



Q-Xposure 'Promoting Healthy Queer and Trans Communities'

Environmental Scan 2007

Queer and Trans service provision and access in Peel Region



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Queer Xposure Environmental scan: Peel 2007

Executive summary

The Peel HIV/AIDS Network and the East Mississauga Community Health Centre, a branch of LAMP, known from here forward as the partnership of *QXposure*, recognizes the service provision disparities for queer and trans identified individuals in the region of Peel. *QXposure* understands the unique health issues for these communities and the barriers to health care access due to a lack of recognition of these unique issues by service providers. An environmental scan was conducted to begin to investigate the opinions and knowledge around queer and trans issues of service providers in the region of Peel and also to discover what, if any, specific services existed to cater to this demographic.

Introduction and background

The focus of this environmental scan was to identify current service provision for queer and trans communities in Peel. It was also intended to highlight gaps in service and offer some insight into the knowledge and opinions of service providers around these communities.

It will be helpful if this document is read in-conjunction with the queer and trans and trans health literature review – *created by QXposure*¹ - so that a better understanding of the social determinants of health for queer and trans can be achieved. Recognizing and understanding the stigma and discrimination that are apparent for queer and trans identifying folk – and their allies, is paramount to understanding the need for specific service provision for these communities.

¹ See www.qxposure.blogspot.com

Key issues and items that were sought from this scan included:

- The age, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity of the service provider
- If the provider was aware of any clients they service identifying as queer or trans, if they believed their organization had any specific queer and trans programming and if their overall programming was adequate for serving the queer and trans community
- Issues around queer and trans new comers and their needs, as well as ethno racial and cultural communities
- The level and the demand for queer and trans and trans training and the existence or not, of queer and trans and trans anti homophobia and anti transphobia workplace polices
- Comfort levels in the providers organization around queer and trans and trans issues

Methodology

This scan was conducted purely electronically via the use of *Survey Monkey*². The link was sent across the Region of Peel to as many agencies as was possible. A focus was made to reach ethno - racial and cultural agencies as well as settlement and newcomer service agencies. QX is committed to an anti-racist and anti-oppressive framework and so the outreach to agencies that may be providing services to ethno-racial, ethno-cultural and newcomer communities was a critical piece in soliciting information to better our response; also accounting for the large immigrant and newcomer population in Peel (over 50%)³. The same questions were listed for a period of two weeks (14 days). The anonymous survey had the option to skip questions and to end the survey at any given point.

² www.surveymonkey.com

³ Social Planning Council of Peel, 2006 <http://www.spcpeel.com>

Results and findings

Despite the far reaching abilities of electronic tools, only 135 service providers responded to the survey, (it is estimated that the survey may have reached some 500 people (based on visible e-lists and e-serves that were sent to QXposure) and from those only 88 people actually completed the survey; with varying numbers skipping certain questions.

- The age of our respondents was fairly broad, representing ages from 20 – 60 in the main, with the highest respondents age group being 30-39. Of this, the majority were Caucasian/white, followed by African and Caribbean, and South Asian: which is in line with the Peel census data (<http://www.spcpeel.com>)
- An extremely large percentage (83.3%) identified as heterosexual/straight, with just 3.9% identifying as gay, 3.9% as lesbian, 1.4% as bisexual, 5% as queer and 2.5% as 'other'. The majority of our recipients (83.2%) identified as female, whilst none identified as transgendered (or anything other than cisgendered).
- When asked about specific queer and trans programming 37.5% of respondents believed that their organization offered such a service, with the majority of 46.2% recognizing that they did not. Noteworthy is that 31 people opted to skip this question. Interestingly 39.4% of respondents believed their organization could cater for the needs of queer and trans newcomers, followed by a close 34.6% of respondents who didn't know if their organization could or not. 31 people also chose to skip this question.
- Almost two-thirds (62.6%) of respondents had not undergone any homophobia/transphobia training in their current job and 73.8% of respondents would like to receive such a training; with over 60% of

respondents not being able to define all letters of the LBGTTTIQQ acronym and some having no idea of any.

- Two thirds of respondents did not have or did not know if their organization had a policy around anti-homophobia, yet 51.7% believed their organization was not heterosexist or homophobic/transphobic (65.9%) and that they felt comfortable discussing queer and trans issues at their place of work (83%)

Limitations of Findings

The analysis of the findings of the environmental scan are limited to very broad and general interpretation, and are intended to be a guide to asking more questions and engaging in a quest for further knowledge about agencies/organizational capacity. The information in the survey is a valuable first step and is meaningful despite some limitations that are acknowledged below.

