For a Feminist Movement That Is More Inclusive of Sexual and Gender Diversity

RESEARCH REPORT | ROAD MAP

Land acknowledgement: It is essential that we fully recognize Indigenous territory and support current Indigenous struggles for justice and equality. Indigenous communities have been the guardians of these lands for millennia, preserving their cultures, traditions and ancestral wisdom. The issues they face, including defending their territorial rights, protecting the environment and fighting against discrimination, are crucial challenges for our society as a whole. By standing alongside Indigenous communities in their fight for justice and acknowledging the wrongs of the past, we are reinforcing our social fabric and working together for a more equitable and respectful future.

Note: Gender-neutral writing is used throughout the text. The pronouns used in quotes refer to those of the people who participated in our consultations. If a participant's pronouns were unknown, "they/them/theirs" was used.

"I know that these groups are meant to be safe spaces for women, where they can fight for their rights. But I'd like them to know that they aren't alone in that fight."

- TRANS MAN (SURVEY)

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— Background

Women's groups and feminist spaces have historically been closed, or gender-segregated, with the goal of providing their members with safe spaces to share with one another, regain power and organize feminist movements. This segregation was defined according to a binary model of gender (men/women) and the experiences of white, cisgender, heterosexual women. As a result, marginalized people who interact with these groups and spaces risk multiple experiences of discrimination as well as institutional and individual violence. Some may have been excluded from these spaces, or will self-exclude out of fear or a lack of trust in feminist spaces.

Among these marginalized groups, members of queer communities are especially vulnerable and over-represented in multiple issues related to physical, mental and social health. Furthermore, their access to services that are adapted to their realities is all the more limited. Despite changes and evolutions in inclusivity, women's groups and feminist spaces are no exception to the cisheteronormativity in our society and are at risk of reproducing this violence.

A paradigm shift is needed to welcome and include 2SLGBTQIA+ people. We need to rethink our closed spaces and define them on the basis of shared experience — that of gender-based violence. An intersectional approach invites us to recognize the specific gender-based oppression that 2SLGBTQIA+ people experience. Homophobia, including lesbophobia and biphobia, in addition to transphobia, can thus be seen as systemic sexist violence. Members of queer communities are part of the feminist project and key actors in the fight for gender equality advocated for by feminist groups.

While the topic of including members of queer communities has been widely discussed within the feminist movement for years, these discussions are often marked by a certain resistance to change. Many groups are interested in reviewing their practices to better align with their commitment to equality, but multiple factors impede their ability to take action: a lack of knowledge, time and resources; the fear of change, etc. As a regional association devoted to its members' development, the Table des groupes de femmes de Montréal (TGFM) would like to contribute to these discussions by supporting its members in their inclusion process. This project is part of an ongoing reflection on how we can attain a more inclusive and truly intersectional feminism.
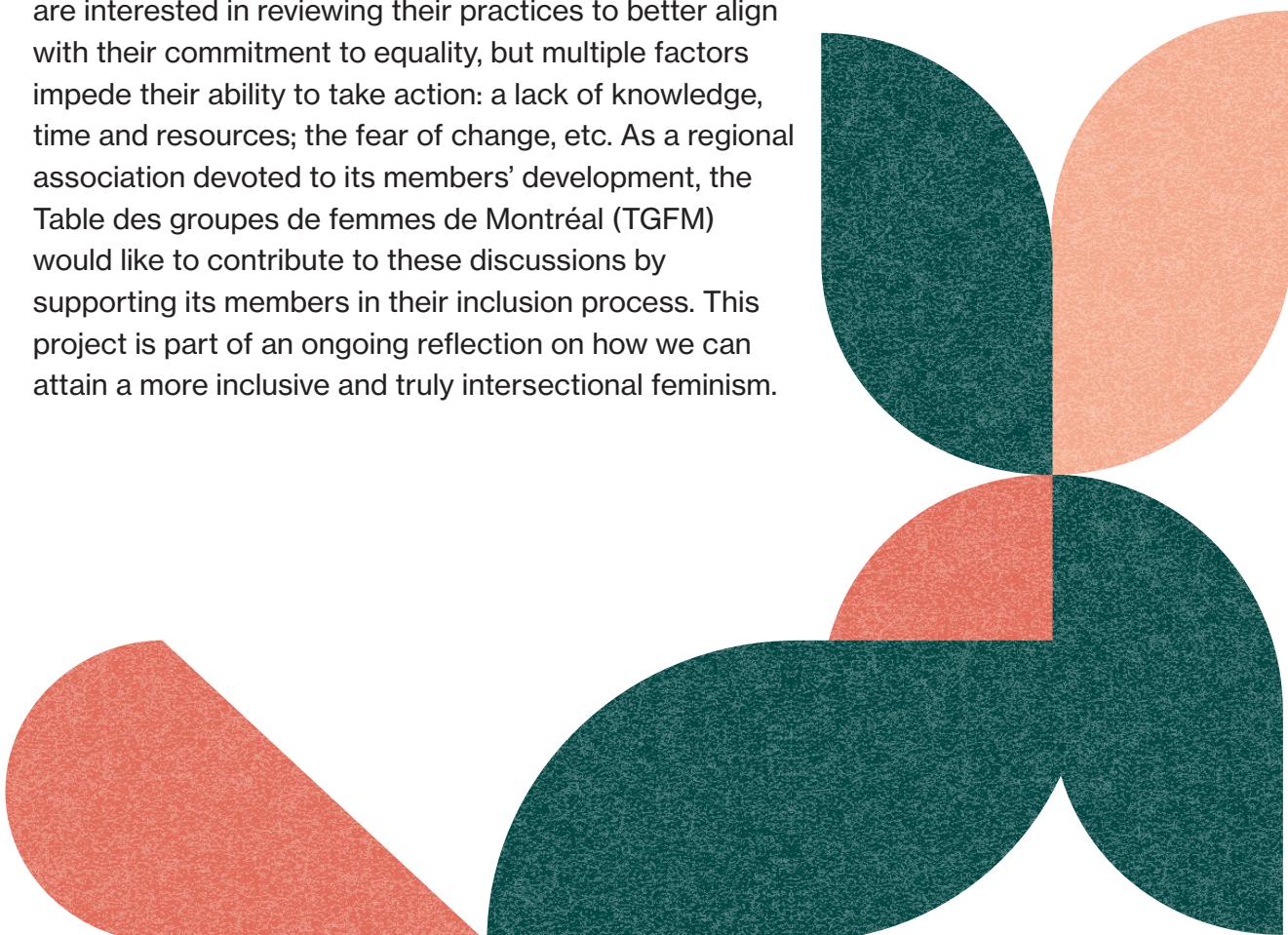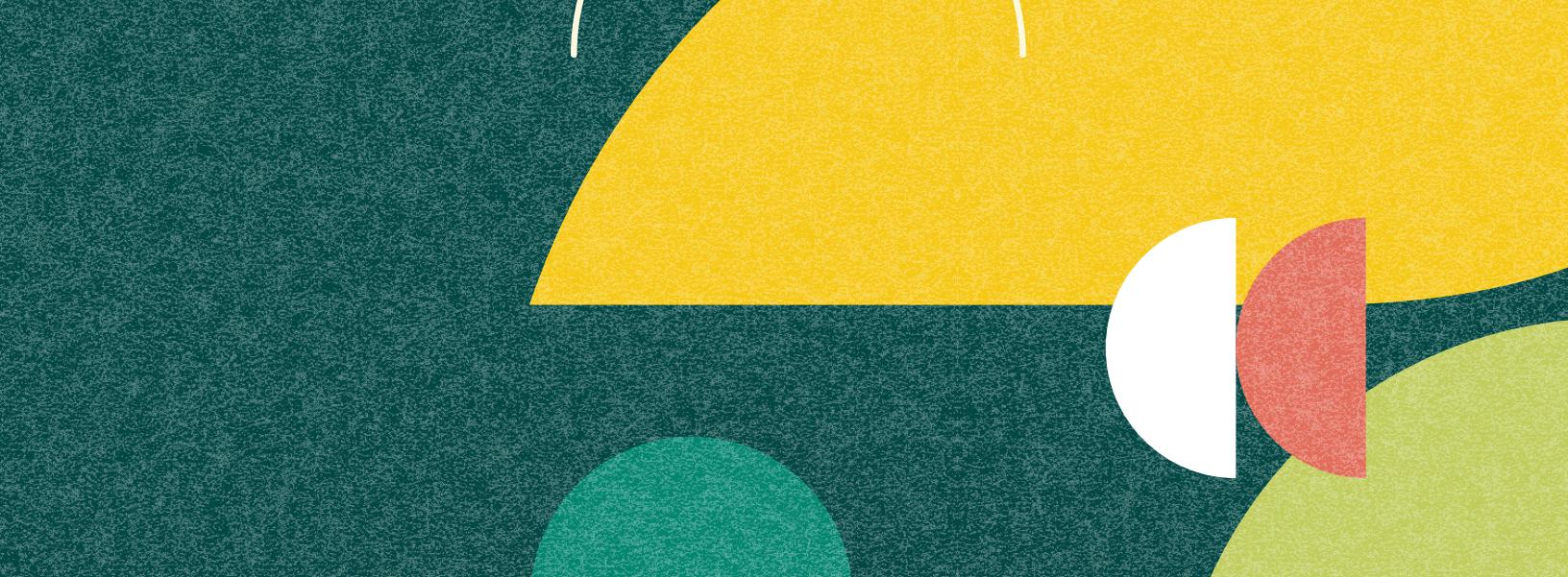
— Project

This collective process seeks to accompany women's groups and feminist spaces that wish to become more inclusive and welcoming to members of queer communities within their activism, services, spaces and staff. The project involves creating tools as well as implementing a community of practice and providing individual support to groups, with the goal of enacting the changes needed to create spaces that are truly welcoming, caring and safe.

As such, it has three primary objectives:

1 ———

Developing a portrait of the lived experiences of members of queer communities within women's groups;

2 ———

Supporting a process of reflection and action on inclusivity;

3 ———

Developing and sharing tools to support change for inclusion.

– Steering Committee

The project is supervised by a steering committee mandated with guiding how project-related activities are carried out. The steering committee is made up of TGFM member groups and members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. The latter worked directly with the project manager in developing consultation tools and the road map.

Steering Committee

TGFM member groups	Members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities
Auberge Madeleine CALACS Trêve pour Elles Centre de solidarité lesbienne Femmes du monde à Côte-des-Neiges Réseau des femmes en environnement	Jeanne Roberge, TRAPs Kim Forget-Desrosiers, Aide aux Trans du Québec (ATQ) Mireille St-Pierre, sexologist at Clinique Mestra Noah Benoit, Transformation and Social Implication Coordinator at the West Island CALACS

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SECTION II

— Consultation with 2SLGBTQIA+ Communities

From September 2023 to January 2024, a survey was distributed among members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities to learn more about their opinions and experiences with women's groups. The survey was distributed throughout the TGFM membership and on social media.

A total of **107 responses** were received (100 in French and 7 in English) including approximately **60 testimonials**. Among these responses, two were outliers that were excluded from the data set. **As a result, a total of 105 survey responses were analyzed.**

The survey was primarily intended for **any 2SLGBTQIA+ person who had interacted with, however closely, one or multiple women's groups**, either by using their services, participating in activities, or even as a staff member, volunteer or activist. 2SLGBTQIA+ people who had not interacted with a women's group could also participate in the survey, although only questions that applied to their situation were asked. The questionnaire was anonymous and confidential. No nominative data or information through which respondents could be identified were asked.

Survey respondents were invited to share their overall impressions of women's groups in terms of their inclusivity and safety, as well as their experiences of violence within women's groups, whether directly experienced or observed. The objective of the survey was to **target dynamics and practices that represent barriers to the inclusion and safety of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals within women's groups.** The survey also asked for their recommendations on how women's groups could be more inclusive of members of queer communities.

The graphics below show the socio-demographic data from the survey sample. In terms of respondents' sexual orientation and gender identity, the vast majority claim a sexually diverse identity (95%) and over half a gender-diverse one (53%). Only 4% of respondents identified as Two-Spirit. 79% respondents identified as white, 18% as racialized and only 3% as Indigenous. These data only highlight the predominant responses, as many respondents claimed multiple identities. Lastly, the average age of respondents was between 25 and 34 years old.

74% of respondents said they had interacted with a women's group as a service user (40%), staff member or volunteer (49%) or as a person involved in a partner group (24%).

