

LIVING IN A LIMINAL SPACE: Experiences of LGBTQ2S Official Language Minority Manitobans

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RÉSUMÉ ABSTRACT

A first of its kind in Western Canada, this study gauged the **experiences and needs of French-speaking LGBTQ2S adults in Manitoba** relative to their perception of discrimination, social connectedness and psychological support. Through the lens of **intersectionality**, the impact of compounding linguistic and sexual minority identities was explored. This **quantitative community-based study** was conducted by means of an online survey in June 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participant sample (n=80) was largely homogenous: most were under the age of 55 years, White, educated, and from urban areas. Many reported experiencing **dual marginalization**, feeling unaccepted by both of their minority communities of belonging. A sense of **isolation**, as well as a lack of opportunities and safe spaces for social interaction, were reported. Psychological services were accessible, but very limited in French.

Recommendations emanating from this study include the need for social initiatives and mental health supports within environments respective of both the official language of the minority and diverse LGBTQ2S identities. Future studies on this topic among youth in educational settings are underway.

Une première dans l'Ouest canadien, cette étude a sondé les expériences et besoins des membres de la communauté **LGBTQ2S d'expression française au Manitoba**, relatives à leurs perceptions de discrimination, à leurs connexions sociales et aux appuis psychologiques. À l'aide de **l'intersectionnalité** comme cadre théorique, l'impact des identités minoritaires, à la fois comme personnes d'expression française LGBTQ2S, qui se conjuguent, a été exploré. Cette **étude quantitative** s'est faite au moyen d'un sondage disponible en ligne en juin 2020, pendant la pandémie de la COVID-19. L'échantillon (n=80) fut largement homogène : la majorité avait moins de 55 ans, s'est affirmée comme Blanche, éduquée, et provenant de milieux urbains. Plusieurs ont rapporté avoir fait l'expérience d'une **marginalisation double**, se sentant ni accueilli par l'une, ni par l'autre de leurs communautés minoritaires d'appartenance. Un sentiment d'**isolement**, ainsi qu'un manque d'opportunités et d'espaces sûrs pour promouvoir les interactions sociales, furent rapportés. Les appuis psychologiques furent disponibles, mais limités en français.

Les **recommandations** émanant de cette étude se rapportent au besoin d'initiatives sociales et d'appuis à la santé mentale, en des environnements respectueux à la fois de la langue officielle de la minorité et des identités LGBTQ2S diverses. Des études subséquentes sur cette problématique, notamment auprès des jeunes en milieu éducatifs, est en cours.

FRENCH SPEAKERS IN MANITOBA

- French-speaking Manitobans represent 8.6 percent of the total provincial population
- Today, they form a **thriving linguistic cultural diaspora**, the result of efforts undertaken by forebears, language rights legislation, and the development of a wide range of French-language services in healthcare, education, culture, and the financial sector (1)
- Although the Franco-Manitoban identity **continues to evolve**, this minority population still faces the impacts of **Francophobia**, healthcare **inequities**, and linguistic **insecurity**

LGBTQ2S PEOPLE IN CANADA

- Canada's **LGBTQ2S community** has likewise known gradual yet significant gains for their wellbeing and health, thanks to movements championing social change (2)
- However, pervasive **stigmatization and discrimination** against sexual minorities in Canada persist, both explicit and implicit, verbal and physical (3); LGBTQ2S people are at a higher risk of experiencing discrimination and stigmatization than the larger population (4)
- LGBTQ2S adults are also at heightened vulnerability to **housing and food insecurity**, and present a greater occurrence of disabilities and maladaptive coping strategies (5)
- When experienced on a **chronic** basis, the social constructs of systemic homophobia and heteronormativity can lead to **minority stress** and, consequently, to the development of psychopathology (6)

