



Key Findings and Recommendations from the Community Survey and Engagement Sessions

2SLGBTQIA+ INCLUSION INITIATIVE



Skwxwú7mesh
úxwumixw

Office of the CAO
May 2024



Introduction

The Nation engaged a total of **205 Squamish People** through a community survey and 5 community engagement sessions from **March to June 2023**.

The purpose of the engagement was to **understand** the needs of 2 key groups, including:

- The unique **experiences and challenges** of Squamish People who are Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Agender plus additional sexual orientations and gender identities (2SLGBTQIA+) and
- General **information needs** of cis-het Squamish People to ensure greater inclusion of gender and sexual diversity in the Nation.

Overall, there is acceptance and support of 2SLGBTQIA+ people in the Squamish Nation, but there are still challenges that complicate full belonging and participation of 2SLGBTQIA+ Squamish People as part of ongoing legacies of colonialism.

***Note:** “Cis-het” describes someone whose is both a) cisgender (i.e., not transgender) in terms of their gender and b) heterosexual (or straight) in terms of their sexual orientation. Another way to say this is anyone who is not 2SLGBTQIA+.*

Overview

Colonization is at root of 2SLGBTQIA+ challenges.

5 key themes about 2SLGBTQIA+ Squamish People:

- 1 Face more **challenges**
- 2 Have **mixed outness** depending on generation
- 3 Hard to access **social and cultural** supports
- 4 Cis-het Squamish People have common **myths** and many **questions** about 2SLGBTQIA+ Squamish People
- 5 Initial insights into **housing, jobs, healthcare**



