REGROUPEMENT
DES CENTRES D'AMITIÉ
AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC

Services Offered to Two-Spirit and Gender and Sexually Diverse Indigenous People in Canada: A Literature Review of Issues Relating to Service Presence and Access

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Advisory Committee

In keeping with the mission and values of the RCAAQ, an advisory committee was established to review and provide feedback on the literature review. This committee includes a representative from our funder, Women and Gender Equality Canada, and from the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), as well as Inuk external consultant Mona Belleau.

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Introduction

In both traditional and contemporary First Nations and Inuit cultures, there is a broad spectrum of gender and sexual diversity that is unique to these communities. At the same time, since colonization, Western academic literature has extensively examined Indigenous sexual and gender identities. In 1998, U.S. anthropologist Will Roscoe remarked that pre-colonial North America was "the queerest continent on the planet" (1998, 4). In his earlier work, *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology* (1988), Roscoe compiled a range of academic works that documented the existence of these roles and identities as far back as the 18th century. Anthropologist Pierrette Désy (1978) also observed this diversity as early as the second half of the 16th century in accounts describing the presence of man-woman figures, referred to by chroniclers of the time using the now outdated and Eurocentric term "berdache." Interest in the topic is therefore not new, and research has often centred on the lived identities of these individuals, their roles within their communities and more.

Over the decades, various terms have been used to describe these identities, including a wide range of expressions within Indigenous[1] nations and their languages. Harlan Pruden (2021), a two-spirit researcher from the nehiyô Cree Nation, compiled a table listing the different terms used to refer to gender diversity among Indigenous peoples included in Roscoe's 1988 work. It is essential to recognize this terminological diversity as a reflection of the wide range of roles and identities that may vary not only between nations but also within them. The term two-spirit was introduced by Cree educator Myra Laramee at a gathering of people identifying with the community then known by the acronym "LGBT," held in Manitoba in 1990 (Lefebvre 2020, 3; Wilson 2015). The term refers to the experience of embodying both a masculine and a feminine spirit within one person. Though specific in origin, it has come to serve as an umbrella term that brings together various identities and enables Indigenous people to self-identify (the author uses the now outdated term "self-name"; Thomas and Jacobs 1999, 97). It is part of a broader effort to reclaim the gender diversity that existed prior to colonization and Christianization. Using the term two-spirit therefore represents a form of decolonization, cultural safety and advocacy for the needs and rights of this third-gender[2] identity unique to the Indigenous people of North America. For far too long, this identity was described using the inappropriate and demeaning term "berdache" (Thomas and Jacobs 1999). The term "two-spirit" was originally used mainly in urban and multi-ethnic contexts (Thomas and Jacobs 1999), and though it is now more widely adopted, it is important to note that it is not used or accepted by everyone.[3]

While two-spirit refers to a spiritual gender identity rather than a sexual orientation, it is included in the **2S**LGBTQIA+ acronym recognized by the Canadian government. It is therefore important to understand that the use of this acronym encompasses a broad spectrum of sexual, gender and spiritual identities, whose realities and issues can differ significantly. Two main themes emerge from scholarly works on 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people: (1) identity and (2) the lived experiences of that identity.

[1] In Canada, the term "Indigenous" includes First Nations and Métis people and Inuit. Since Quebec does not recognize an official Métis nation originating from the province, this literature review takes care to select texts accordingly.

[2] The concept of a third gender was introduced by Bernard Saladin d'Anglure in relation to the Inuit (1985; 1986).

[3] Vowel points out that two-spirit is often understood through a colonial lens, given that it is an English term. In current debates, some advocate for the exclusive use of terms from Indigenous languages. Others argue for the importance of having a shared reference term. Still others prefer to create new terms with which they identify more strongly. According to Youssef's research (2020–2021), the French translations of two-spirit—namely, *deux-esprits* and *bispirituel*—have not yet been unanimously recognized by Francophone two-spirit groups. That being said, in the French version of this text, we use the terms *bispirituel* and deux-esprits interchangeably when referring to the two-spirit experience. We also use the expression "gender and sexual diversity," as well as the acronym 2SLGBTQIA+ to encompass the full range of experiences. However, based on our research, this acronym is often used without fully acknowledging the variety of identities it includes.

Identity

The notion of identity at the heart of Indigenous gender diversity is without a doubt a recurring theme in the work of scholars in this field. Researchers have examined the emergence and authenticity of the terms used, particularly the origins of two-spirit, which is derived from the Anishinaabemowin term *niizh manidoowag* (Pyle 2018; Robinson 2017); other Indigenous languages;[4] and the use of neologisms like "Indigiqueer" (Lefebvre 2020) by those who do not identify as two-spirit. The traditional roles of two-spirit people have long been a subject of study (Thomas and Jacobs 1999; Désy 1978; Hall et al. 2020; CAP 2020; McCaskill et al. 2013; etc.). These roles, which vary between nations, include mediators, teachers, knowledge keepers, spiritual leaders, interpreters, artists, counsellors, healers, shamans and priests (Youssef 2021; Morrison et al. 2019). Identity in relation to others has also been a focus, including the misuse of the term two-spirit by non-Indigenous people (Cameron 2009), the social representation of this identity (Thomas and Jacobs 1999; Lang 1998, 1999; Trexler 1995), and pan-Indigenous stereotypes (Vowel 2016). Lastly, the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization and Christianization and the impacts of Canadian nation-building (Thoms 2007) on these identities, which are central to Indigenous communities, are also widely discussed in the academic literature.

Experiences

Many studies focus instead on the lived experiences (a concept closely related to identity) of these individuals, beginning with those of two-spirit youth (Sylliboy et al. 2017; A Way Home Canada and National Learning Community on Youth Homelessness, n.d.). This includes their experiences of coming out and coming in (Sylliboy et al. 2017; Wilson 2007, 2008 and 2015; Ansloos et al. 2021; Brotman et al. 2002) within their families, Indigenous communities and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. These two distinct processes are central to the experience and journey of 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people. The "coming out" process, or the act of revealing one's identity, is common to everyone across the spectrum of gender and sexual diversity. However, Meyers (1998), in a series of interviews with Indigenous individuals from various nations (Inuit, Ojibwe, Naskapi, Dene), points out that this step tends to be more complex for 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people due to the heterosexism, homophobia and transphobia that have developed in communities as a result of Christianization. In an effort to reclaim traditional meanings, some authors prefer to focus on the "coming in" process, which is unique to two-spirit Indigenous people and is viewed as the final step in self-determining a 2SLGBTQIA+ identity. Author and professor at the University of Saskatchewan, Alex Wilson, herself a two-spirit person from the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, describes it (2007, 2008 and 2015) as a process of assuming responsibility for and taking ownership of the two-spirit experience and identity as a single whole that enfolds sexuality, culture, gender and all aspects considered essential to that identity. In other words, it is not about conforming to a pre-existing and limiting identity, but about shaping one's own, and connecting to both a community and something greater than oneself (Wilson 2007, 2008 and 2015).

Other experiences, such as the mobility that identity can lead to or motivate, are also widely discussed in the literature. This theme includes issues of mobility, migration, movement, communities, the lack of statistical data, and experiences of isolation and displacement (Ristock et al. 2019; Teengs and Travers 2006; Lépine Dubois 2018; Ristock et al. 2010; Ristock et al. 2011; Sylliboy et al. 2017; Le Duigou 2000; Pullen Sansfaçon et al. 2022; LGBT+ Family Coalition 2021). Ristock et al.'s (2011) study found that 33% of their participants had been forced to leave their home community because of their gender expression or sexual identity. Migration to urban centres is explored from a number of angles, for example, the search for a safe community where individuals can finally be themselves or make sense of themselves, to connect with others experiencing similar realities, to join a visible 2SLGBTQIA+ community while maintaining anonymity, or to access services such as healthcare and education (Ristock et al. 2011, 18). Mobility can also be marked by conflicting emotions, as when a person wants to remain in their community but is forced to leave due to social rejection. This was the

[4] Vowel (2016, 108) gathers some terms in the Cree language and reflects on their historical usage, which does not appear to be universally accepted by the people she interviews.

case for the 10 participants in Patrice Larivée's (2019) study, who had to leave Eeyou Istchee and relocate to the city because of the social rejection they experienced in their community. For them, such a move was a difficult step, involving leaving behind friends, family and community, while also symbolizing part "of their journey toward self-determination" (Larivée 2019, 74). It is also worth noting that the movement of Indigenous populations to urban centres is steadily increasing (RCAAQ 2016, 7) for various reasons, including the still significant migration of 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people to urban areas.