FRENCH-SPEAKING LGBTQ2S PEOPLE IN MANITOBA

- Hence, the issues faced by French-speaking LGBTQ2S people in Manitoba's official linguistic minority reflect the **intersectionality** of this Community's spoken language and their sexual and gender identities. Additional variables such as age, ethnocultural or spiritual identity, health status, rural or urban contexts, disabilities, socioeconomic status, or social standing, may further **exacerbate** the effects of the inequities experienced by this Community (7,8)
- The complex intersection at which members of this Community find themselves contributes to their **heightened susceptibility** to mental and physical health problems compared to the general Canadian population (8)

- However, like anyone else, LGBTQ2S people who have access to robust social supports and who enjoy a sense of resilience and self-sufficiency can experience excellent mental and physical health, fully **flourishing** as individuals and free to express their sexual and gender identities (9)

- In Manitoba, a handful of organizations serve the LGBTQ2S community, although these services and resources are offered **almost exclusively in English**

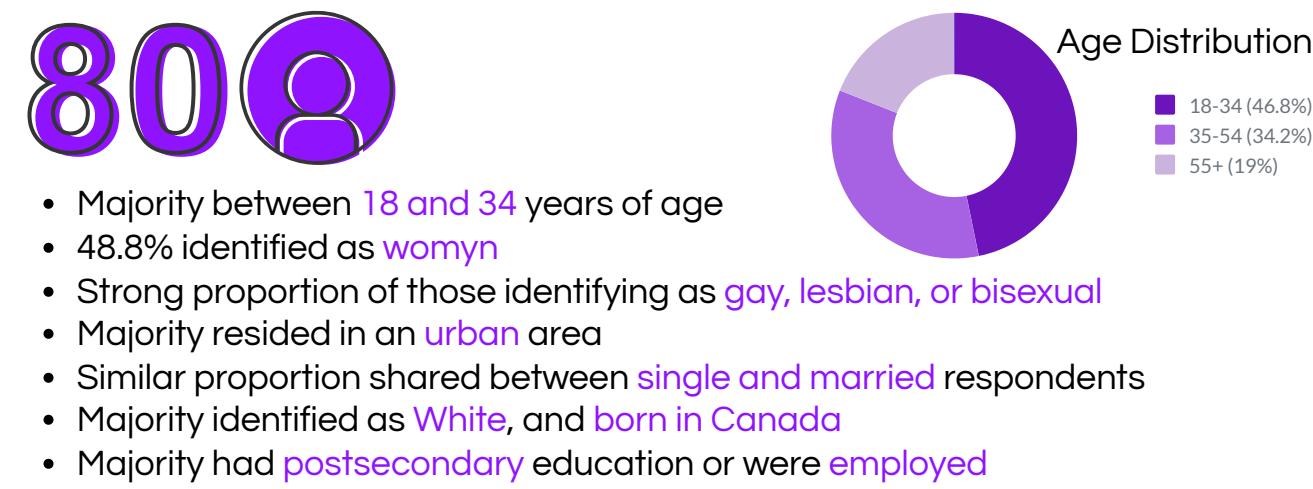
METHODS

This study's **primary objective** was to better appreciate the current realities faced by members of this Community pertaining to:

- their **sociodemographic** and ethnocultural profile;
- their **social support** and **healthcare** needs;
- their perceived **discrimination** or **stigmatization**, as much in terms of their spoken language as their sexual orientation or gender identity; and
- their **priorities for the future**.

