ people. As we discussed earlier in this report, a person is never just one identity at any given time, and so with this question we wanted to *begin* to understand the access or lack thereof that Indigenous LGBTQ2S+ participants currently have to cultural supports. We emphasize the word “begin” as we strongly believe a dedicated project with an emphasis on Indigenous LGBTQ2S+ people in the North Bay area is necessary in order to more fully capture those unique experiences and stories.

### **Removing barriers to services**

We asked participants, what would make them feel safer and/or more welcome when accessing services in North Bay and to select all that apply. We defined safer as what would make you want to use a service, feel better about going to a service, etc. 107 participants responded.



- 76% Staff are experienced and have skills in working with LGBTQ2S+ people (82)
- 73% LGBTQ2S+ specific program available (79)
- 66% Use of inclusive language (71)
- 61% Staff have positive space training (66)
- 60% Little cost or free (65)
- 57% All-gender washrooms and/or change rooms (62)
- 53% Confidentiality is discussed and it is clear that staff will not “out” me/share my identity with others (57)
- 51% LGBTQ2S+ identified staff, volunteers, etc. (55)
- 51% There is a positive/safer space policy posted (55)
- 48% Intake forms that ask about my pronouns, gender identity, preferred name, etc. (52)
- 48% Intake forms ask me if I identify as a member of the LGBTQ2S+ community (52)
- 48% LGBTQ2S+ information resources are available (52)
- 47% An opportunity to offer feedback about services in a safe way (51)
- 42% Staff introduce themselves with their pronouns and ask me what my pronouns are (46)
- 33% I will be anonymous/no one will know I went there (36)
- 10% Services available in my language (e.g. other than English or French) (11)



These responses mirror much of what has already been detailed in the report. LGBTQ2S+ people want services that make space for their identities on forms, in bathrooms and in staffs conceptualizations of sex, gender, and sexual orientation/sexuality. They want spaces



that indicate that LGBTQ2S+ people are welcome and that staff are specifically trained, knowledgeable, and experienced with their identities. 73% would like to see LGBTQ2S+ specific programs and 51% would appreciate knowing that a service provider has LGBTQ2S+ staff or volunteers. That said, we hold this latter desire in tension with the fact that 41% of LGBTQ2S+ participants of this study are not out to their coworkers (37 of 102), 53% are not out to their supervisor/boss (49 of 102), and 55% are not out to their employer in general (49 of 102). We see the desire for openly LGBTQ2S+ staff and volunteers as meaningfully connected to the reluctance of LGBTQ2S+ people to come out at work. In both cases, homophobia, transphobia, heteronormativity, and other factors leave LGBTQ2S+ people fearing reprisals and seeking their environments for signs that they are safe, welcome, and genuinely understood. Sending clear signals that LGBTQ2S+ people are welcome as clients and staff *must* be backed up by genuine and ongoing efforts to educate staff, coworkers, and community service providers. As the responses outlined above indicate, 33% of LGBTQ2S+ people would like access to anonymous services and we flag that as a further consideration for service providers especially with regard to sexual health, another theme that emerged in the surveys.

## SAFETY

***“Most of us are always thinking about, are we safe in this situation, and thinking about how to adjust or change or whatever our behaviour...”***

When asked if they felt safe as an LGBTQ2S+ person in North Bay participants articulated responses that were complex, exhibited a high degree of reflection, and indicated that many participants are regularly assessing their sense of safety. For many, a sense of safety was dependent upon “where I am and who I am with”. Several participants discussed ways that they “adjust” their behaviour or “tone down” their queerness in an effort to avoid being targeted. It is worth noting that many responses complicated the question about safety in ways that are important, including frequent mention of being “uncomfortable” rather than unsafe as an LGBTQ2S+ person in North Bay, or experiencing a “lack of embracing or accepting. I don’t think it would make me feel unsafe but I think that I would feel uncomfortable in my community”. In recognizing the frequent mention of “comfort” versus “safety” we wish to acknowledge that many participants shared experiences of feeling unsafe, *and* that beyond safety—LGBTQ2S+ people want to feel comfortable and accepted in North Bay.

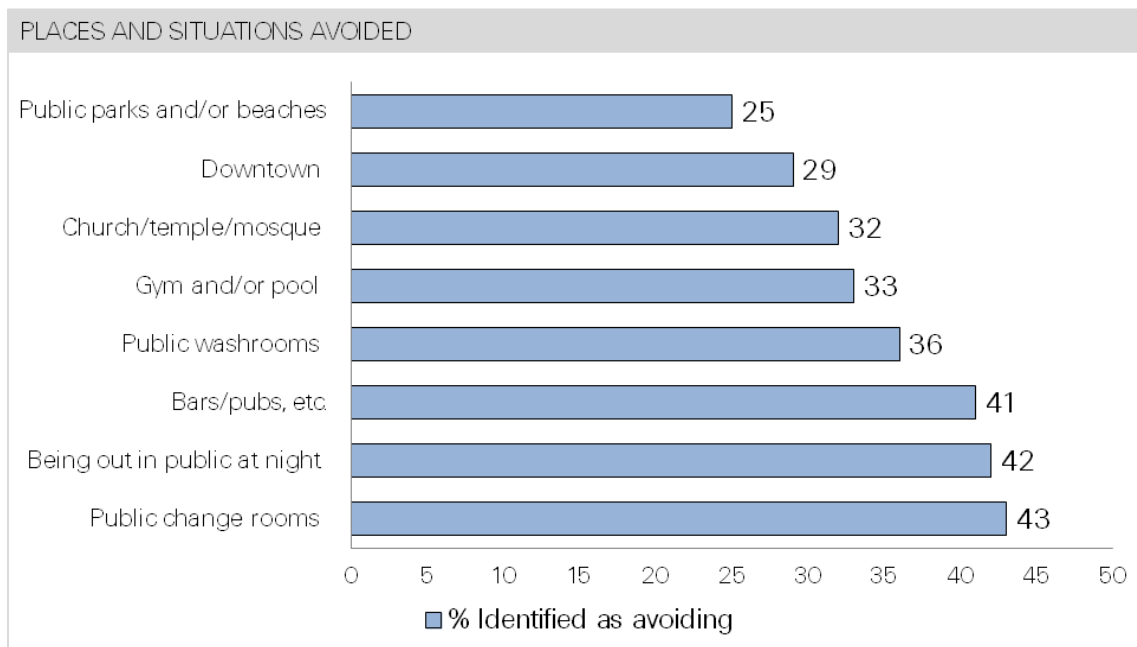
We now turn to spaces and situations in North Bay that some participants actively avoid and have experienced or perceive to be unsafe. This information can help us to better “open up” North Bay so that LGBTQ2S+ people feel safe accessing a wider range of places in the city. We also highlight existing spaces, service providers, and organizations that respondents identified as safe for them as LGBTQ2S+ identified people.



## Avoiding places and situations

69 participants responded to the question about places and/or situations they avoid in North Bay because they feel unsafe as an LGBTQ2S+ person. We highlight below those spaces and situations that over 25% of the respondents avoid:

43%	Public change rooms (30)	33%	Gym and/or pool (23)
42%	Being out in public at night (29)	32%	Church/temple/mosque (22)
41%	Bars/pubs, etc. (28)	29%	Downtown (20)
36%	Public washrooms (25)	25%	Public parks and / or beaches (17)



It is important to consider how, for LGBTQ2S+ people, the city of North Bay shrinks with every avoidance. Respondents were careful to draw attention to their level of “visibility” in responding to this question, writing different versions of: “Visibility is what causes us the most grief. If you pass, you are ok, if you don’t then you are not ok”. As such, feeling safe in North Bay and not avoiding any spaces can be read as both a fact of some LGBTQ2S+ people’s experience of the city and, for some, a result of passing as sexually and gender ‘normative’. Consequently, it is important that we hear experiences of avoidance *and* safety with some attention to whether the speaker is known or seen to be LGBTQ2S+. Those who identified as “visibly gay,” “gender non-binary” or as “holding hands with their partner”—to name only a few examples—indicated that they were more likely to avoid certain spaces and face harassment in North Bay, while others who identified as “passing” and otherwise privileged commented on how they often “blended in” and felt safe as a consequence. That said, those who pass are also anxious. As one person wrote, “I generally feel OK but get like super paranoid that someone just somehow KNOWS”. Being



known to be LGBTQ2S+ identified, being perceived to be LGBTQ2S+, and fearing that others will somehow “know” that they are LGBTQ2S+ all influenced how respondents’ navigated the city.

Even LGBTQ2S+ people who see it as their responsibility to “ease other’s discomfort” or “manage my appearance and practices in public to avoid harassment” recognize that they cannot actually manage other’s responses. As one participant wrote:

This participant seems to suggest that a certain amount of diplomacy *might* mitigate others’ responses, but that such individualized “solutions” to homophobia and transphobia are only partial *and* may be entirely ineffective. Such insights reveal how social inequalities cannot be transformed solely through individual change enacted by marginalized peoples themselves, but require broader social change. Further, this respondent demonstrates that the longstanding social stigma that LGBTQ2S+ people are threatening to or predatory of minors and vulnerable people still has an effect on people, places, and situations some LGBTQ2S+ people actively avoid.



### **Feeling safe in community**

45 people shared with us a place, community of people, or event in North Bay where they felt safe as an LGBTQ2S+ person. Participants named a wide range of LGBTQ2S+ communities, local businesses, arts organizations, one sports association, and two said “at home”. We offer kudos to the most frequently named groups, places and events; those named by five or more respondents:

Nipissing University (11)

North Bay and District Multicultural Centre (8)

Student-run Equity Centre at Nipissing University (6)

St. Andrew’s Church and LGBTQ+ potlucks (6)

North Bay Pride events (5)





To highlight one recent example, a participant with a long history of organizing events and starting organizations for LGBTQ2S+ people in the North Bay area wrote: “I was extremely happy to learn there was going to be a Pride parade last year... Without hesitation, I definitely wanted to participate... and what a surprise about the turnout... it gave me goosebumps... it was great and quite overwhelming to see and hear”. It is important for us to recognize the local institutions and organizers that participants identified as enhancing their lives as LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay. While there is always room for improvement—and we say that as people with stakes in at least three of the five groups named above—we hope that these organizations, churches, and events will continue to build on their strengths as notable spaces where a significant number of LGBTQ2S+ identified respondents feel safe in North Bay.