Some limitations include:

- Technical difficulties in completing the survey
- Never receiving the survey because it was on email
- Completing the survey late
- Receiving the survey and not understanding the information
- Receiving the survey and not feeling comfortable to respond
- Refusing to complete the survey because Queer and Trans issues are not 'priority populations' of the agency you work for

Recommendations

The findings of this scan can be interpreted in a number of ways. As raw data, as presented above, it would appear that organizations in Peel Region are eager to learn about queer and trans issues, confront

homophobia and develop strategies for sustaining an anti-homophobic, anti-heterosexist and anti-transphobic position around these issues. QX would recommend that these strategies take the form of open dialogue at the workplace, organizations developing and operating specific queer and trans services, and developing responses that are armed with tools for the regions demographic, specifically queer and trans newcomer issues.

Unfortunately, the respondents from this scan represent only a small fraction of service providers across Peel Region. The majority of the 88 people who actually completed the survey were the same people who come from agencies who are part of or who are affiliated in some capacity with, the Positive Space Coalition of Peel⁴. As such our respondents are people who have committed to working with and for these communities already. This is not to discredit their work and/or participation with our survey. Conversely it is intended to highlight the enormous reluctance or indifference of service providers who have not made this conscious commitment, to complete the anonymous survey and/or to identify a gap in their service provision to this under serviced community(s).

Whilst we have a favorable response from many who checked a want to receive anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia training, there is still a large piece of work left untouched by not being able to access the providers who do not see queer and trans issues as a priority or at worst, a concern and/or right. It is acknowledged that issues often are not identified as priority due to funding constraints, infrastructure deficits, and

⁴ The Positive Space Coalition of Peel is a networking group of individuals and agencies dedicated to addressing the social and health needs and increasing the visibility, of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Transsexual Two Spirited, Intersexed, Queer and Questioning (LGBTTTTIQQ) communities in the region of Peel (www.positivespacespeel.org)

a lack of trust in the party soliciting for information. Working within an anti-oppressive framework allows QXposure to tie in with organizations and agencies concerned with providing inclusive services at all levels.

The recommendations that can be made from this scan maybe limited but are none the less valid and response worthy:

- A collaboration from our service provider allies that have committed to the survey is encouraged
- To provide / assist with the training and education around homophobia and transphobia is encouraged: community and service provider education
- Community capacity building especially around the issues of social support networks (for example, queer and trans events, in particular Pride)
- An environmental scan from the queer and trans community is suggested to collect evidence based data to support the need for service provision to these communities and indeed to support the claim of a gap in services
- A need to place queer and trans issues on the political and social agenda. Identifying as queer is a human right (protected under Human Rights law, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and other hate crime legislation). Social service agencies need to embrace these rights and make them an integral part of their work and environment. Further, advocacy needs to be continued and developed to ensure gender identity is covered under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, explicitly.
- Offer consultation to service providers on the adaptability of existing services into queer and trans positive provision

- To incorporate the feedback from QXposures' community forum⁵ into a set of final recommendations and Work plan for action to create queer and trans programming in Peel
- An effort needs to be made to target newcomer and settlement agencies around queer and trans issues as there was only one such agency that responded to the survey; although did recognize the gap in service and their lack of education and knowledge around the issues.

We thank all of those who participated in the survey, we are grateful for your energies, time and participation. Please contact us at qxposure@hotmail.com if you wish to participate further in creating inclusive and anti-oppressive spaces at your organization and/or following up on your input into the survey.

⁵ Burnhamthorpe Library, October 18th 2007, Mississauga, Peel

Queer and trans Glossary of terms

(Source: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) Asking the Right Questions II, Published: Aug 17, 2007)

Asexual: a word describing a person who is not sexually and/or romantically active, or not sexually and/or romantically attracted to other persons.

Autosexual: a word describing a person whose significant sexual involvement is with oneself or a person who prefers masturbation to sex with a partner.

Biphobia: irrational fear or dislike of bisexuals. Bisexuals may be stigmatized by heterosexuals, lesbians and gay men.

Bi-positive: the opposite of biphobia. A bi-positive attitude is one that validates, affirms, accepts, appreciates, celebrates and integrates bisexual people as unique and special in their own right.

Bisexual: a word describing a person whose sexual orientation is directed toward men and women, though not necessarily at the same time.

Coming out: the process by which LGBTTTIQ people acknowledge and disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity, or in which transsexual or transgendered people acknowledge and disclose their gender identity, to themselves and others (See also "Transition"). Coming out is thought to be an ongoing process. People who are "closeted" or "in the closet" hide the fact that they are LGBTTTIQ. Some people "come out of the closet" in some situations (e.g., with other gay friends) and not in others (e.g., at work).