Figure 1: Respondent Distribution by Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

🔴 Sexually diverse individuals	100	95%
⚫ Gender-diverse individuals	56	53%
🟡 Two-Spirit individuals	4	4%
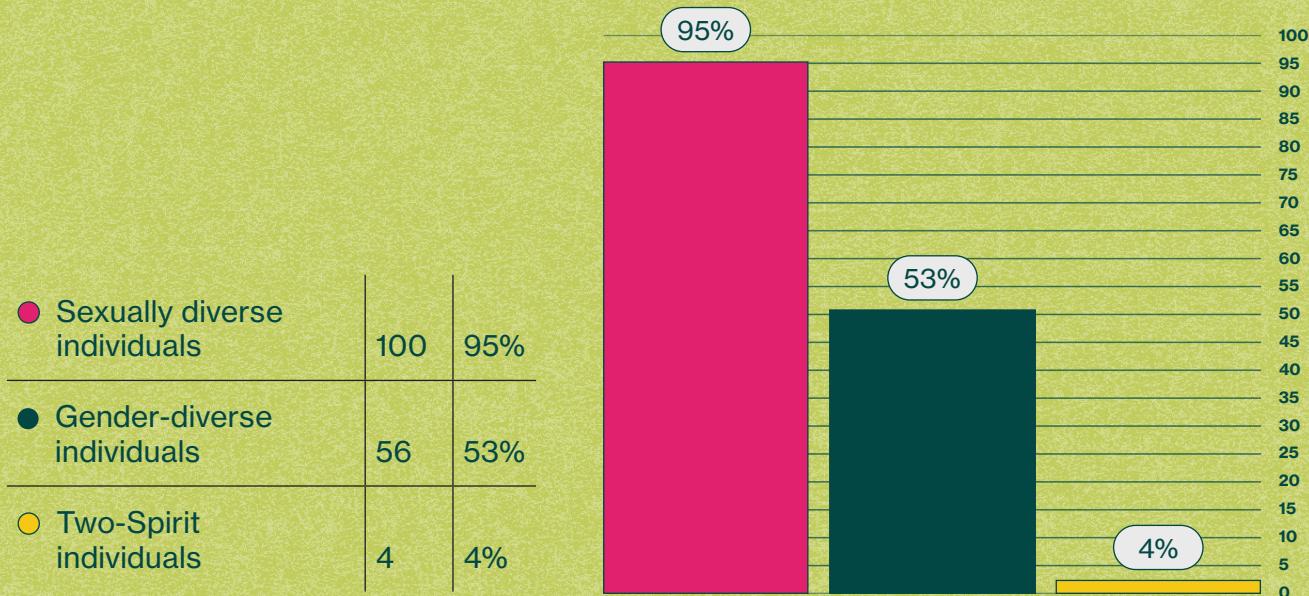
Figure 2: Respondent Distribution by Racial Identity

🔴 White individuals	82	79%
⚫ Racialized individuals	19	18%
🟡 Indigenous individuals	4	3%

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Figure 3: Respondent Distribution by Age Range

● Under 18	1	1%
● 18-24	16	15%
○ 25-34	40	38%
○ 35-44	18	17%
○ 45-54	14	13%
● 55-64	11	10%
○ 65 and older	5	5%
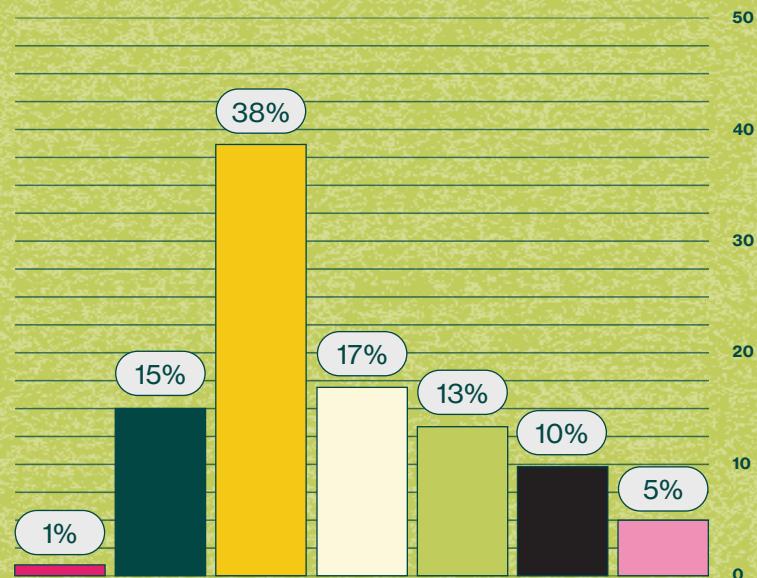
Figure 4: Respondent Distribution by Interactions with a Women's Group

● Service users	42	40%
● Employees and volunteers	51	49%
○ People involved in a partner group	25	24%
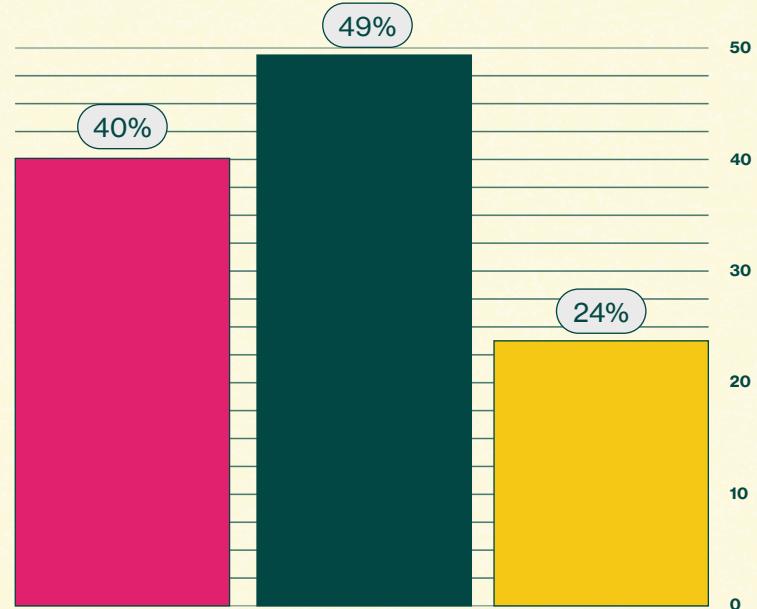
Alongside the survey, a series of three discussion groups was held to explore the experiences of members of queer communities within women's groups. Participants were recruited using a registration form shared on social media and at the end of the survey. Participation in the consultation process was paid. The three discussion groups were divided into the following categories:

#1

2SLGBTQIA+ individuals who had been employees, volunteers or activists;

#2

Service users who identify as sexually diverse;

#3

Service users who identify as gender diverse.

Six people from diverse communities participated in the discussion group for 2SLGBTQIA+ people who had been employees or volunteers. Two members of the project's steering committee facilitated the discussion group, which lasted two hours.

Several challenges arose when planning the service user discussion groups. Service user consultations were reimagined to ensure maximum participation: instead of group discussions, they took the form of individual one-hour interviews. This allowed for greater flexibility when planning meeting times. The individual interview format also helped facilitate a feeling of trust between service users and interviewers, creating a space that was more conducive to sharing experiences in confidence. A total of four individual interviews were facilitated by steering committee members.

Questions asked in the discussion groups and individual interviews specifically targeted **experiences within women's groups, elements impacting participants' feeling of safety, their needs and expectations from women's groups, as well as potential solutions and recommendations** for how these groups could be more inclusive of members of queer communities.

– Consultation with TGFM Groups

During this same period, a series of interviews were conducted with interested Table member groups. The project manager conducted one-hour interviews and four groups participated. Efforts were made to target groups from different fields of intervention to ensure a diversity of experiences.

Some groups had already begun reflecting on inclusivity while others were still in the early stages of the process. As a result, interview questions were adapted to the specific realities of each space. Questions focused on **each group's needs, concerns, obstacles to inclusion, and actions already undertaken** across its services, spaces, activism and staff. Data collected will allow for individualized accompaniment for groups that participated in the interviews and help define the different tools and activities that will be provided to the Table's full membership. They were also used to guide the creation of the road map, presented later in this report.
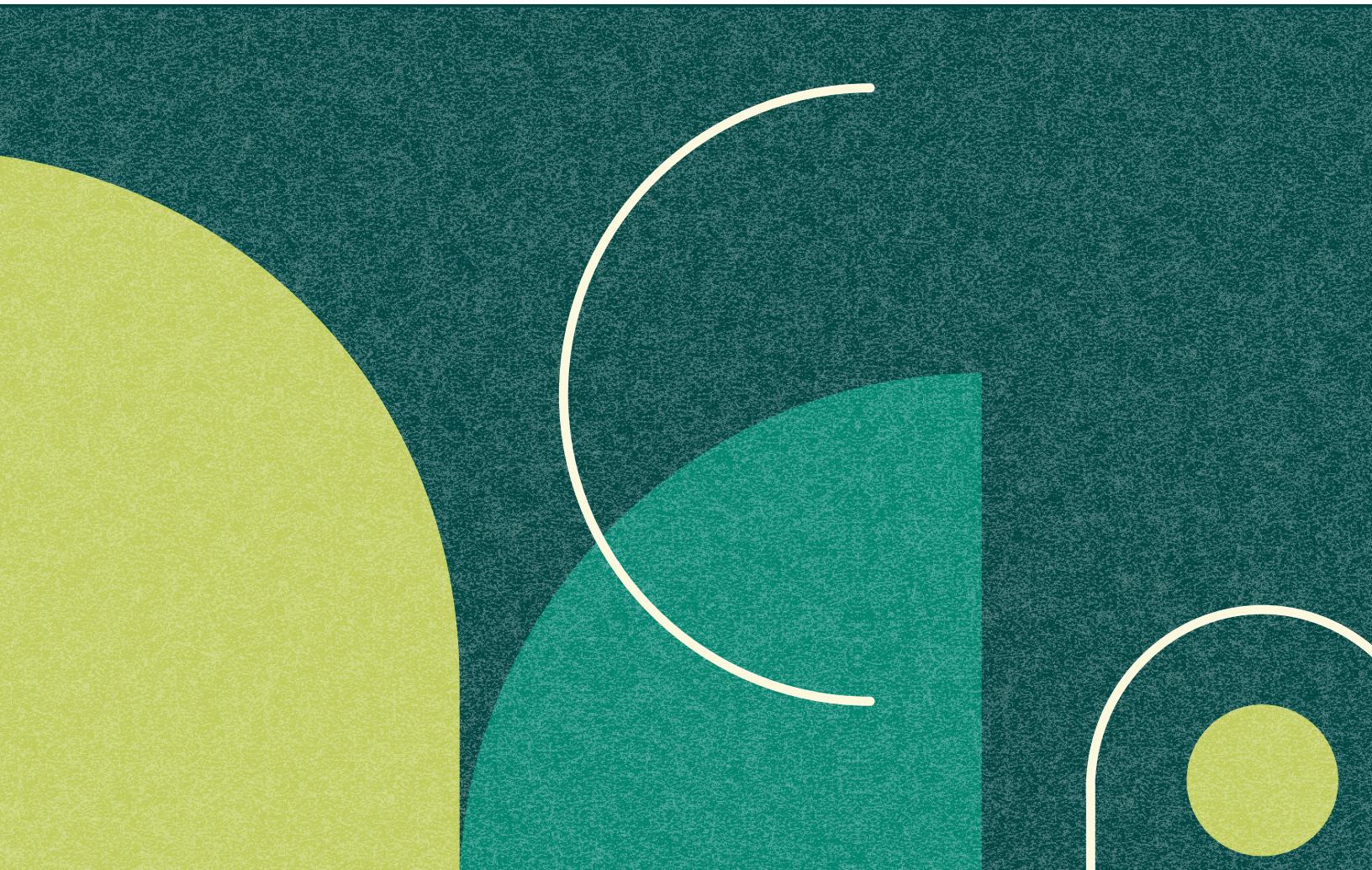
RESULTS

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RESULTS

— Portrait of violence

According to the survey results, nearly **40% of people who interacted with a women's group mentioned having experienced violence within a women's group**. Among these respondents, 70% claimed that this violence was motivated by bias, negative attitudes or hate due to their gender identity or sexual orientation, whether real or presumed. 70% of respondents mentioned having experienced microaggressions, 70% psychological or verbal violence, 56% institutional violence, 10% cyberviolence, 6% sexual violence and no respondent mentioned experiencing physical violence.