We do not wish to oversimplify our remarks in this area and want to do justice to the patterns that emerged. It is important to note that the surveys communicated clearly that not all LGBTQ2S+ people feel safe or comfortable at the events or spaces listed above. For example, *many* participants expressed great enthusiasm and gratitude for the potlucks at St. Andrew’s United Church, while 20% of respondents avoid faith and/or spiritual services (12 of 60). We embrace both of these realities as illuminating the need for *diversified* opportunities and services for LGBTQ2S+ people. On one hand, all LGBTQ2S+ events and services should strive to be safer spaces, accessible in cost as well as to people with varying abilities and mobilities, respectful and anti-oppressive. While on the other hand, we accept that LGBTQ2S+ events and services cannot reasonably be expected to be everything to everyone. We wish to offer kudos to these safer spaces and recognize and recommend that we need more safer spaces in North Bay in order to reflect the diverse interests and identities of LGBTQ2S+ people, not fewer.

## **BELONGING, SOCIAL ISOLATION & DISCRIMINATION**

***“My community is not easy to find”.***

### ***Belonging***

We asked participants in the focus groups and interviews to share their experiences of being an LGBTQ2S+ person in the wider North Bay community, beyond the experiences accessing services. Their answers strongly indicated that many LGBTQ2S+ people do not feel a sense of belonging or a connection to community in North Bay. One participant summed up their experience as one of “loneliness” while another expressed that LGBTQ2S+ people “get the cold shoulder in this town a lot and it makes us struggle”. Another participant described their experience as feeling like “you’re treading into a space you don’t belong to. We all live here, we exist but don’t belong”. Several participants touched on an acute perception that they are viewed as “different” and stated as commonsense that North Bay is “an extremely conservative community with very little understanding/acceptance toward LGBT+ people”. These responses illustrate that the



broader North Bay community is perceived by some as not welcoming to, or not understanding of, LGBTQ2S+ people and their experiences.

When survey participants were asked to rate their current sense of belonging as an LGBTQ2S+ person in North Bay, 11% indicated “Very Weak” (11) and 31% said that it was “Somewhat Weak” (30). 35% of the 98 respondents to the question said that their sense of belonging was “Somewhat Strong” (34) and 12% responded that their sense of belonging was “Very Strong” (12). These responses indicate participants were quite divided on how much they felt a sense belonging as an LGBTQ2S+ person in North Bay. However, there is certainly much room for improvement in the “Very Strong” category. Many of the participants expressed that they are not “out” in North Bay and described feeling concern or uncertainty about whether or not they would be accepted if they were out. One participant said, “I currently feel a sense of belonging to my community, but I fear I would lose that sense of belonging if I were out”. This response and others like it indicate that LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay are uncertain about whether the wider North Bay community is accepting and whether or not they would lose their existing community connections if they were known to be part of the LGBTQ2S+ community.

Many participants also discussed a lack of connection to other LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay. When asked if they felt connected to other LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay 47% said “Yes (44) and 53% said “No”. One participant described being new to North Bay and in spite of being “out” that “it kind of felt like I was in the closet because I didn’t have folks in my life that I could chat to, and you never really knew where people stood because there was no visible community here”. It was often cited that a lack of visibility or opportunity to meet other LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay contributed to feelings of isolation or lack of connection to others. Another participant shared that in spite of having “a lot of queer friends [they] still long for a diverse, large and intergenerational queer community”.

LGBTQ2S+ people want to feel like they belong in North Bay. Many of the desires stated by participants felt like modest asks with massive consequences. For example, the following are three brief responses to the question of what belonging as an LGBTQ2S+ person in North Bay would feel like: “Less socially isolated, more welcome, more secure and happier”; “I just want to live my life without being questioned or harassed”; and “I would like to know more people and have more friends in the community”.

55 respondents offered the following gestures or spaces that would help cultivate belonging:

- More rainbow stickers in businesses and healthcare (that have training) (22)

- All gender washrooms (16)

- A designated LGBTQ2S+ space (16)

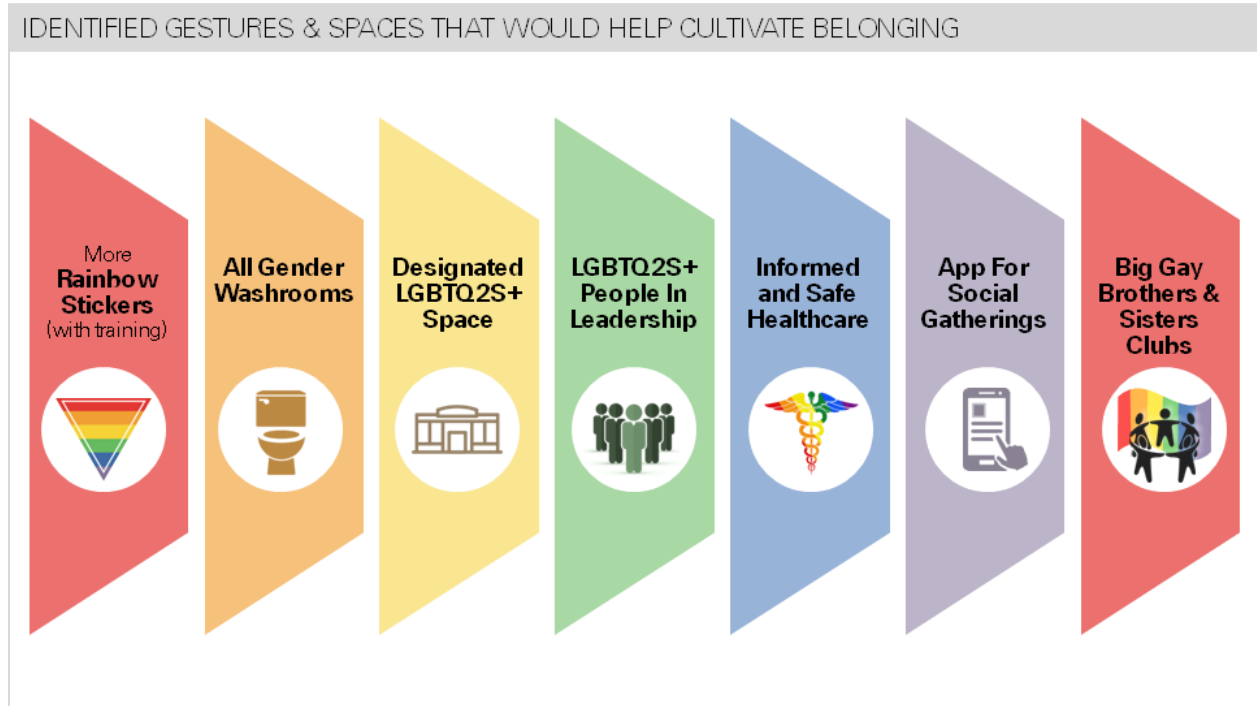
- LGBTQ2S+ people in leadership (3)

- Informed and safe healthcare

- An app for social gatherings

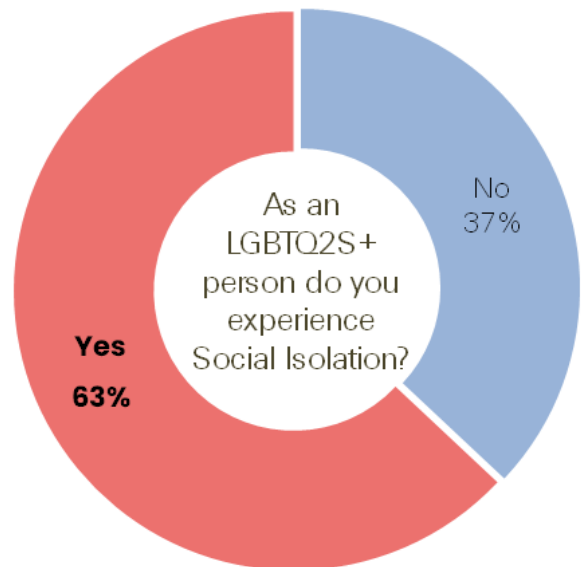


## Big gay brother/sister clubs



## Social Isolation

We asked survey participants if they experience social isolation in North Bay. We defined social isolation as: a lack of connection to other people and/or the larger community. Social isolation can occur when there is a lack of safe, inclusive, and/or meaningful opportunities to connect with other people and your community. 63% of participants who responded to this question said that they do experience social isolation in North Bay (60). When asked to elaborate on what would help them feel less socially isolated in North Bay, the vast majority of those who responded expressed a strong desire for opportunities and/or a place to gather socially with other LGBTQ2S+ people. Several people wanted opportunities to connect and make friends that were not centered around “hooking up”. It is also worth noting that several people said that having LGBTQ2S+ services, including several mentions of trans specific supports would help them feel less socially isolated. Participants



recommended, “Support groups for those who are questioning their gender identity or are undergoing transition” and a “segregated trans and intersex support and advocacy group or centre with social events open to the public”. Finally, several participants expressed that “less discrimination” would help them feel less socially isolated.

