

VictoriaNeeds.LGBT

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A Survey to Determine the Needs, Desires, and Support for a
Queer / LGBT Community Centre in Victoria, BC.

Survey and Report by Andrew Shopland

Summer 2015

*This legacy project proudly funded by VARCS
Victoria AIDS Resource & Community Service Society*

Summary

The VictoriaNeeds survey took place in July 2015 to determine the needs, desires, and support for a Queer / LGBT Community Centre in Victoria, BC. The survey received 482 responses, 82% of which were identified as from Greater Victoria.

- Over 84% of participants responded that there is a need for a Queer / LGBT Community Centre in Victoria.
- Space Priorities: large flexible space and health clinic were clear priorities across age groups and identities.
- Programming Priorities: social events, health, and advocacy were clear priorities across age groups and identities, though the degree and order did show differences in needs for the various identities.
- Gender inclusivity, centring of marginalized identities, a conscious political nature, and intentional safer spaces practices were all identified as important factors in making the space accessible and welcoming.
- Individual Support: almost 50% of respondents report they will attend an initial community meeting and 46% report that they will volunteer their time.

A meeting will be called in Fall 2015 to present this report to the community and to determine the next steps of this project.

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Acknowledgements

Victoria is on unceded Indigenous territories. We give our respect to the Coast Salish Nation, specifically the Lekwungen and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the initial conversations, those who provided feedback on developing the survey, everyone who helped disseminate the survey, and to all those who took the time to share their voice.

Background

The idea of having a Queer/LGBT Community Centre in Victoria isn't new - there have been many attempts and iterations over the years. More recently, a group of Queer Victoria residents began musing about the creation of a Queer safe-space and the possibilities were endless - and daunting. Unfortunately, none of us had the time or resources to begin such a project, so it was shelved.

In 2014, VARCS (Victoria AIDS Resource and Community Service Society; formerly, Victoria AIDS Respite Care Society) closed its doors after 23 years of delivering AIDS respite care and harm reduction support to Victoria's HIV+ and/or intravenous drug using communities. Although our day-to-day operations ceased, our small organization found itself with enough money remaining to undertake a legacy project in VARCS' memory. The Board of Directors of VARCS agreed to fund a needs assessment survey to determine whether there was an appetite and support for a "bricks and mortar" queer space in Victoria.

Working closely with VARCS Co-chair T.J. Furlani, consultant Andrew Shopland was contracted to connect with local community leaders to ensure the content of the survey reflected the diversity of Victoria's Queer/LGBT communities. The survey was launched on July 4th at Alt-Pride and on July 5th at the Victoria Pride Festival.

Survey Methodology

1. Met with community leaders to get an impression of the current state of Victoria's Queer / LGBT communities
2. Developed survey
3. Received feedback on survey from community leaders
4. Launched survey at Alt-Pride and Pride
5. Distributed survey online for 2 weeks through social networks and community organization mailing lists
6. Analyzed results and presented report to community



Results

From 1,089 discrete views of the VictoriaNeeds.LGBT website, we received 482 responses to the survey. This high conversion rate of 44% shows strong interest in the survey.

Demographics

Demographic questions were intended to ensure our sample represented the diversity of our communities, and to identify patterns among specific groups within our communities.

Location, Age, and Identity

398 of the 482 responses (83%) were identified as from Greater Victoria¹. The remainder of the responses are broken down by location in the table to the right.