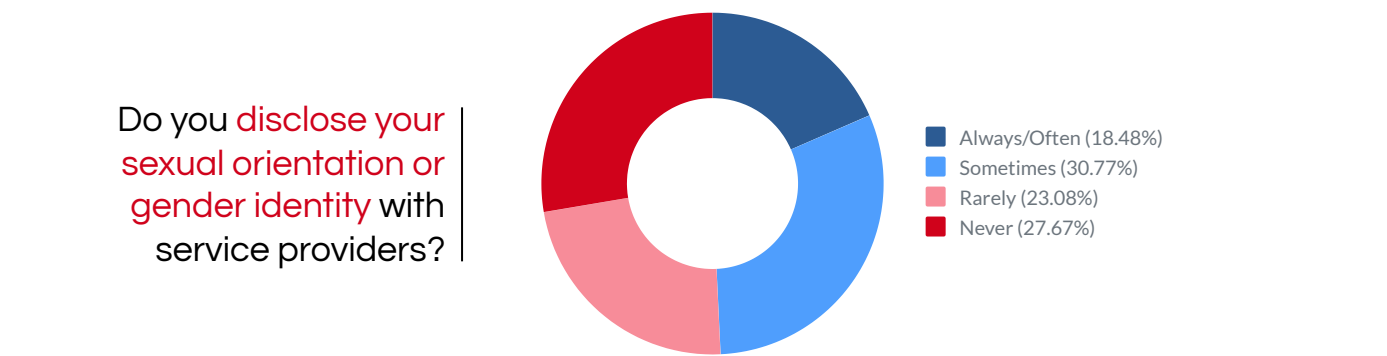
This study's methodology was mostly **quantitative**. Promotional materials directed at French-speaking LGBTQ2S adults in Manitoba for an online survey were distributed during first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, in June 2020. The survey, comprised of 38 questions, **focused on participants' sociodemographic profile, service utilization, and perceptions of discrimination and stigmatization**.

SAMPLE



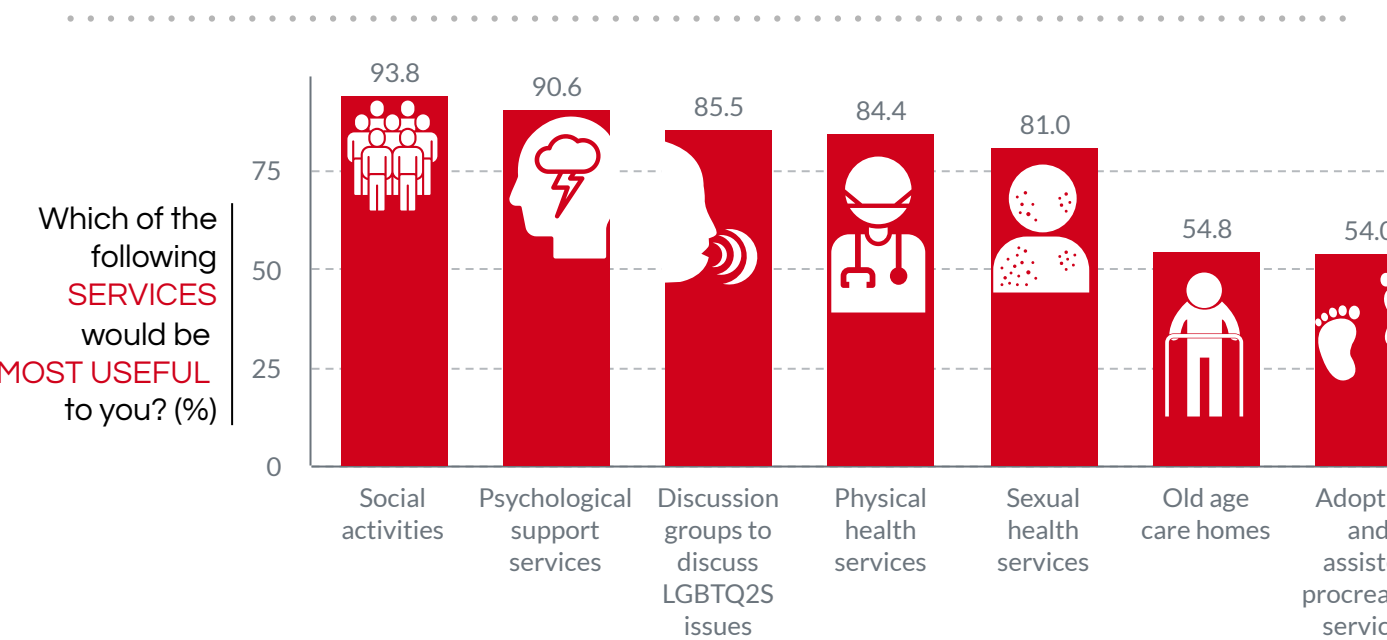
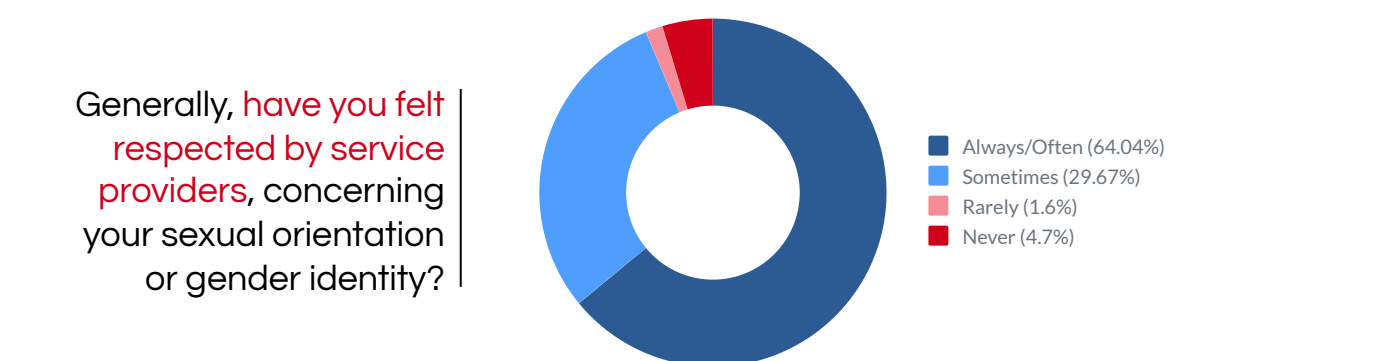
KEY FINDINGS

