

**“HIV Vulnerability among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, 2-Spirited, Transgender
and Transsexual Youth (LGBT & 2-Spirited) Who Migrate to Toronto:
A Community-Based Research Project”**

Executive Summary

The Youth Migration Project (YMP) initially emerged from a community-university research partnership between the AIDS Committee of Toronto and Ryerson School of Social Work, which had been supported by Health Canada’s Community-Based HIV/AIDS Research Fund. The Youth Migration Project was funded by the Wellesley Central Health Corporation, and emerged out of increasing community concern for youth who were new migrants to Toronto, and sought to understand their vulnerability to HIV. The research team was built by recruiting service providers and community activists who had expertise in HIV among LGBT and Two-Spirit youth. The core team members represented the AIDS Committee of Toronto, Asian Community AIDS Services, the Department of Public Health Sciences at the University of Toronto, the Trans Programme at the 519 Church Street Community Centre, Supporting Our Youth (now at the Sherbourne Health Centre), and 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations.

This study was designed to assess HIV vulnerability, and health and social service needs of migrant LGBT and Two-Spirited youth who have migrated to Toronto from other cities and towns, and other parts of the world (immigrant, refugee and non-status youth). Though this research was conducted to develop local prevention initiatives, its findings have broader implications and can serve as a catalyst for other communities wishing to address similar issues. The study was led by the Co-Principal Investigators (Carol-Anne O’Brien and Robb Travers), who worked closely with a community-based team comprised of service providers and community activists with expertise in LGBT youth and HIV issues. The project was administered through the Ryerson School of Social Work, and secured ethics approval from the Ryerson Research Ethics Board.

YMP’s objectives were:

1. To document a diverse array of migration experiences (successes and challenges) among migrant LGBT and 2-Spirited youth.
2. To gather relevant expert knowledge from service providers in health and social service organizations (including AIDS service organizations) and other key informants (to address knowledge gaps related to social policy impacts on migrant LGBT and 2-Spirited youth.)
3. To identify risk factors and prevention and support needs in relation to HIV for migrant LGBT and 2-Spirited youth (to address a knowledge gap among community members, health and social service providers - including AIDS Service Organizations - and policy makers).
4. To offer community supports and facilitate community building for migrant LGBT and 2-Spirited youth, throughout the research process (to decrease youth isolation).
5. To offer recommendations to health and social service providers, AIDS Service Organizations, LGBT & 2-Spirited youth organizations and policy makers in relation to HIV prevention and support needs for migrant LGBT and 2-Spirited youth (to address a knowledge gap among various stakeholders).
6. To implement a research project that incorporates the core values and principles of CBR (to contribute to the strengthening of CBR as a research process for addressing inner city health issues, particularly within the youth and HIV sectors.)

7. To make recommendations for further research (to encourage and inform further research about HIV vulnerability among migrant LGBT and 2-Spirited youth.

Ninety-seven youth and key informants were interviewed during the course of the research. The project's key research findings and recommendations have been reported in a series of six community reports or Information Sheets which are attached to this report and are also available on-line at: www.actoronto.org/youth

Project Background

The Youth Migration Project initially emerged from a community-university research partnership between the AIDS Committee of Toronto and Ryerson School of Social Work. The team was built by recruiting service providers who had expertise in HIV among LGBT and Two-Spirit youth. The core team members represented the AIDS Committee of Toronto, Asian Community AIDS Services, the Department of Public Health Sciences at the University of Toronto, the Trans Programme at the 519 Church Street Community Centre, Supporting Our Youth (now at the Sherbourne Health Centre), and 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations.

In the early phase of the project, Central Toronto Youth Services' Pride and Prejudice Program was a key partner and provided valuable in-kind support, such as project meeting rooms. In the later stage of the project that type of support was generously provided by the Wellesley Central Health Corporation, which welcomed the team into their boardroom.

The first phase of the Youth Migration Project involved a significant focus upon team-building and the development of project goals. We established Learning Exchanges that allowed each team member to familiarize team members with each other's work. We also created a detailed Terms of Reference that delineated the different roles and responsibilities of the PIs and the team members. In Phase II the Terms of Reference were revised with the addition of key project principles, and guidelines for decision-making, ownership of data and authorship of publications. (See Appendix A – Terms of Reference.)