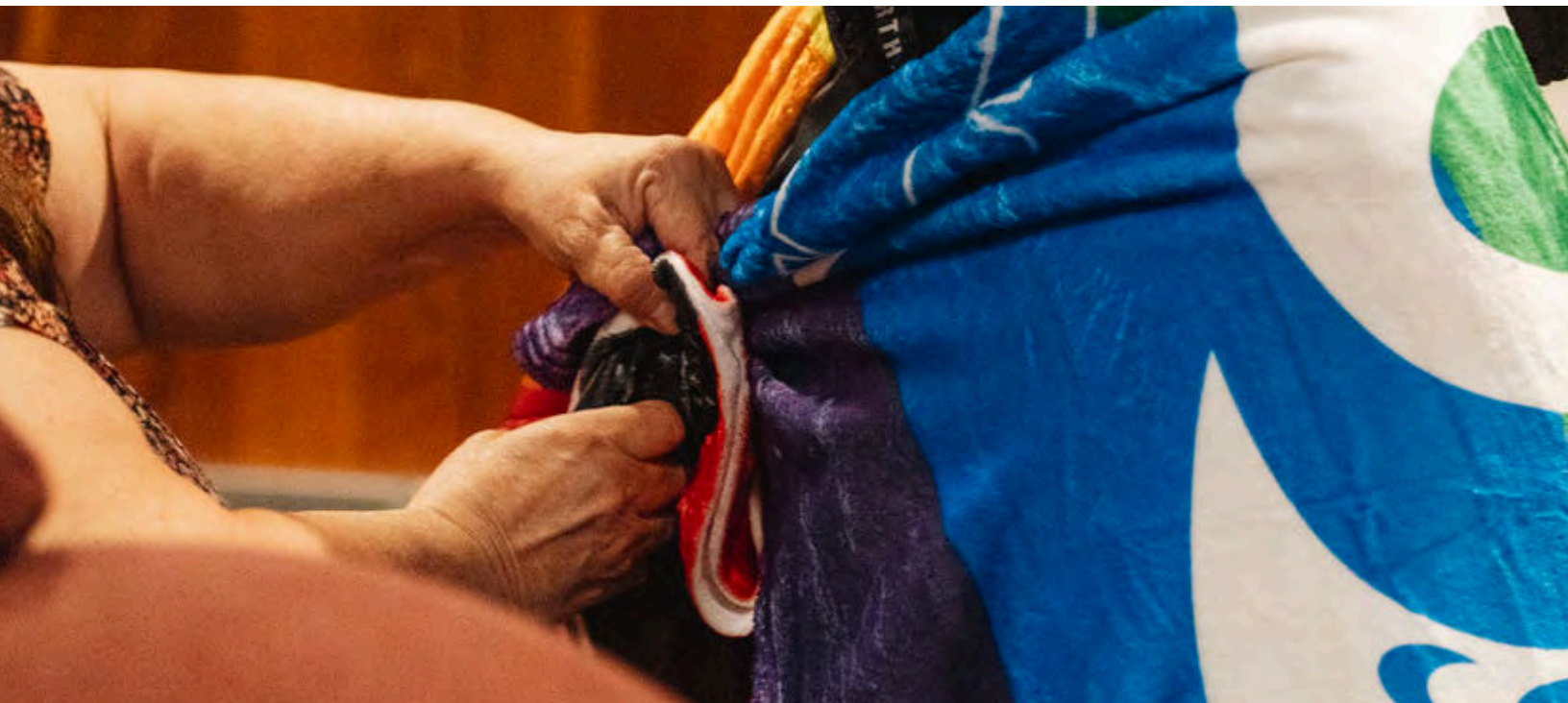
Recommendations for advancing the work

- Research, record, and share the **history and language** related to 2SLGBTQIA+ Squamish People.
- Continue with, and add to ongoing **social programs** and resources specific to 2SLGBTQIA+ needs and Squamish culture, especially mental health. Create 2SLGBTQIA+ **navigator position** to connect 2SLGBTQIA+ Squamish People to access social programs.
- Continue with and add to **special events** focused on 2SLGBTQIA+ community members
- Become **employer of choice** among 2SLGBTQIA+ people by making cultural and system changes.
- Continue to discuss how to create **greater inclusion** of 2SLGBTQIA+ people in range of cultural events held by Nation.



Recommendations for advancing the work

- Provide ongoing education sessions for
 - a) **all staff** and
 - b) specific to **leaders** at the Nation to fill gaps in understanding about gender and sexual diversity.
- Provide regular information sessions and self-paced courses to **Squamish People** to learn 2SLGBTQIA+ history, language, respectful interactions, and allyship.
- Strengthen Census collection and expand uses of 2SLGBTQIA+ data by Nation.
- Continue to engage Squamish People on 2SLGBTQIA+ issues, especially among Elders, and measure and communicate success of implementing the recommendations.





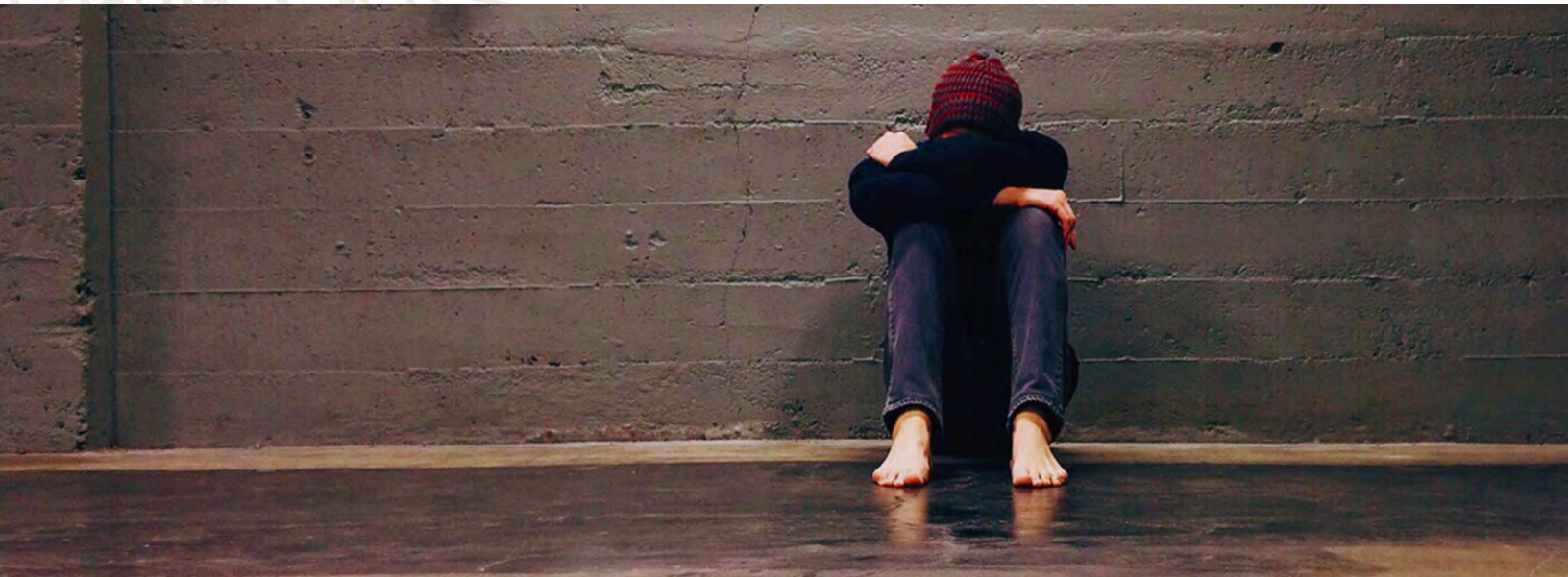
Staff are preparing an implementation plan based on the results of the survey and engagements.