Figure 5: Respondent Distribution by Type of Violence Experienced

● Microaggressions	70%
● Psychological or verbal	70%
● Institutional	56%
○ Cyberviolence	10%
● Sexual	6%
○ Physical	0%

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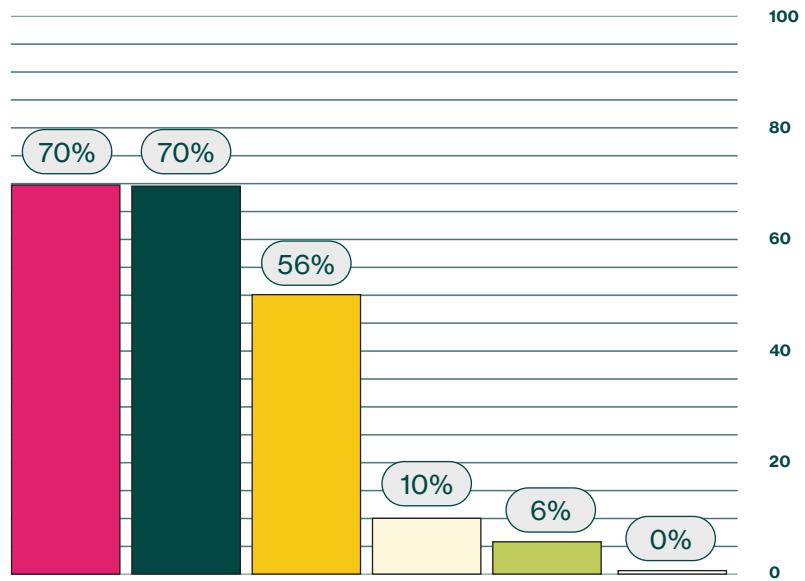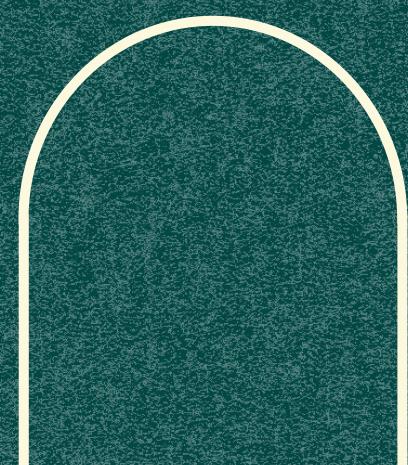
In terms of violence that was observed rather than experienced, **nearly 40% of survey respondents mentioned having witnessed homophobic or transphobic violence in a women's group**, whether directly or as reported by a third party. Among these respondents, 79% said they witnessed microaggressions, 77% psychological or verbal violence, 64% institutional violence, 26% cyberviolence, 18% sexual violence, and 18% physical violence.

Figure 6: Respondent Distribution by Type of Violence Observed

● Microaggressions	79%
● Psychological or verbal	77%
● Institutional	64%
○ Cyberviolence	26%
● Sexual	18%
○ Physical	18%
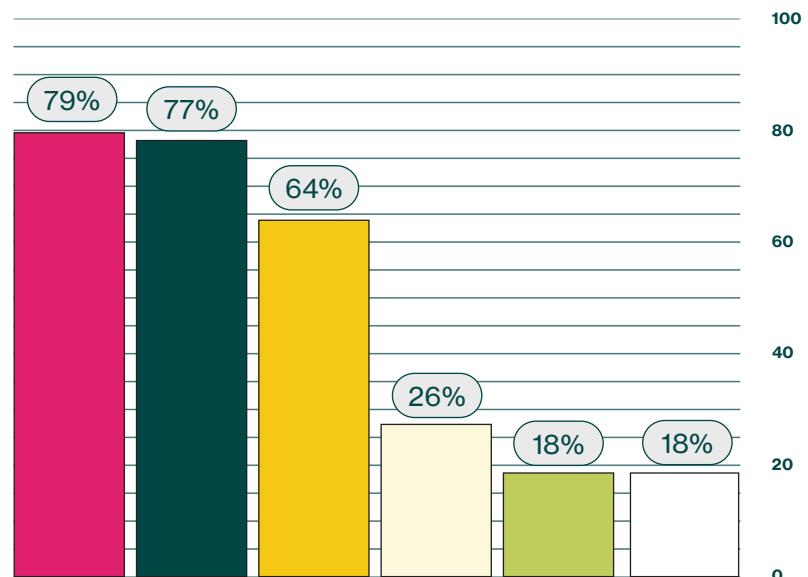
– Feeling of Safety

Among 2SLGBTQIA+ people who had interacted with a women's group (n=74), only 15% of those who experienced violence reported a low feeling of safety in women's groups. This finding may appear shocking at first, but can be explained by the fact that violence based on gender, gender identity and sexual orientation is often normalized and minimized—including by its victims.[1, 2]

Among participants who witnessed violence, only 6% reported having a low sense of safety in women's groups. This can also be explained by the fact that observing violence, especially when it's not always recognized as such, doesn't necessarily affect the feeling of personal safety among people who interact with women's groups.

By contrast, we note that **being both a victim and a witness of violence significantly influences a person's feeling of safety** within the context of women's groups:

roughly one person in two (47%) who experienced and observed violence reported **not feeling safe within women's groups;**

over one person in two (58%) who experienced and observed violence mentioned feeling like they **need to hide their identity in the groups;**

roughly one person in two (47%) who experienced and observed violence reported **not feeling comfortable revealing their identity in the groups.**

— **References**

[1] Worthen, M. G. (2022). "1: Gender- and Sexuality-Based Violence among LGBTQ People: An Empirical Test of Norm-Centered Stigma Theory." In *Queering Criminology in Theory and Praxis*.

[2] Payne, E et M. J. Smith. (2018). Violence against LGBTQ Students: Punishing and Marginalizing Difference. In *The Wiley Handbook on Violence in Education: Forms, Factors, and Preventions, First Edition*.

It is possible to consider that these individuals' feeling of safety was significantly reduced when they realized that the episode of violence they experienced or observed is not an isolated event and is likely to happen again.

Table 1: Personal Sense of Safety of 2SLGBTQIA+ Respondents Who Interacted with a Women's Group by Experienced and Observed Violence

	Violence experienced	Violence observed	**Violence experienced and observed**	No violence experienced or observed
I do not feel safe when I am in these spaces or when I participate in group activities.	15%	6%	**47%**	4%
I feel like I need to hide my identity in the group.	15%	13%	**58%**	10%
I do not feel comfortable revealing my identity and being my authentic self in the group.	38%	13%	**47%**	10%

In keeping with that trend, 58% of people who experienced and observed violence believe that women's groups are not safe spaces for sexually diverse people and 88% believe that women's groups are not safe spaces for gender-diverse people.

However, even if they were victims or witnesses of violence, the vast majority of survey respondents believe that **women's groups are less safe for gender-diverse people than for sexually diverse people**. This feeling was also shared by the people who neither experienced nor witnessed violence in women's groups.

Table 2: General Impression of 2SLGBTQIA+ Respondents on Safety within Women's Groups by Experienced and Observed Violence

	Violence experienced	Violence observed	**Violence experienced and observed**	No violence experienced or observed	**All experiences in total**
I believe that women's groups are not safe for sexually diverse people.	23%	4%	**58%**	23%	**25%**
I believe that women's groups are not safe for gender-diverse people.	46%	63%	**88%**	42%	**56%**

For a Feminist Movement That Is More Inclusive of Sexual and Gender Diversity

— Experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ Service Users

According to the survey, 42% of 2SLGBTQIA+ service users reported experiencing homophobic or transphobic violence in a women's group; 89% of them have a gender-diverse identity. Among these respondents, **50% reported experiencing violence perpetrated by another service user, while 72% experienced violence perpetrated by staff members.**

In terms of observed violence, **40% of 2SLGBTQIA+ service users reported witnessing at least one episode of homophobic and transphobic violence** in a women's group. According to respondents, 82% of observed violence was perpetrated by service users, while 88% was perpetrated by staff members.

"My presence was a regular topic of debate. I asked my local group if their activities included trans and non-binary people, and I'm still waiting because they were checking with everyone. When you're a butch "woman," lesbo-queer, non-binary, trans masc, Sapphic, a trans man, non-binary — whatever the label, it's a different experience to be constantly reminded that you'll never be a woman, even though you experience the same dangers as they do in mixed-gender spaces or with men. We have no space in society."

**- TRANS BUTCH QUEER
SERVICE USER (SURVEY)**

1 | Psychological or Verbal Violence

Among the different types of homophobic or transphobic violence experienced by service users, **psychological and verbal violence was the most frequent.** 72% of people who experienced violence reported that it was psychological and verbal violence. Psychological or verbal violence is characterized by attitudes, comments or actions that seek to lower or destroy a person's self-esteem or sense of safety.

"In that shelter, service users often made stereotypical comments about lesbian and trans people. [Trans and non-binary] people used the organization's services and other users would make transphobic, invalidating, objectifying and derogatory comments about their gender identity. For example, saying that someone passed as a woman, but was a guy, or a lot of comments insinuating that being trans was first and foremost a mental health problem."

- TRANS BUTCH QUEER
SERVICE USER (SURVEY)

One manifestation of homophobic or transphobic psychological violence reported in the survey was "**outing.**" This form of violence is specific to members of queer communities because it involves divulging a person's sexual orientation, gender identity or trans journey without their consent.

"I was outed by my support worker in a shelter where I was living. It was never considered violence and the person never apologized."

- TWO-SPIRIT NON-BINARY TRANS
SERVICE USER (SURVEY)

2 | Microaggressions

67% of 2SLGBTQIA+ service users who experienced homophobic or transphobic violence reported experiencing one or multiple microaggressions. Microaggressions are attitudes, comments or actions that are informed by stereotypes and that can seem banal or even invisible to the people who commit them, but have a cumulative and meaningful effect on the people they target.

Multiple interviewees reported **microaggressions, including inappropriate comments** about their sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as **heteronormative or cisnormative stereotypes**.

"I had a friend who worked in a shelter with one floor for women. A trans woman was staying there and my friend tried to make sure that everything went OK, but she often heard the staff talking about [that resident]. It's such a vulnerable environment — you don't know if they're going to let you stay there, and you feel like people think that you don't belong there. It's not a fun experience."

**- TRANS MASC
SERVICE USER (INTERVIEW)**

"It wasn't really violence [that I experienced], more like homophobic ideas that I thought were inappropriate. It was mainly clichés, like, men are rougher with their kids and women are gentler. It's exhausting. It was mainly one person I would avoid, because I knew they would ask me incredibly intrusive questions. When I saw them at brunch, I'd run to the other end of the table."

**- QUEER WOMAN
SERVICE USER (INTERVIEW)**

Among the testimonials we received, a service user reported **feeling obligated to constantly educate people about their identity** when they received inappropriate comments about it.

> **"I interacted with those groups for 3 years and it was a relief when I stopped. It was exhausting having to educate people. I don't think there was one activity—and sometimes I went to 3 or 4 per week—where I didn't have to educate someone. And I identify as a woman! I try not to introduce myself as a queer person, because it takes so much energy having to explain things to people. Especially when you're a new parent, you're already exhausted."**
>
> **- QUEER WOMAN SERVICE USER (INTERVIEW)**

Another microaggression experienced by service users was using **non-inclusive language**. Participants referred to language that was based on heteronormativity and cisnormativity, whether in verbal exchanges or the images or pictograms used in the space.

> **"No one ever adapts their language in women's groups. It's always super gendered. Cis binary. Even the stickers to show you where you can breastfeed, it's still a picture with a mom, dad and baby."**
>
> **- QUEER WOMAN SERVICE USER (INTERVIEW)**

Lastly, respondents reported experiencing or observing multiple incidents of **misgendering** — referring, whether voluntarily or otherwise, to a person by a gender that does not correspond with their actual gender identity.

"There was a non-binary person [in the group] who used 'she', but sometimes also used 'he' and the support workers weren't gendering him correctly. For example, when the non-binary person referred to himself with 'he,' the support workers continued referring to him with 'she.' I noticed it."

- QUEER CIS WOMAN
SERVICE USER (INTERVIEW)

3 | Institutional Violence

67% of 2SLGBTQIA+ service users who experienced homophobic or transphobic violence reported experiencing institutional violence. This violence is created by power dynamics reproduced within institutions at the structural and interpersonal level.

Some respondents reported being **invisibilized** within women's groups, whether in terms of the services available or the welcome they received. During these experiences, their gender identity or sexual orientation was completely ignored or even invalidated by the women's groups with which they interacted.

"I didn't experience direct violence; it was more like constant forgetting that came to feel violent over time. It was like they completely forgot that lesbians exist. It created an environment where I didn't feel safe talking about my reality."

— LESBIAN CIS WOMAN
SERVICE USER (SURVEY)

"Being trans or non-binary in women's spaces, unless they have taken a stand to include trans and non-binary people, means having to deal fairly regularly with gender essentialism and only being viewed as the gender you were assigned at birth."