Funding for Phase II of the Youth Migration Project was awarded by Wellesley Central Health Corporation. This phase (reported on here) comprised the implementation of a research protocol (data collection and analysis, dissemination and action) developed in the Formulation Phase (funded by Health Canada's Community-based HIV/AIDS Research Initiative). This study was designed to assess HIV vulnerability, and health and social service needs of migrant (immigrant, refugee and undocumented) LGBT and Two-Spirited youth who have migrated to Toronto from other cities and towns (the majority of whom live within the inner city of Toronto). It also helped to identify the impact on these youth of current social policies regarding, for example, immigration, housing, youth employment, youth access to social assistance, health and HIV prevention. Though this research was conducted to develop local prevention initiatives, its findings have broader implications and can serve as a catalyst for other communities wishing to address similar issues.

The current project involves a partnership between Ryerson School of Social Work and a number of community organizations: the AIDS Committee of Toronto, Central Toronto Youth Services, Positive Youth Outreach, 2-Spirited People of the First Nations, the Lesbian, Gay, Bi Youthline, Asian Community AIDS Services, and the Black, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Initiative for Youth at the Centre for

Addiction and Mental Health. The two Co-Principal Investigators, Carol-Anne O'Brien and Robb Travers, both have long histories of working on issues related to this project.

Methods

Our method involved in-person interviews with youth and key informants. We interviewed service providers who work with youth, and other key informants who offered insights into the impact of current social policies on migrant LGBT and Two-Spirited youth. Interviews were also conducted with LGBT and 2-Spirited youth who had moved to Toronto from other parts of Canada, and with LGBT youth who were newcomers or recent refugees from other countries. They were asked about issues related to migration experiences, settlement in Toronto, health and social service needs, and HIV. The coordination of these activities was carried out by the Research Coordinator under the supervision of the Co-Principal Investigators, and with strategic recruitment advice from the research team members. Concerns related to the emotional vulnerability of participants in the research process, and emerging directions from our Formulation Phase consultations, prompted a qualitative methodology in this research. Methods that allow for face-to-face interaction helped ensure that through the research process we could hook participants up to relevant services, where necessary. The scarcity of literature addressing the issues faced by these groups of migrant youth also prompts a flexible research method – one not limited in scope to a predetermined number of questions and responses (as in survey research). Most importantly, it was important to use methods in this research that allowed sufficient room for youth to “tell their stories”, and to build peer connections with each other. See Appendix B – Interview Guides. This appendix include our four Interview Guides for a) Key Informants regarding internal migration within Canada; b) Key Informants regarding international migration to Canada; c) Youth who had moved to Toronto from other parts of Ontario or Canada; d) Youth who were recent refugees, immigrants, or living without status.

The number of youth consulted was determined by two standard sampling procedures in qualitative research. First, based on the logic of “purposeful sampling” (Patton, 1987), a sampling framework was devised to seek “information rich cases... from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the evaluation” (Patton, 1987; p.52). Second, the principle of “qualitative informational isomorph... [selecting] a sample that is expanded until redundancy with respect to information (i.e., saturation) is reached, at which point sampling is terminated” was utilized (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.233-234).

During the data collection phase of the project we developed outreach strategies and interview schedules for work with youth and service providers. With the help of the excellent outreach skills of our Research Coordinator, we collected close to 100 interviews (n=97) with key informants (service providers, policy experts, community leaders) (n= 38) and youth (n=59) during the two phases of the project. All youth interviews, and most key informant interviews were conducted by our Research Coordinator. One of the PIs also conducted key informant interviews regarding newcomer and refugee issues. Seven of the youth interviews were conducted with the assistance of translators from Spanish and other linguistic communities. All interviews were taped and transcribed by a professional transcriber fluent in English and Spanish and familiar with HIV issues.

