

Among Friends: Beyond Positive Intentions: Providing Equitable Services for LGBTQ+ Newcomers



Research/analysis presented by:

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Presentation Outline

- Terminology
- LGBTQ+ Refugees/Newcomers: Historical & Current Context
- Research Impetus
- Key Findings: Barriers & Challenges
- Key Findings: Social & Health Impacts
- Beyond Positive Intentions: Gaps & Needs
- Access Alliance: Promoting Positive Spaces
- Questions



Terminology

LGBTQ+ Newcomer Woman: woman/femme who has immigrated to Canada within the past 7 years and self-identifies as a gender and/or sexual minority

LGBTQ+ Asylum-Seeker: someone pursuing legally-recognized 'refugee' status within Canada, on the grounds of persecuted gender and/or sexual identity elsewhere

LGBTQ+ Refugee: someone who has been granted legal 'refugee' status within Canada, on the grounds of persecuted gender and/or sexual identity elsewhere

The Importance of Context

“Politics of care enables a form of “armed love” in which the moral imperative to act is accompanied by practices of violence and containment, which end up reproducing inequalities”

(Prof. Kobelinsky, on ‘Casualties of Care: Immigration and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France’ by Miriam Ticktin)

The Importance of Context

The “*‘bad’ country of origin vs ‘good’ country of refuge (Canada)*” narrative justifies and obscures the global politics that create refugees



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Five LGBTQ refugees describe why they came to Canada

BY DANIELLE KINAHAN | JUNE 21, 2019



theGlobeandMail.com/canada/british-columbia/article-drag-queen-fled-iran-finding-both-freedom-and-a-stage-in-vancouver/#:~:text=Drag%20queen...

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VANCOUVER
PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 21, 2020

TRENDING

1 'This is only the beginning': Roberta Battaglia steals audi hearts on America's Got Tal



theGlobeandMail.com/news/national/worldpride/article19285991/

THE GLOBE AND MAIL CANADA

Canada: A safer haven for LGBT refugees

MATTHEW SHERWOOD
SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL
PUBLISHED JUNE 22, 2014



theGlobeandMail.com/news/canada-chechnya-gay-asylum/article36145997/

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

How Canada has been secretly giving asylum to gay people in Chechnya fleeing persecution

Canada has quietly brought in 22 people, with more to come, despite risks to Canada-Russia relations, John Ibbitson reports

“Bad country of origin”

History of Global Homophobia & Transphobia

- British ‘queered’ colonial subjects to justify colonial rule
- India had ” *the first colonial ‘sodomy law’ integrated into a penal code ... Its influence stretched across Asia, the Pacific islands, and Africa, almost everywhere the British imperial flag flew* (Gupta, ‘This Alien Legacy: The Origins of “Sodomy” Laws in British Colonialism ’)
- *“One of the major findings of our data analysis is the correlation between having a British legal origin and having a law criminalizing homosexual conduct. Of those states with such a law, 57 per cent have a British legal origin. Of those states with a British legal origin, almost 70 per cent continue to criminalize homosexual conduct”* (Prof. Han & O'Mahoney, ‘British colonialism and the criminalization of homosexuality’)

“Bad country of origin”

Present Aggravators of Global Homophobia & Transphobia

- Global economic dynamics established during colonialism persist
- EG) sub-Saharan Africa is a net *creditor* to the rest of the world (Various NGO's, Honest Accounts 2017)
- Intolerant attitudes towards gays and lesbians are inversely correlated with economic development (2012 Gallup World Poll)
- EG) Socio-economic status safeguards against transphobic/homophobic discrimination (Prof. Murray, 'The Homonational Archive: Sexual Orientation and Gendered Identity Refugee Documentation in Canada and the USA')
- Queers are housed in bodies – with material needs. We can't limit our concern for 'LGBTQ+ well-being' to only their persecution *as* queers.

“Good country of refuge (Canada)”

The Refugee System



YET

*To those fleeing persecution, terror and war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength.
#WelcomeToCanada
(PM Justin Trudeau; Jan 28, 2017)*

- **Eligibility criteria** : ‘Safe Third Country’ Agreement (recently struck down); failure to recognize economic and climate refugees
- **Processing** : backlogs; CBSA check-ins; detention; intrusive refugee hearing process; deportation – effectively “fraudulent until proven refugee”

“Good country of refuge (Canada)”

Being LGBTQ+ in Canada

Despite globally/historically-unprecedented recognitions, protections, and affirmations, LGBTQ+ people in Canada experience:

- Higher rates of poverty & homelessness
- Poorer mental health
- Familial rejection, bullying, hate crimes, violence
- Institutional discrimination (e.g. healthcare)
- Political dehumanization
- Lack of political representation

Outcomes are more stark for trans/gender-non-conforming people; and those experiencing additional oppressions

“Good country of refuge (Canada)”

Refuge on Stolen Land

“Canada’s national identity and its regulation of immigration is informed through ongoing settler colonialism in which the erasure of Indigenous persons and the control of non-White immigrants go hand in hand with the creation of the Canadian state and the solidifying of its borders”

(Prof. Fobear, ‘Queer Settlers: Questioning Settler Colonialism in LGBT Asylum Processes in Canada’)

LGBTQ+ Refugees in Settler-Colonial Canada

“refugees don’t need our tears, they need us to stop making them refugees”

(Anders Lustgarten, The Guardian, 2015)

Among Friends Research Project

Discussion and Reflection on Research

- Challenges in inclusion and exclusion criteria
- Misgendering: Inclusion of trans men and gender non-conforming individuals
- Incentives to participate in research may have impacted participation
- Research is valuable – honor those that shared voices

Among Friends Research Project

Data Collection:

- 16 1-1 service providers interviews
- 3 focus groups of LGBTQ+ Newcomers Women/Femmes including trans and gender non-conforming individuals with 30 participants total
- 3 in depth interviews with LGBTQ+ Newcomer women and 1 gender non-conforming Newcomer

The **challenge** in conducting research with LGBTQ+ Newcomer Women - *inclusion/exclusion criteria*

Key Findings:

Systemic Barriers = “Disintegration of Hope”

Expectations	Experiences
Life of Safety, security, health and prosperity	Lack of access to safe/affordable housing
	Employment/economic insecurity
	Social isolation

Housing

- Lack of access to safe/affordable housing from the first days of arrival
- Negative shelter experiences
- Direct and indirect discriminatory treatments by potential landlords
- Isolated housing

Economic Security

- Meeting daily needs – i.e. food insecurity, clothing and sanitary products
- Leaving resources behind (Everything)
- Limited social and professional connections
- Lack of consistent childcare

Social Isolation

Challenges making social connections

- Racism
- Transphobia, homophobia
- Language – Accent stigma, language barriers
- Income
- Social location – interlocking barriers
- Mainstream culture/not welcoming – Individualistic, consumerist

Social and Health Impacts

Determinants result in damaging impacts on the health and wellbeing of newcomer LGBTQ+ women, and their families including:

- Depression
- Trauma and PTSD
- Lack of self-worth and feeling invisible
- Acute stress and feeling overwhelmed
- Gender dysphoria and confusion

Service Gaps and Needs: Program Level

Gap: Lack of peer support groups specific to women and trans/gender non-conforming people

Need: Creation of safe spaces and peer support groups in order to

- Reduce social isolation
- Reduce the negative impacts of discrimination and insensitive treatments
- Increase sense of self-esteem and self-worth
- Help clarify how people identify in terms of gender and sexual orientation
- Increase access to programs, services and resources
- Provide a platform for collective action on issues of shared concern

Service Gaps and Needs: Service Level

Gap: Services are not inclusive and understanding of entire identity of clients including how wellness is impacted by multiple, intersecting determinants

Need: Framework/model in which these programs/services are delivered needs to change in order to promote wellbeing of newcomer LGBTQ+ women

Service Gaps and Needs: Macro/Systems Level

Gaps:

- Policies, organizational models/culture, and programs/services are not consistently grounded on principles of equity
- Lack of recognition that gender and sexual orientation are integral social determinants of health indicators

Service Gaps and Needs: Macro/Systems Level

Needs:

- Build capacity of decision makers and service providers – LGBTQ+ newcomer friendly
- Collect socio-demographic data to ensure equitable services are planned and delivered
- Adopt and deepen equity based hiring practices to increase representation of newcomer LGBTQ+ people
- Meaningfully engage newcomer LGBTQ+ women, in advisory or other guiding capacity

Access Alliance Programs: Promoting Positive Spaces

Systems Level:

- Hiring representative of populations served including Board of Directors and Senior Leadership
- Funding priority for Agency
- \$15/Fairness Campaign

Service Level:

- Prioritized Access to Primary Care Services (Unable to cover services that are not covered by OHIP - impacts trans clients)
- Engagement in sectoral tables such as Toronto Neighbourhood Centres Rainbow Alliance Group

Access Alliance Programs: Promoting Positive Spaces

Program Level:

- Settlement Services and connection to resources
- Therapeutic Programming
- Peer engagement
- Code of conduct
- Pride March





Questions?

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