Crossdresser: A person who dresses in the clothing of the other sex for recreation, expression or art, or for erotic gratification. Formerly known as "transvestites." Crossdressers may be male or female, and can be straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual. Gay/bisexual male crossdressers may be "drag queens" or female impersonators; lesbian/bisexual female crossdressers may be "drag kings" or male impersonators.

Dyke: a word traditionally used as a derogatory term for lesbians. Other terms include lezzie, lesbo, butch, bull dyke and diesel dyke. Many women have reclaimed these words and use them proudly to describe their identity.

Fag: a word traditionally used as a derogatory term for gay men. Other terms include fruit, faggot, queen, fairy, pansy, sissy and homo. Many men have reclaimed these words and use them proudly to describe their identity.

Family of choice: the circle of friends, partners, companions and perhaps ex-partners with which many LGBTTTIQ people surround themselves. This group gives the support, validation and sense of belonging that is often unavailable from the person's family of origin.

Family of origin: the biological family or the family that was significant in a person's early development.

Gay: a word to describe a person whose primary sexual orientation is to members of the same gender or who identifies as a member of the gay community. This word can refer to men and women, although many women prefer the term "lesbian."

Gay-positive: the opposite of homophobia. A gay-positive attitude is one that affirms, accepts, appreciates, celebrates and integrates gay and lesbian people as unique and special in their own right.

Gender conforming: abiding by society's gender rules, e.g., a woman dressing, acting, relating to others and thinking of herself as feminine or as a woman.

Gender identity: a person's own identification of being male, female or intersex; masculine, feminine, transgendered or transsexual. Gender identity most often corresponds with one's anatomical gender, but sometimes people's gender identity doesn't directly correspond to their anatomy. Transgendered people use many terms to describe their gender identities, including: pre-op transsexual, post-op transsexual, non-op transsexual, transgenderist, crossdresser, transvestite, transgendered, two-spirit, intersex, hermaphrodite, fem male, gender blender, butch, manly woman, diesel dyke, sex radical, androgynist, female impersonator, male impersonator, drag king, drag queen, etc.

Genderqueer: this very recent term was coined by young people who experience a very fluid sense of both their gender identity and their sexual orientation, and who do not want to be constrained by absolute or static concepts. Instead, they prefer to be open to relocate themselves on the gender and sexual orientation continuums.

Gender role: the public expression of gender identity. Gender role includes everything people do to show the world they are male, female, androgynous or ambivalent. It includes sexual signals, dress, hairstyle and manner of walking. In society, gender roles are usually considered to be masculine for men and feminine for woman.

Gender transition: the period during which transsexual persons begin changing their appearance and bodies to match their internal identity.

Genderism: the belief that the binary construct of gender, in which there are only two genders (male and female), is the most normal, natural and preferred gender identity. This binary construct does not include or allow for people to be intersex, transgendered, transsexual or genderqueer.

Hate crimes: offences that are motivated by hatred against victims based on their actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

Heterosexism: the assumption, expressed overtly and/or covertly, that all people are or should be heterosexual. Heterosexism excludes the needs, concerns, and life experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual people, while it gives advantages to heterosexual people. It is often a subtle form of oppression that reinforces silence and invisibility for lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Heterosexual: term used to describe a person whose primary sexual orientation is to members of the opposite gender. Heterosexual people are often referred to as "straight."

Heterosexual privilege: the unrecognized and assumed privileges that people have if they are heterosexual. Examples of heterosexual privilege include: holding hands or kissing in public without fearing threat, not questioning the normalcy of your sexual orientation, raising children without fears of state intervention or worries that your children will experience discrimination because of your heterosexuality.

Homophobia: irrational fear, hatred, prejudice or negative attitudes toward homosexuality and people who are gay or lesbian. Homophobia can take overt and covert, as well as subtle and extreme, forms. Homophobia includes behaviours such as jokes, name-calling, exclusion, gay bashing, etc.

Homosexual: a term to describe a person whose primary sexual orientation is to members of the same gender. Most people prefer to not use this label, preferring to use other terms, such as gay or lesbian.

Identity: how one thinks of oneself, as opposed to what others observe or think about one.

Internalized homophobia: fear and self-hatred of one's own sexual orientation that occurs for many lesbians and gay men as a result of heterosexism and homophobia. Once lesbians and gay men realize that they belong to a group of people that is often despised and rejected in our society, many internalize and incorporate this stigmatization, and fear or hate themselves.