Results/ Discussion/Implications

The Youth Migration Project has been tremendously successful in meeting its core objectives, in addition to numerous others that were not originally anticipated (e.g., the development of a knowledge

transfer strategy that would maximize community mobilization and knowledge uptake). Based upon the research priorities that emerged during the Formulation Phase, the Team was divided into two sub-committees, each led by one of the PIs. One sub-committee group focussed upon issues related to “internal” migrant youth, that is, youth who had migrated to Toronto from other parts of Ontario and Canada. The second sub-committee focussed upon issues related to newcomer, refugee, and non-status youth who had recently moved to Toronto from other countries. Team discussions of research priorities led to further refinement of the scope of each sub-committee’s research. The “internal” committee’s preliminary research in Phase I had revealed that among those youth, transsexual/transgender youth and Two-Spirit Aboriginal youth were most vulnerable to HIV. Similarly, the sub-committee on newcomer/refugee/non-status youth focussed upon racialized LGBT youth, who had been found to be most vulnerable because of racism and other forms of marginalization within Canada.

Responding to the Needs of Youth

It was imperative among YMP team members that the research process also be regarded as an opportunity to ‘connect’ youth to each other and where required, to relevant community supports. In the early phases of the research, we chose a focus groups methodology to allow ideas exchange and opportunities for very isolated youth to meet each other. Given their relative isolation, it was important to move beyond the conceptualization of youth as simply research ‘subjects’ to viewing them as vulnerable and requiring support. We are confident that through our interviews and focus groups that:

- peer connections between youth have been enhanced;
- youth are more involved in the community;
- youth have increased knowledge of community resources.

Finally, team members drew upon the work of the project (i.e., the data collected) to support their program development (e.g., the Supporting our Youth’s Express Project with refugee and newcomer youth, and further research support for 2-Spirited People of the First Nations’ project on gay youth and HIV risk).

Maintaining a Community Buzz

Given the advantage of a formulation phase in this research project, we were able to create a community ‘buzz’ early on. By the time we were ready to collect data, YMP had a name in the community, a ‘look’, a logo, and a solid reputation. Given the breadth of our team partnership, the community was familiar with YMP, respected its leadership and team members and was cooperative in helping to solicit participants. It was our goal to maintain a buzz in the community from the beginning of the project through to the launch of the data and into the future.

The launch of the community reports, in October 2004, took place at a community forum on poverty and migration issues among LGBT and Two-Spirit youth. The launch was created by a unique partnership. It brought together a national LGBT policy organization (EGALE Canada), a key LGBT community service provider (Supporting Our Youth), and a CBR project team (YMP) to address issues related to poverty and migration among LGBT and Two Spirit youth. The forum was attended by about 90 community leaders, service providers, youth, and policy makers from federal and provincial governments and NGOs. YMP’s research process and our six community reports were key highlights of the forum, and the keynote address was provided by the Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term

Care. The launch concluded with small-group discussions and a plenary that identified significant follow-up strategies and activities. In addition, each of the six YMP information sheets contained a section entitled “What can we do?” that highlights our recommendations for community and policy change.

Promoting a Social Determinants of Health Framework within HIV Research

The theoretical premise behind our research, and its objectives, emerged from a shared understanding among team members about the roots of HIV vulnerability. Rather than narrowly focusing upon psychology or behaviour, we believed in the importance of exploring the role of broader social and political processes in HIV vulnerability, such as poverty and other forms of inequality, for example the social exclusion experienced by racialized groups, transgender people, and LGBT and Two-Spirited youth. Our project outcomes were therefore designed to address these broader social determinants of HIV vulnerability. The project has made a significant contribution to promoting an understanding of social determinants of HIV vulnerability, thereby increasing the capacity of the field to move beyond prevention programmes that are limited to behavioural change strategies.

New knowledge was accumulated (by community researchers, advocates and workers) in areas where, to date, little was known. We enhanced knowledge (among very diverse stakeholder groups) about the lived experience of migrant LGBT and Two-spirit youth and identified risk factors that may contribute to their HIV vulnerability: Specifically, we created an enhanced understanding of:

- issues facing migrant LGBT and Two-Spirited youth among policy makers, including the Ontario Ministry of Health as well as those at the municipal and federal levels;
- issues facing migrant LGBT and Two-Spirited youth among health and social service providers (including those in AIDS service organizations);
- the impact of current policies (e.g., welfare, immigration, housing) on migrant LGBT and Two-Spirited youth;
- health and social service supports required by migrant LGBT and Two-Spirited youth;
- risk factors that may contribute to HIV vulnerability among migrant LGBT and Two-Spirited youth among health and social service providers;
- HIV prevention needs for migrant LGBT and Two-Spirited youth among health and social service providers.