Other experiences, such as violence in its various forms, are also a constant theme in studies on 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people. Research into violence sheds light on realities related to the following: discrimination and stigmatization (Higgins et al. 2021): loss of land (Sarah Hunt, 2016, a member of the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation, describes two-spirit individuals as experiencing both homelessness and landlessness (Hall et al. 2020); practices of gendercide (Deborah 2010); and invisibility, particularly through the lack of two-spirit issues and testimonies in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (Blankestijn 2021). Various forms of discrimination, such as homophobia, transphobia and racism, are also highlighted in studies on migration to cities (Ristock et al. 2011), revealing the connections between the different experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous individuals.

Health issues are also widely discussed in the academic literature, particularly the challenges many face in accessing healthcare services, for reasons such as long waiting lists, the shortage of accessible mental health professionals, lack of service integration and oversight, cultural and language barriers, geographic and demographic inequalities and the cost of care (Chaiton et al. 2022). Added to this are experiences related to sexual realities, including, among others, sex work (Matthen et al. 2018), as well as mental health and well-being (Keewatin 2009; Barlow 2001; Brotman et al. 2002). Lastly, a significant portion of the literature focuses on HIV (Zoccole et al. 2005; Zoccole 2006; Thoms, 2007; Lyons et al. 2016; Ristock et al. 2019; Dykhuizen et al. 2022).

One experience that particularly highlights the relevance of this literature review is the dual barrier 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people face in accessing services (whether in the community or in the city), due primarily to the intersection of various forms of discrimination they may encounter (Lépine-Dubois 2018) and to 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations' failure to consider Indigenous realities and contexts.

Objectives

This work arises from the observation that no inventory of the services available to 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people in Canada has ever been carried out. We looked at five literature reviews addressing the issues faced by 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Canada, of which only two specifically touched on Indigenous realities. Waite, Ecker and Ross (2019), who explored the employability and labour market of 2SLGBTQIA+ people, highlighted the complete lack of research on the impact and experiences of two-spirit people in the workforce. Comeau, Johnson and Bouhamdani (2023) examined inequities within the Canadian healthcare system affecting 2SLGBTQIA+ people, but did not address the specific realities of Indigenous people. Dykhuizen et al. (2022) discussed health issues among 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people, a topic also explored by the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health in relation to contemporary issues (Hunt 2016). Martin-Storey et al. (2021) focused on online spaces and youth and, like Waite, Ecker and Ross (2019), noted that very little academic literature has examined 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous experiences. Finally, Morrison et al. (2019) provided a historical perspective on the two-spirit identity, its contemporary adaptation, the various forms of discrimination faced by these individuals and the narratives of resistance they have developed.

The primary objective of this literature review was to highlight the diversity of practices and services available to gender-diverse Indigenous people, not only within the Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement but also across the country, including services provided by Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations, in

urban areas and on traditional territories. Through our review, it became evident that there is a limited amount of information available on this topic.

This literature review seeks to partially fill this gap first by documenting existing services, second by addressing accessibility issues. We have organized the services to highlight what services for 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people already exist in 2024 and what still needs to be developed. Finally, in the discussion, we go over the key objectives and core principles that emerged from the texts and that are crucial for establishing effective services for this group.

This literature review thus seeks to compile in one document the writings on services specifically targeted toward this group, provide tools for future research on the subject and guide research toward current needs. Ultimately, the goal is to provide Native Friendship Centres with recommendations, to help them improve their services.

This literature review was made possible through funding from Women and Gender Equality Canada, secured by the RCAAQ. It is part of a broader project aimed at identifying best practices in programming, service delivery and prevention related to addressing gender-based violence in Native Friendship Centres. This literature review was conducted by the RCAAQ's Observatory of Urban Indigenous Realities. Its mission is to gather, understand and share knowledge related to urban Indigenous issues, focusing its actions on using First Nations and Inuit knowledge and expertise for the benefit of society as a whole. To conduct this review in an Indigenous context, we decided to involve an advisory committee that reviewed and provided feedback on this document to improve its quality and ensure its alignment with the Indigenous context. This committee included Indigenous members and collectives.

Research strategy

We conducted a literature review on services offered to 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people in Canada. The search for sources was carried out between September 2023 and February 2024 by a three-person research team (one First Nations member and two non-Indigenous members). During our initial meetings, we established the following list of keywords to help define the identity of the target group: "Indigenous* people*" OR Indians* OR "First* Nation*" OR "First* People*" OR Inuit* OR BIPOC OR Amerindian*. We also selected keywords relating to gender and/or sexual identity for the 2SLGBTQIA+ population, taking care to include Indigenous-specific terms: "Two* Spirit*" OR "Two-Spirit*" OR *bispirituel*[5]* OR *niizh manidoowag* OR LGBTQ OR LGBT OR LGBTQ2+ OR 2SLGBTQIA+ OR lesbian* OR gay* OR bisexual* OR transgender* OR queer OR transsexual* OR genderqueer OR trans OR Indigiqueer OR "gender identity" OR "sexual orientation." Finally, our keywords included terminology related to the notion of service: Service* OR Help OR Support* OR Assistance OR Care* OR Intervention* OR Protection OR Need*, and location: Canada OR Quebec. Our research was conducted using the following databases: SOFIA, AnthroSource, Pascal-Francis (CNRS), CAIRN, Indigenous Studies Portal, Bibliography of Indigenous Peoples in North America (EBSCO), Women's Studies International (EBSCO), Autochtonia, INSPQ, and Google Scholar.

The selected texts were uploaded to a shared Zotero library so that all members of the team could access them.

[5] We chose to use the term "*bispiritual*" over "*two-spirit*" after reviewing emerging literature and the terminology commonly used.

Inclusion/exclusion criteria

Our article selection targeted services offered to or directed toward 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) living in Canada, whether in urban areas or in communities. To do this, we defined the concept of "service" broadly by including 8 distinct keywords. We also included 10 terms reflecting diverse forms of Indigenous self-identification. Lastly, it was important to adopt a broad definition of 2SLGBTQIA+, incorporating 20 terms related to the realities and issues of gender and sexual minorities—some specifically Indigenous, others used more broadly in Canada and North America. From the preliminary research stage, we included various types of documents: scientific articles presenting primary data (research findings), reports, articles presenting secondary data (other research), and actual tools/services (rather than their analysis), such as toolkits and websites. Our research included both qualitative and quantitative studies, published in either French or English. We intentionally chose not to apply a publication date range in order to access texts that might discuss early or pioneering services. And lastly, we imposed no restriction on the source of the document, including whether or not it had been peer-reviewed.

In our analysis table, we made a point of indicating the authors' affiliation or self-identification with an Indigenous Nation or organization, and to a 2SLGBTQIA+ or two-spirit identity. This decision reflects our intention to highlight literature produced by Indigenous authors. In line with this objective, this literature review is based not only on academic works but also includes films and tools (training materials, handbooks, toolkits) created by Indigenous authors.

During the preliminary analysis of sources, before integration into Zotero, we excluded a total of 2,394 titles (n=2,394) that were duplicates, off-topic sources and sources in other languages. After subtracting this number from the total found, we were left with 1,099 sources.

After adding the sources to Zotero, we carried out further screening by removing duplicates (n=254) resulting from searches carried out by the three collaborators across different platforms, as well as documents from unrelated disciplines (n=648). This process yielded a total of 409 titles, which were then subjected to a preliminary review (or first reading).