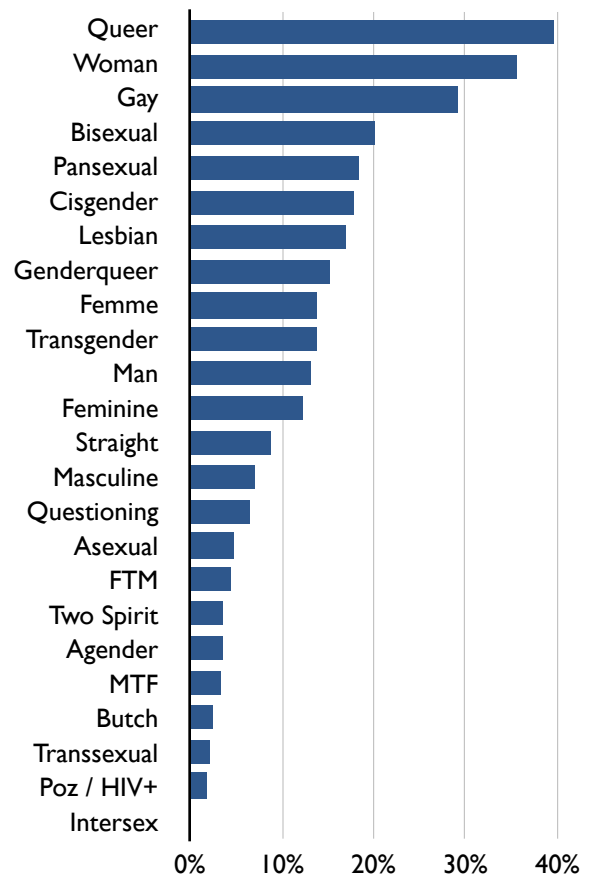
Age of respondents skewed lower, with the majority of respondents falling into the 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 categories. To account for this, much of the analysis was done through a lens of age to minimize this imbalance and illuminate generational differences.

Respondents reported a diversity of gender, sex, and sexuality identities. For the “Add your own” response to this question, the two most common responses were genderfluid and non-binary.

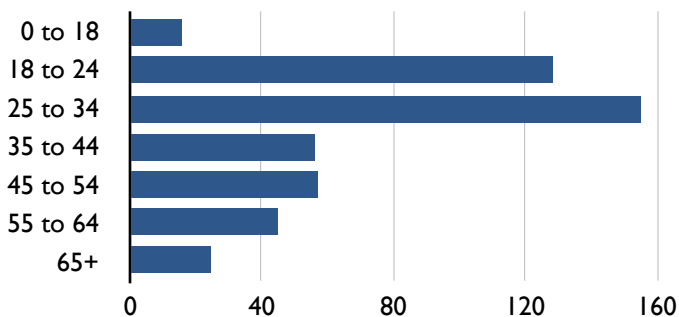
Respondents by Location

Location	Responses
Greater Victoria ¹	398
Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands	38
Rest of BC	14
Outside of BC	10
Unknown	22
Total	482

Percentage of Respondents by Identity



Count of Respondents by Age



¹ Greater Victoria is composed of the Victoria Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) excluding rural components of Juan de Fuca Electoral Area, which are included in Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands.

Map of Victoria CMA: [https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/regional-planning-pdf/Population/victoria-census-metropolitan-area-\(cma\).pdf](https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/regional-planning-pdf/Population/victoria-census-metropolitan-area-(cma).pdf)

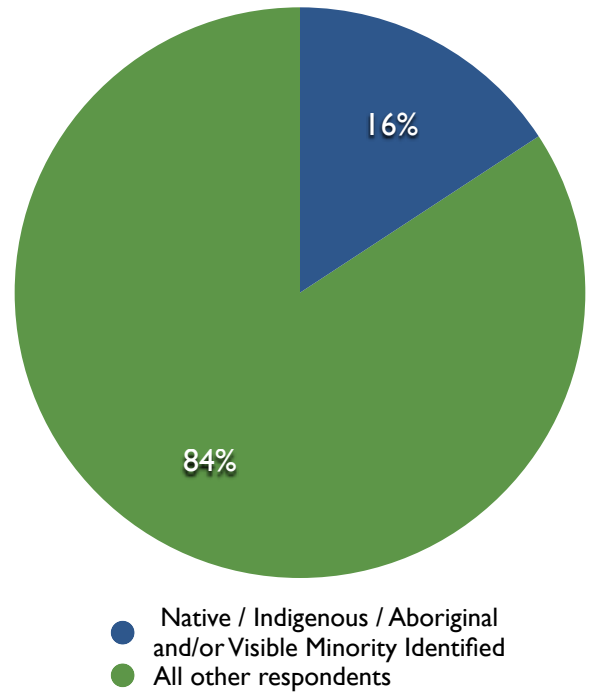
Ethnic / Racial Diversity

One question cannot adequately capture the full complexities of something like ethnic and racial identities and experience. The intention behind this question was to be able to understand the extent to which the results included the voices of the Queer / LGBT Indigenous and People of Colour (IPOC) in our communities.