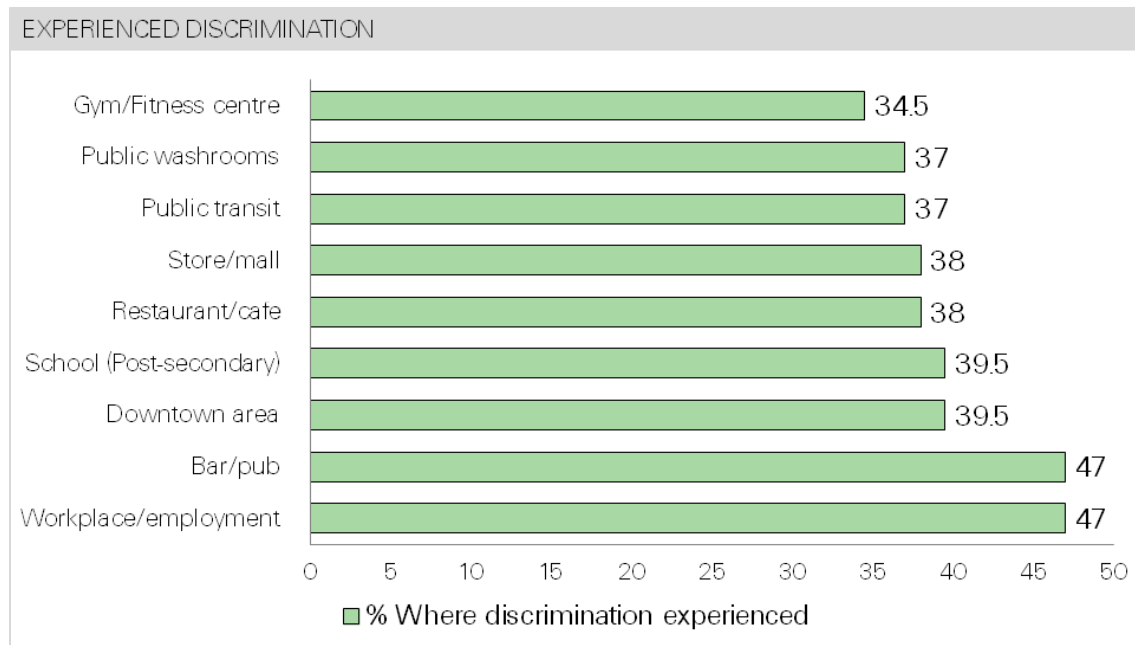
## **Discrimination**

Throughout the survey, focus groups, and interviews almost all participants described experiencing discrimination in many aspects of their lives including: with family members; at local businesses; when accessing services; at school; at work; and with the general public. They perceived that they had been discriminated against based on their: gender identity; gender expression; sexual orientation; and appearance and/or size. Participants frequently cited how they were made fun of, harassed, laughed at, or stared at because of their weight or size, or for their perceived queerness or non-normative gender expression. Several participants described experiencing discrimination due to their race and/or Indigeneity. Others shared experiences in relation to their disability. As we discussed earlier in this report, we want to emphasize the intersectionality of the LGBTQ2S+ community in North Bay, and that there are many aspects of their identities that impact the way they navigate the city and services. In moving towards the goal of broader social change, we want to emphasize that in order to truly create positive spaces in North Bay, issues of sizeism, racism, colonialism, ableism, and all other forms of oppression and discrimination that impact members of the local LGBTQ2S+ community must be addressed simultaneously.

We asked participants to identify where they had experienced discrimination in North Bay. We have highlighted below only the responses that more than 25% of participants selected:

47% Workplace/employment (38)	38% Store/mall (31)
47% Bar/pub (38)	37% Store/mall) (30)
39.5% Downtown area (e.g. Main Street) (32)	37% Public transit (e.g. at the bus stop, on the bus, etc.) (30)
39.5% School (Post-secondary) (32)	34.5% Public washrooms (28)
38% Restaurant/cafe (31)	27% Gym/Fitness centre (22)





When asked to elaborate on these experiences further, many participants described issues related to washrooms. Several mentioned issues at local bars, including one person who said they are frequently “carded” by bouncers before they are allowed to use the washroom of their choice, and another sharing that they had witnessed “friends being thrown out” or being told that their “friends are not allowed to use the washroom”. Another participant described witnessing people “making fun of the inclusive washroom signs” at a local school. Given that so many participants expressed wanting to have more social opportunities at local bars for LGBTQ2S+ people, we strongly encourage local bar owners and managers to learn about how to provide safer spaces, and to ensure that all of their staff do the same.

We also want to draw attention to the fact that 46% of participants said they had witnessed or experienced discrimination in their workplace. We asked participants specific questions about their experiences in the workplace, including: if they felt that their sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression had impacted their ability to secure employment in North Bay, and if they had ever left a job because of discrimination against LGBTQ2S+ people. 87% of participants indicated that they *did not* feel that their sexual orientation had impacted their ability to secure employment (82), and 76% of participants *did not* feel that their gender identity and/or gender expression has impacted their ability to secure employment (59). Finally, 86% of participants indicated that they had not left a job in North Bay due to discrimination against LGBTQ2S+ people. Given how many participants described hearing offensive remarks about LGBTQ2S+ people or had other negative experiences while at work, it may be that some choose to remain in a workplace out of necessity, and not because it is a positive space.

In their written responses to these questions, many participants expressed that their




experiences were complex, and went beyond a simple “Yes” or “No” answer. One participant expressed that they “can’t imagine how an employer that I have given a resume to could know about my sexual orientation so I don’t believe this has negatively impacted me attempting to secure a job. I do however worry that if my possibly future employer learns about my sexual identity that I may be fired or at least not respected in the work place.” Other participants expressed similar concerns and that they hadn’t disclosed their identity “out of fear that it will impact my ability to secure employment” One participant shared with us that after witnessing “hurtful comments about specific LGBTQ2S+ clients and LGBTQ2S+ topics in general I provided opportunities for positive space training but no one took me up on the opportunities. This was one of the reasons why I looked for other employment”. Rather than wait for an employee to request training or reacting to an environment that is already potentially unsafe for their employees, we urge employers in North Bay to be proactive in their approach. All employers have the responsibility to create a safe environment for employees, which includes making sure their workplace is a positive space for LGBTQ2S+ people. We strongly urge all employers in North Bay to ensure their staff and volunteers have positive space training so that LGBTQ2S+ people feel supported in their workplace.

## SOCIAL ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

### ***“North Bay has a definite gay culture problem”.***

As discussed above, out of 95 respondents, 64% (60) indicated that, as an LGBTQ2S+ identified person, they experience social isolation in North Bay because of a lack of safe, inclusive, and/or meaningful opportunities to connect with other people and their own community. One participant wrote, “I have a lot of lgbtq friends and I feel I belong with them, but on the whole of north bay I feel isolated outside of my friend group.” In the larger context of the study, this participant is fortunate to have LGBTQ2S+ friends, as 53% (50 of 94) of respondents do not feel connected to LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay. People born and raised in North Bay, as well as those who moved here shared this



*“I’m single and want to settle here. My job holds me to the area but unfortunately many guys leave to avoid the area which makes dating impossible. I’d feel closer to the city if I could find someone who also lives here. [...] North Bay has a definite gay culture problem. It’s viewed as a black hole for relationships.”*



pattern. For example, in response to a question about belonging in North Bay, one person wrote, “Despite being born and raised here, I feel very alone in North Bay”.

Beyond expressing high degrees of social isolation, other common refrains that appeared throughout the surveys, interviews, and focus groups include the following claims and beliefs about North Bay: “many LGBTQ2S+ people want to stay”; “the city has an LGBTQ2S+ retention problem”; “it lacks LGBTQ2S+ community”; and—“in the absence of LGBTQ2S+ community and ‘gay culture’—it is challenging to meet other LGBTQ2S+ people for friendship, fun, romance, sex, support, and a sense of community”. As one participant wrote:

To further emphasize the importance of social opportunities to participants, when asked which potential LGBTQ2S+ services they would access if they were available in North Bay, the most common response was social events (84%, 76 of 91). Further, when asked if having services and/or social opportunities for LGBTQ2S+ people would encourage them to stay in North Bay or move to North Bay in the future, 71% indicated yes and 20% were unsure. It is for these reasons that we dedicate considerable attention to the social isolation and social lives of LGBTQ2S+ identified people in North Bay.

In the following sections, we turn our attention to the kinds of social activities participants would like to see in North Bay in the near future. We outline in detail what would make these LGBTQ2S+ respondents more likely to attend and/or participate in local LGBTQ2S+ activities, events, and services. Finally, we outline two common suggestions made by participants, specifically a desire for a centralized source where they could post and hear about local LGBTQ2S+ events, as well as a “place for us”. The desire for a space dedicated to LGBTQ2S+ people and allies, resources, support groups, education, outreach, sexual health, and social events was expressed in myriad ways.

### ***What kinds of LGBTQ2S+ events are desired?***

The creativity and hopes of participants were revealed vividly in questions regarding the kinds of social opportunities they desire for themselves and other LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay. While the responses were generally hopeful and enthusiastic, we could not help but notice a rather low bar, suggesting that LGBTQ2S+ people are both keen and perhaps a bit desperate for LGBTQ2S+ community events. To illustrate, participants dreamed of “ongoing anything really,” “Anything really (as long as it wasn’t too expensive)”, “pretty much anything”, “anything”, “Anything, we need more social opportunities” and “Anything social to help meet others”. Not to belabor the point, but the following sums up this pattern in a meaningful way: “Anything and everything. I really want to know other LGBT+ people because I feel isolated”. This low bar is both a warning sign to the North Bay community and an opportunity to develop events for a community that longs for togetherness, safety, and social fun. As one respondent writes:



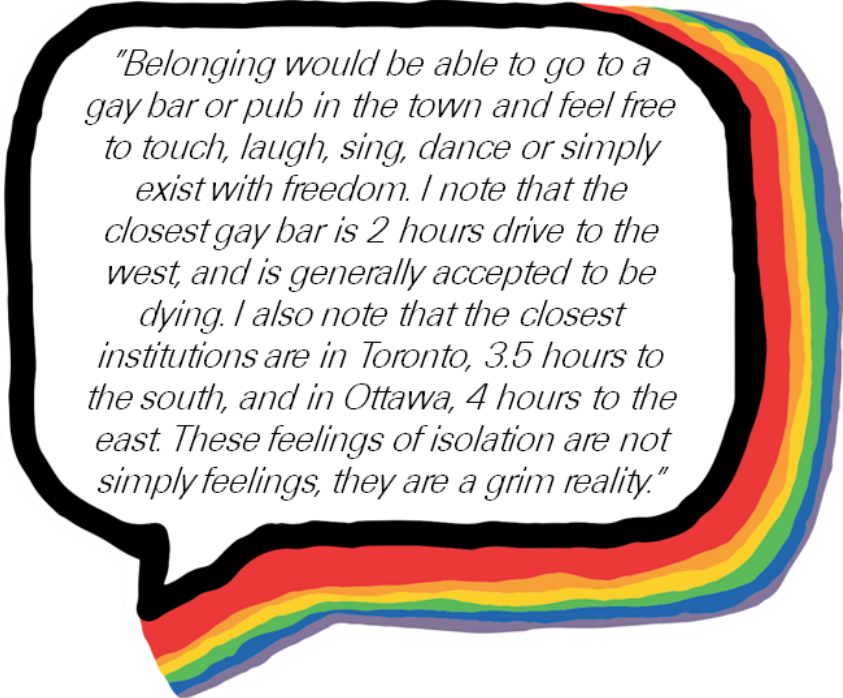
Setting aside this low bar for a moment, we asked what kinds of LGBTQ2S+ activities and events respondents would like to see in North Bay—recognizing that some of these already exist. Out of 92 respondents, 75% (69) desire Pride events and 71% (65) want nightlife activities (e.g. bar/club night, pub, dances, etc.). Coffee houses (67%, 62), support groups (64%, 59), and entertainment (e.g. musicians, singers, comedians, etc.) (60%,

55) also ranked very highly. 62% want a café/restaurant (62); 47% would like movie nights (43) and 37% were interested in dating opportunities (e.g. speed dating, mixers, etc.) (39%). Equally popular were events for affinity groups, such as space and/programs for families with children (37%, 34), LGBTQ2S+ sports teams (29%, 27), and religious and/or faith groups (21%, 19).