Thirdly, following the preliminary review (title, keywords, subheadings, introduction, tables, conclusion), we excluded 226 references that were out of context: 54 related to realities in the United States, 120 focused solely on 2SLGBTQIA+ realities and not Indigenous ones, 29 dealt exclusively with Indigenous realities and not 2SLGBTQIA+ and another 23 were artistic works (novels, films, etc.). Then, given the breadth of results and their lack of relevance to our research question, we introduced additional inclusion and exclusion criteria, such as the mandatory use of the term "service." Then, given the limited number of documents that analyzed existing services (8), we chose to include documents that make recommendations regarding services, and not only those presenting or analyzing existing ones.

The second reading phase involved the analysis of 92 texts. During this stage, we deliberately excluded documents that did not specifically address services (i.e., the term appeared only in expressions such as "social services") as well as documents that included the terms "two-spirit" or "2S" from the 2SLGBTQIA+ acronym but did not tangibly discuss services aimed at Indigenous people. Two key findings from our literature review are the frequent use and inclusion of the term "two-spirit" in texts without any consideration for the specific realities and issues facing this group, and the inclusion of Indigenous participants in research without identifying results relating specifically to them. These practices contribute to a misrepresentation of Indigenous 2SLGBTQIA+ realities, as they are not properly accounted for in texts claiming to study them. After the second reading phase, a total of 51 documents were selected for inclusion in the literature review.

It was following this second reading phase, in March 2024, that we decided to relaunch the bibliographic research by focusing on gender diversity terminology in Indigenous languages encountered during the course of our work. For this new search, we targeted the following terms:

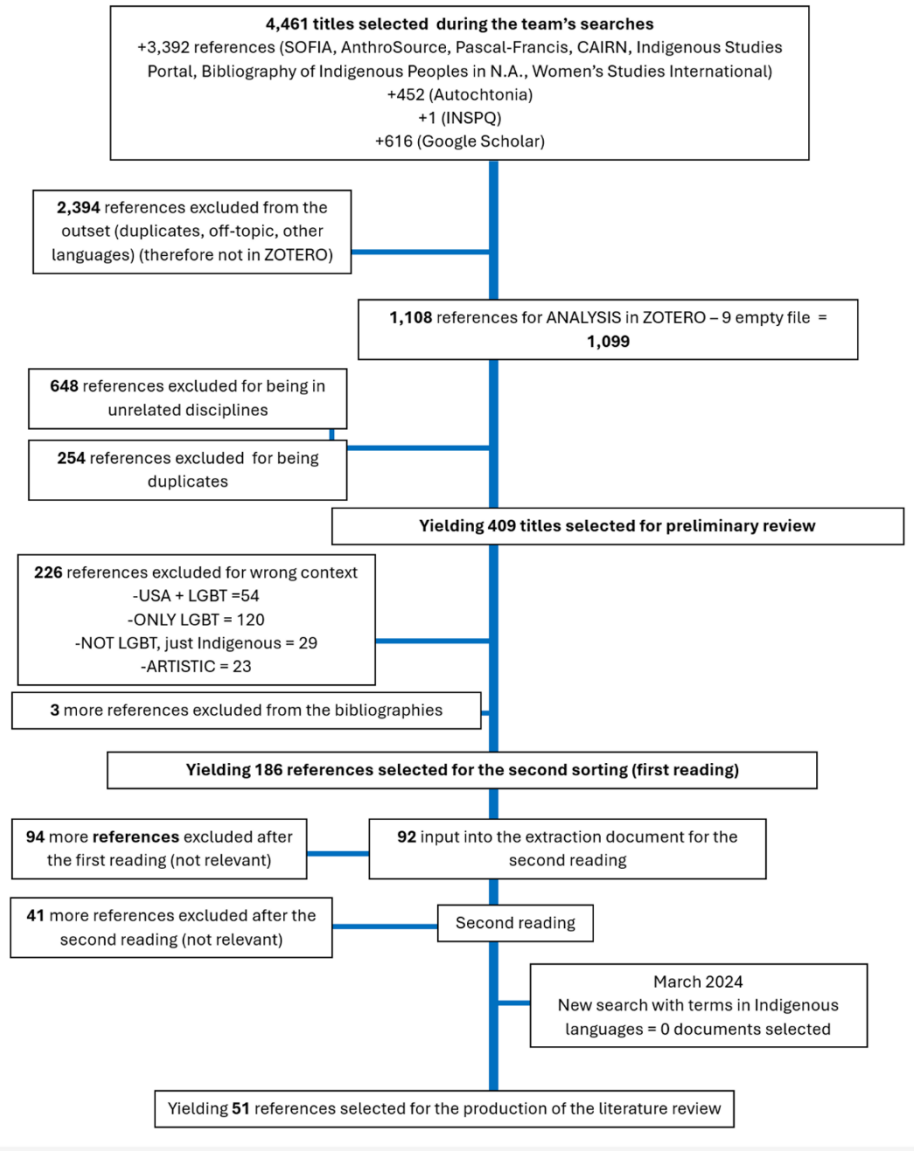
("Niizh Manidoowag" OR Winkte OR Nadele OR Kokwi'ma OR Ayagigux' OR Tayagigux' OR "Haxu'xan" OR Hoxuxuno OR "Kuxa't" OR Winktan OR "Aakíí'skassi" OR "Saahkómaapi'aakííkoan" OR Hoyę' OR Goyę' OR Ge: OR "Nádale asgaya" OR "Nádale agehya" OR Asegi OR "He'eman" OR "He'emane'o" OR Hetaneman OR "Hetane'mane'o" OR Hatukiklanna OR Hatukholba OR Agi OR Elha OR Warrhameh OR "Napêw iskwêwisêhot" OR "Iskwêw ka napêwayat" OR Ayahkwêw OR Înahpîkasoht OR Iskwêhkân OR Napêhkân OR Bote OR Bate OR Bade OR Winkta OR "Ma'kali" OR Athuth OR Miati OR "Ho'va "OR Ikoueta OR "Ickoue ne kioussa" OR "Nok'olhanxodeleane" OR Chelxodeleane OR Sipiniq OR Arnaasiaq OR Angutaasiaq OR Kwit OR Monaguia OR "Twlinna'ek" OR "Kupatke'tek" OR Titqattek OR "Kok'we'ma" OR Winkte OR "Bloka egla wa ke" OR Cuit OR Uluqui OR Mihdacka OR "Ilyaxai' Kwiraxame" OR "Nde'isdzan" OR "Geenumu gesallagee" OR Osabu OR Alyha OR Hwame OR "Tai'up" OR "Rotionon:wat" OR "Iotinon:wat" OR "Onon:wat" OR Nadleeh OR Nadle OR "Osa'pu" OR Tuučuk OR ČakussA OR Agokwa OR Okitcitakwe OR "Mixu'ga" OR "Mixo'ge" OR "Wik'ovat" OR Tudayapi OR Tuwasawuts OR "Ku'saat" OR "M'netokwe" OR Coya OR "I-coo-coo-a" OR "Teadiya'de:no'" OR "Hënöja'dajaöh" OR "Tuva's" OR Tubasa OR "Waipu sungwe" OR Tuvasa OR "Tubas waip" OR "Waipu sungwe" OR "Tainna wa'ippe" OR Nuwuducka OR "Xa'wisa" OR Kwido OR "Kweep'aa" OR "Senp'aa" OR Gusgimukw OR Lhunide OR Warharmi OR Gatxan OR Tuwasawits OR Shiange OR "Ik!e'laskait" OR "Elxa'" OR "Kwe'rhame" OR "Aranu'tiq" OR Anasik OR Uktasik OR Aranaruaq OR Angutnguaq OR Muxe OR "La'mana" OR "Ko'thlama" OR Katotse OR napeckweo OR napeushkueu) AND (Indigenous OR Indian* OR "First Nation*") AND (Service*).

The results of this search were inconclusive, although it was an essential step in line with our position of valuing works authored by Indigenous people who are also part of gender and sexual diversity communities. No additional texts were therefore added to the list. However, we believe this is a step that should be revisited in future research and literature reviews, as it helps highlight terms used in Indigenous languages. The total number of texts included in this review therefore remained unchanged, with 51 texts analyzed.