— NON-BINARY
SERVICE USER (SURVEY)
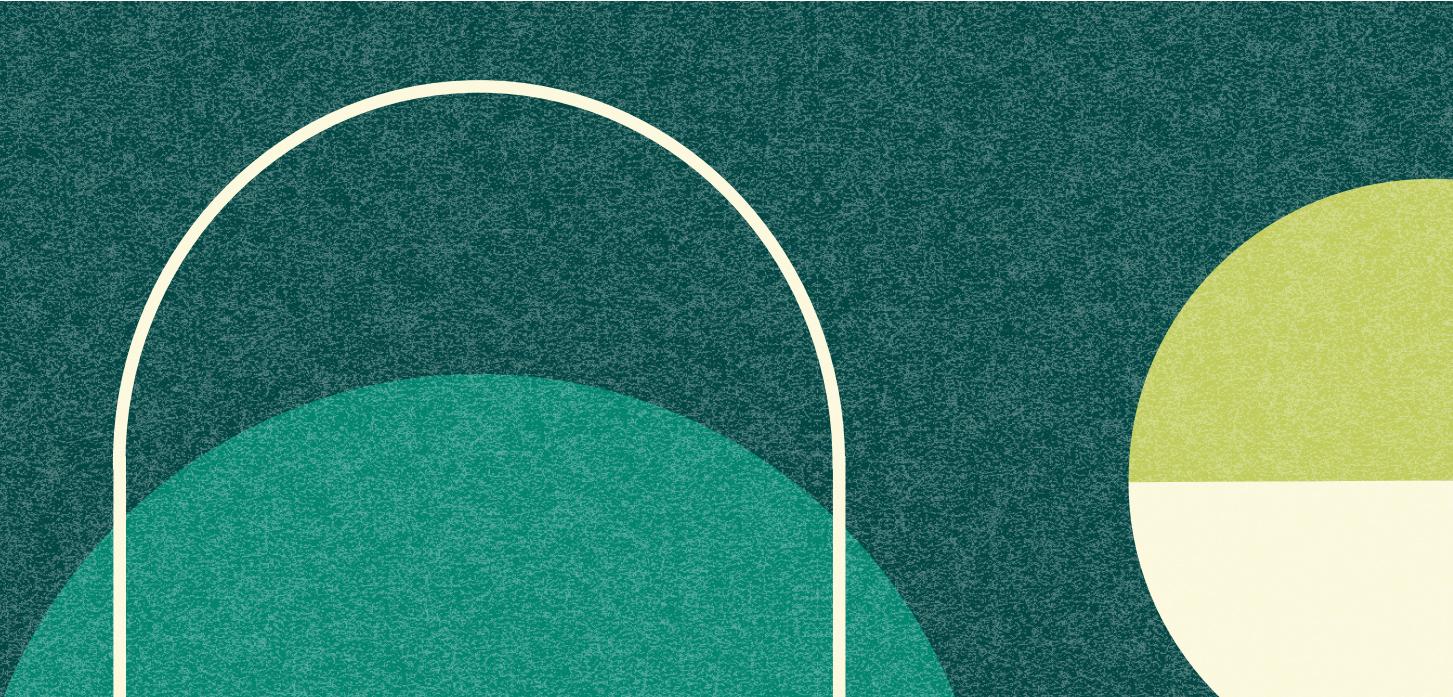
One survey respondent reported observing a dichotomy between an organization's purported inclusion and its real-life application, resulting in **a service that isn't adapted** to a clientele that is sexually and gender diverse, even though they had been invited to use its services.

"In the training that I got when I started working there, they told me that we accepted everyone who identified as a woman, but that we could only use 'she' pronouns. If a service user used another pronoun, we had to let them know, ask them to leave and only come back when they identified as a 'feminine' gender.

Even though many trans service users went there, the organization prioritized the safety of cis women and transphobic, racist and homophobic comments were not considered a serious cause for removal — unlike the use of a pronoun other than 'she.' The organization included gender-diverse people in its services, but there were no protective measures in place to ensure that they could receive the same quality of service as cis service users.

It's probably a safer environment than single-gender shelters for men, but the trans people who interacted with the organization experienced multiple forms of transphobic and homophobic violence, in addition to receiving services that were poorly adapted to their realities."

- NON-BINARY TRANS EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER (SURVEY)

Lastly, **refusal of service or exclusion from services** were among the forms of institutional violence observed and experienced by participants in our consultations. This violence is recognized as being especially traumatizing, as it can result in a total lack of services for people who especially need them.

"I fought to participate [in a closed activity] as a non-binary person. It was a very emotional thing as they repeatedly tried to prevent me from being there. I finally succeeded in participating, but at that point, they had decided to include everyone, even cis men, even though I hadn't asked for anything like that. After that, I felt bullied by the people in charge of the organization, and I ended up being banned from the organization without any reason [...]. It was a traumatic experience. I completely stopped interacting with the organization. I kept asking for explanations over and over again and never got them. I felt rejected and I really needed this organization's services."

- NON-BINARY TRANS
SERVICE USER (SURVEY)

For a Feminist Movement That Is More Inclusive of Sexual and Gender Diversity
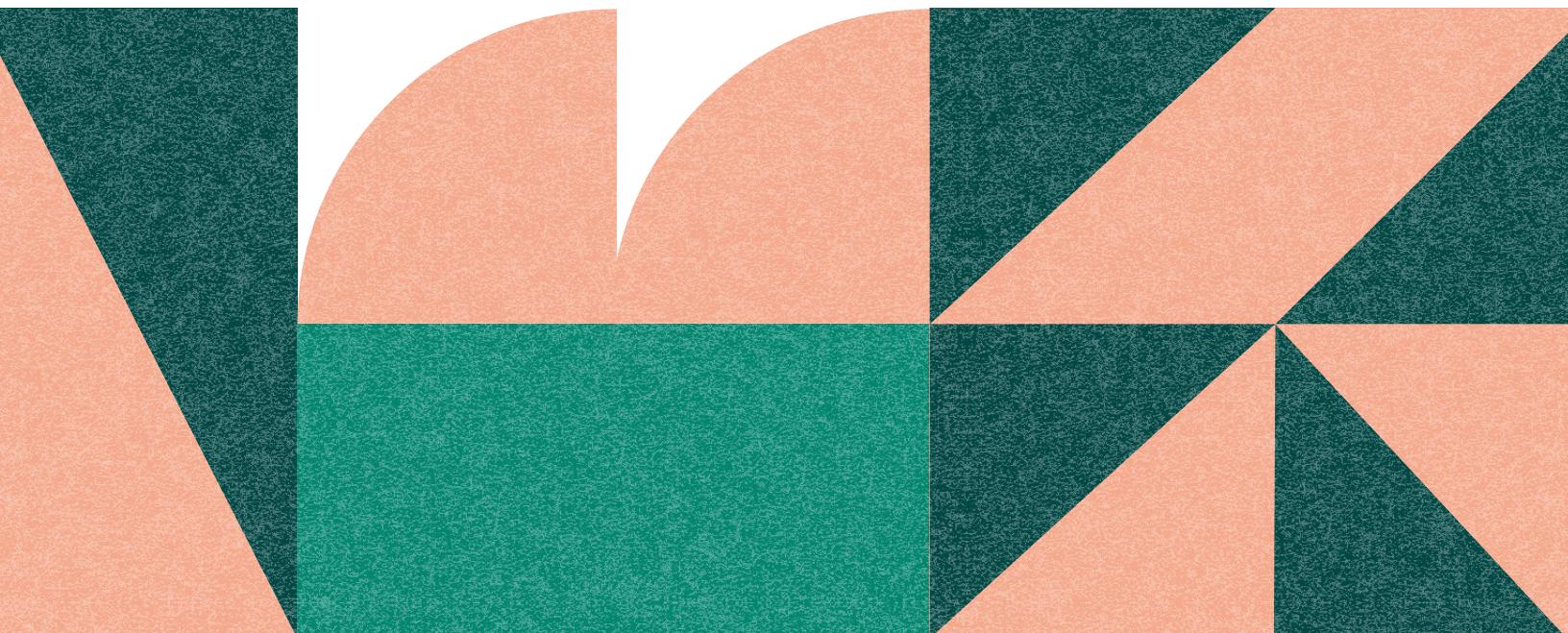
— Experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ Employees, Volunteers or Activists

Approximately 50% of 2SLGBTQIA+ employees and volunteers in women's groups reported experiencing violence in those spaces. Among those respondents, **42% reported that this violence was perpetrated by service users, while 71% experienced violence perpetrated by other members of the organization's staff**. Psychological and verbal violence and microaggressions were the forms of violence most frequently experienced by employees and volunteers, with 71% of responses, followed by institutional violence at 54%.

"I received lesbophobic comments from users who wanted to invalidate me in my role as a support worker."

- NON-BINARY TRANS EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER (SURVEY)

In terms of violence that was observed rather than experienced, 46% of 2SLGBTQIA+ employees and volunteers reported witnessing homophobic and transphobic violence in women's groups: 78% perpetrated by service users and 74% by other staff members. Microaggressions were the form of violence most frequently observed by employees and volunteers with roughly 90% of responses, followed by psychological and verbal violence with 74% and institutional violence with 70%. Employees also reported observing episodes of physical violence (13%) and sexual violence (9%) in their workplaces.

2SLGBTQIA+ employees and volunteers in women's groups reported experiencing violence similar to that experienced by 2SLGBTQIA+ service users, especially in terms of microaggressions. The results below present more details about the specific experiences directly related to their status as workers or volunteers in women's groups.

1 | Identity Invalidation

One of the most frequently experienced and observed forms of violence reported by staff members was the invalidation of their 2SLGBTQIA+ identity or that of another staff member. Some reported having been **clearly asked not to come out in the space**. For others, the presence of heteronormative and cisnormative attitudes and comments between team members led them to feel like they needed to **hide their identity**.

"I didn't ask for anything because I was too uncomfortable, but I told people my pronouns, and then, nothing happened. I talked to my coordinator about how all the trans issues were affecting me in my transition, and I was told I wasn't a trans person because I wasn't transitioning to another gender. So according to that person, I wasn't [trans]."

> - NON-BINARY TRANS EMPLOYEE (DISCUSSION GROUP)

"A [transmasculine] employee was asked to hide their trans identity after they began transitioning. They decided to quit because they couldn't use their pronouns or name at work. Several members of queer communities worked at that organization, but they had to keep a low profile about their identity to avoid experiencing violence from the service users and microaggressions from their colleagues and superiors."

> - NON-BINARY TRANS EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER (SURVEY)

"In spaces where I felt like there could be that fear [of making mistakes or misgendering], I was afraid of being the cause of it. So I also held back from telling people my pronouns. One time, there was this [colleague] who said, 'Well, whatever, it's just between us girls,' and I was there like... I didn't want to say otherwise because I was worried it would turn into this whole long conversation."

> - NON-BINARY WOMAN EMPLOYEE (DISCUSSION GROUP)

In addition, cisnormative or heteronormative stereotypes perpetuated by team members played an important role in this invalidation. The cisnormative stereotypes included misinformation about transitioning, the association between gender and pronouns, and the assumption that everyone in a given space is cisgender. In particular, we might note that the **experiences of non-binary and transmasculine people are more often invisibilized, invalidated or completely swept aside.** Their presence in feminist spaces and groups is frequently questioned due to their trans reality or identity.

> **"One thing I'm thinking about is when I went to a women's centre. There were a lot of discussions about whether a trans man who had offered his time as a volunteer over many years could still come now that he had 'completed his transition.' It's violence like that that makes me feel like it's not much of a safe space."**
>
> **- CIS WOMAN EMPLOYEE (SURVEY)**

2 | Superficial Inclusion

Some staff members who participated in the study mentioned a divergence in attitudes towards inclusion that the organization shares publicly and the real attitudes when it welcomed queer clients. This superficial inclusion sometimes took the form of visual symbols of inclusivity, like "ally" stickers or pride flags, without any safe attitudes or behaviours to accompany them. **Such organizations provide a performance of inclusion that has no real influence on their work or on their staff behind closed doors.**

> **"My organization said it was open to trans women, but behind closed doors the discussions completely changed. That's why I quit."**
>
> **- NON-BINARY TRANS EMPLOYEE (DISCUSSION GROUP)**

3 | Feeling of Powerlessness

Emerging from the discussion groups, interviews and testimonials received in the survey was a shared feeling of power-lessness in the face of the violence and lack of openness to queer identities. **Participants reported often feeling alone** when it was time to address issues of inclusion for queer community members, and **sometimes opted to stay silent rather than challenge the status quo**.