Intersex: a person who has some mixture of male and female genetic and/or physical sex characteristics. Formerly called "hermaphrodites." Many intersex people consider themselves to be part of the trans community.

Lesbian: a female whose primary sexual orientation is to other women or who identifies as a member of the lesbian community.

LGBTQQ: a common acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgendered, two-spirit, intersex and queer individuals/communities. This acronym may or may not be used in a particular community. For example, in some places, the acronym LGBT (for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered/transsexual) may be more common.

MSM: refers to any man who has sex with a man, whether he identifies as gay, bisexual or heterosexual. This term highlights the distinction between sexual behaviour and sexual identity (i.e., sexual orientation). A person's sexual behaviour may manifest itself into a sexual identity, but the reverse is not always true; sexual orientation is not always reflective of sexual behaviour. For example, a man may call himself heterosexual, but may engage in sex with men in certain situations (e.g., prison, sex work).

Out or Out of the closet: varying degrees of being open about one's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Passing: describes transgendered or transsexual people's ability to be accepted as their preferred gender. The term refers primarily to acceptance by people the individual does not know, or who do not know that the individual is transgendered or transsexual. Typically, passing involves a mix of physical gender cues (e.g., clothing, hairstyle, voice), behaviour, manner and conduct when interacting with others. Passing can also refer to hiding one's sexual orientation, as in "passing for straight."

Polysexual: an orientation that does not limit affection, romance or sexual attraction to any one gender or sex, and that further recognizes there are more than just two sexes.

Queer: traditionally, a derogatory and offensive term for LGBTTTIQ people. Many LGBTTTIQ people have reclaimed this word and use it proudly to describe their identity. Some transsexual and transgendered people identify as queers; others do not.

Questioning: people who are questioning their gender identity or sexual orientation and who often choose to explore options.

Sexual behaviour: what people do sexually. Not necessarily congruent with sexual orientation and/or sexual identity.

Sexual identity: one's identification to self (and others) of one's sexual orientation. Not necessarily congruent with sexual orientation and/or sexual behaviour.

Sexual minorities: include people who identify as LGBTTTIQ.

Sexual orientation: a term for the emotional, physical, romantic, sexual and spiritual attraction, desire or affection for another person. Examples include heterosexuality, bisexuality and homosexuality.

Significant other: a life partner, domestic partner, lover, boyfriend or girlfriend. It is often equivalent to the term "spouse" for LGBTTTIQ people.

Straight: a term often used to describe people who are heterosexual.

Trans and transpeople are non-clinical terms that usually include transsexual, transgendered and other gender-variant people.

Transgendered: a person whose gender identity is different from his or her biological sex, regardless of the status of surgical and hormonal gender reassignment processes. Often used as an umbrella term to include transsexuals, transgenderists, transvestites (crossdressers), and two-spirit, intersex and transgendered people.

Transgenderist: someone who is in-between being a transsexual and a transgendered person on the gender continuum, and who often takes sex hormones, but does not want genital surgery. Transgenderists can be born male (formerly known as "she-males") or born females (one called he/shes"). The former sometimes obtain breast implants and/or electrolysis.

Transition: the process (which for some people may also be referred to as the "gender reassignment process") whereby transsexual people change their appearance and

bodies to match their internal (gender) identity, while living their lives full-time in their preferred gender role.

Transphobia: irrational fear or dislike of transsexual and transgendered people.

Transpositive: the opposite of transphobia. A transpositive attitude is one that validates, affirms, accepts, appreciates, celebrates and integrates transsexual and transgendered people as unique and special in their own right.

Transsensual: a term for a person who is primarily attracted to transgendered or transsexual people.

Transsexual: a term for a person who has an intense long-term experience of being the sex opposite to his or her birth-assigned sex and who typically pursues a medical and legal transformation to become the other sex. There are transmen (female-to-male transsexuals) and transwomen (male-to-female transsexuals). Transsexual people may undergo a number of procedures to bring their body and public identity in line with their self-image, including sex hormone therapy, electrolysis treatments, sex reassignment surgeries and legal changes of name and sex status.

Transvestite: see "Crossdresser."

Two-spirit: an English term coined to reflect specific cultural words used by First Nation and other indigenous peoples for those in their cultures who are gay or lesbian, are transgendered or transsexual, or have multiple gender identities. The term reflects an effort by First Nation and other indigenous communities to distinguish their concepts of gender and sexuality from those of Western LGBTTTIQ communities.

WSW: refers to any woman who has sex with a woman, whether she identifies as lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual. This term highlights the distinction between sexual behaviour and sexual identity.