Staff is already starting to action the recommendations.

In March 2024, the Nch'ú7mut (One Love) Blanketing Ceremony was well attended by community and offered a safe place for love and acceptance. The last Nch'ú7mut (One Love) Blanketing Ceremony was in 2017.

The ceremony upheld and celebrated S̓kw̓xwú7mesh people who identify as Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and additional sexual orientations and gender identities (2SLGBTQIA+).

A closer look into the 5 themes



Theme 1: Face more challenges

38% of 2SLGBTQIA+ Squamish People **face challenges** compared to 7% of cis-het Squamish People including:

- Verbal and physical **bullying/harassment**
- **Shunned** by family and friends
- **Left out** of events, including cultural events
- Gossip and **rumours**
- **Denied** services, including housing



“People have sometimes made people feel unwelcome based on assumptions about their gender because of appearance.”

- 2SLGBTQIA+ session participant

A closer look into the 5 themes



Theme 2: Mixed outness

- 2SLGBTQIA+ Squamish People have to make tough choices between being **safe or seen** for who they are.
- There are differences in how generations approach being out among 2SLGBTQIA+ Squamish People:
 - All 2SLGBTQIA+ Elders **are fully out** compared to half of adults and youth.
 - 2SLGBTQIA+ Adults are more likely to be **somewhat out** (21%).
 - 2SLGBTQIA+ Youth are more likely to **neither share nor hide** (29%).

Note: The word “out” is used to describe when someone has shared with some or most people in their lives that they are 2SLGBTQIA+.



“I knew when I was 12 years old [that I am 2SLGBTQIA+], but didn’t come out until I was 30.”

- 2SLGBTQIA+ session participant

A closer look into the 5 themes



Theme 3: Social and cultural supports

Social

- More than 25% of 2SLGBTQIA+ Squamish People who answered the survey want social support, but **do not know how** to access.
- 35% of fully out 2SLGBTQIA+ Squamish People access supports **outside the Nation.**

Cultural

- 2SLGBTQIA+ Squamish People feel left out of cultural events, including 10% most of the time and 25% sometimes.
- 37% of 2SLGBTQIA+ Squamish People who are not fully out **avoid events.**



“There are a lot of cultural activities that are specifically: ‘You are female - this is what you do. You’re a male. This is what you do.’ I think there really needs to be a lot of re-education around that...It’s something comes up all the time.”

- 2SLGBTQIA+ session participant

A closer look into the 5 themes



Theme 4A: Myths and questions among cis-het Squamish People about 2SLGBTQIA+ people

Common myths

- Being 2SLGBTQIA+ is a **choice**.
- 2SLGBTQIA+ people are “**sinful**” or “**unnatural**.”
- Children should **not know** about 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

Common questions

- Meaning of **terms and concepts** (e.g., pansexual, cis, trans, Two-Spirit)
- How to interact and support, especially with **transition**
- How to **address harmful** words and acts

A closer look into the 5 themes



Theme 4B: Want to support and learn more

- 95% of cis-het respondents are ready to **respectfully interact with 2SLGBTQIA+ Squamish People.**
- A majority of cis-het respondents want to learn more, especially importance of Two Spirit in **cultural roles.**



“It is heartbreaking to hear how in so many places (and even within families) 2SLGBTQIA+ are not safe. I had no idea!”

- Cis-het session participant

A closer look into the 5 themes



Theme 5: Insights into housing, jobs, health

Compiled 2SLGBTQIA+ data in **Squamish Census:**

- 2SLGBTQIA+ Squamish People face **more challenges** accessing subsidized housing (41% on waiting list).
- 2SLGBTQIA+ Squamish People are **more likely** to be employed than cis-het Members.
- 2SLGBTQIA+ Squamish People and cis-het Squamish People accessing health care providers at **similar levels**.



Opportunities

There are opportunities to expand on the inclusion work already underway to increase access to spaces, events, supports, culture, services, and systems that will ensure the Squamish Nation is more supportive and inclusive of gender and sexual diversity today and for generations to come.



squamish.net/two-spirit-inclusion
twospiritinclusion@squamish.net