Aside from the events and activities listed above, other ideas were also pitched, with 58 respondents offering detailed suggestions. An after-school drop-in or social group for LGBTQ2S+ youth was requested by 13 respondents. Arts and crafts figured prominently with six participants interested in events “that centre around art and self-expression”. In terms of physical activity, one participant suggested a trans and non-binary safe gym/fitness nights (1), while others desired LGBTQ2S+ sports or “fitness groups” (1), and outdoor adventure groups (2). Trans specific “safe social spaces,” social opportunities, support groups, advocacy organizations, and events were suggested by five participants. Karaoke (4), drag shows (3), games nights (3), social/dating events, summer camp for queer families and queer family activities were also named as desirable activities.

In a more prescribed question, 91 respondents indicated which of the following activities they would access if they were available in North Bay:

84%	Social events (76)	48%	Drop-in space (44)
67%	Education, training and/or workshops (61)	23%	Trans specific groups and/or services (21)
56%	General support groups (51)	19%	Family groups and/or services (17)
55%	Arts based programs (50)	18%	Youth groups and/or services (16)

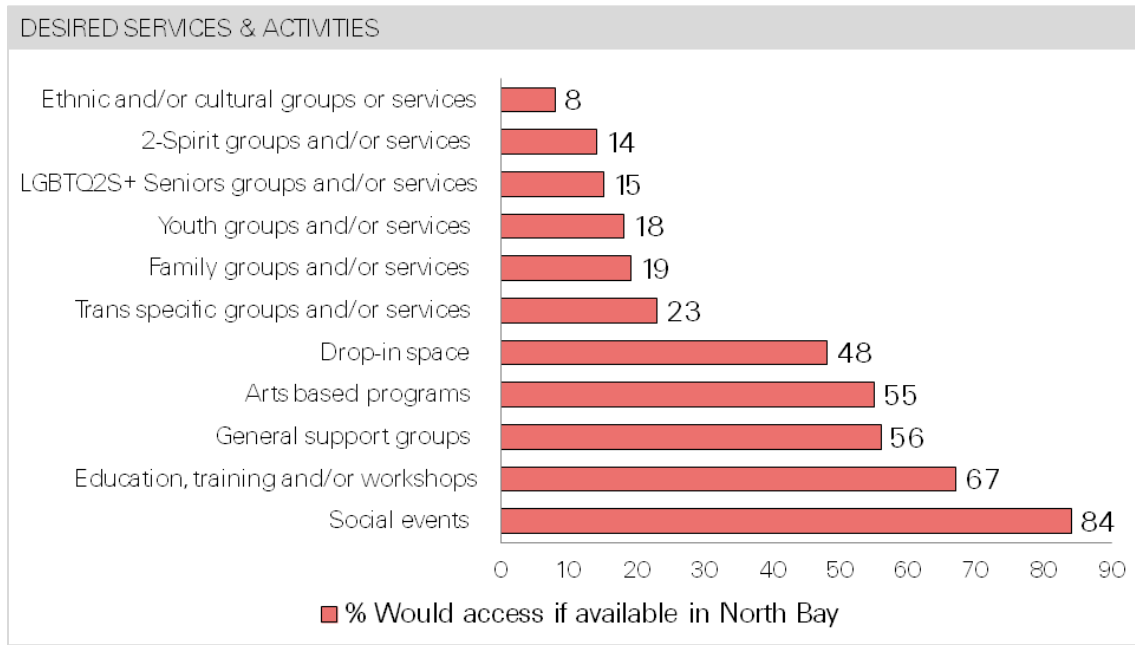


*“Belonging would be able to go to a gay bar or pub in the town and feel free to touch, laugh, sing, dance or simply exist with freedom. I note that the closest gay bar is 2 hours drive to the west, and is generally accepted to be dying. I also note that the closest institutions are in Toronto, 3.5 hours to the south, and in Ottawa, 4 hours to the east. These feelings of isolation are not simply feelings, they are a grim reality.”*





- 15% LGBTQ2S+ Seniors groups and/or services (14)
- 14% 2-Spirit groups and/or services (13)
- 9% Ethnic and/or cultural groups or service (8)



Further, respondents—out of a total of 88—indicated that they would be more likely to attend LGBTQ2S+ activities, events, and services if they were:

- 82% Low cost to attend/participate (e.g. pay what you can, sliding scale, small donation) (72)
- 72% Flexible hours and/or days (e.g. open evenings and/or weekends) (63)
- 70% No cost to attend/participate (62)
- 51% Food/refreshments provided (45)
- 49% Located in a LGBTQ2S+ specific community centre space (43)
- 47% All-gender washrooms and / or change rooms onsite (41)
- 33% Located in an accessible building (29)
- 31% Services have an intersectional approach to services/they understand my unique, intersectional, and/or complex needs and identity (27)
- 16% Available in accessible formats (e.g. Braille, ASL interpretation, etc.) (14)
- 14% Located in a non-LGBTQ2S+ specific community centre space (12)
- 4.5% Available in French (4)
- 4.5% Available in language other than English and French (4)



In the category of “other,” participants indicated the following: “organized/run by lgbtq2s+ folks”; “child friendly”; “Feeling accepted as a member of the community when I am with my opposite sex partner, not my same-sex partner”; “serve alcohol!”; “frequency”; “knowledge of event”; and “Open to allies for the first time going, so I can have someone I know with me”. We include all of this data so that service providers, event organizers, and local organizations can do their best to develop events and services that reach and welcome the largest number of LGBTQ2S+ people. As is clear, social isolation is a serious issue for the LGBTQ2S+ participants of this study and social opportunities are needed in North Bay.

### **Accessible and centralized event listings**

A very common issue identified by participants is that LGBTQ2S+ do not hear about LGBTQ2S+ specific events. Granted that very few exist, 41% of 98 respondents (40) indicated that they are not aware of *any* social activities for LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay. When asked why LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay do not participate in existing events, the most common answers were lack of publicity and nowhere to find out about LGBTQ2S+ events (23 of 51). As one participant explained, “It is difficult to find out what events are happening. Information is too scattered and not easily found”. Centralized event listings for LGBTQ2S+ community events would be helpful in better publicizing the few events that presently take place in North Bay. Other common deterrents to attending LGBTQ2S+ events included: not feeling safe, welcome or comfortable at the existing LGBTQ2S+ events (7); not being “totally out” (5); no one to go with (3); and cost (2).

### **A space for LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay**

97% (93 of 96) of participants indicate that having an LGBTQ2S+ positive social space would help connect LGBTQ2S+ people to each other. Such a centre—whether independent or run out of an existing service provider—might help to provide an “entry point” into an LGBTQ2S+ community while also signaling that “the community at large is happy you are here”, to use the language of one participant. When asked if they would access an LGBTQ2S+ resource centre/organization in North Bay, only one person out of 91 respondents said no. 74% indicated yes and 25% responded maybe.

**97%** of participants said having an **LGBTQ2S+ Social Space** would help **connect LGBTQ2S+ people** to each other

This dream of a “place for us” appeared throughout the surveys across a range of questions. Responding to the question of what would help people “come out” in North Bay, one participant wrote, “A safe place specific to the rainbow community that we can access to feel safe with family”. Another signaled that LGBTQ2S+ resources would be helpful: “To feel safer being out I would need a better understanding of my own sexuality and the resources available to gain that understanding”. A dedicated space appealed for other reasons, including the following: “I feel too exhausted to participate and actively be in



a space at a specific time. However if there was a space such as an LGBTQ2S+ bar, café, bookstore, etc. You can simply go there as you please". As such, a designated and accessible LGBTQ2S+ space with resources, groups, educational opportunities, affinity based services, events, and centralized event listings would do much to build LGBTQ2S+ communities and identities while signaling to all residents of North Bay that LGBTQ2S+ people are welcome and wanted in the city.

The importance of social opportunities and building diverse LGBTQ2S+ communities is well supported by research that points to "the satisfaction aging members of a community experience through mentoring [and] offering a part of themselves to younger generations" (Goltz, 2013, p. 141). One elder interviewee spoke about wanting to be able to share skills and support LGBTQ2S+ youth in organizing their own events and how she felt she "let them down by not... being more supportive". Because of a longstanding stigma that cast non-straight people as predatory and threatening to youth, intergenerational queer communities have been restricted. The lack of intergenerational LGBTQ2S+ community has negative effects on all of its generations because such communities provide opportunities for: mentoring; role models; encountering future scripts; expanding views of LGBTQ2S+ people beyond those depicted in mainstream popular culture; and countering oppressive beliefs about LGBTQ2S+ people. A "place for us" could help reduce social isolation and improve quality of life for LGBTQ2S+ people across the life cycle. Because of the overwhelming collective desire for LGBTQ2S+ community connection and spaces to gather, we discuss the possibility of a resource centre in more detail in the next section concerning future supports and services.



## **FUTURE SUPPORTS & SERVICES**

Across the survey, focus groups, and interviews the vast majority of participants expressed that having a place or space in North Bay for LGBTQ2S+ people was strongly desired. Many participants also indicated that seeing a positive space and/or rainbow symbol in a business or service provider would send a message of support for and recognition of the LGBTQ2S+ community in North Bay. Finally, when asked about services and supports they wanted in the future, participants expressed a desire for support groups and for education, training, and workshops available in North Bay. Below we detail each of these desires for community supports and services in more detail.

### ***LGBTQ2S+ Community Space***

73% of 91 participants said that they would access an LGBTQ2S+ centre or service provider in North Bay (67). As we discuss throughout our findings, the desire and need for a dedicated space, which can be multi-purpose and open during flexible times and hours, was overwhelming. When we asked participants which issues were most impacting them, 55% said not knowing where to meet other LGBTQ2S+ people (49 of 89) and 57% said they didn't feel a connection/sense of belonging to the local LGBTQ2S+ community (51 of 89).