Review procedure

Flowchart of the Search Strategies Used

Reference Selection Pathway



Our selection and review process was organized into six stages: (1) dividing the databases among the research team and conducting a preliminary search for texts; (2) team meetings to work on the preliminary selection of sources; (3) dividing the texts for the two reading phases (we note that we did not carry out double readings, as the research team was composed of only three members); (4) team meetings to discuss the readings, reach a shared view on problematic texts, consolidate the data for a broader overview and make adjustments if necessary; (5) sharing our results with an advisory committee; (6) revisiting our results based on the committee's feedback.

At the end of the two reading phases, we identified 51 texts for inclusion in this literature review.

Results

From these readings, we present two main categories of findings, relating to (1) existing services and (2) their accessibility.

Existing services

In our review of the literature, we found few articles offering an in-depth analysis of services available to 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people. Many services are named or listed without being explored in detail, and some are mentioned because they are lacking. In this section, we list the different types of services that appear in the literature, while highlighting the extent to which they are analyzed (thereby encouraging future studies to look further into these analyses).

Anchor points

When discussing services offered to 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people, it is essential first to consider the service's anchor point. Who provides the service, and who is the intended population? The literature allows us to define a service's community anchor point in terms of whether the organization offering it is Indigenous-led (or not), and whether the service is formally or informally targeted to 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people. Passante (2012) notes that a service can be offered by a non-Indigenous organization, as is the case with the Nine Circles, Klinic and Mount Carmel clinics, and for the Rainbow Resource Centre, all based in Winnipeg. These organizations are informally addressed to 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people, notably through the inclusion of "2S" in the acronym of the populations they serve, without, however, offering services specifically tailored to them. A service offered by a non-Indigenous organization may, however, formally target Indigenous people, as in the case of the Hassle Free Clinic in Toronto, which has hired trans staff and highlights its efforts to create a safe environment for two-spirit people. This type of anchor is sometimes seen as allowing for anonymity in a way that may not always be possible within Indigenous organizations, as well as offering the possibility of being part of a broader (2SLGBTQIA+) community (Lépine Dubois 2018; Ristock et al. 2010).

The decision-making process around choosing a service and the organization providing it was analyzed by Art Zoccole, an Anishinaabe Ogokwe from the Lac des Mille Lacs First Nation in Ontario, and collaborators in 2013. They noted that 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people tend to access non-Indigenous organizations more frequently for legal and health services. By contrast, they are more likely to turn to Indigenous organizations (Beswick et al. 2013, 24) for spiritual services or services related to HIV and AIDS.

Anchoring services within Indigenous organizations enables the provision of services formally targeted at Indigenous 2SLGBTQIA+ people. Examples include those offered by the Urban Native Youth Association (such as the now-closed Drop-In Group and the 2-Spirit Collective stream of the Community & Connection program) and the Native Youth Sexual Health Network, which has produced two guides specifically addressing the realities of 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous youth: *You Are Made of Medicine. A Mental Health Peer Support Manual for Indigiqueer, Two-Spirit, LGBTQ+, and Gender Non-Conforming Indigenous Youth* and *niizh jijaag gashkibijigan:Building Our Bundles of Support with Two-Spirit Youth*).

We have grouped the services presented, analyzed or listed in our literature review into five categories: 1) collective support services; 2) fundamental services; 3) cultural services: culture and identity; 4) health-oriented services; 5) education and awareness-raising services.

While some services are analyzed, most of the selected texts primarily list and describe these services.

Collective support services

Our first category of services offers collective support, including various types of gatherings: safe spaces, talking circles, drop-in groups and leadership programs. Passante's (2012) master's thesis presents two Indigenous organizations in Vancouver that provide collective services specifically for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals: the Aboriginal Wellness Program, which has a two-spirit group, and the Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA), which had a youth drop-in group that was closed due to low attendance (Passante 2012). This drop-in was part of several initiatives from UNYA's Two-Spirit Youth Program and Counsellor, which also included counselling services and eventually ended due to a lack of funding (Lerat and Gray 2004, 3). Passante also notes the importance of public spaces that can serve as gathering places for two-spirit people.

This same research highlights the importance of a sense of belonging, or in other words, the building of community, which must be fostered by the organizations providing these services.

> Good, relevant services become welcoming, accepting places to gather, help people make sense of and become themselves, within a group of accepting peers. (Passante 2012, 168).

The thesis by Lépine-Dubois (2018) notes the lack of gathering spaces, this time in Montréal, pointing out that between the time of the interview and the publication of the article, an Indigenous organization in Montréal had formed a group for two-spirit youth, giving them a space to come together. Sometimes, the focus is more on a gathering occasion or event. Fiona Meyer-Cook, of Anicinabe and Scottish descent and an adoptive member of the Beardy's and Okemasis First Nation in Saskatchewan, and Diane Labelle, a two-spirit Mohawk[6] (2004), recounts the origins of the first two-spirit organization in Montréal, which grew out of a two-spirit barbecue in 1996, which brought together 25 people who then made connections. These gathering spaces and occasions can also take place online, though no study has yet analyzed such services.

The video by Harrisson et al. (2018) published in First Peoples Child & Family Review, features the testimony of a young Métis woman, Kaitrina Harrisson, who highlights the importance of gathering spaces, particularly two-spirit talking circles and drum circles. Meyer-Cook and Labelle (2004) echo this by emphasizing the value of talking or working circles dedicated exclusively to two-spirit groups.

Sometimes grouped under "community-based services" (Passante 2012), drop-in groups help foster a sense of belonging and provide safe spaces to gather. In a study by Meyer-Cook (1998), one participant noted that many people "don't go to the friendship centre because they're afraid of it getting back to their home" (p. 52), highlighting the importance of offering a drop-in service in a more anonymous location than a Friendship Centre. This quote underscores the complexity of service provision for 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people. Many publications point to the value of this kind of service (Chaiton et al. 2022; Passante 2012; A Way Home Canada and National Learning Community on Youth Homelessness, n.d.), which can take various forms:

> (…) drop-in support groups; social support drop-ins; peer support drop-in groups; drop-in social groups; drop-in with one-to-one mental health support available; (…) drop-in centres; drop-in and social spaces with resources. (…) (Chaiton et al. 2022, 8)

In the study of the Two-Spirited Youth Program mentioned above, Barlow (2001), a Mi'kmaq from New Brunswick, highlights the goal of offering drop-in groups as an essential peer-support tool to "enhance healing around issues of sexual abuse, low self-esteem, depression, and homophobia" (9). According to the same study, the short-term outcomes are promising: "Level of participation in groups sustained and increased over time; observed and self-reported increases in peer support, healing, and healthy lifestyles; and reduced rates of substance abuse, depression" (9).

[6] In the text, Diane Labelle uses the term "Mohawk." However, we note that from a decolonial writing perspective, the preferred term would be "*Kanien'keha:ka*." Here, we have chosen to respect and reflect the way the individual refers to herself.

Collective support services also include leadership programs, such as those offered by the Indigenous web platform *Ka Ni Kanichihk* (Those Who Lead), aimed at youth (Passante 2012). According to Passante, this idea of collective support is also tied to the feeling of being useful to one's community. The author notes that participants achieved this by contributing directly to community services, whether through volunteering or community leadership (130). This suggests that collective services benefit not only those who access them, but also those who take part as volunteers, fostering a broader sense of contributing to the community.

Fundamental services

Numerous fundamental services are mentioned in the body of work reviewed. These include, among others, access to food banks or services facilitating access to food (Passante 2012; and Sylliboy et al. 2022 in the context of COVID-19), transportation between the community and the city or within the city itself (FitzMaurice et al. 2013), home visits (FitzMaurice et al. 2013), services that facilitate liaison between organizations (FitzMaurice et al. 2013), services that involve case management (Abramovich and Kimura 2021; FitzMaurice et al. 2013), housing services (Abramovich and Kimura 2021), mentorship and telephone helplines (Passante 2012). The latter stands out in the study by Michelle Sylliboy, L'nu and Mi'kmaq, and collaborators (2022), which describes the implementation of a support line for gender-diverse Elders during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, these services are not, or only minimally, described. Only housing-related services are analyzed in greater detail. Other Indigenous-led initiatives have emerged, such as the Indigenous led Crisis Response Pilot launched in 2022 by 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations in partnership with the Eshkiniigjik Naandwechigegamig (ENAGB) Indigenous Youth Agency and the Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre (PQWCHC). However, no publications have inventoried or analyzed these initiatives.