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT OBSTACLE REPORTED PERTAINED TO LOCATING AND RECEIVING QUEER-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SERVICES IN FRENCH.

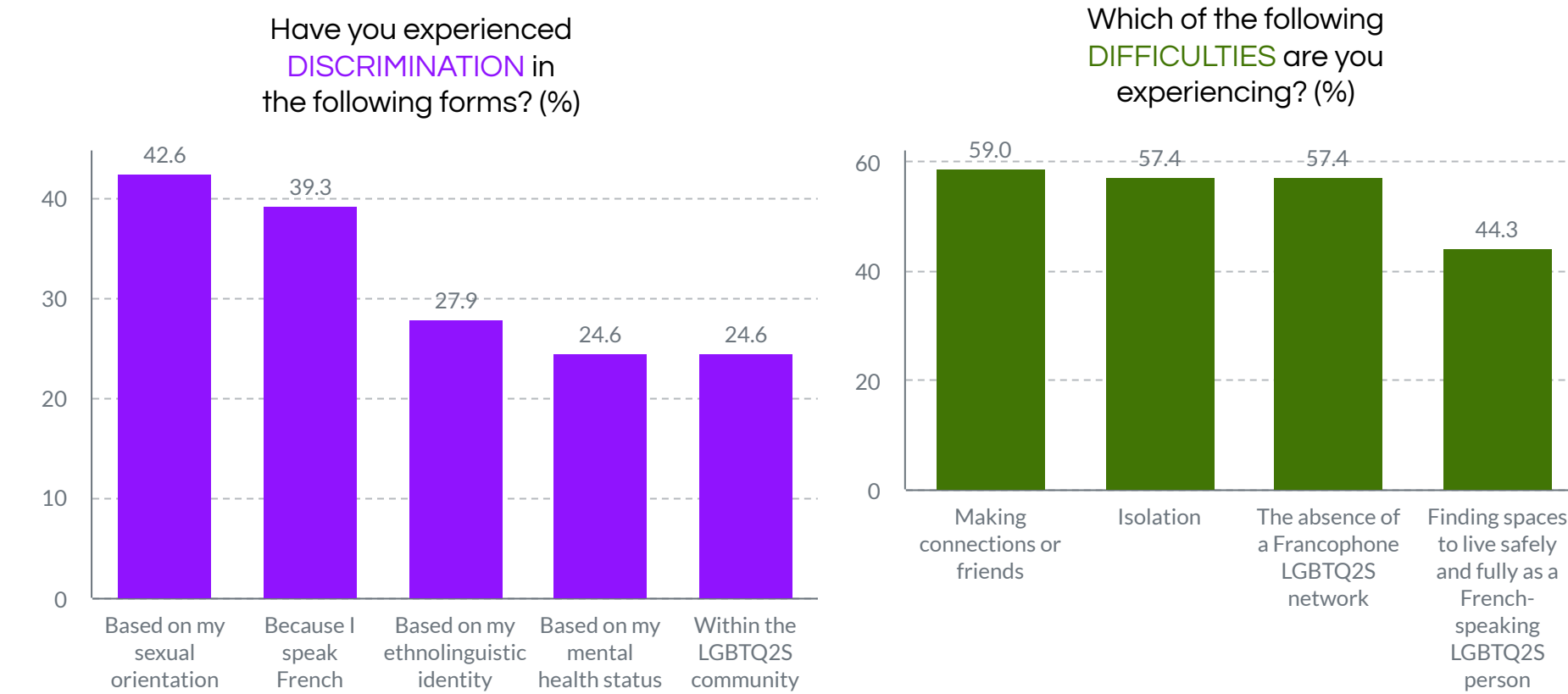
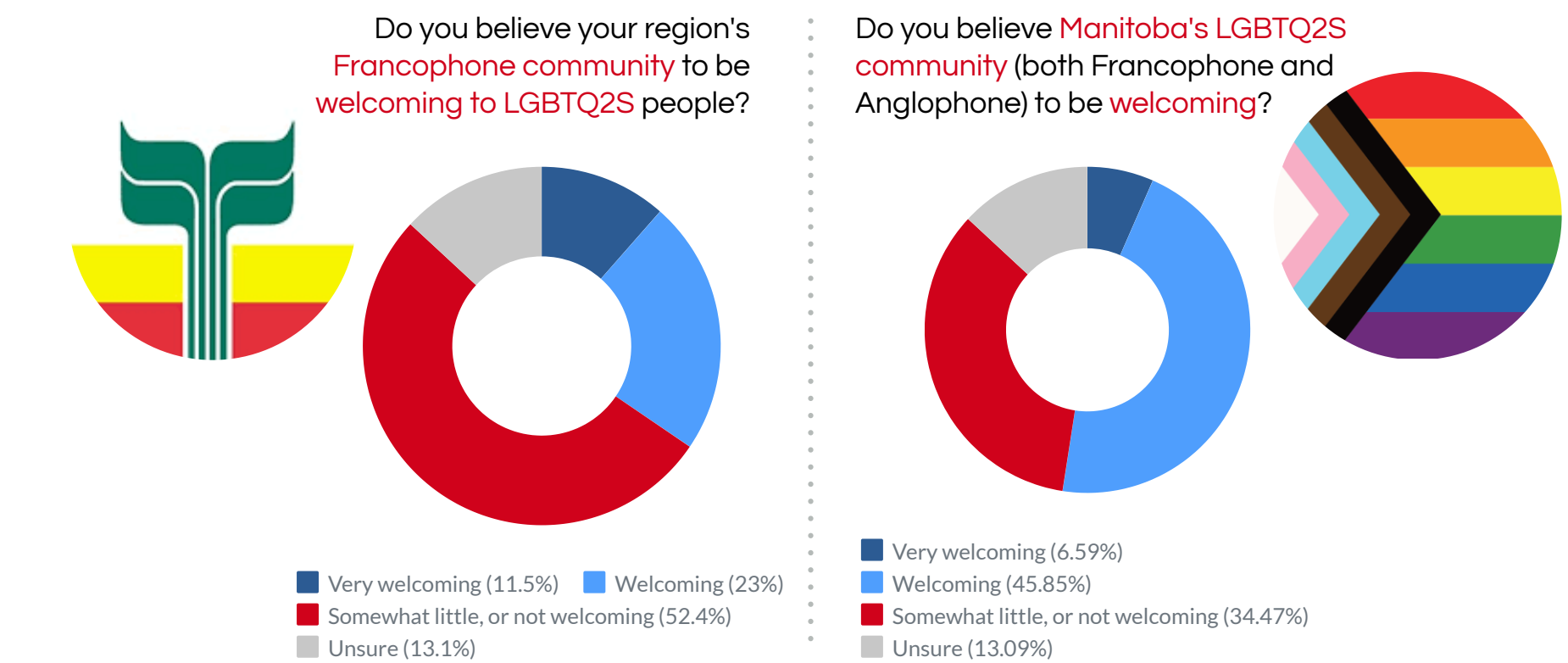