"When you have an interview with a women's organization and you know their vision, but you need the job, you may need to bend to it. And once you're hired, they expect you to conform to their values and so you have to stay quiet or have fewer beliefs. Then you witness microaggressions and you can't really change anything. So even if you are a member of that diversity category, it's complicated."

- NON-BINARY WOMAN EMPLOYEE (DISCUSSION GROUP)

"There's the normalization argument, the rare-case argument, but also the history of that space, what feminists from that wave are used to. I understand that there isn't one feminism that's more correct than others, but why does that woman have more space in her feminism than I do? If I'm telling them these issues are important to people, why can't we sit down and figure out solutions together?"

- NON-BINARY WOMAN EMPLOYEE (DISCUSSION GROUP

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RECOMMENDATIONS

SECTION IV
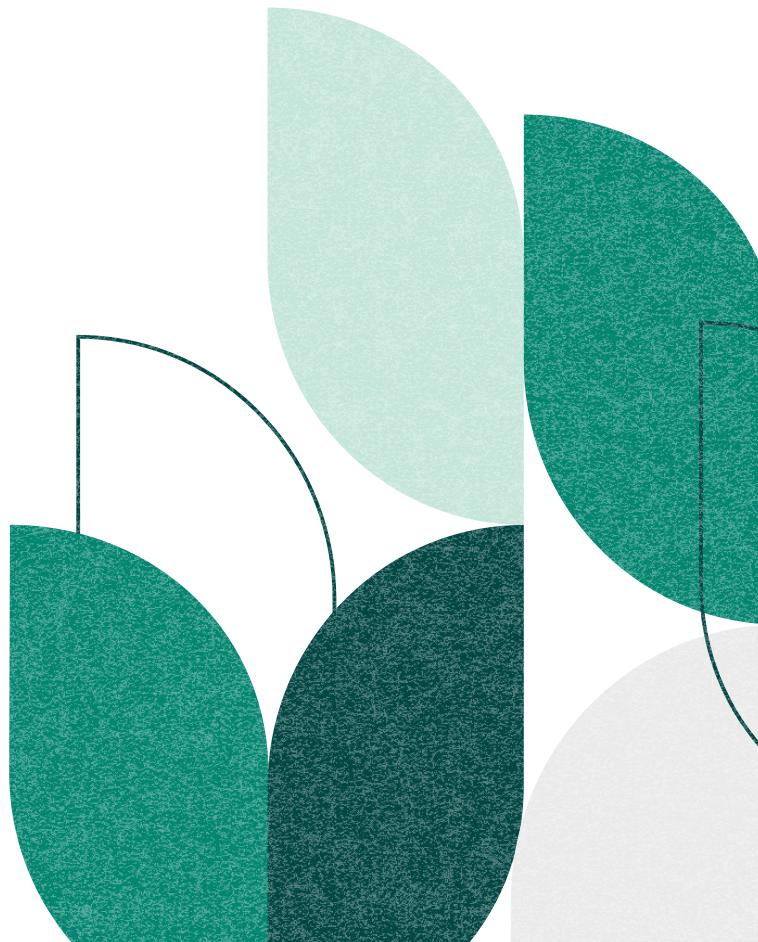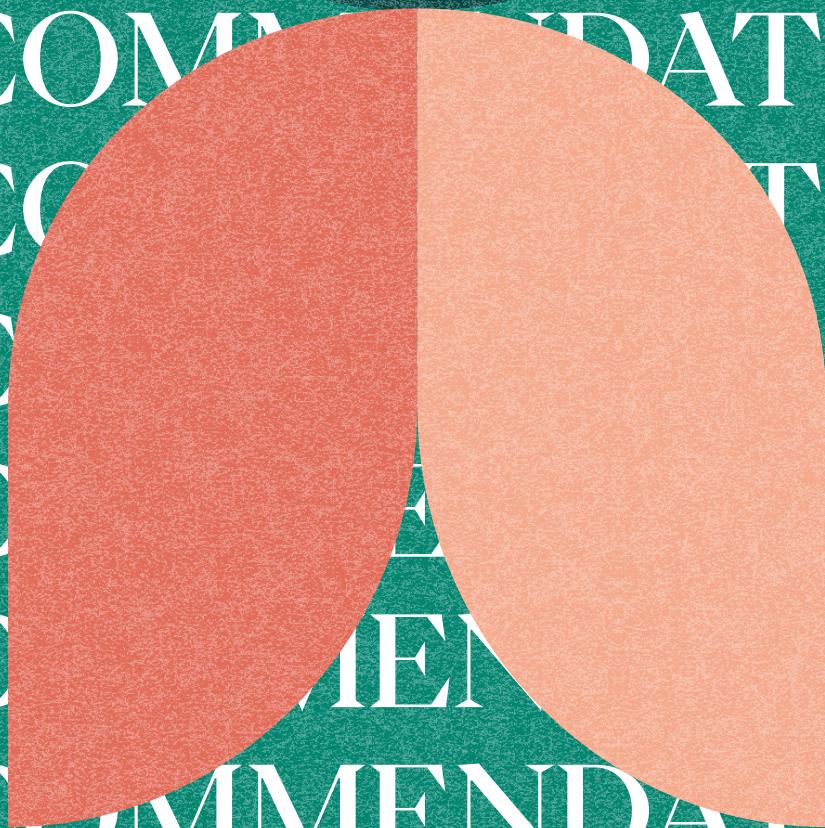
Through the survey, 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents were invited to identify the elements that would have had a positive impact on their decision to get involved with a women's group. The results are summarized in the table below. While all of these recommendations are important and could have a meaningful impact on the presence of 2SLGBTQIA+ people in women's groups, the survey results helped us **prioritize** the changes to implement to protect their presence and ensure a sense of safety in these groups.

Table 3: Elements That Would Have a Positive and Meaningful Impact on 2SLGBTQIA+ Respondents' Decision to Interact with a Women's Group, in Order of Priority

	Statement	% of responses
1	Staff attitudes	84%
2	Having a pro-inclusion, anti-discrimination policy	81%
3	Comments and experiences of other 2SLGBTQIA+ people	81%
4	Inclusion of members of queer communities in existing services	78%
5	Creating new services specifically for 2SLGBTQIA+ people	74%
6	A referral from a 2SLGBTQIA+ organization	72%
7	Inclusive external communications (inclusive language, 2SLGBTQIA+ representation in photos and illustrations, etc.)	71%
8	Adapted spaces and environments (individual or all-gender washrooms, etc.)	65%

Attitudes among staff members and the presence of an anti-discrimination inclusion policy were named by over 80% of respondents. These two elements directly align with the 2SLGBTQIA+ participants' experiences of violence in women's groups that were mentioned above. It is essential to take the time and resources needed to work on these aspects if we hope to have a meaningful impact on 2SLGBTQIA+ people who interact with women's groups.

Inversely, inclusive communication (inclusive language, etc.) and adapted environments (all-gender washrooms, etc.) were lower priorities for respondents. While these changes are important, they won't necessarily protect 2SLGBTQIA+ people's safety in women's groups and could end up being performative if they are not accompanied by a meaningful reflection on inclusion and adopting anti-oppressive attitudes when working with members of queer communities.

"Sometimes we spend a lot of time talking about terminology, when I think people's approaches matter a lot more. There's this emphasis on saying your pronouns, and then you get misgendered. At that point, I'd rather just not give my pronouns if it doesn't matter."

- NON-BINARY TRANS EMPLOYEE (DISCUSSION GROUP)

"Yeah, it's tricky, because everyone's going to have their own idea about the right term to use, but personally, I don't think we're ever going to reach consensus on every single term. I'd rather someone get it wrong but [still see that] they're actually interested."

- TRANS MASC SERVICE USER (INTERVIEW)

It's also important to recognize the importance of word of mouth within queer communities. Other community members' comments or experiences can have a significant impact on an organization's reputation as a safe place for 2SLGTBQIA+ people. **Rebuilding bonds of trust with communities goes to the heart of any process of better 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion.** Several concrete recommendations for attaining this objective were reported in our consultations

— Training and Educational Efforts

1 | Staff and Volunteers

Across our consultations, participants were unanimous in the importance of training and educating staff and volunteers about 2SLGBTQIA+ realities. **Before services are opened up to members of queer communities, staff and volunteers must first be informed about 2SLGBTQIA+ realities, especially for trans, non-binary and Two-Spirit individuals.** Bringing in 2SLGTBQIA+ individuals into a group without first training volunteers and staff puts us at risk of breaking those ties of trust and directly endangers the safety of queer service users.

"Training would be an important step. Because I sincerely believe that the people who came up and asked me intrusive questions did not have bad intentions. It's just they'd be the 40th person that day. It would be a good idea to expand it to include service users, too. […] It would get everyone on the same page."

**- QUEER WOMAN
SERVICE USER (INTERVIEW)**

Mandatory training on 2SLGBTQIA+ issues and realities also ensures that all employees within a group have a shared baseline understanding and helps them develop new reflexes when working with members of queer communities. These trainings would also support staff members to more easily recognize episodes of violence experienced by 2SLGBTQIA+ people in their spaces and guide them to intervene accordingly. The responsibility to educate staff on these issues is on the women's group — not on 2SLGBTQIA+ service members, who are often called on to educate others about their realities.

2 | Service Users

Participants also spoke out against some women's groups that instrumentalize existing service users as barriers to inclusivity practices. Participants reported arguments suggesting that service users would not understand the changes or the choice to open up services to more diverse clienteles, or that they would be revictimized by the presence of trans and non-binary people in the space. This fear is rooted in a lack of understanding of trans and non-binary realities. The safety of cis women service users is not endangered by the presence of trans and non-binary people being in the same space any more than it is by the presence of other cis women service users. Training volunteers and staff on 2SLGBTQIA+ realities would directly reduce this lack of understanding and help deconstruct biases, including transphobic biases, that some may harbour, consciously or otherwise.

These trainings would also support teams in being able to address these realities with existing service users. **It's important to recognize the agency of service users in the process of inclusion and not underestimate their ability to adapt and learn. These conversations with service users don't need to dwell on theoretical concepts around gender and sexuality, but should instead highlight the shared experiences among all people who interact with the organization.** Trans and non-binary people need services and resources, just as cis women do, and it's important to recognize that fact.

"The argument of 'service users aren't going to understand, they'll be retraumatized' came out a lot. It's not true. I've had conversations with service users who can understand it well; they just need a little more information. For some, you sit down with them and explain, and 15 minutes later they get it. It's just that they don't know any trans women. It's an excuse, it's using the people who use the services as a reason not to improve our services by saying, 'They're not going to understand.' It's not true. The service users have always understood better than the support workers I worked with."

- NON-BINARY TRANS EMPLOYEE (DISCUSSION GROUP)

– Creating a Safer Space

1 | Inclusive and Anti-Discrimination Policies

Beyond training staff and volunteers and working to help educate people who interact with the organization, 2SLGBTQIA+ participants in our consultations highlighted the importance of developing inclusive and anti-discrimination policies to protect 2SLGBTQIA+ people within women's groups. **Various tools can be implemented, including a code of conduct or a contract committing to certain values, which would include best practices to adopt in the space.** These tools should clearly identify the need to respect people's identities and pronouns, as well as reiterate a zero-tolerance policy for homophobic and transphobic comments and behaviours.

Tools like these also create a solid foundation to which support workers can refer in case of a situation of violence. Support workers must be equipped to respond if they witness homophobic or transphobic behaviours or comments from service users or even their colleagues. **The responsibility to intervene must fall on employees, so that 2SLGBTQIA+ people are not burdened with having to educate others.**

"Having an anti-oppression policy that considers derogatory, invalidating, biased or hateful comments towards members of queer communities as contrary to the organization's code of conduct. The interventional approach used when oppressive comments are made should be based on the principles of popular education, to help bring awareness to our differences and intersectionality."

- NON-BINARY TRANS SERVICE USER, EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER (SURVEY)

"Personally, I felt like I couldn't say anything. I don't know... […] In a context where I would be more vulnerable, it takes a lot out of me to go in and make things right. Because I'm already extremely vulnerable, making myself even more so would be too much. I don't want it to have to be me, I want the support worker to be the one who has to do it."

- QUEER CIS WOMAN SERVICE USER (INTERVIEW)

2 | Visual Signs of Inclusivity

Participants were invited to share on how they identified a space as being safe. The majority referred to the importance of having visual signs of inclusivity in the space. For example, having pride flags in the organization's spaces could be clues that the space is safe for members of queer communities, or including pronouns during introductions or in email signatures. Likewise, the idea of posting a code of conduct came up several times in discussions. A copy of this code of conduct could be posted on the organization's website, making it more visible for 2SLGBTQIA+ people doing research before physically visiting a women's group.