Mentorship is considered essential, though it is still not widely available (NYSHN and OFIFC 2015; Sylliboy et al. 2017[7]). In their 2017 report for the Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network (UAKN) on the coming-out process, Sylliboy and Young emphasize the importance of mentorship, including it in their survey under the category "Supports include Peers, Parents and Mentors." Of the 20 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous youth who responded, none identified a mentor as having played a key role in their coming-out process, but several offered advice highlighting its value. They pointed to Elders or other 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people with lived experience. In a more recent study on mental health and substance use services for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in Ontario during the pandemic, Chaiton et al. (2022) also note that peer mentorship is a service accessed by 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous youth.

Access to housing continues to be a challenge for 2SLGBTQIA+ people, with Indigenous individuals experiencing the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination (Teengs and Travers 2006; Abramovich and Kimura 2021; Hébert et al. 2022). The report from the Department of Justice (Hébert et al. 2022) examines the scope and impact of legal issues faced by trans, two-spirit and non-binary individuals. The report is based on interviews with 27 2SLGBTQIA+ people, of whom 4 identified as Indigenous. Its findings suggest that some considered housing support services to be inadequate (discrimination, abuse, lack of support or assistance, etc.).

Another example is the study by Abramovich and Kimura (2021), which provides an in-depth analysis of the YMCA Sprott House in Toronto. It draws on the experiences of 13 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, including 2 Indigenous participants. The study highlights the importance of developing long-term housing options, i.e., lasting more than one year, instead of relying on shelters or drop-in centres. The need for long-term housing is also highlighted in *Forgotten Voices: Indigenous Two-Spirit, LGTB*QIA Youth & Homelessness*, published by the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (2014). While much of the literature focuses on the experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, participants in the Women and Gender Equality report (2022) drew attention to issues

[7] This report is grounded in an Indigenous methodology, taking care to involve Elders both in the research team and in focus group discussions, not only to provide support but also ensure that definitions of two-spirit identities are culturally rooted.

facing older individuals, including the phenomenon of "going back into the closet"[8] in long-term care facilities. Although not specific to gender-diverse Indigenous people, the report underlines the need for safe, inclusive housing services that recognize the legacy of colonization.

Ristock et al. (2010) also stress the importance of creating safe, two-spirit-specific housing, including transitional homes for 2SLGBTQIA+ people moving into urban areas.

Health-oriented services

In 2022, Dykhuizen et al. conducted a literature review of 13 articles focusing on the health and wellness of the Canadian two-spirit community. This article, like several others (Pullen Sansfaçon et al. 2022), highlights a lack of information and services related to two-spirit health. It is clear that many of the services available to gender-diverse Indigenous people fall within the areas of prevention; harm reduction or HIV/AIDS (McCaskill et al. 2013; ANHAN 2009); and mental health.

HIV

This is notably the case with the All Nations Hope Network (ANHN), which in 2009 published a handbook compiled by Wesley Keewatin, a member of the Cree Nation and the coordinator of the two-spirit support project. While ANHN's initiatives are directed at people living with HIV and hepatitis C, this handbook is intended for all two-spirit people and for those working to support them. Based on a literature review conducted in 2007 (ANHN 2007), the handbook contains six sections, three of which are of particular interest here. Section 3 focuses on strategies and practices to improve the health and wellness of two-spirit people. We will return later to sections 4 and 5.

In the third section of its handbook, ANHN highlights the importance of reducing risky behaviours—particularly injection drug use, which is the most common means of transmission for sexually transmitted infections within Indigenous communities. The handbook recommends a strategy of strengthening the holistic prevention approach advocated by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC 2006, cited in Keewatin 2009, 30–31), which has a two-level structure:

> Primary prevention aims to prevent exposure by identifying at-risk individuals and performing thorough assessments, patient-centred counselling and education. Secondary prevention involves reducing the prevalence of STIs through the detection of infections in at-risk populations, counselling, conducting partner notification and treating infected individuals and contacts in a timely manner, thus preventing and/or limiting further spread.

The handbook highlights the essential need to provide two-spirit people with culturally safe services, while also acknowledging the complexity that two-spirit identity can represent within Indigenous communities themselves.

When it comes to service use, although non-Indigenous services are available to Indigenous people living with HIV (such as Nine Circles, Klinic and Mount Carmel, all of which include two-spirit people in their mandate), the study by Zoccole, Myers and Day (2005) shows that Indigenous participants tend to prefer Indigenous-run services, in part to stay connected to their Indigenous community while being far from home (11).

Sexual health and disease prevention

Another area, closely linked to the issue of HIV, concerns the sexual health of Indigenous people with diverse gender identities. One of the findings of Pruden's (2021) research does not focus on a specific service, but

[8] "[…] seniors in long-term care […] do not disclose their identities out of fear of discrimination from care staff and other residents. This is even though many of today's 2SLGBTQI+ seniors are those who fought for 2SLGBTQI+ rights" (Women and Gender Equality 2022, 16).

rather on the importance of participants' social networks, suggesting that the larger the network, the greater was the impact on knowledge of best health practices.

> […] urban respondents had higher levels of sexual health knowledge among two-spirit (but not other Indigenous) men points to a need to better understand how two-spirit approaches to reconnecting Indigenous gbMSM [gay and bisexual men who have sex with men] to pre-colonial traditions that supported or even venerated diverse genders and sexualities may in turn improve sexual health knowledge. We hypothesize that this may happen by both improving a sense of self-esteem and belonging for two-spirit individuals and by creating social connections that allow two-spirit people to learn about new sexual health interventions (such as PEP and PrEP) (Pruden 2021, 103).

In their article, Ansloos et al. (2021) discuss peer education as a way to reduce risks. Many authors (Vowel 2016; Pullen Sansfaçon et al. 2022) agree on the importance of the Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN), which uses a variety of methods (media campaigns, etc.) to promote and share pragmatic, honest and clear information (Vowel 2016, 111), while actively engaging in the renewal and revitalization of Indigenous traditions related to health.

Mental wellness

Finally, the literature on health services for gender-diverse Indigenous people also addresses mental health and wellness, with several studies highlighting that mental health issues are a serious concern and have historically been overlooked by mental health researchers, despite the widespread presence of 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people across North America (Brotman et al. 2002, 70).

In a study involving 923 trans youth in Canada—of whom 1 in 10 was Indigenous—Veale et al. (2015, 2) reported that "nearly two-thirds of youth said they had self-harmed in the past year; a similar number reported having serious suicidal thoughts; and more than one in three had attempted suicide" [translation]. Some studies (Dykhuizen et al. 2022) link mental health to HIV, noting that "The two-spirit community may be at an increased risk of HIV considering their increased mental health challenges, increased substance use, and exclusion from housing and support services" (Lyons et al., 2016; Ristock et al., 2019).

Unfortunately, our literature review did not find any analyses of specific mental health services for gender-diverse Indigenous people. That said, the importance of social support is emphasized by Beswick et al. (2013), along with the need to foster a warm atmosphere—a "home experience"—that addresses mental health issues, as highlighted in the leaflet *Forgotten Voices* (Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council 2014), which brings forward the voices and recommendations of two-spirit youth in Toronto. However, this does not refer to an existing service. The research by Sylliboy and Young (2017), through its use of a talking circle methodology, demonstrated the effectiveness of such a space as both safe and healing.

> The Circle was a safe space and a source of healing for many individuals who openly talked about their lived experiences with suicidal ideation and mental health (W2SA, *Mawita'jik Puoinaq: A Gathering of 2 Spirited People!*, 2011). The Circle provided a spirit of healing from sharing each other's stories. Participants and organizers witnessed how individual experiences immediately transformed into a powerful collective voice of courage and resilience (10).