Project Outcomes

While the Co-PIs were consistently the project leaders, every stage and aspect of the Youth Migration Project involved high levels of participatory decision-making. Research priorities emerged from extensive collective discussions. In the data analysis phase we developed a strategy for collaborative data analysis with team members while adhering to strict ethical guidelines for informant confidentiality. The community reports were produced through a collaborative writing strategy that involved significant input from team members. The team sub-committees have also agreed to work together to write peer-reviewed publications.

The first phase of the Youth Migration Project involved a significant focus upon team-building and the development of project goals. We established Learning Exchanges that allowed each team member to We also created a detailed Terms of Reference that delineated the different roles and responsibilities of the PIs and the team members. In Phase II the Terms of Reference were revised with the addition of

key project principles, and guidelines for decision-making, ownership of data and authorship of publications. (See attached Revised Terms of Reference.)

The core team members represented the AIDS Committee of Toronto, Asian Community AIDS Services, the Department of Public Health Sciences at the University of Toronto, the Trans Programme at the 519 Church Street Community Centre, Supporting Our Youth (now at the Sherbourne Health Centre), and 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations. In the early phase of the project, Central Toronto Youth Services' Pride and Prejudice Program was a key partner and provided valuable in-kind support, such as project meeting rooms. In the later stage of the project that type of support was generously provided by the Wellesley Central Health Corporation, which welcomed the team into their boardroom.

In the data analysis phase, we developed a strategy for collaborative data analysis with team members while adhering to strict ethical guidelines for informant confidentiality. Team members were involved in identifying key research themes and a collaborative writing strategy led to extensive working group discussions of draft reports.

Building Bridges: Enhancing Team Capacities

One of our principal objectives in YMP was to enhance the capacities among team members to understand each others' work, concerns and issues, and the relative ways that CBR might help alleviate problems facing migrant youth. Dissatisfied with the one-way nature of the CBR literature related to capacity-building (it assumes only community members need 'help' with understanding research), we created a series of 'learning exchanges' whereby team members presented overviews of their communities, the groups they work with, and the issues and concerns they face. The researchers on the team presented on CBR, on issues related to research methods, data analysis, and action outcomes. As such, we believe that YMP fostered an environment where:

- team members have enhanced capacities for involvement in CBR (i.e., understanding of research as a change tool, new research skills, and a greater understanding of the role of research in service delivery and policy development).
- team members expanded their knowledge of the issues facing diverse communities involved in the partnership;
- team members created an 'action' partnerships between key community agencies and a national policy organization which fore fronted poverty and immigration and refugee issues in LGBT and 2-spirit communities

Dissemination

Innovation in 'Knowledge Transfer'

Our approach to knowledge transfer took into account the ways in which people use and respond to research findings in their daily work. We prioritized accessibility and relevance of information and communicated our research findings through community reports, presentations to academic, professional and community conferences and workshops, and a community launch of the reports. (See Question 5 for further details regarding our knowledge transfer activities.)

As a result of YMP, and, in particular, its innovative and community-friendly knowledge transfer strategy, awareness of migrant LGBT and 2-Spirit youth and their unique issues has been significantly enhanced. In our decision to create a Knowledge Transfer Strategy that would maximize uptake of findings through attending to how stakeholders ‘use knowledge’ in their work, we have shown that ‘locally produced’ knowledge (research that is on a community-driven end of the CBR spectrum) is indeed successful in affecting change. It was also crucial to YMP team members that ‘action’ would begin early; waiting for the research to end before implementing findings was not an option for this team. Most importantly, YMP team members wanted to create knowledge transfer strategy that would be efficient, would take into account how people gain and use knowledge in their work, and would avoid a cumbersome report that few would read. This strategy is outlined below.