"I wasn't sure at first, but [...] the centre claimed it was open and so I went to check it out. When I went, there were posters with their messages and values up on the walls. It put me at ease. When I went there, the support workers seemed to accept me."

- TRANS WOMAN
SERVICE USER AND VOLUNTEER
(DISCUSSION GROUP)

However, **it is essential that groups that employ visual signs of inclusivity ensure that they are actually safe, so as not to mislead members of queer communities, exposing them to situations of violence**. The performative aspect of these actions is a source of concern and mistrust among some 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals.

"I've become a little paranoid. [Signs of inclusivity] might help, but I'm always asking myself if it's really the same behind closed doors. So, if I'm going for an interview, I'm wondering if I should be honest or if it will cause trouble. I think it's good, but I don't know to what extent."

- NON-BINARY WOMAN
EMPLOYEE (DISCUSSION GROUP)

3 | Inclusive Language

Language is also a key element named by participants in making a space safer. Words have a major impact on 2SLGBTQIA+ people's feeling of safety in women's group, as mentioned in the results presented above. However, language is a controversial topic in feminist spaces. These groups often criticize inclusive or gender-neutral language by saying that it erases women. As a result, women's groups often opt for feminized language, but it's important to recognize that this practice can also erase certain realities and reproduce microaggressions for gender-diverse people.

"Someone mentioned that they wanted to use 'person who breastfeeds' instead of 'woman who breastfeeds' and people were really upset, like, 'We're not going to start changing all of our documents! Plus, the majority of people who breastfeed are women!' They thought that we were trying to steal their identity. There was zero openness."

**- QUEER WOMAN
SERVICE USER (INTERVIEWS)**

In addition, using adapted language is a major element of making services accessible to members of queer communities, especially trans and non-binary people. **Using appropriate terminology and respecting pronouns are essential reflexes when working with 2SLGBTQIA+ populations.** In addition to being a sign of openness, it's a crucial part of offering services that are safe and adapted to their realities.

Participants mentioned the importance of publicly indicating an organization's openness to gender-diverse people by clearly explaining for whom their services are intended. However, participants were unanimous in their disapproval of the phrase "people who identify as women," as it implies that trans women aren't really women — they're just claiming to be. This expression is especially transphobic when used in the expression "women and people who identify as women," as it assumes the exclusion of trans women. It would be more appropriate **to use terms that build solidarity and describe the situation rather than terms that contribute to further stigmatization or invalidation of trans women,** for example: "cis and trans women" or simply not separating trans women out from the category of "women."

The phrase "women and non-binary people" was also widely criticized by participants. Women's groups often use this awkward expression to signal that their space is intended to be inclusive and safe for all people other than cis men. However, it invisibilizes the multiple realities that fall under the non-binary experience and excludes trans men from the space. Having spaces that are selectively closed is an important part of 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion, but it's better **to base criteria for inclusion on the shared experiences among people invited to share the space, rather than on their gender identity or gender expression.**

— By and For Approach

1 | Activities and Partnerships

Several participants referred to the importance of a by and for approach for members of queer communities. This approach involves organizing and developing services based on the needs and interests of the people they are for, and inviting them to participate throughout the process. This creates a feeling of trust and safety among members of queer communities.

One form of a by and for approach is to directly consult members of queer communities when creating services or developing partnerships with 2SLGBTQIA+ community organizations. Organizing by and for activities that are selectively closed also provides 2SLGBTQIA+ people with a moment of respite from violence and helps progressively rebuild a bond of trust with communities. It's important to target communities or specific experiences when organizing by and for activities, as 2SLGBTQIA+ people do not all have the same needs. For example, creating activities specifically by and for trans women responds more directly to their needs than an activity by and for 2SLGBTQIA+ people, where they are more likely to be invisibilized.

"[The priority is] on by and for initiatives. Sometimes inclusion for inclusion's sake doesn't work. Whereas by and for initiatives acknowledge our differences. We talk a lot about diversity, but we don't really talk about our differences. Selectively closed spaces help a lot of people feel safer, feel more comfortable saying what they really mean. This kind of initiative can make a material difference in people's lives. It feels a lot safer — it goes beyond just inclusivity."

**- TRANS WOMAN
SERVICE USER (INTERVIEW)**

2 | Representation among Staff and Volunteers

All participants also mentioned the essential importance of having 2SLGBTQIA+ people in staff and volunteer roles at women's groups. It is both an indicator of the safeness of the space, and of the likelihood that their needs will truly be taken into consideration. Several participants mentioned wanting to work with support workers who share their experiences, in order to avoid having to constantly educate support workers while in a vulnerable position.

"I didn't experience much open violence, because I left most women's groups when I started my transition. Now, as a trans masc person, I won't even consider going to an activity unless I know everyone involved in organizing it or if it's also a queer organization."

- TRANS BUTCH QUEER SERVICE USER, (SURVEY)

"When there's a queer person on the team, it's really reassuring. When there isn't, I'm on alert."

- QUEER WOMAN SERVICE USER (INTERVIEW)

While representation among staff and volunteers is important, several participants flagged the importance of avoiding tokenism. Tokenism is a practice through which organizations bring in people from diverse backgrounds simply to appear inclusive without undergoing any real reflection or making any concrete changes towards inclusivity. In these situations, 2SLGBTQIA+ staff are instrumentalized to represent this superficial diversity and improve the organization's image. Tokenism can manifest in subtle ways, as it can happen despite the best intentions of an organization trying to diversify its team. For that reason, it's all the more important to ensure a workplace is anti-oppressive when hiring 2SLGBTQIA+ staff at a women's group.

"We ask people from the community to talk about their realities or to share their opinions on the services we offer, but the spaces aren't really prepared to receive criticism, even when it's caring and constructive. So the working environment becomes hostile for the people from the community who have contradictory reactions and requests/mandates."

- QUEER EMPLOYEE OF A PARTNER GROUP (SURVEY)

2SLGBTQIA+ employees are often asked to support and guide their workplaces in efforts to open services to broader clienteles. While it's important to consult the people who are directly affected, it's crucial that the appropriate resources are allocated to those changes and reflections. **It should never fall on one sole person to change an entire organizational structure — this is a collective responsibility that requires the engagement of every member of the group.**

"I had friends who told me about being mandated with changing the whole structure and mentality of a community space. They ended up burning out! [...] They were mandated to change things, but the big change was too destabilizing, so in the end it didn't work and they were the ones who ended up burnt out. There was no space for their feelings. It's just for the look."

- NON-BINARY TRANS EMPLOYEE (DISCUSSION GROUP)

One participant spoke out against these situations, linking them to the phenomenon of the "**glass cliff**", or a situation in which a marginalized person is put in a leadership position while the organization is going through a crisis. As a result, they find themself in a precarious position. Without the resources they need to reach their objective and without engagement from the organization, they are held responsible for a change that's doomed to failure.

"It's cool to want to be more inclusive, but you have to ask questions at a structural level. It's not one person from a minority group who should have to do all the work managing microaggressions. [...] The 'glass cliff,' when a gender minority is promoted to a leadership position where they have to salvage something that's unsavable. You have to make structural changes. When a group opens up to include members of queer communities, those people are in the hot seat. You need to want these people to stay, because often they're in roles or positions that are very precarious."

- TRANS WOMAN
SERVICE USER (INTERVIEW)

— Political Positioning

1 | Solidarity with Communities

One of the last elements raised by participants was the importance of showing support for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. **Reacting to misinformation by taking political positions is one way to show an organization's openness and act in solidarity with 2SLGBTQIA+ communities**. In addition to signaling to members of queer communities that the organization is actively fighting for their rights, this solidarity helps rebuild bonds of trust with communities. These political positions are all the more important given the rise in anti-trans hate and violence in the current social climate, as mentioned by a trans woman who participated in our interviews.

"We're facing a resurgence in transphobia. We don't really know who our allies are among feminist groups. Taking a stand leaves the door open to work together down the road and help build awareness on more specific issues. Show your solidarity out in the open. Based on the radio silence from outside of the trans community, I'm guessing it's because people are afraid to ask questions or accidentally say the wrong thing. But personally, I would rather that than silence."

**- TRANS WOMAN
SERVICE USER (INTERVIEW)**

2 | Intersectionality

Intersectionality was mentioned in several testimonials: participants highlighted the importance of an intersectional approach when reflecting on and implementing processes to increase queer inclusion. **Intersectionality asks us to recognize the indissociable nature of certain struggles with those of queer communities.**

For example, 2SLGBTQIA+ people of colour experience specific issues at the intersection of their identities, which manifests in major barriers to accessing health care, housing and jobs. 2SLGBTQIA+ people of colour also highlight currents of exclusion and racism within queer communities[3]. Similarly, Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer individuals directly experience the impacts of colonization on their genders and sexualities. The notions of gender and sexual diversity are Western ideas that stem from colonization and do not necessarily apply to Indigenous realities[4]. If we want true inclusion for members of queer communities, we need to pay special attention to people at the intersection of other systems of oppression than gender and sexuality; otherwise we risk reproducing violence against the most marginalized people that we hope to reach within 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. Adopting anti-racist and decolonial practices should thus be considered part of inclusion process from an intersectional perspective. "Never one without the other": groups that commit to working on inclusivity and diversity must do so on every front.

Another important political position mentioned by many was recognition for sex work. While this is a topic that generates divergent and polarizing opinions within the feminist movement, **a stand in support of the decriminalization of sex work was named as a crucial step towards including 2SLGBTQIA+ people**, especially for trans and non-binary people.

Trans issues and sex work have been intertwined throughout history and remain so today. Many trans, non-binary and Two-Spirit people choose to engage in sex work due to the structural barriers that they face in the labour market and in access to education[5]. The stigmatization associated with the criminalization of sex work puts them at significant risk of violence, all the more so when they come from marginalized communities, such as racialized or Indigenous people. When we work to ensure our services include trans, non-binary and Two-Spirit people, it is also important to ensure we bring a concrete and intentional approach to including sex workers.

In addition to adopting best practices, this openness requires taking a stand in favour of the decriminalization of sex work. As stated by organizations like Stella[6] and the West Island CALACS[7], decriminalization is the first step towards recognizing sex workers' right to autonomy, equality, self-determination and dignity.

─ **References** ────────────────────────────────

[3] El-Hage, H. and Jin Lee E. (2017), LGBTQ racisés : frontières identitaires et barrières structurelles (in French)
[4] Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) (2023), Intersections : Indigenous and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Identities
[5] SWP (2015), Underserved. Overpoliced. Invisibilised. LGBT Sex Workers Do Matter
[6] Stella (2012), The Basics: Decriminalization of sex work 101
[7] West Island CALACS (2023), Changes at the West Island CALACS!

A neutral position on decriminalization — or the failure to take one at all — is incompatible with an intersectional approach that recognizes the specific realities of trans and non-binary people as relates to sex work. Taking a pro-decriminalization stance sends a clear and specific message to trans and non-binary people that your organization is aware of the issues related to sex work and is open to those realities.

"It depends on the organization's level of humility, but also taking concrete public stances, so deciding to be part of something that could mean trouble for you down the road, like writing a communiqué about the importance of decriminalizing sex work. These are important public positions."