Although it does not in itself represent an existing service, this study highlights the relevance of creating talking circles specifically for two-spirit people, and of placing this dimension at the heart of research protocols when addressing issues faced by gender-diverse Indigenous people. In the same study, the authors emphasize the importance of social networks, particularly friends, in the coming-out process, representing 60% of their support group. They propose creating mentorship programs to address the various needs of youth, as well as workshops focused on youth empowerment, cultural identity, awareness of two-spirit identity and suicide prevention.

Finally, psychosocial support services are mentioned in numerous studies (Barlow 2001; Taylor 2009; Ansloos et al. 2021; Passante 2012), and their outcomes are widely recognized. The study of the Two-Spirited Youth Program run by the Urban Native Youth Association in Vancouver, presented by Barlow (2001), mentions the

positive outcomes of psychosocial support activities, whose objectives include "healing around issues of sexual abuse, low self-esteem, depression, coping with sexuality, and homophobia in schools" (9).

According to their findings, in the short term, individual psychosocial support leads to observable improvements in managing sexuality, homophobia and depression; increased self-esteem; reductions in the rates of suicide (and attempts), sexual abuse and substance use; as well as a decrease in the number of 2SLGBTQIA+ youth experiencing homelessness (Barlow 2001).

While some individuals do, of course, access non-Indigenous psychosocial support services (Taylor 2009), Ansloos et al. (2021) instead discuss "Radical Care Practices," which involve knowledge keepers providing psychosocial support and mentorship to Indigenous youth, and 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in particular, centred on the importance of "opportunities for cultural connection, grounding and relationship in the promotion of mental health and well-being." These themes are revisited in the next section on cultural services.

Cultural services: Culture and identity

Cultural services are often mentioned, although few are discussed in depth. They sometimes refer to cultural "land-based programs," which include projects rooted in traditional knowledge and sometimes described as "land as research." These initiatives may involve gardening, caring for the land, exploring feminine and two-spirit roles in reciprocal relationship with the land, as well as economic renewal and the empowerment of women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people. Activities include, for example, "maple-tapping (…), gardening heirloom/Indigenous seeds, gathering natural medicines from the forest, and processing and storing seeds and foods" (Hall et al. 2020, 8).

Many sources highlight the importance of drum sessions (McCaskill et al. 2013; Sylliboy et al. 2022; Harrisson et al. 2019; FitzMaurice et al. 2013; Passante 2012), without delving into their specific impact on 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. The literature also points to the value of services that incorporate spirituality (Zoccole et al. 2005; Sylliboy et al. 2017), including collective spiritual spaces (A Way Home Canada and National Learning Community on Youth Homelessness, n.d.), or possibly individual ones (Native Youth Sexual Health Network 2021), as well as the transmission of traditional knowledge (Ristock et al. 2011, 24) related to spirituality or medicinal plants to treat depression and anxiety. These writings highlight the vital roles of medicine people, caregivers and family members (Native Youth Sexual Health Network 2021). Elders also feature prominently in discussions of cultural services. Their importance, which will be explored further in the recommendations section, is often linked to providing "a deeper sense of historical context to being two spirits in the communities" (Sylliboy et al. Some sources mention the support Elders can offer in coming-out or healing processes (Native Youth Sexual Health Network 2021), while other sources propose tools to help broach these topics with them. For instance, the pamphlet *Everyone Has a Place in the Circle* (The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples 2020) addresses the question, "How do I have a conversation about gender with […] an Elder?" This section explains that Indigenous communities once recognized that Elders could learn from young people just as much as young people could learn from them. It also tactfully acknowledges the impacts of colonization through shifts in role perceptions, and it indirectly touches on the potential for homophobic or transphobic attitudes within communities due to Christianization. The guide *You Are Made of Medicine* (Native Youth Sexual Health Network 2021) highlights the role of traditional and ceremonial support services, with Elders playing a central role in creating safe spaces for two-spirit people. Other sources describe safe space initiatives, such as the Two-Spirit Youth Program and Counsellor at UNYA, which developed such spaces in rural areas in partnership with the Pacific Foundation for the Advancement of Minority Equality and Youthquest!, two queer organizations based in Vancouver (Lerat and Gray 2004).

Education and awareness-raising services

The final type of service presented is not analyzed in depth, but it represents a form of support whose accessibility and versatility are undeniable: education and awareness-raising services.

Much like the manual *A Journey of Healing: Two-Spirit Peoples Joining the Circle: Holistic Wellness and Resource Manual for Two-Spirit Individuals and Service Providers*, produced by Wesley Keewatin on behalf of the All Nations Hope Network in 2009, this final category of services brings together information to help educate gender-diverse individuals and the various people working to support their wellness. This may include documents such as manuals or guides (*You Are Made of Medicine*; *A Journey of Healing: Two-Spirit Peoples Joining the Circle: Holistic Wellness and Resource Manual*, Keewatin 2009), toolkits (*Everyone Has a Place in the Circle: Strategy & Toolkit*, CAP 2020), bibliographic resources (*Two-Spirit Resource Directory*, Prudent 2013; Passante 2012), or brochures (*Forgotten Voices*, TASSC 2013). Also included are websites (*niizh jijaag gashkibijigan: Building Our Bundles of Support with Two-Spirit Youth*), online training (*2SLGBTQIA+ Toolkit to Support Youth Experiencing Homelessness*) and videos (*La Boîte Rouge VIF, VIF et al. 2023a* and *b*) aimed at a range of audiences, including families, practitioners and allies.

A range of themes are explored in an informative and educational way: the lack of information available to families and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals; appropriate terminology; the issues and challenges faced by Indigenous and gender-diverse Indigenous people; the effects of colonialism and the imposition of religion on two-spirit, Indigiqueer and LGBTQ+ populations; the social determinants of Indigenous health; barriers to accessing services; traditional and sacred teachings; and advice on showing respect and participating appropriately in cultural activities. These documents may be supported by additional resources in various formats (organizational contacts and links, bibliographies, videos, lists of acronyms, organizational resources, etc.).

Although these services are not evaluated or analyzed, they are frequently mentioned in the sources. We include them in our corpus as data reflecting the voices and experiences of gender-diverse Indigenous individuals and organizations. Based our reading of these materials, we propose that they represent some of the few available tools, as well as a rich and vital source of information for gender-diverse Indigenous people and those working in support services. Furthermore, they respond to the need for more online services to enable individuals in communities and urban areas to access them discreetly and confidentially.

ACCESS TO SERVICES

Numerous issues and challenges relating to service accessibility are discussed in the literature. For ease of presentation, we have grouped them into four categories: issues arising from the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination; issues linked to the lack of support within services; issues related to inadequate communication tools; and finally, issues tied to the lack of anonymity.

Intersection of multiple forms of discrimination

Many publications highlight the voices of participants who point to the discrimination they face. They describe racism,[9] homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism by frontline practitioners (Hébert et al. 2022; Hunt 2016; Ristock et al. 2011; Ristock et al. 2010). The leaflet *Forgotten Voices* (Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council 2014) describes prejudices among workers that end up "alienating the people who need it most" (11). Morrison et al. (2019, 147), drawing on the studies of Lyons et al. (2015, 2016), describe discrimination:

> based on their gender identity (e.g., denied access to women-specific and gender-affirming shelters, and residential addiction treatment) and gender expression (e.g., only those perceived as "trying to be feminine" or "woman enough" were respected and welcomed in social services).

Discrimination is also present within communities, where homophobia, an enduring legacy of centuries of colonization, can create pressure that ultimately leads individuals to leave. Brotman et al. (2002) highlight the strategies used by two-spirit individuals to avoid discrimination stemming from intolerance toward difference, including concealing their identity or leaving their community altogether. Similarly, Teengs and Travers (2006) note that, for HIV-positive Indigenous two-spirit people, migration to the city becomes the only way to escape the homophobia, the persistent stigma of living with HIV, and the lack of social and health services in their home communities. This reality has been documented in the literature for several decades (Le Duigou 2000) and it is often compounded by racism when these same individuals seek support outside their community,

[9] These forms of discrimination can be observed in various contexts: housing, employment, the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and the health and social services system (Ristock et al. 2010; Hébert et al. 2022; Hunt 2016; Le Duigou 2000).

for instance in LGBT spaces, where they can sometimes equally feel unwelcomed (Lépine-Dubois 2018; Wesley 2015; Passante 2012; Teengs and Travers 2006; Meyer-Cook and Labelle 2004; Le Duigou 2000). Sylliboy et al. (2022, 20) note that mainstream health services—and this observation could be extended to mainstream LGBT and Indigenous services—are perceived by individuals as being "culturally, physically, emotionally and spiritually unsafe," which contributes to low service uptake.