Information Sheets/Community Reports

Our community reports drew on the innovative example of the Positive Youth Project’s recent zine-reports. Rather than writing a standard (and often unread) research report, we wrote six four-page community reports. Each community report was either group-focussed or thematically-based, and each reported on key findings, drew links between the social determinants of health and HIV vulnerability, and recommended follow-up activities to be taken up by service providers, the community at large, or policy makers. One of the community reports was focussed on the experiences of Two-Spirit youth who had migrated to Toronto from across Canada; it is entitled: “What do you find in the city.” Two other community reports addressed issues related to transgender and transsexual migrant youth from across Canada and from other countries, “Leaving normal” and “Inadequate resources”. Three of the community reports focussed upon LGBT refugee and newcomer youth, “Oh Canada, why Canada”, “For English press 1.”, and Home... away from home?”. Each of the reports was beautifully designed by a team member who was a graphic designer. (See attached for copies of the six community reports.)

These information sheets are also available on-line at www.actoronto.org/youth

Multiple Stakeholders

Our stakeholder groups were diverse and demanded multiple knowledge transfer strategies. Policy makers, service providers, youth, LGBT and 2-Spirit communities at large, and other community-based researchers were included among our stakeholders. Meeting the needs of each demanded creativity and innovation in getting our messages out.

Conference presentations (most of which were peer-reviewed) were numerous for YMP team members. Approximately 15 conference presentations and lectures were delivered at provincial, national, and international conferences, including the Canadian AIDS Society’s Skills Building Symposium, the Canadian Association of HIV Research Conference and the both the 1st and 3rd International Conferences on Urban Health. The target audiences at these conferences were diverse and were representative of all stakeholder groups. (See full list below in Table 1)

A series of workshop and conference PowerPoint presentation overheads have been created and are actively in use by YMP team members. (See attached for an example).

Health and Social Service Providers

Several of the project Co-Investigators were responsible for professional development work with service providers. For example, an early project partner agency, Central Toronto Youth Services, is nationally known for delivering workshops for service providers on issues related to working with LGBT and 2-Spirit youth. As soon as data became available through YMP, the curriculum of these workshops was modified to include relevant and new information. In addition, other partner organizations (e.g., AIDS Committee of Toronto, Asian Community AIDS Services, and 2-Spirit People of the First Nations) also have training mandates – they too incorporated new findings from YMP into their training curricula.

Policy Makers

Policy makers were crucial stakeholders if we intended on affecting change in the social determinants of HIV infection. We included numerous individuals in policy-related fields in our key informant interviews. We saw the key informant interviews as an opportunity to collect information from policy stakeholders and as a means of creating awareness among them of a group of youth that easily fell through the cracks. Policy informants included those working in education, housing, welfare, law, health and social services, and immigration/settlement. Many of these stakeholders were key in helping us to access target audiences (e.g., key individuals working in health and social policy) to target our findings to. A press announcement was distributed across media outlets in the GTA and to key decision makers announcing the YMP findings and upcoming launch. To ensure that policy solutions remained a priority, we forged a launch partnership with a key national policy organization (EGALE Canada) and were successful in having the Ontario Minister of Health and Long Term Care – George Smitherman – deliver the keynote address at the launch.

LGBT Communities and Media

On several occasions throughout the YMP process, the LGBT media created awareness among the broader communities by featuring articles about the study and the stories that were emerging from youth. In October, 2004, the YMP community reports were officially launched at a one-day forum on youth, migration and poverty issues at the 519 Church Street Community Centre in Toronto's gay village. The launch was attended by 90 people and included presentations, panel discussions and small group 'think tanks' that brought forward solutions for change. (See attached notice of the community launch.)

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

Several journal articles are currently being conceptualized by YMP team members. Writing groups have been proposed and will be meeting in the near future to begin work.