We wish to emphasize that opportunities to connect and meet other LGBTQ2S+ people can and should happen in many different venues and iterations in North Bay. Many participants wished for a central place where they could also "drop in" as needed, which a dedicated LGBTQ2S+ community space could offer. Of the 89 who responded, 56% said that if there were LGBTQ2S+ services available in North Bay, they would feel most comfortable using them in an LGBTQ2S+ specific centre/organization (50). Several participants indicated that they did not have a preference of an LGBTQ2S+ specific service provider or a non-LGBTQ2S+ service provider as long it was "safe". We draw attention to these responses because we strongly urge existing service providers to consider introducing LGBTQ2S+ services, if they can do so in a way that is safe for LGBTQ2S+ people; this is especially desirable given that a separate LGBTQ2S+ service provider may not happen in the immediate future. That being said, we also wish to highlight that the existence of a dedicated LGBTQ2S+ space could do more than meet the social needs of LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay; it could function as a centralized space for resources, community outreach, and to advertise other events and services – all of which participants indicated they desired. 57% of respondents (52 of 92) want an LGBTQ2S+ resource directory and a community centre would be a convenient place from which to spearhead such an initiative. Additionally, a dedicated space could act as a resource for referrals and support for local service providers, organizations, businesses, government, and community members.



## Positive Space Symbol Initiative

Many, many participants expressed a desire to see “rainbow” or “positive space” stickers/signs/symbols posted in local businesses, organizations, and service providers. It came up in response to questions including questions about belonging and what would make accessing services feel safer. Several participants expressed that having positive space symbols in businesses, organizations, and service providers would signify that LGBTQ2S+ people are welcomed, accepted, and included in those spaces. Further, such a sign communicates to all who see it that LGBTQ2S+ people exist and matter in North Bay. The proliferation of positive space signs in our city has the potential to alter the landscape for LGBTQ2S+ people seeking assurance and safety, while also signaling to visitors and newcomers that North Bay strives to be an inclusive. It is important to note that participants expressed concern that seeing a positive space symbol at a business or organization might be “hollow” if staff and volunteers, for example, did not have the necessary education and skills to follow through on that promise of acceptance and inclusion. We ask organizations to keep in mind that while rainbow/positive space symbols can be a great step to show LGBTQ2S+ people are welcome, it also directly invites people to share their identities and experiences with staff. If your organization is considering whether or not to put up rainbow or positive space symbols, we strongly urge that an organization *seriously* evaluates their current capacity to facilitate positive spaces, and whether they have taken steps to think about meaningful inclusion for LGBTQ2S+ people.



## Local Trainer & Advocacy Support

LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay love to learn. 67% of respondents said they want education, training, and/or workshops (61 of 92). Given that many participants identified a lack of knowledge about LGBTQ2S+ people by both service providers and the wider community, we believe that a local training program that provides opportunities to everyone in North Bay to receive education and training would be beneficial. Additionally, of the 91 participants who responded, 44% that they would access referrals to LGBTQ2S+ positive services if that was available (40).

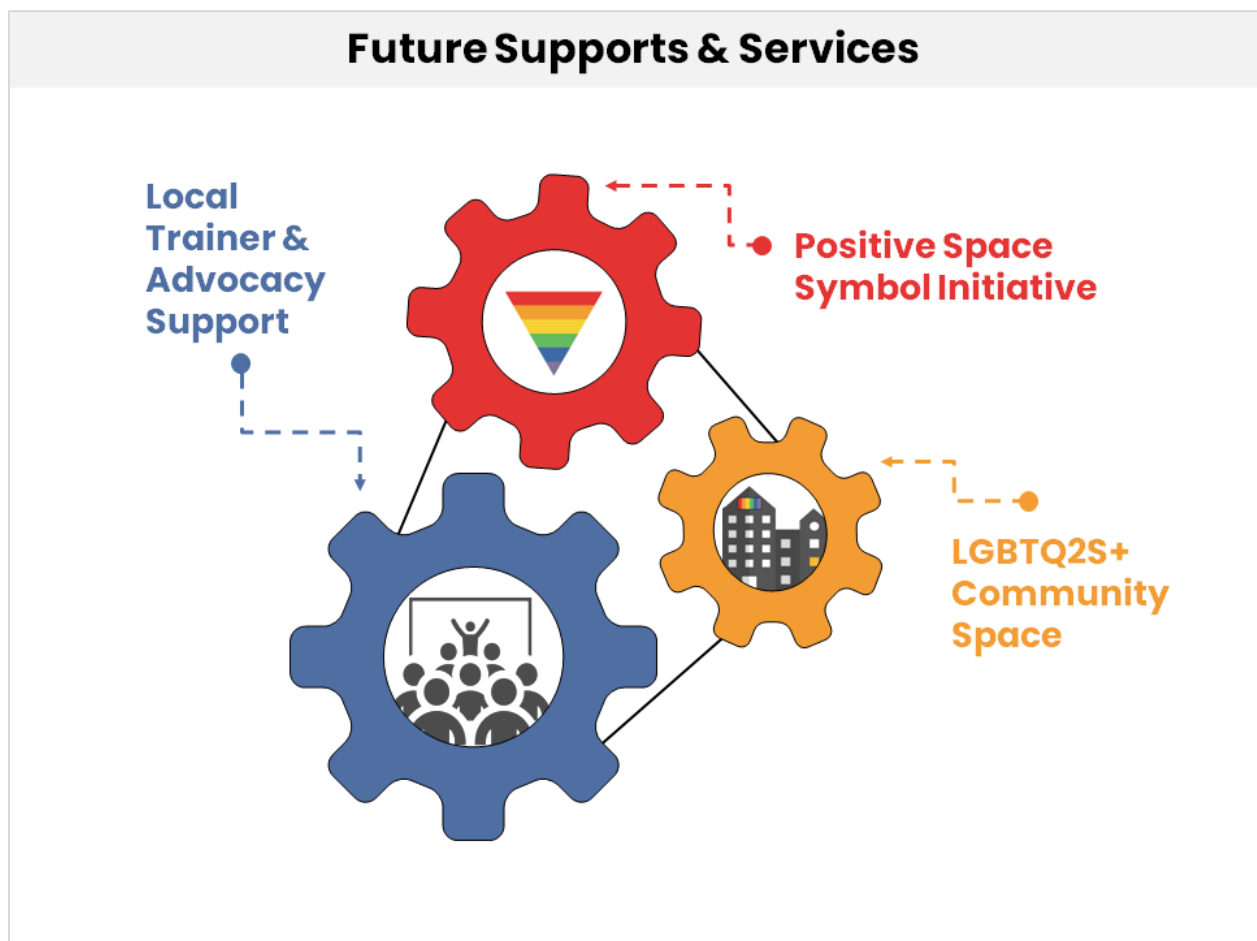


Part of this project involved travelling to visit and learn from other organizations currently providing LGBTQ2S+ services and education. Candace Ghent—the research coordinator—was fortunate enough to visit with The Gilbert Centre in Barrie and TG Innerselves in Sudbury. The Gilbert Centre currently offers support groups for LGBTQ2S+ people and



coordinates a positive spaces training program; they work with local service providers, businesses, and community organizations to provide organizational assessments and training around LGBTQ2S+ inclusion. TG InnerSelves hosts regular support/social groups for trans youth and parents of trans youth, facilitates training and education to local service providers and businesses, and provides advocacy and support to trans youth navigating services across Northern Ontario.

We highlight these organizations because they are examples of successful local initiatives that increase the capacity of service providers *and* provide support to LGBTQ2S+ people in the local community. We believe that these organizations are models that can be adapted and adopted in North Bay. Having a similar organization in North Bay providing education and training, as well as facilitating safer spaces, would go a long way toward meeting the needs of the local LGBTQ2S+ community.



See full diagram of 'Future Supports & Services' in [Appendix A](#)



## OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

A hallmark of our findings is that many service providers—most notably police, healthcare, and mental health services—received very mixed reviews. While some participants provided examples of frightening, uncomfortable or simply being refused assistance, these were often balanced out by respondents who had positive experiences. The wider city of North Bay was also described in similarly divided terms with some people experiencing North Bay as welcoming while others expressed that they were moving away because of the lack of services, safety, and LGBTQ2S+ community. To provide an example, these mixed reviews are evident in responses to the question of whether, as an LGBTQ2S+ person, participants felt safe in North Bay. Of 104 responses, 35% (36) indicated yes, 7% (7) indicated no, 41% (43) indicated sometimes, and 17% (18) articulated their responses in more detail; the latter explained different versions of “It depends on where I am and who I’m with,” as well as “how I look and what I’m doing”. In these mixed results we see tremendous potential and responsibility. We recommend that the wider North Bay community and local services build on the positive experiences and work hard to eradicate the social, systemic, and material barriers faced by LGBTQ2S+ people. Further, we highlight the ways in which such consistently mixed experiences inculcate an apprehension, mistrust, and anxiety in many LGBTQ2S+ people as they simply do not know which “side” of an organization or the city itself will be revealed on any given day or interaction. This disease is evident across many of the surveys, focus groups, and interviews. In many cases, the positive experiences gave respondents hope, but many—though not all—seemed to operate on a day-to-day basis with caution, fear of exposure, and an awareness that they might have to defend themselves in the not-so-distant future.

We acknowledge that LGBTQ2S+ people will experience similar encounters in different ways and therefore there is not one “right answer” to improving engagement. That said, we can all likely agree that a respondent who reported being told that “faggots don’t deserve to live” by a service provider is right to be distressed, discouraged, and/or enraged by the encounter. There are gray areas in the data *and* our recommendations, but there are also notable patterns that we believe must be addressed.

A repeated refrain in these mixed reviews of service providers and the city itself was that “it really depends who you get”. For example, respondents named doctors, therapists, pharmacists, and police officers who they believed provided good care to them as people with specific needs related to their LGBTQ2S+ identifications, practices, desires, appearances, and transitions. Nearly all acknowledged that finding these trusted professionals was a difficult process of trial and error preceded by experiences they characterized variously as compromising, ineffective, judgemental, humiliating, frightening, and pathologizing. In this report, we offer suggestions for evening out these interactions with the goal of bringing them all closer to the positive experiences described by individuals throughout the research data. As the participants indicate, it would be a relief to



see more consistency within service providers and an acknowledgement that service providers are taking steps toward better serving LGBTQ2S+ people.