The intersection of the various forms of discrimination experienced by gender-diverse Indigenous people highlights the complexity of navigating the different services available to them, and thus the challenge of accessing services that are adapted to their realities.

Discrimination within institutions such as hospitals and clinics has long been recognized as a problem for all Indigenous people. However, the intersection of discriminations puts gender-diverse Indigenous people in an even more vulnerable position. In 2000, 48% of two-spirit men who took part in a survey by the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN, cited in Le Duigou 2000) reported that it was difficult to access services without being judged, noting that Indigenous 2SLGBTQIA+ people "present much sicker than [non-Indigenous patients] when they finally do get treatment" (Le Duigou 2000, 203). Morrison et al. (2019) explain that the root of this issue lies in the minimization of colonial abuses, which continue to affect Indigenous communities, but are not taken into account by service providers to offer more appropriate support to Indigenous 2SLGBTQIA+ people. Along similar lines, Ristock (2019) attributes service inefficiency to the use of inappropriate intervention models, resulting from the ongoing refusal to use an intersectional approach to the services for Indigenous 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

These experiences of multiple, often intergenerational, forms of discrimination can lead young people to fear not being taken seriously by institutions, and fear humiliation, ridicule or even the use of derogatory language directed at them. As a result they may choose to avoid these services altogether (Urban Native Youth Association 2004; Hébert et al. 2022). Those who have experienced violence in public spaces may develop a sense of hypervigilance as a means of self-protection, which in turn "limits their ability to access employment or other services, including healthcare" (Hébert et al. 2022, 36).

The key task that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous services must urgently undertake is to recognize the impacts of colonization in order to provide inclusive and culturally safe services.

Lack of support

Many two-spirit or HIV-positive Indigenous people report migrating to the city to access more services (Passante 2012). Others describe it as a necessity, a form of forced mobility resulting from a lack of safety or the need to escape a tense environment resulting from them affirming their identity (LGBT+ Family Coalition 2021). The video module on family violence against 2SLGBTQ+ Indigenous people, *Lack of Resources*, produced in 2023 by La Boîte rouge VIF and others, reminds us that this remains a current issue in communities and in Indigenous families in Quebec. However, many authors also note that the lack of specific services for 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people is just as prevalent in urban settings. In this regard, the 2004 report by the Urban Native Youth Association highlighted the need for programs specifically targeting two-spirit people in British Columbia, which at the time were entirely lacking.

The lack of support is widely felt. The authors of the *Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP)* found that only 1% of respondents considered the available support and intervention services in Toronto to be sufficient (McCaskill et al. 2013, 181). Even when services do exist, access to them may still be complicated because of the lack of proper support within those services. The most striking example is arguably the failure of service staff to intervene when a 2SLGBTQIA+ person experiences discrimination (Morrison et al. 2019).

This lack of support may partly be explained by the continued lack of adequate training among staff in various organizations, including Indigenous ones (LGBT+ Family Coalition 2021). It is more difficult for workers to grasp specific needs and to direct individuals to appropriate resources if they do not have suitable knowledge of the traditional understandings of roles within communities, the impacts of colonization, the terminology used and the various expressions of gender diversity among Indigenous Peoples (Lépine-Dubois 2018).

Hébert et al. (2022) note that, in such situations, it often falls to 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals themselves to educate staff—a burden they should not have to carry. Since the lack of support can also stem from Indigenous services, it is crucial that these services develop "best practices" specifically tailored to gender-diverse Indigenous people, whose needs remain largely "unheard or unanswered in the province of Quebec" (Lépine-Dubois 2018, 67).

In some cases, it is not only the staff's lack of knowledge but also their identity that can create a barrier to accessing services. A participant in the study by Hébert et al. (2022) explained that receiving services primarily from non-Indigenous staff only made it harder to connect.[10] Only once they connected with a youth worker who not only understood Indigenous cultures but was also two-spirit did the participant finally get access to the services and support of an Indigenous health centre. This shows the importance of having Indigenous LGBT or two-spirit role models. Wesley Thomas, a member of the Navajo Nation in the United States, and Sue-Ellen Jacobs (1999) explain that gender-diverse Indigenous people who have support within their community and positive LGBT or two-spirit role models nearby are much less likely to leave for the city. Without such role models, 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people are more likely to report "their experiences of oppression, violence, familial and communal homonegativity" (Morrison et al. 2019, 158).

This situation also plays out in communities where non-Indigenous staff are commonly found. In addition to the cultural barrier, the lack of rootedness in the community leads to high staff turnover, and this instability results in a lack of connectedness between service providers and those using the services. However, such connectedness is essential to the staff's accessibility (CAP 2020).

The issue of inadequate support therefore calls for service providers building a relationship of trust and ensuring cultural safety, both in urban areas and within communities. This is especially important because 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people, like many other Indigenous people living in cities, are known to move regularly between these two spaces (Le Duigou 2000) and because it can help ease the often difficult transition from community to city (Ristock 2019). As Alaers (2010, 76) aptly puts it:

> Social workers must be sensitive to gender, sexual and cultural diversity in their practice and be aware that these and other aspects of self are all interconnected in an [Indigenous] worldview. Professionals must be careful not to assert their power over clients by denying them preferred terms for their identity.

This support can also take the form of a sense of community within the service, as noted by participants in Passante's (2012) study, who spoke of the need to feel at home, to develop a sense of belonging. Trevor Stratton (2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations 2008), a member of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, made a similar point, reporting that services that are seen as competent—and are therefore used—are described as "a second family," a crucial source of support for individuals whose own families deny their identity (Le Duigou 2000) or subject them to discrimination (Morrison et al. 2019) or exclusion (Alaers 2010). Echoing Pruden's (2021) emphasis on the importance of social networks, the support systems within services can also help disseminate good practices and knowledge that would otherwise be difficult to access, notably information about sexual health best practices.

Lack of communication

A lack of communication can also create multiple barriers to accessing existing services. Similarly to the previous issue, if staff are not properly equipped, a person may be referred to a service that is not appropriate for them or their situation (Passante 2012; Teengs and Travers 2006). In specific cases, such as access to trans-related medical care (linked to medical transition), a lack of communication may lead someone to turn to private, and therefore much more expensive, services (Hébert et al. 2022), which can be detrimental to them. Language is also a potential barrier, particularly within Indigenous organizations. These often multilingual organizations (French, English and Indigenous languages) may face financial challenges in translating and

[10] This can be seen as an indirect reference to intercultural relations, language barriers and so on.

distributing their materials, which unintentionally makes their content difficult for some to access (Lépine-Dubois 2018).

Speaking of campaigns aimed at changing risky behaviours among 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people, Thoms (2007) highlights the issue of a lack of social marketing that would effectively reach the right audience. His research on campaign posters shows how the lack of a positive visual—one that is recognized as such by the target group—can become yet another barrier to accessing appropriate services. In her work to improve social work practices regarding gender diversity, Alaers (2010) draws attention to the problem of the lack of communication around available services. This two-spirit Cree[11] author notes, for instance, that the Saskatoon Police website makes no mention of the efforts made to educate officers on two-spirit identities. As a result, two-spirit individuals may have no idea these inclusion efforts even exist. The takeaway is clear: communication tools aimed specifically at reaching two-spirit people are just as important as the initiatives themselves. It is not enough to simply offer services, there must also be a concerted effort to ensure the information reaches the people concerned.

This is why it is important to produce more appropriate and positive communication tools, such as the CAP leaflet, which includes an entire section devoted to 2SLGBTQIA+ realities. It provides information on appropriate terminology, the importance of avoiding generalizations (not everyone uses the term two-spirit), and suggestions for supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals and for approaching this topic with an Elder (CAP 2020). Participants in Thoms' study highlighted the importance of "…positive self-images of dignified, historically correct, or adapted images of Two-Spirit men" (2007, 25). According to the author this type of visual was unfortunately difficult to find in 2007, making it harder for individuals to see their group reflected in service-related visuals. Lastly, the importance of communication tools for improving access to services is underscored by a suggestion made by participants in the *Forgotten Voices* leaflet (Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council 2014). They requested a phone line that would enable them to check, for instance, whether a service is open before going.