WHY?

- The opportunity did not present itself or the context did not lend itself to this topic (59.3%)
- My sexual orientation/gender identity has no bearing on my service access (48.1%)
- My sexual orientation or gender identity is none of their affair (48.1%)
- I felt uncomfortable discussing it (37.0%)
- My service provider may have felt uncomfortable with my sexual orientation or gender identity (35.2%)
- My service provider could have divulged my sexual orientation or gender identity to others (16.7%)



- ” Often, as a **gay man**, the situation becomes **even more complicated**, as the types of services that could serve our community and which understand us without judgement, are **only offered in English**.
- ” Generally, as a **pan- and polysexual person**, I feel like I'm at the **border of another border**, as if I don't have a space in any community, neither Francophone, neither LGBTQ2S.
- ” I was **afraid** I wouldn't receive the same **quality of care** if they knew I was a **lesbian**.
- ” I sometimes choose to **not access services in French**, for fear that the provider or their associates may **lack discretion**.
- ” I find there remain many **stereotypes, even within LGBTQ2S groups**, and that I get judged, even labeled, a certain way without anyone really knowing me.
- ” There is **not enough service access for Francophones** in a general way, and when it's targeted in a small community, we feel **even more targeted/stigmatized**.
- ” I was born in 1960 at the St. Boniface General Hospital, at which time all the services and associations in Manitoba which were available in **French actively discriminated against the gay and lesbian communities**.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study is a starting point to better understanding the needs and realities faced by members of the Community, and provides evidence that will inform future projects. Three main recommendations stem from the insights and experiences shared by participants:

- 1** **CONTINUE** with this **needs assessment to reach underrepresented populations**
- 2** **FOSTER** the **interpersonal and community well-being** of **French-speaking LGBTQ2S Manitobans**
- 3** **IMPROVE** access to **healthcare and social services**, in a **proactively inclusive and safe environment for all LGBTQ2S people**
- Minors** (namely in schools)
 - Seniors**
 - Indigenous Peoples**
 - Racialized people**
 - Those living in a **rural** setting
 - People with **disabilities**
 - Those living in **precarious socioeconomic conditions**
 - Allies and families** of Community members
- Continue to facilitate **gatherings** in French for LGBTQ2S individuals
 - Advocate** for more diversity and for the active inclusion of Community members within the greater French-language community
 - Establish a **social support network**
 - Establish a centre**, a physical meeting place
- Collaborate** with healthcare and social service providers
 - Develop and promote **sexual health resources in French**
 - Regularly **evaluate services** provided to members of the Community
 - Establish** a formal **mental health support service**
 - Promote French-language healthcare education** to LGBTQ2S youth

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