**- NON-BINARY TRANS
EMPLOYEE (DISCUSSION GROUP)**
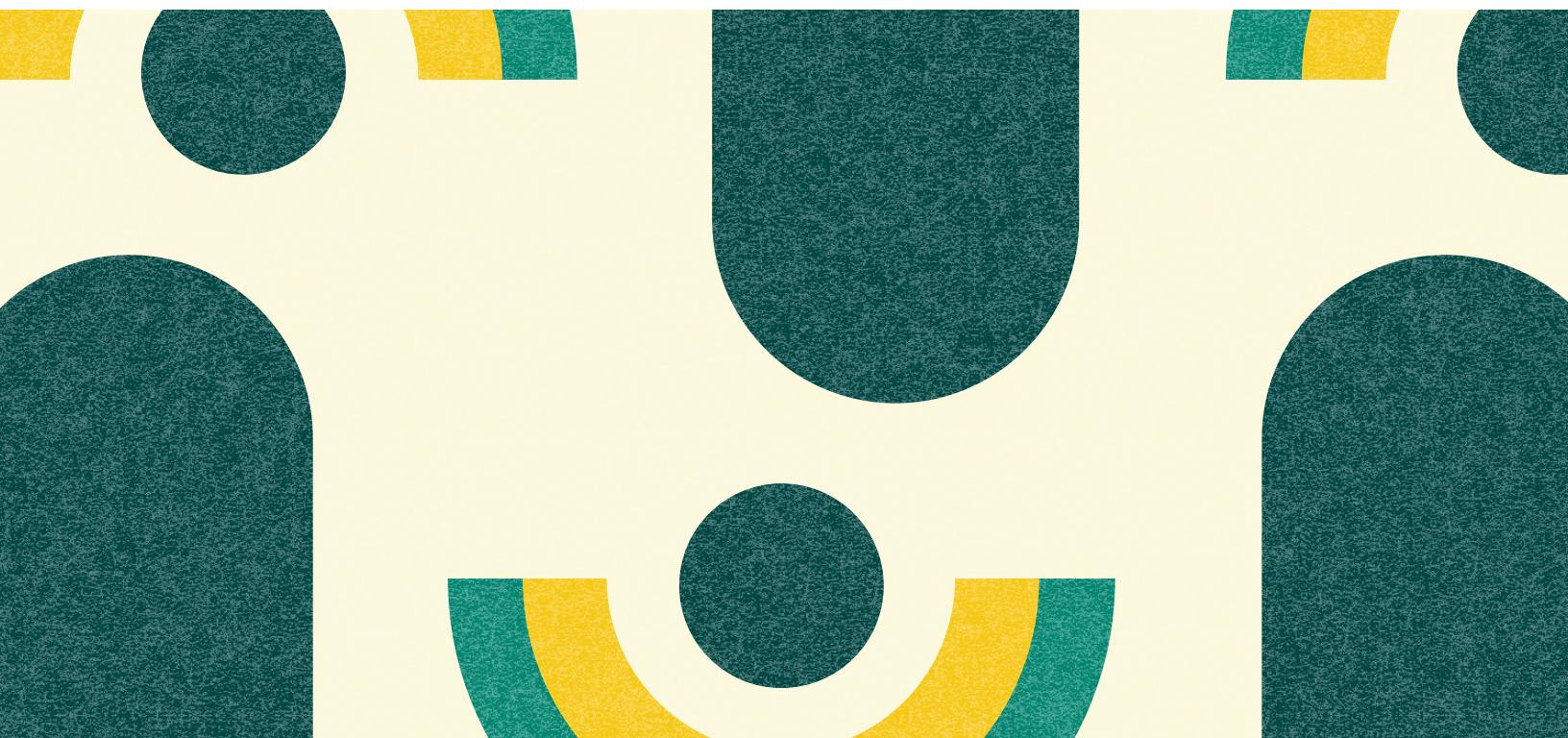
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During our consultations, several Table member groups mentioned the same obstacles to their commitment to an inclusion process. One of the major difficulties they encountered was a lack of time and financial resources. The precarity of funding in the community sector can keep groups from prioritizing meaningful work on inclusion. In addition to these external factors, women's groups that want to engage with a process of opening their spaces can also face obstacles from within their various decision-making bodies.

Employees and volunteers are often quicker to assert their engagement with these processes and reflections, as they regularly witness the impacts of certain practices on the 2SLGBTQIA+ people who interact with the organization, while the Board of Directors (BOD) may be more reticent and concerned at the prospect of changes. The groups also flagged a lack of understanding of 2SLGBTQIA+ issues within their teams as a barrier to their group's evolution. While some groups are very interested in engaging with the process of becoming more inclusive, several do not necessarily know where to start or are afraid of making mistakes.

This first version of the road map was created to provide a collective response to these various roadblocks. More specifically, **it seeks to support women's groups that wish to open their services up to members of queer communities, drawing on the results of our consultations and the expertise of our steering committee.** In it, we present the various possible steps and essential approaches to a process of increasing inclusivity. Given the specific context of each women's groups, the steps

and elements proposed in this tool should be seen as guidelines. Women's groups that engage with this process are encouraged to make the road map their own and adapt it to their specific needs.

At the end of this project, the experiences shared in our community of practice will be used to amend and improve the road map.

1 Analysis of the situation, reflections begin

General objective: Guide the process based on your analysis of the situation, developing plans for increasing inclusivity

Conducting a critical analysis of the space and setting a shared baseline

○ **Train staff, volunteers and Board members** with the goal of sharing an overall understanding of queer issues.

Examples of potential trainings:

- Introduction to 2SLGBTQIA+ realities
- Training on Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer realities
- Training on points of convergence between feminist movements and queer and trans movements

○ **Create spaces where team members can discuss and reflect,** including staff and Board members with the goal of clarifying expectations and reducing unknowns, preventing doubts and concerns.

Important questions to ask:

- What is motivating us to start reflecting on inclusivity?
- What concerns do we have about this process?
- What strengths can we rely on to overcome various obstacles?
- What does the team need? What have they learned?

○ **Identify opportunities to bring these changes about.** E.g., Renewing a strategic plan, a new action plan, developing new services, funding opportunity, etc.

Opening a dialogue with 2SLGBTQIA+ communities

○ **Conduct consultations with members of queer communities** to identify dynamics that create obstacles to safety and inclusion for 2SLGBTQIA+ people in the context of the group. E.g., Discussion groups, interviews, surveys, feedback questionnaire, etc.

○ **Create an advisory committee made up of 2SLGBTQIA+ people** with the role of guiding the process to increase queer inclusion.

! Remember!

It is important to adequately pay the people who participate in your consultations. 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals are often over-solicited for research participation. It is essential to recognize and value their lived experience through financial compensation. This remuneration can also have a meaningful impact on the material living conditions of 2SLGBTQIA+ people, who are more likely to experience financial precarity.

2 Engagement and preparing the organization

General objective: Prepare the space for the upcoming changes and to welcome 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals

Ensuring active and continuous engagement from every aspect of the organization

○ **Make the decision to collectively commit to an inclusion process.** This decision is usually determined through consensus and is officialized by the director and Board.

○ **Allocate financial and temporal resources to this process** to ensure you have the means to match your ambitions and avoid potential pitfalls caused by disinterest. For example:

- Include it in your annual budget;
- Add it to your annual action plan or strategic planning;
- Hire someone to manage the project, or designate a member of the current team and provide them with the resources they need.

○ **Maintain spaces where team members can discuss** and further their reflections on the process of increasing inclusion.

Important questions to ask:

- What is this organization's mission and what are its values?
- How can we rethink those to better reflect real inclusion?
- How can we redefine closed spaces within the organization?
- What activist projects can we advance alongside this project of increasing inclusion? E.g., Decriminalizing sex work, anti-racist movements, decolonization, etc.

Starting by making a safer space

Inform service users about the reflections and changes to come before they are implemented. Create spaces to address their concerns and questions.

Continue training team members on the practices and attitudes needed to create a safer space.

> **Examples of potential trainings:**
> - Training on trans-affirming and anti-oppressive approaches
> - Training on behaviours and attitudes for allies
> - Training on inclusive language and writing techniques

Develop and adopt new inclusive policies, such as a new code of conduct, a contract committing to certain values, an inclusive communication policy, etc.

Rebuilding bonds of trust with 2SLGBTQIA+ communities

Develop and nourish partnerships with 2SLGBTQIA+ groups.

Take a stand in solidarity with 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

- React to news stories and participate in concrete political actions;
- Share demands from 2SLGBTQIA+ groups;
- Acknowledge key dates: May 17, the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia, November 20, International Trans Day of Remembrance, various days of visibility for different queer identities, etc.

For a Feminist Movement That Is More Inclusive of Sexual and Gender Diversity

3 Implementation and opening the space

General objective: Open the space to 2SLGBTQIA+ people and ensure the perpetuity of the inclusion process

Ensuring that knowledge is transferred throughout the team

○ **Implement a mentor program** for new team members or those returning after a long absence. This will also help prevent the program from unraveling if one person leaves.

○ **Ensure that training for the team continues** to address specific issues.

Protecting and signifying the safety of the space

○ **React and intervene in situations of transphobia or homophobia in the space.**

- Create an intervention plan and apply a zero-tolerance policy for violence;
- Hold people accountable for their words and actions;
- Facilitate processes for submitting complaints or concerns;
- Plan for a vibe checker or safety officer during events.

○ **Create activities and spaces by and for 2SLGBTQIA+ people,** on the basis of specific communities or experiences.

Protecting and signifying the safety of the space

Make changes to the physical space. For example:

- Ensure the new code of conduct is posted in common spaces and during activities;
- Post visual signs and symbols of inclusion in addition to flags: documentation and resources, awareness campaigns on 2SLGBTQIA+;
- Have individual or all-gender washrooms.

Undertaking structural changes

Hire 2SLGBTQIA+ employees to diversify your teams and ensure their representativity.

Update your administrative policy to ensure the inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ employees and volunteers within your team.
E.g., Policy preventing hiring discrimination, anti-harassment policy, ensuring trans-affirming care is covered through group insurance, etc.

Amend the organization's by-laws to include these new inclusivity practices. E.g., Amending the organization's mission, eligibility criteria for members, or even changing the organization's name.

For a Feminist Movement That Is More Inclusive of Sexual and Gender Diversity

— Essential Approaches to This Process

1 | Collective decision-making

Decision-making is a central element of any collective process to improve 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion. Decisions must involve the full collaboration of the organization's various bodies to ensure consensus: its team, members of its Board of Directors and its membership as a whole. **Consensus refers to a position chosen together, without necessarily requiring unanimity. However, consensus is not possible without the full participation of all people involved. As a result, it is important to create moments of dialogue between all members of an organization's teams so that everyone feels heard and taken into consideration.** Without taking the time for people to align themselves with a collective decision, the consensus will fall apart at the first hurdle. These moments of collective listening and learning will also ensure the group's engagement and a more solid consensus.

Decision-making is also intimately connected to an organization's power dynamics and governance[8]. It's important to guard against the influences of existing power dynamics. These can exist across an organization's various bodies, including between its Board of Directors and employees, or even among the employees themselves due to seniority or friendships. Dynamics that stem from systemic oppression can also be reproduced in interpersonal dynamics among team members. As reported in our consultations, when it comes time to begin discussing opening services, 2SLGBTQIA+ employees — or the people who initiated the inclusion process — are often met with resistance from Board members or the organization's leadership. This resistance to change can quickly halt inclusion process and cut conversations short.

— **References**

[8] Communagir, Comprendre et agir - Prendre des décisions collectives (in French)

While they're often founded in a fear of the unknown, these concerns should not be an obstacle to collective decision-making, especially when power dynamics are present. Making decisions by consensus seeks to respect the pace at which all people involved will learn. It also involves trusting the 2SLGBTQIA+ people involved. Choosing not to collectively engage in a process of change has real and damaging effects on members of queer communities. These effects must be taken into account when making the decision. **As such, decisions must be made based on the well-being of the "collective we," meaning for the organization's evolution towards safer and adapted services, rather than based on our own individual feelings of resistance.**

2 | Inclusion as a stance

Committing to a process of opening up an organization to members of queer communities requires taking not only a collective, but also an individual inclusive stance. Taking this stance is a process involving self-reflection, allowing each person to examine their own thoughts, behaviour and biases, and take accountability for their own reactions. It is an ongoing learning process that is not necessarily linear, and can take a long time. **Welcoming critique and learning from our mistakes is also a key part of the process.**