Lack of anonymity

A fourth category of issues concerns the lack of anonymity within services. While this challenge is more broadly associated with services offered in communities (Le Duigou 2000; LGBT+ Family Coalition 2021) and is one of the reasons for mobility to urban centres, it can also apply to urban services, like Native Friendship Centres, where people often know each other and may later share information with relatives back in the community (Meyer-Cook and Labelle 2004; Ogilvie 1999, cited in Le Duigou for the city of Toronto). On a related note, the Indigenous organizations involved in the LGBT+ Family Coalition report (2021, 19) also point to the difficulty of inviting urban-based 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous individuals to attend community social and cultural events because they fear being recognized. The ideal setting is seen as one that focuses on the specific realities of 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people, but that is located outside the community and outside of Indigenous organizations—a separate space that ensures full confidentiality.

In the literature reviewed, two examples are presented. Le Duigou (2000) presents the HIV and STI testing clinic operating in the communities of the Beardy's and Okemasis Cree Nation and the Sandy Lake First Nation, which is not run by a band council and whose staff come from outside the communities. The anonymity of the clinic's biweekly services goes hand in hand with strong community engagement with these health issues, close collaboration and the integration of guidance from service providers. On another note, Matthen et al. (2018) suggest using the Internet to reach a broader and younger audience while ensuring full anonymity. Alaers (2010) underscores the importance of websites in increasing awareness and visibility of programs for two-spirit individuals, as well as the need for staff training to ensure services are delivered in a culturally safe and welcoming environment.

[11] In the text, Jill Alaers uses the term "Cree." However, we note that in decolonized writing, when referring specifically to the Eeyou Nation of Eeyou Istchee in the Quebec context, it would be preferable to use the term "Eeyou." Here, we have chosen to respect and reflect the way the individual refers to herself.

Discussion

The main goal of this literature review was to provide an up-to-date picture of the services and practices available to gender and sexually diverse Indigenous people in Quebec, and more broadly across Canada. This aim also gave rise to a second objective: to support the Quebec Native Friendship Centres in developing services tailored to this population, in line with the principle of pertinence outlined in the RCAAQ's Research Framework (2021). After our initial overview of the available literature, and with a view to highlighting research led by and for Indigenous people, we deemed it essential to consider a third objective: ensuring that the voices of gender and sexually diverse Indigenous people were heard and made central in this document. This meant including materials authored by people from these communities, as well as integrating testimonies drawn from both non-academic (e.g., brochures, pamphlets) and academic sources (e.g., peer-reviewed articles, theses).

To meet these objectives, we focused on two key areas: existing (or past) services and their accessibility. These categories emerged organically from our reading and were also necessary to help structure the findings. It is not enough to simply describe what services exist, we must also examine how accessible they are. This approach is intended to equip the Quebec Native Friendship Centres with practical insights to help them better serve gender and sexually diverse Indigenous people.

In the "Existing services" section, we presented the various services found in the literature, grouped according to the type of support they offer. The main takeaway is that not only are there few services available, but there is also a lack of literature discussing them in any depth. This observation, made fairly early in the review process, led us to broaden the scope of the materials we analyzed. We included non-academic sources, such as films, pamphlets, toolkits and training materials produced by 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous authors or organizations. This also allowed us to better reflect Indigenous perspectives, in which the sharing of knowledge can take forms beyond academic publications. The services mentioned are generally described briefly, and only rarely are they analyzed or evaluated in detail. Yet it is precisely these latter steps—analysis and evaluation—that would be needed to understand the real impact of a service on the individual, the 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous community and the organization providing it. The literature also highlights that these services are often short-lived, largely due to limited and short-term funding. Furthermore, the most substantial funding is typically tied to HIV-related initiatives, which significantly influences the kinds of services that are developed and maintained.

The "Access to services" section is built around four key findings that emerged from the literature. While services do exist, they are often inaccessible, or perceived as such, which poses a significant barrier for those who might benefit from them. Service accessibility is affected by (1) the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination, (2) a lack of support within organizations, (3) poor communication and (4) a lack of anonymity. These barriers can apply to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations offering services. Notably, the issue of anonymity has been specifically identified in the context of Friendship Centres (Meyer-Cook, 1998), and this need for confidentiality can prevent 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals from participating in community-based social and cultural activities for fear of being recognized (LGBT+ Family Coalition 2021, 19). Each subsection concludes with potential solutions drawn from the literature, offering possible pathways toward more inclusive and effective practices.

Abundant throughout the literature, these recommendations can be seen as possible solutions for the identified gaps and shortcomings. We initially planned to present a list of these recommendations so that they would be useful to readers. However, in analyzing the content, we identified certain biases. One example of such is the overfunding of certain areas, such as HIV and sexually transmitted diseases, vis à vis the Indigenous 2SLGBQIA+ population, thus presenting a distortion and maybe even fuelling prejudice. Based on this realization, we decided to organize an event gathering various players in the goal of reflecting on these recommendations and, above all, finetuning them to better echo the realities and challenges this community

faces. The findings of this activity will be published on the RCAAQ's website and can be used as a tool to help create services that are appropriate and tailored to Indigenous people.

When it comes to the delivery of services for 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous people, two final observations are especially important. First, there is a clear need for more research on the services available, including in-depth analysis and evaluation that amplifies the voices and lived experiences of gender and sexually diverse Indigenous people. The Urban Native Youth Association underscores this need, stating that "More research and writing must be done about the rich history of two-spirit people" (2004, 7). Second, it is essential that researchers take the observations presented here into account in their own work with a population that is vulnerable and marginalized in multiple ways. Not only should the use of the acronym 2SLGBTQIA+ as a catch-all label be critically examined, but the methods used to assess services should also be grounded in the same principles of cultural safety as the services themselves. In their study, Sylliboy et al. (2017) highlight the importance of culturally safe research practices for two-spirit youth:

> In a Sharing Circle, participants expressed their sense of urgency for developing supports for Two-Spirited youth. The Circle was a safe space and a source of healing for many individuals who openly talked about their lived experiences with suicidal ideation and mental health (W2SA, *Mawita'jik Puoinaq: A Gathering of 2 Spirited People!*, 2011). The Circle provided a spirit of healing from sharing each other's stories. Participants and organizers witnessed how individual experiences immediately transformed into a powerful collective voice of courage and resilience (10).

Two final observations, both brought forward by our advisory committee, deserve to be highlighted. First, much of the existing literature on services tends to focus primarily on difficulties, whether related to identity or service access, and fails to acknowledge the once-honoured role of two-spirit people. This lack of recognition inevitably frames much of the literature through a deficit-based lens, that is, highlighting what is missing rather than building on what already exists. While our original goal was to document analyses and evaluations of current services and practices in order to guide Friendship Centres toward promising approaches, we must acknowledge that our own literature review is itself shaped by this deficit-based perspective. For this reason, we strongly encourage researchers interested in this subject to help fill this important gap by documenting and evaluating services.

Second, it is important to point out that most of the works meeting our inclusion criteria were produced over a decade ago. We intentionally chose not to restrict our search to a specific time frame in the hopes of uncovering innovative or forward-thinking initiatives that may have emerged earlier. As a result, the sources analyzed in this review span two to three decades. These findings reinforce the lack of current literature on services for 2SLGBTQIA+ people. The outdated nature of many sources may also skew the analysis, particularly with respect to current experiences of discrimination within communities. Once again, we call on interested researchers to address this lack of up-to-date studies that both assess services and provide a contemporary picture of the contexts that make such services necessary.

Third, it is worth noting that none of the studies or documents reviewed make any distinctions between realities, needs or services according to nation of origin. More research in this area would help determine whether services and approaches should be tailored to the specific needs of each nation (beyond simply offering them in the appropriate language).

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