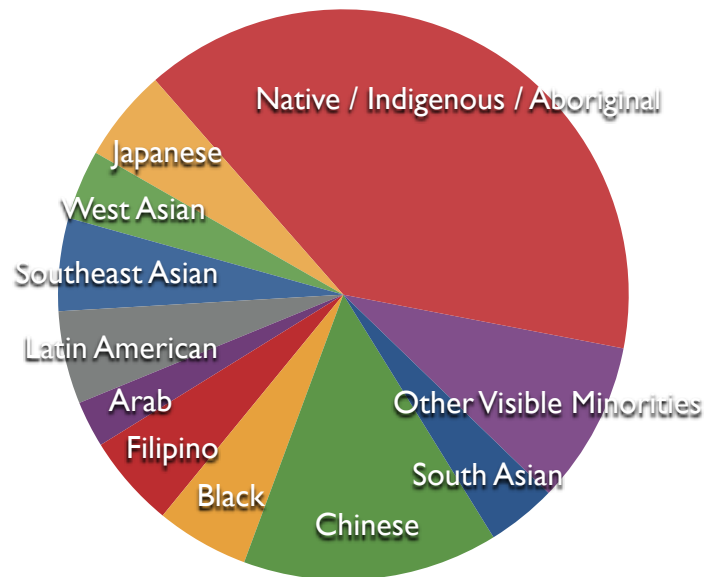
16% of respondents identified themselves as Native / Indigenous / Aboriginal or with one of Statistics Canada's Visible Minority categories. Break down of specific identities are shown to the right. This percentage is comparable to the 14% of residents in Greater Victoria who were identified as Aboriginal or Visible Minorities in the 2006 census.²

Having a sample of IPOC people in the survey that is comparable to the broader community represents an adequate response. To maintain and increase this level of participation, future consultation should deliberately reach out to IPOC communities, with visible representation of IPOC voices in the coming process being integral.