Table 1 – Peer-reviewed Conference Presentations

Conference	Name of presentation	Presenters
3 rd International Conference on Urban Health, Boston, October 22, 2004	Challenges, Complexities and Solutions: A Unique HIV Research Partnership in Toronto, Canada	Robb Travers, Humberto Carolo
Working with Families and Children and HIV, Toronto, Hospital for Sick Children, April, 2004	HIV Vulnerability among LGBT & 2-Spirited Youth who Migrate to Toronto	Humberto Carolo, Florence Heung, Andrea Ridgley, Kyle Scanlon
Canadian AIDS Society, Annual Skills Building Conference, November, 2003	Assessing HIV Vulnerability among LGBT & 2-Spirited Youth who Migrate to Toronto	Humberto Carolo, Florence Heung
Social Determinants of Health Across the Lifespan, York University, Toronto, November, 2002	Generating Knowledge: Responding with Action: CBPR as a Tool for Addressing the Social Determinants of Health	Lea Narciso, Robb Travers
First International Conference on Inner City Health, Toronto, October, 2002	Community-based research: an approach to building sustainable capacities in the HIV/AIDS community	Lea Narciso, Blaize Mumford, Robb Travers, Susanna Edwards
Qualitative Research Conference, McMaster University, Hamilton, June 2002	Assessing HIV Vulnerability among LGBT & 2-Spirited Youth who Migrate to Toronto	Robb Travers, Chad Leaver
University of Guelph Annual Sexuality Conference, June, 2002	HIV Vulnerability among LGBT & 2-Spirited Youth who Migrate to Toronto	Robb Travers, Doe O'Brien, Andrea Ridgley
Canadian Association of HIV Research (CAHR), Winnipeg, May, 2002	Assessing HIV Vulnerability among LGBT & 2-Spirited Youth who Migrate to Toronto	Robb Travers, Chad Leaver, Alex McClelland
Lesbian Lives XII Annual Conference, University College Dublin, Ireland, February, 2002	Leaving Home: Migration and Queer Communities	Carol-Anne O'Brien

Table 2 - Community and Professional Conferences (includes invited lectures)

Conference	Name of Presentation	Presenters
AIDS Committee of Toronto & the Toronto People with AIDS Foundation, Invited lecture/professional development, November, 2004	HIV Vulnerability among LGBT & Two-Spirit Youth Who Migrate to Toronto: A Community-based Research Project	Carol-Anne O'Brien, Humberto Carolo
Centre for Urban Health Initiatives, Invited presentation, November, 2004	HIV Vulnerability among LGBT & Two Spirit Youth Who Migrate to Toronto: A Community-based Research Project	Robb Travers
Ontario AIDS Network, Annual Support Workers Meeting, Toronto, November, 2004	HIV Vulnerability among LGBT & Two Spirit Youth Who Migrate to Toronto: A Community-based Research Project	Humberto Carolo, Florence Heung, Doe O'Brien, Kyle Scanlon
Queer Health Matters: A Health Fair for the LGBTQ Communities, Sherbourne Health Centre, April, 2004	HIV Vulnerability among LGBT & Two Spirit Youth Who Migrate to Toronto: A Community-based Research Project	Humberto Carolo, Florence Heung, Andrea Ridgley, Kyle Scanlon, Suhail Scanlon
Ontario AIDS Network, Annual Educators Meeting, Toronto, March 2004	HIV Vulnerability among LGBT & Two Spirit Youth Who Migrate to Toronto: A Community-based Research Project	Humberto Carolo, Florence Heung, Doc O'Brien, Kyle Scanlon
Department of Community Nutrition, University of Toronto, November, 2003	Community-based participatory research: Generating knowledge, responding with action	Robb Travers
Department of Community Nutrition, University of Toronto, November, 2002	Community-based participatory research: Generating knowledge, responding with action	Robb Travers
Invited Lecture, University College Dublin, Ireland February, 2002	Community and University Research Partnerships: A Case Study	Carol-Anne O'Brien

Next Steps

Ongoing Work

The work of YMP does not finish simply because the data have been released to the community. The work of YMP was complex and we drew upon the insights of many individuals to identify issues affecting migrant GBT and 2-spirit youth. As such, we see the work of YMP continuing into the future. There is an ongoing need to turn data into social action and many of YMP's initial team members have committed themselves into the future through the creation of a Working Group with the following objectives:

- to identify further research initiatives on issues relevant to migrant LGBT and 2-Spirited youth;
- to ensure policy development and implementation in areas identified through this research;
- to ensure programme development in areas identified through this research;
- to ensure ongoing awareness and enhanced involvement among the LGBT communities in the implementation of these initiatives.