Further, as one participant explained, broader social change—outside of service provision—is a goal worth striving for: “I’m hoping that the existing broader community I know and love will accept me for who I am. If this project can help identify ways to shift normative values and beliefs in our community to make everyday people more accepting of those in the LGBT community, that would make the project a success for me”. Another expressed a longing for community outside of “social services,” one “that begins with fun and food”. While our research focus is on service provision, we wholeheartedly agree that these organizations are only one part of a much larger picture, albeit a meaningful and consequential one. Like these respondents, we too hope and strive for broader social change while desiring diverse communities built through fun, food, and meaningful relationships.

We entitled this report “A Place for Us” and give due credit for that title to a participant who shared this in response to the question of what would make them feel more connected to other LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay. While their words were in response to a specific question, they beautifully captured what many of the participants articulated they need and want throughout our findings. When asked if having access to services and/or social opportunities for LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay would encourage them to stay or move to North Bay in the future 71% said “Yes” (65). Whether it is a sense of belonging in North Bay, access to safe, meaningful, and inclusive services, or a dedicated gathering space—LGBTQ2S+ people want and need a “place” in all of these areas. We want to emphasize that acceptance in the wider community, safe access to services, and dedicated community spaces and supports are all important to our participants; there is a strong desire to see a place for LGBTQ2S+ in the services, spaces, and wider community of North Bay.





# Recommendations



# RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are our recommendations based on the research findings. Our intention is to present a guide for local people, service providers, businesses, schools, and any other interested parties to better understand and meet the needs of LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay. We have laid out our recommendations in two sections: (1) Community Recommendations and (2) Recommendations for Service Providers. While we introduce them in two separate sections, we recognize that there is much overlap, and that many people who read this report will be both community members and service providers. We encourage all who read these recommendations to identify opportunities that they can take up and work toward, whether they be retirees, service providers, teachers, employers, volunteers, board members, or family members. As stated earlier, we believe that reading the full report—and not just the recommendations—will enable you to draw your own conclusions and tailor strategies based on your specific resources, clients, services, and capacity. We have also done our best to capture intra-group dynamics within LGBTQ2S+ communities throughout the findings, but for the most part these are beyond the scope of this research project.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

### OF NORTH BAY

Everyone in North Bay has a responsibility and an opportunity to help build a more inclusive and welcoming community for LGBTQ2S+ people.



Many LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay shared that they often feel “invisible” or unrecognized by others in the North Bay community. Relatedly, many who are viewed as gender non-normative or “visibly queer” felt “*hyper-visible*” in ways that felt unsafe and uncertain. There is a fairly widespread perception that many non-LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay do not understand and embrace LGBTQ2S+ people. In addition to safer services, participants want to feel comfortable, safe, and a sense of belonging in North Bay. While we recognize that each person will have a different vision for LGBTQ2S+ inclusion in North Bay, making the commitment to recognize, learn about, and express support for LGBTQ2S+ people are important and necessary steps toward creating a welcoming and aware community. Rather than an exhaustive list, we have endeavored to outline specific steps and highlight examples of what those recommendations could look like in action. Our recommendations are intended to provide a foundation for an ongoing conversation about creating positive spaces in North Bay. With our community recommendations we call upon *everyone* in the North Bay community to:



## 1. Recognize the LGBTQ2S+ Community in North Bay

### Actions

- Recognize that LGBTQ2S+ people are your neighbors, business owners, clients, co-workers, employees, elders, and leaders
- When speaking with others use language that recognizes, is inclusive of, and makes space for the many identities, family make-ups, and lived experiences in our community (e.g. avoid gendered language, using partner vs. husband/wife)
- Ask instead of assuming you know someone's pronouns and/or identity



### Impacts

- Reduce feelings of "invisibility" and social isolation
- Increase opportunities for community connection
- Contribute to a stronger sense of belonging in North Bay for LGBTQ2S+ people
- Better understanding and awareness of the demographics of North Bay
- LGBTQ2S+ people have their identities acknowledged and respected

## 2. Learn About LGBTQ2S+ People

### Actions

- Seek out opportunities to learn about LGBTQ2S+ peoples experiences and challenges
- Create opportunities for thoughtful and respectful discussion and attend events that speak to the experiences of local LGBTQ2S+ people
- Understand homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism, and cis-sexism
- Consider how Indigeneity, race, class and other factors inform diverse LGBTQ2S+ lived experiences



### Impacts

- Less burden on LGBTQ2S+ people to educate others
- Increased understanding of LGBTQ2S+ peoples experiences and challenges
- Increase capacity for all people to be able to offer meaningful and helpful contributions to discussions and service provision
- Better recognition of language, behaviour, or attitudes that may be harmful to LGBTQ2S+ people
- Reduce tendency to see one LGBTQ2S+ person's experience as representing all LGBTQ2S+ people



### 3. Show Support for LGBTQ2S+ People

#### Actions

- Actively support LGBTQ2S+ business owners, artists, efforts, events, and initiatives
- Challenge homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism, and cis-sexism in all spaces (personal, professional, online, etc.)
- Actively make space for LGBTQ2S+ people at whatever 'table' you are at (planning committee, sports team, government structure, workplace, social circle, dinner table)
- Read and share this report with others. Host a discussion group about this report and incorporate the recommendations into your community group's policies.



#### Impacts

- LGBTQ2S+ people feel supported and included
- Increase feelings of belonging and reduce feelings of social isolation
- Improved understanding of the local LGBTQ2S+ community
- LGBTQ2s+ people will have more opportunities to contribute and connect



See full diagram of 'Recommendations for Community Members' in [Appendix B](#)



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

### IN NORTH BAY

Based on our findings, it is evident that LGBTQ2S+ people currently experience a lack of welcoming, safe, and meaningful services in North Bay. That said, many participants identified front line staff, managers, volunteers, board members, and other key players at local service provider organizations who have contributed positively to their experience of accessing services; we acknowledge that these individuals are invested in creating positive spaces and hope they continue to feel supported in their efforts. We hope to build on these existing strengths because 50% of participants said that “some, but not all” North Bay service providers are safe for LGBTQ2S+ people and 20% percent indicated that they were “unsure”. This uncertainty, coupled with the lack of distinct LGBTQ2S+ services, indicates that service providers in North Bay need to take steps toward recognizing and meeting the needs of the local LGBTQ2S+ community. The following are recommendations to local service providers in order to improve and/or introduce much needed services for the local LGBTQ2S+ community. With the following recommendations, we call upon all North Bay service providers to:



#### 1. Commit to Creating Positive Spaces

Making the commitment to create positive spaces is a small but necessary step that all service providers can take. Committing to making your organization a positive space demonstrates an awareness and recognition of the local LGBTQ2S+ community and their needs within your organization. A positive space is a welcoming and inclusive environment for all LGBTQ2S+ people, including those who are clients, employees, and volunteers. An organization or place is considered a positive space when staff receive ongoing training about sexual and gender diversity and when its services are inclusive of LGBTQ2S+ people. A positive space is one that recognizes the LGBTQ2S+ community and incorporates an awareness and understanding of their diverse needs into its services. As the findings suggest, positive spaces that do not come with a user fee are highly recommended.



#### *Actions*

- Decide as an organization to commit to working toward becoming a positive space
- Consider all levels of your organization, including service users, staff, volunteers, and other patrons
- Undertake an organization-wide assessment of your mandate, policies, best practices, strategic plan, programs, services, and other relevant areas to identify barriers to LGBTQ2S+ inclusion and access



*Impacts*

- LGBTQ2S+ service users, clients, and staff are recognized and better served by your organization
- Next steps are able to be identified (e.g. new policies needed, existing programs need to be adapted, inclusive signage for washrooms should be developed, etc.)
- Fewer LGBTQ2S+ people avoiding services and leaving unsafe workplaces
- Increases probability that LGBTQ2S+ clients will have positive experiences and reduces the “it depends who you get” factor

**2. Invest in Positive Spaces**

While we acknowledge that for many service providers funding may be a challenge, we wish to emphasize that there are many ways to “invest” in positive spaces that do not require access to additional funds. While hiring a dedicated staff person may not be possible, reviewing current intake forms or making explicit that your service welcomes all genders are ways that service providers can invest in positive spaces. That being said, the vast majority of our participants expressed a strong need for service providers that have training, experience, and skills in working with LGBTQ2S+ people and dedicated LGBTQ2S+ services; we strongly urge local service providers to review opportunities to dedicate time, funds, and other resources to meeting those needs.

*Actions*

- Develop a dedicated positive spaces initiative
- Develop policies and best practices for LGBTQ2S+ inclusion (e.g. anti-discrimination policy, positive space commitment statement, employee transition support guidelines)
- Introduce LGBTQ2S+ specific services and/or programs (e.g. coming out support, healthcare services for gay men, transition support)
- Hire dedicated staff and/or allocate funding to LGBTQ2S+ specific supports and services
- Dedicate time and resources to provide opportunities for ongoing positive space and/or LGBTQ2S+ competency training for new and current staff, volunteers, and other key players
- Develop policies and best practices around inclusive language and pronouns
- Review your current marketing materials, intake forms, internal documents, and social media practices to ensure that they are inclusive of LGBTQ2S+ people
- Ensure existing public services are safe, inclusive, and accessible (e.g. all-gender washrooms and change rooms, inclusive definition of family, trans inclusive)
- Create diverse programming (e.g. trans support group, programs for families with children, education for allies/advocates)
- Invest on an ongoing basis. Assess and reassess your capacity regularly to ensure you are responsive to current and changing needs.



*Impacts*

- LGBTQ2S+ people are a recognized priority group within your organization
- Needs of LGBTQ2S+ people are met in a safe and meaningful way
- Existing services have increased capacity
- New services can be introduced for LGBTQ2S+ people
- Staff, volunteers, and others are set up for success
- LGBTQ2S+ people have positive experiences when using services
- The diverse needs and experiences of LGBTQ2S+ are recognized

**3. Demonstrate That Your Organization is a Positive Space**

Once your organization, business, or service has invested in positive spaces, it is important that you take steps to demonstrate this to the local LGBTQ2S+ community and non-LGBTQ2S+ community. It is important that LGBTQ2S+ people know where they can access resources, services, and supports. Given that many LGBTQ2S+ people expressed uncertainty or apprehension about accessing services in North Bay, demonstrating your commitment and investment in positive spaces lets LGBTQ2S+ people know that you are a safer space, rather than leaving them guessing.