Taking a reflexive stance is also a process charged with vulnerability and discomfort. This discomfort can often slow us down in the face of change, but it can also be a motivational force. Being able to question ourselves and move beyond our discomfort is a path toward personal and professional improvement, in addition to becoming a force for change within our environment. As the process requires time and energy, it is important to be patient with ourselves and with other people involved. This also goes for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. Throughout the process, they will learn to trust the organization.
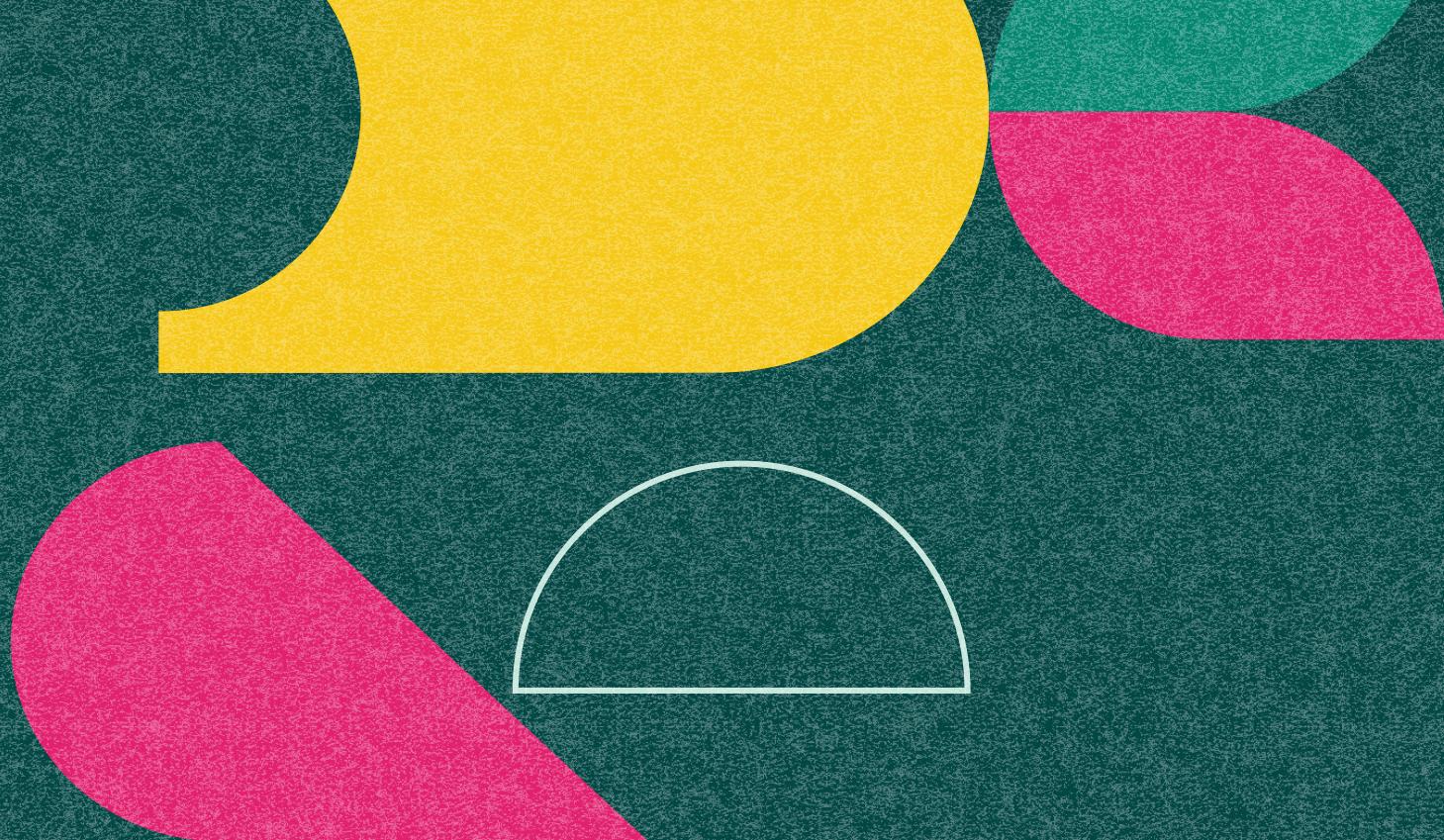
Reflexivity and inclusion ask us to be humble in the face of our assumptions and errors so we can challenge them. This accompanies a practice of listening to the people involved when they come forward to express discomfort with a reaction or behaviour, and not questioning their feelings. Examining our past behaviours and attitudes, especially when those may have been for the betterment of a person or community, can evoke feelings of shame. **It is important to be able to see this shame and overcome it, so that we can see that change is needed. This critical reflection allows us to grow and more easily adopt new practices.**

Lastly, i**t is important to be aware of the considerable impact of privilege and oppression on the accessibility of feminist spaces to members of queer communities, and especially on their feelings of safety within those spaces.** As a result, we need to be aware of our own privileges as well as those of our service users. By taking these privileges into account, we can more easily recognize the specific needs of members of queer communities — as well as other marginalized communities — and create a more inclusive environment.

3 | Brave(r) Spaces

Creating spaces to cultivate and confront our discomfort is a crucial part of a collective process towards inclusion. These "brave spaces" go beyond safer spaces. Safer spaces are spaces where people's individual experiences are welcomed and validated. As such, they are able to feel comfortable expressing themselves and telling their stories, without fear of violence or judgement. This feeling of personal safety is never guaranteed and can vary from one person to another, but these spaces strive to be as safe as possible.

Brave spaces, for their part, are meant to deepen our reflections while maintaining caring dialogue. Brave spaces are built on a foundation of safer spaces where individual spaces are validated, but seek instead to highlight the strength and courage present when we express our vulnerability and discomfort. Brave spaces are based on 6 pillars[9]:

Vulnerability, which, despite the discomfort we might experience, brings with it creativity, innovation, learning and accountability.

Changing our perspective, so we can better recognize others' experiences.

Welcoming and facing our fears, so that we can truly learn.

Thinking critically, so that we can deconstruct our own understanding of the world and the people around us.

Examining our intentions, so that we can better understand and respect our boundaries, in addition to taking accountability for our words and actions.

**Mindfulness,** so that we can intentionally engage with the present moment.

Références

[9] Stubbs V., LICSW and LCSW-C, The 6 Pillars of Brave Space

Nourishing this type of space throughout an inclusion process helps facilitate collective decision-making and guide our reflections. **Becoming aware of how our ways of communicating can impede caring dialogue is both an individual and collective responsibility in this process**. Throughout this dialogue, we are intentionally creating a space to further our commitment to one another and to others.
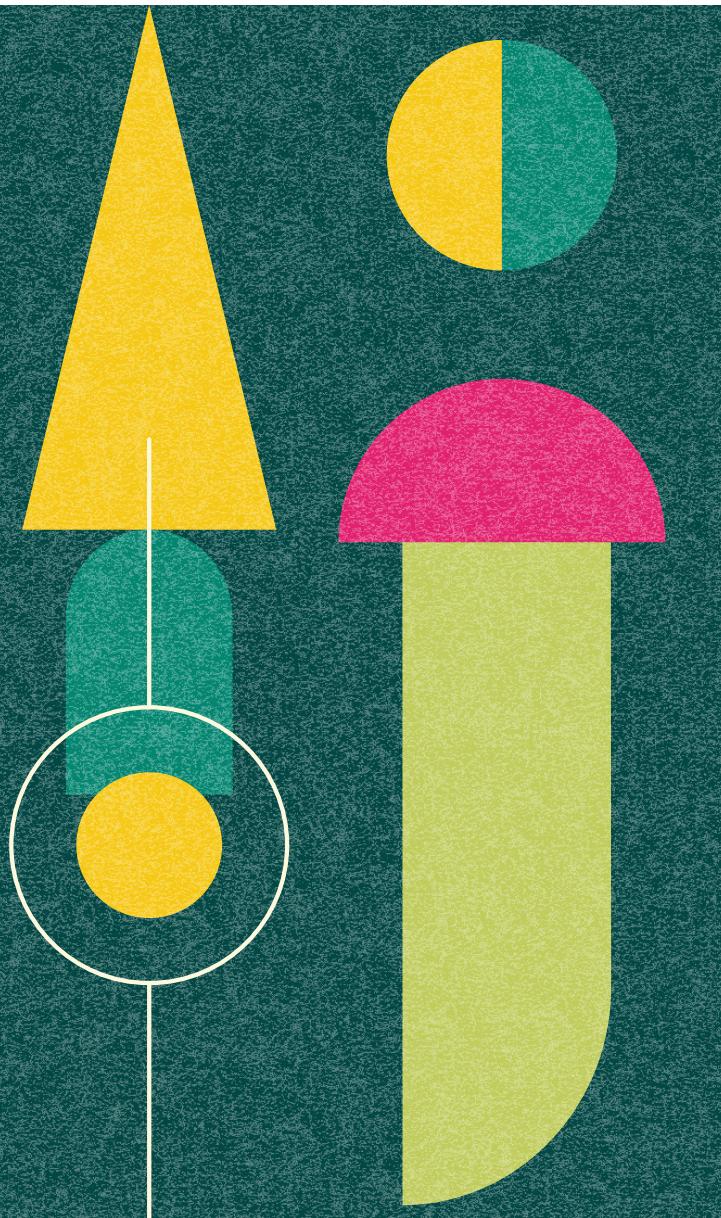
"I think this should absolutely be recommended as a group effort, rather than hiring someone who's going to tell everyone what to do and how to do it [...]. It takes time, sure, but it's more effective and adapted. You get everyone around the table and you talk. Like, 'Hey, I'm cis and I don't know anything and that's scary.' That takes humility!"

- NON-BINARY WOMAN EMPLOYEE (DISCUSSION GROUP)

GLOSSARY

2SLGBTQIA+

Acronym referring to members of queer communities: Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning, intersex, aromantic, agender and other individuals.

CISGENDER (CIS)

Adjective that refers to people who identify with the sex and gender that they were assigned at birth.

CISNORMATIVITY

Concept that manifests in the assumption that everyone is cisgender. Being cisgender is considered the "norm" and dictates what is "valid" in terms of experiences and gender identity. This implicit assumption leads to oppressive and discriminatory dynamics towards gender-diverse individuals.

GENDER BINARY

System that limits gender identity to two categories ("man" and "woman") based on gender assigned at birth, both of which involve stereotypes.

GENDER EXPRESSION

Terms referring to all codes used to socially perceive and express one's gender, through observable characteristics and behaviours (physical appearance, clothing, language, behaviours, etc.).

GENDER IDENTITY

Term that refers to the gender with which a person identifies, regardless of the gender they were assigned at birth or their gender expression.

HETERONORMATIVITY

Concept that manifests in the assumptionthat everyone is heterosexual. Heterosexuality is considered to be the "norm" and dictates what is "valid" in terms of sexuality and relationships. This implicit assumption leads to oppressive and discriminatory dynamics towards sexually diverse individuals.

HOMOPHOBIA

Interpersonal and systemic violence experienced by sexually diverse people. This includes negative and discriminatory attitudes towards a person or group of people based on real or presumed sexual orientation. Homophobia also includes the concepts of lesbophobia (violence directed specifically towards lesbians) and biphobia (violence directed specifically towards bisexuals).

INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE

Violence created by power dynamics reproduced within institutions at the structural and interpersonal level. E.g., neglect, refusal of services, barring access to an area or expulsion, invisibilization, lowered quality of service due to someone's identity or appearance, intrusive questions about someone's identity, etc.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Approach developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw that examines the intersections of various systems of oppression and the ways in which they manifest and reinforce one another.

MICROAGGRESSIONS

Attitudes, comments or actions towards a person that are informed by stereotypes and that can seem banal, or even invisible, to the people who commit them.

NON-BINARY

Describes a person whose gender identity does not correspond to the male/female binary. Often considered to fall under the umbrella of trans identities.

PHYSICAL VIOLENCES

Actions involving physical contact with a person or an object that seek to cause harm, threaten, or intimidate someone. E.g., pushing, physical blows, threats of physical harm, etc.

PSYCHOLOGICAL OR VERBAL VIOLENCE

Attitudes, comments or actions that seek to lower or even destroy a person's self-esteem or sense of safety. E.g., yelling, insults, manipulation, misgendering, outing, forced social isolation, etc.

QUEER

Umbrella term that includes a wide range of gender identities and sexual orientations that fall outside the cisgender and/or heterosexual norms.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Refers to the attraction that a person can feel towards people of one or multiple genders. Sexual orientation also refers to a sense of personal and social identity based around this attraction and, in some cases, on belonging to a community of people who share the same identity.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Unconsented-to attitudes, comments or actions of a sexual nature. E.g., sexual comments, groping, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual coercion, etc.

TRANS-AFFIRMATIVE APPROACH

Approach that involves strong and unconditional support for trans, non-binary, Two-Spirit and other gender-diverse individuals.

TRANSGENDER (TRANS)

Adjective that refers to people whose gender identity does not align with the sex or gender they were assigned at birth.

TRANS MASC OR TRANS FEM

People whose gender identity falls along the spectrum of masculinity (transmasculine) or femininity (transfeminine) and who were assigned another gender at birth.

TRANSPHOBIA

Interpersonal and systemic violence experienced by trans and non-binary people. This includes negative and discriminatory attitudes towards a person or group of people who are trans or non-binary, or are presumed to be.

TWO-SPIRIT OR INDIGIQUEER

Two-Spirit is a term from Indigenous nations that represents identities that go beyond western and colonial under-standings of the gender binary, sexuality and social roles.

Indigiqueer is a term used by Indigenous people that indicates and celebrates queer identity in relation to Indigenous identity.

— **Definitions taken from:** ————————————————————

Interligne (2022), Lexique LGBTQ+
Conseil LGBT (2020), Mieux nommer et mieux comprendre (in French)
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Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) (2023), Intersections : Indigenous and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Identities