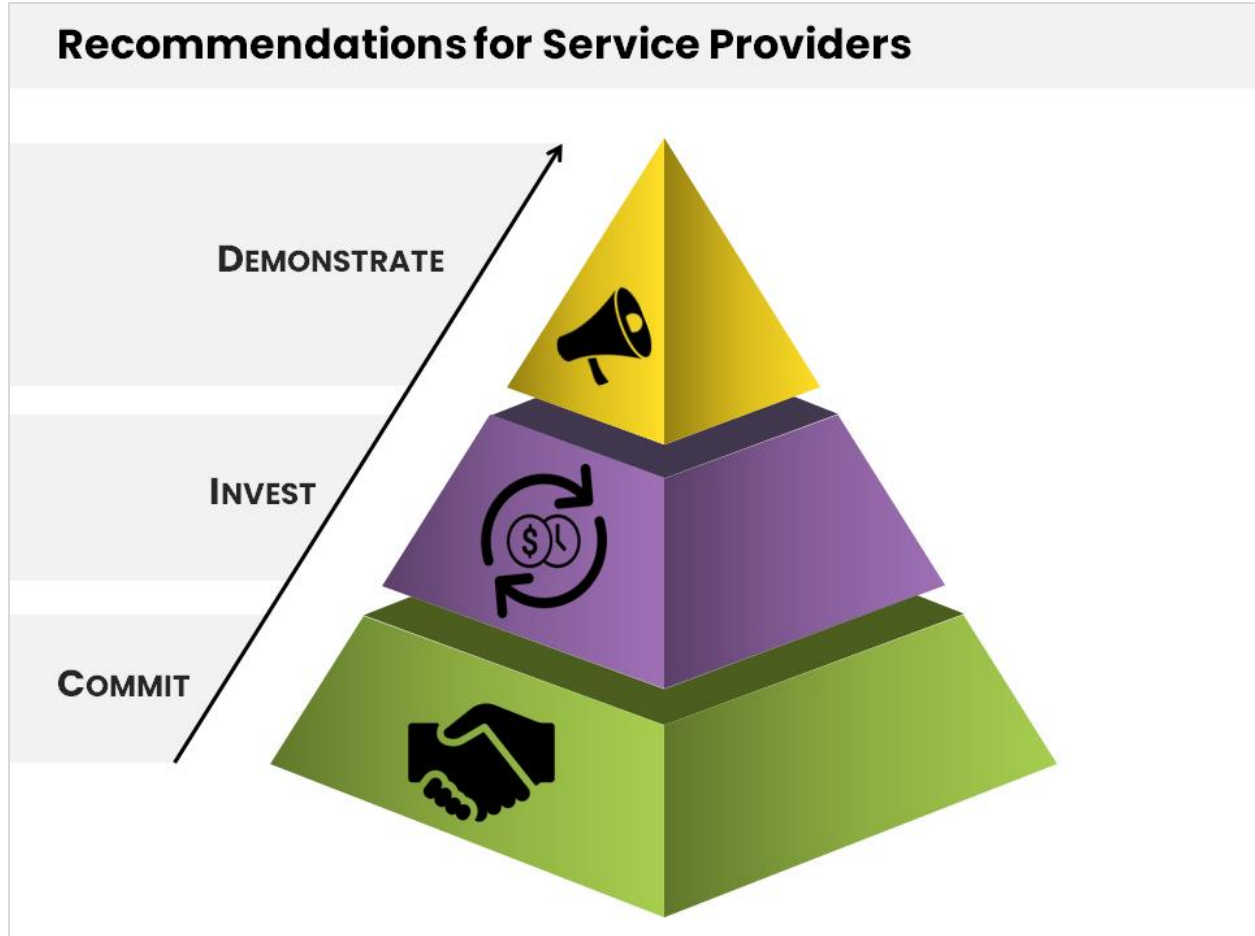
*Actions*

- Create a campaign and/or LGBTQ2S+ community outreach initiative
- Make your positive space visible (e.g. signage) and accessible (e.g. multilingual, accessible building, no/low cost)
- Use diverse LGBTQ2S+ representation in your outreach, educational and resource materials
- Participate in local events and initiatives for LGBTQ2S+ people
- Create ongoing opportunities for feedback from LGBTQ2S+ people

*Impacts*

- LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay feel welcome and recognized
- LGBTQ2S+ people can easily access the services that are available to them
- LGBTQ2S+ people in North Bay are aware of your organization's commitment to creating positive spaces
- LGBTQ2S+ people see your organization actively and outwardly showing support
- Creates accountability and an opportunity to respond to changing needs





See full diagram of 'Recommendations for Service Providers' in [Appendix C](#)

In conclusion, we thank you for reading this report and considering the recommendations. We recognize that research is only as powerful as its context allows it to be. We hope this report will make an impact and this responsibility is now in all of our hands.







## GLOSSARY

**2-Spirit / Two Spirit** - A term used by some Indigenous communities to describe people with diverse gender identities, gender expressions, gender roles, and sexual orientations. This term reflects Indigenous understandings of gender and sexuality that can refer to cross, multiple, and/or non-binary gender roles; non-heterosexual identities; and a range of cultural identities, roles, and practices.

**Agender** - A person who is agender sees themselves as neither man nor woman, has no gender identity, or no gender to express. Similar terms to agender include genderless, gender neutral, and neutrois.

**Asexual** - Someone who does not experience sexual desire. Some asexual people desire romantic relationships, while others do not. Asexuality can be considered a spectrum, with some asexual people experiencing desire for varying types of intimacy. This desire may fluctuate over time. Asexuality is distinct from celibacy, which is the deliberate refraining from sexual activity. Asexual people experience high levels of invisibility and trivialization.

**Biphobia** - Fear or hatred of, aversion to, and discrimination against bisexuals and bisexual behaviour. Biphobia exerts a powerful, negative force on the lives of bisexual people. Some examples of biphobia in action are disparaging jokes, verbal abuse, acts of violence targeted at bisexual people, or the dismissal of bisexuality as an inferior, invalid, confused, or irrelevant expression of sexuality. Bisexual people often face biphobia and discrimination in queer and non-queer communities.

**Bisexual** - An individual who is attracted to, and may form sexual and romantic relationships with “both” or all sexes and genders. “Both” appears in quotation marks to reference the root of bi as meaning two, but also to acknowledge that there are more than two sexes and more than two genders. A bisexual person may feel equally attracted to all sexes and genders, or may experience stronger attractions to some over others; this ratio of attraction may vary over time.

**Cisgender** - Identifying with the socially constructed sex category that one was assigned at birth and a gender identity that society considers to match the assigned sex. For example, an infant assigned to the socially constructed category of female identifies as a girl and a woman as they mature.

**Cisgender Man** - a person who was assigned to the socially constructed category of male at birth, who continues to identify as male, and as a boy and a man as they mature.



**Cisgender Woman** - a person who was assigned to the socially constructed category of female at birth, who continues to identify as female, and as a girl and a woman as they mature.

**Cissexism** - attitudes, bias, or prejudice that favor and/or privilege cisgender people. This includes the assumption that all people are cisgender, that being cisgender is “normal” and by extension the unnaturalness and at times pathologization of transgender people. Cissexism and transphobia are connected; transphobia often describes the actions that are informed by cissexism.

**Coming Out / “Coming Out of the Closet”** - the process of identifying with a queer sexual orientation, 2-Spirit or trans\* identity and telling others about it. This is an ongoing process that may not include everybody in all aspects of one’s life.

**Discrimination** - refers to a broad range of practices, policies, and actions that unjustly treat people or prejudice people based on some aspect of their identity (e.g. sexual orientation, ability). Discrimination can exclude people, deny benefits and/or rights, or impose burdens. Discrimination exists when rules, standards, or requirements that appear to be neutral have a discriminatory impact on people identified. Discrimination can take many forms, including systemic and interpersonal discrimination. Systemic discrimination refers to policies or practices that appear neutral on their surface but have discriminatory effects on individuals or communities of people. Direct or interpersonal discrimination involves an individual act of discrimination against another person or community of people.

**Gay** - A person who is mostly attracted to those of the same socially constructed sex; often used to refer to a man who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to or involved with other men. Gay is also sometimes used as an umbrella term to refer to the lesbian, gay, bisexual + community.

**Genderfluid** - conveys a wider, more flexible range of gender expression, with interests and behaviors that may change, even from day to day. A genderfluid person may feel they are a woman some days and a man on others, or a combination. They may feel or present as masculine, feminine, androgynous, or a combination, or possibly feel that binary genders (man / woman; masculine / feminine) do not describe them accurately.

**Gender Expression** - How one outwardly manifests gender; for example, through behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, makeup, body language, and voice. A person’s chosen name and pronoun are also common ways of expressing gender.

**Gender Identity** - each person’s internal and individual experience of gender. It is their sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along or outside the gender spectrum. A person’s gender identity may be the same as or different from their birth-assigned sex. Gender identity is fundamentally different from a person’s sexual orientation. A person’s gender identity is not necessarily visible to other people.



**Heterosexism** - attitudes, bias, or prejudice that favor and/or privilege heterosexual relationships and heterosexuality. This includes the assumption of heterosexuality and its normalcy and by extension the unnaturalness and at times pathologization of homosexuality. Heterosexism and homophobia are connected; homophobia often describes the actions that are informed by heterosexism.

**Heterosexual** - Men who experience sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction to women, and vice versa. Also known as "straight".

**Homophobia** - Fear or hatred of, aversion to, and discrimination against homosexuals or homosexual behaviour. There are many levels and forms of homophobia, including cultural/institutional homophobia, interpersonal homophobia, and internalized homophobia. Many forms of homophobia are related to how restrictive binary gender roles are (see 'oppositional sexism'). An example of this might be a female-identified person who is harassed with homophobic language for being perceived to be masculine. Many of the problems faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, including health and income disparities, stem from homophobia and heterosexism.

**Identity** - refers to how you see/understand/think about yourself as a person. Can include aspects of self, such as: beliefs, values, personality, individuality and life experience. It can also include other elements of self, such as: sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, ability/disability, language, culture, place of origin, religious or spiritual beliefs, age, mental health status, citizenship, relationship status, ancestry, education, and income.

**Intersex** - a term used for people who are born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or chromosome pattern that does not fit the socially constructed sex categories of male or female. "Intersex" has replaced the term "hermaphrodite", which is widely considered to be outdated, inaccurate, and offensive. An intersex individual may or may not identify as part of the trans community, however the terms "intersex", "transsexual", and "trans" are distinct and should not be used interchangeably.

**Lesbian** - A woman who is primarily romantically and sexually attracted to women. Although not as common, sometimes the term 'gay woman' is used instead.

**LGBTQ2S+** - lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/trans, queer, 2-Spirit, and the plus sign is meant to represent and acknowledge other identities not explicitly represented in this acronym, such as pansexual and asexual.

**Non-Binary** - an identity that can fit under the umbrella term of trans, though people who identify as non-binary may not also identify as trans. Non-binary specifically refers to people whose sex / gender identity does not fit in the male-female binary.

**Not Out** - a term that is used to describe a person who is personally aware that their gender identity and/or sexual orientation, but has not shared that with others. Some people choose to not be out due to safety or privacy reasons.



**Out** - a term that is used to describe a person who privately and publically acknowledges their non-normative gender identity and/or sexual orientation. This typically refers those who are part of the LGBTQ2S+ community. Many people who are out continue to “come out” many times in their life, sometimes many times a day, given that every new person or context is potentially a new “closet”. “Coming out” usually occurs in stages and is a non-linear process. An individual may be “out” in only some situations or to certain family members or associates and not others. Some may never “come out” to anyone beside themselves.

**Outing** - the act of disclosing an LGBTQ2S+ person’s sexual orientation or gender identity without that person’s consent. Outing a person can put them at risk of harm and discrimination, and inherently violates their privacy.

**Pansexual** - An individual who is attracted to and may form sexual and romantic relationships with men, women, and people who identify outside the gender binary. Omnisexual is another term that can be used.

**Pronoun** - a pronoun is a word used in place of a noun when referring to a person. Some examples of pronouns are “he”, “she”, or “they”. Pronouns are part of a person’s identity and can be part of the way they express that identity. For example, some people who use the pronoun “they” use that pronoun because it is gender neutral, rather than using “she” or “he” which are gendered. However, people may use pronouns such as “she” or “he” but may not identify as a woman or man, respectively. Like gender identity, pronouns are not visible; you cannot “tell” what a person’s pronouns are by interpreting their appearance or name.

**Queer** - an identity refers to a person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of all sex and gender identities. Queer can also be used as an umbrella term to refer to the LGBTQ2S+ community. Historically the word queer has been an insult, however some people have reclaimed the word, while some are still opposed or uncomfortable with using it.

**Questioning** - a term sometimes used by those in the process of exploring personal issues of sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

**Safe** - when you feel as though you can share your identity without negative consequences. A place or a person could be considered safe if your identity is understood, recognized, and accepted. A safe place or person will support and respect your identity and where you will be free from discrimination because of your identity.

**Sex Assigned at Birth** - refers to the sex and/or gender that was assigned to a person, usually at birth, by a doctor, nurse, or midwife. This assignment is usually based on the genitalia of the infant, and sometimes includes an assessment of the infant’s hormones, chromosomes, and other characteristics related to reproduction. Infants are typically assigned to one of three socially-constructed categories: male, female, or intersex. Those



who identify with the sex category they were assigned at birth are “cisgender” and those who do not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth are “transgender”.

**Sexual Orientation** - Refers to a person’s feelings of emotional, sexual, and/or romantic attraction to groups of people (e.g. men, women, all genders, masculine people, feminine people) and a person’s sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviors, and possibly membership in a community with others who share those attractions (e.g. bisexual, gay, heterosexual, queer). Many people experience sexual orientation fluidly, and feel attraction or degrees of attraction to different sexes and genders at different points in their lives. Sexual orientation is defined by feelings of attraction rather than behaviour.

**Transgender / Trans** - is an umbrella term that describes a wide range of people whose gender identity and/or expression differs from conventional expectations based on their assigned sex at birth. Some of the many people who may or may not identify as transgender/trans include: people on the male-to-female or female-to-male spectrums; people who identify and/or express their gender outside of the male/female binary; people whose gender identity and/or expression is fluid; and many more possibilities. Identifying as transgender/trams is something that can only be decided by an individual for themselves and does not depend on criteria such as surgery or hormone treatment status.

**Transgender Woman** - a person who identifies as both transgender and a woman. For example, this could include people who were assigned male at birth and now identify as a woman. Some, but not all, people also identify with the term “M-to-F” (male to female).

**Transgender Man** - a person who identifies as both transgender and a man. For example, this could include people who were assigned female at birth and now identify as a man. Some, but not all, people also identify with the term “F-to-M” (female to male).

**Transphobia** - The fear and dislike of, and discrimination against, trans people. Transphobia can take the form of disparaging jokes, rejection, exclusion, denial of services, employment discrimination, name-calling and violence.

**Unsafe** - When sharing your identity may put you at risk of experiencing harm, harassment, exclusion and danger. A place or a person could be considered unsafe for you to share your identity if, for example: negative comments are made about your identity; your identity is not taken seriously; and you are threatened or harmed because of your identity.



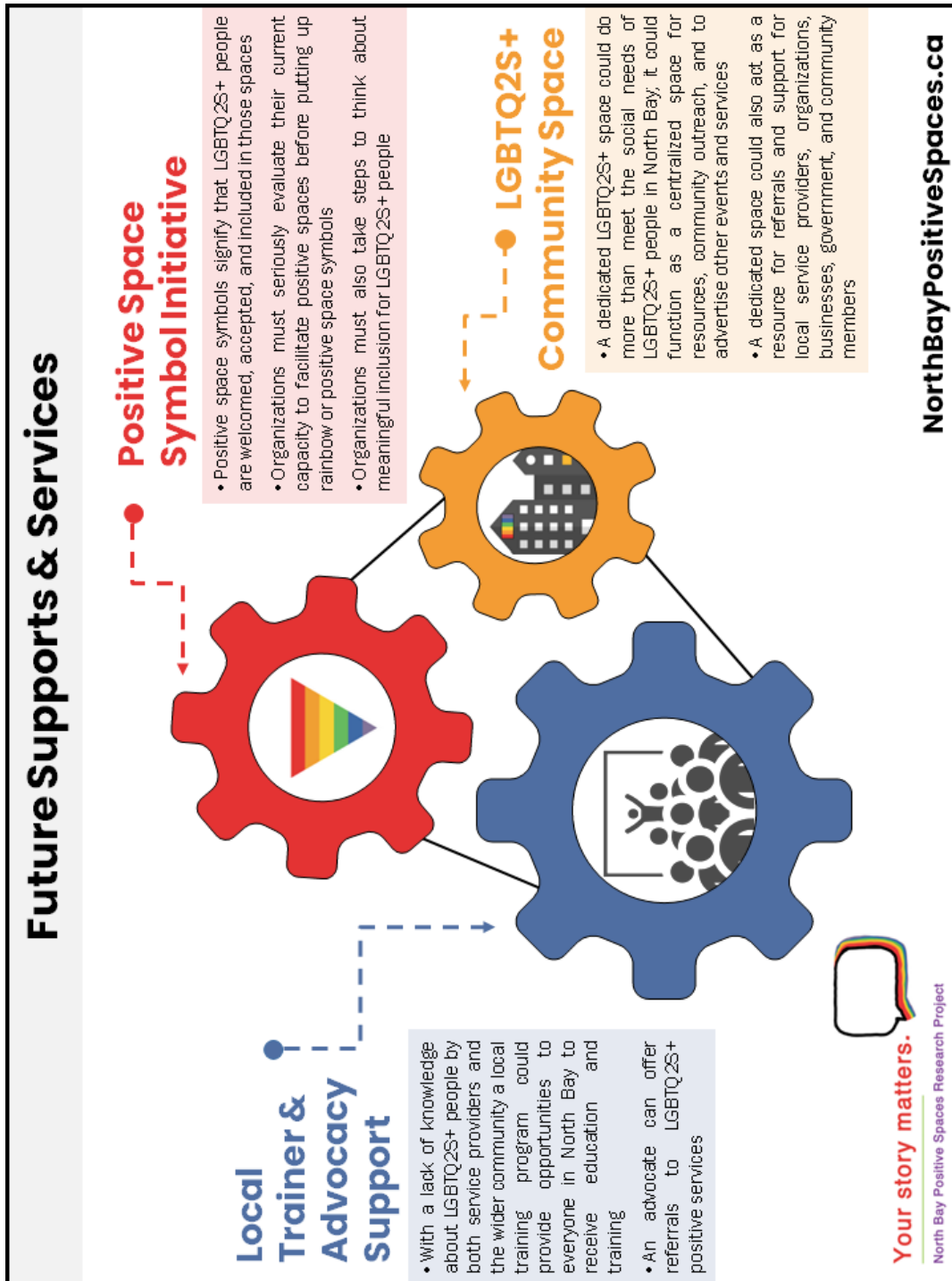
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# Appendix A: "Future Supports & Services"



# Appendix B: "Recommendations for Community Members"

## Recommendations for Community Members

**Everyone in North Bay has a responsibility and an opportunity to help build a more inclusive and welcoming community for LGBTQ2S+ people.**

While we recognize that each person will have a different vision for LGBTQ2S+ inclusion in North Bay, we strongly believe that making the commitment to recognize, learn about, and show support for LGBTQ2S+ people are important and necessary steps towards creating a community in North Bay that is more welcoming and more aware of LGBTQ2S+ people.

With our community recommendations, we call upon everyone in the North Bay community to take up the three calls to action: Recognize, Learn, and Support.

**RECOGNIZE**

- ✓ Acknowledge & recognize that LGBTQ2S+ people are your neighbours, business owners, clients, co-workers, employees, elders, and leaders
- ✓ Ask instead of assuming you know someone's pronouns and/or identity

**SUPPORT**

- ✓ Actively support LGBTQ2S+ business owners, artists, efforts, events, and initiatives
- ✓ Actively make space for LGBTQ2S+ people at whatever 'table' you are at
- ✓ Read and share this report with others

**LEARN**

- ✓ Seek out opportunities to learn about LGBTQ2S+ peoples lived experiences
- ✓ Understand homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism, & cis-sexism
- ✓ Create opportunities for thoughtful & respectful discussion

**Your story matters.**

North Bay Positive Spaces Research Project

**NorthBayPositiveSpaces.ca**





# Appendix C: "Recommendations for Service Providers"