Ethnic / Racial Identity of Respondents



Native / Indigenous / Aboriginal or Visible Minority Identified Respondents

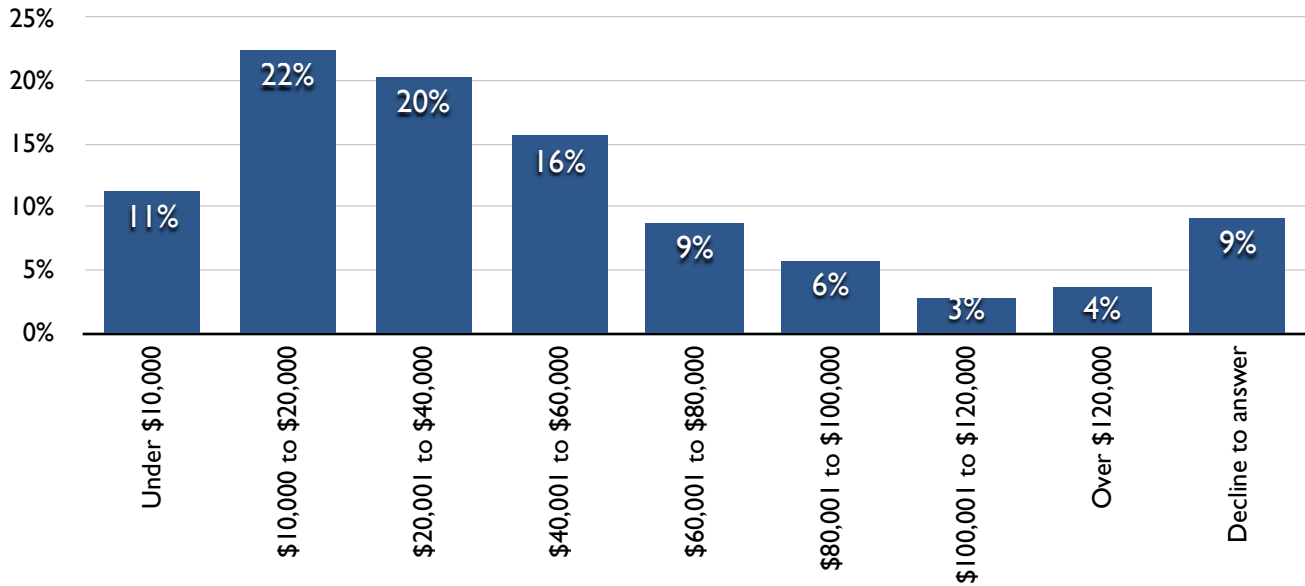


² Source: Statistics Canada, Victoria Census Metropolitan Area, 2006 Census
 Visible minority population: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/101/cst01/demo53g-eng.htm>
 Population by Aboriginal group: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/101/cst01/demo64a-eng.htm>

Income

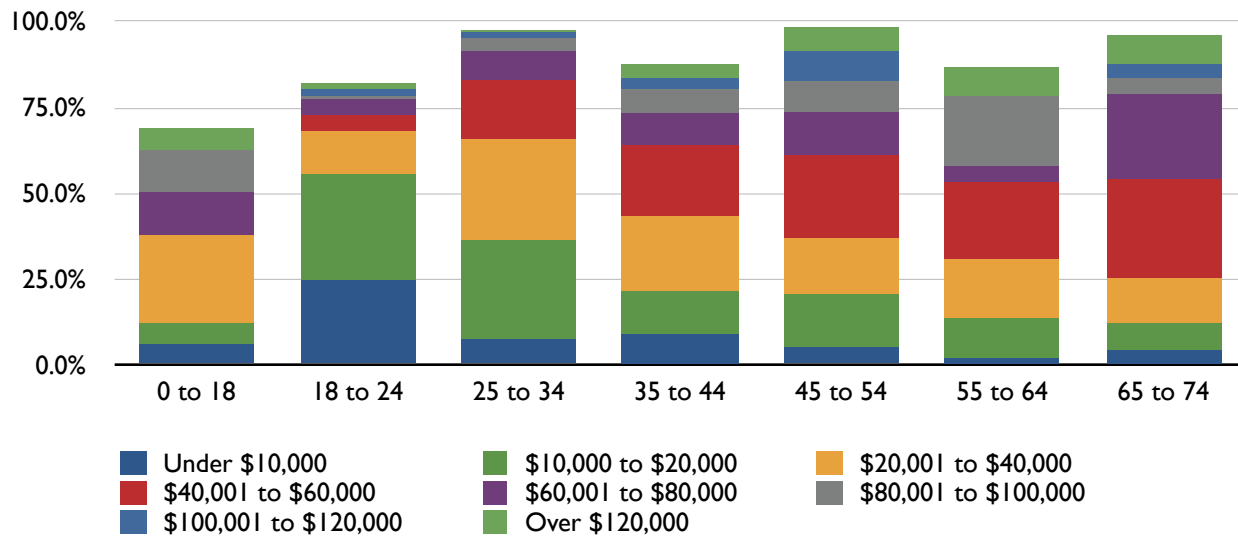
The median family income for Greater Victoria³ in 2013 was \$84,500 - 78% of our respondents fell in categories below this, with only 12% above. (9% of respondents declined to answer.) This suggests that either only lower income members of the community responded to the survey, or more likely that members of the Queer / LGBT communities tend to have lower incomes.

Percentage of Respondents by Income Category



While this pattern may seem to be a result of the higher percentage of younger respondents, the trend towards lower income is still visible when broken apart by age group..

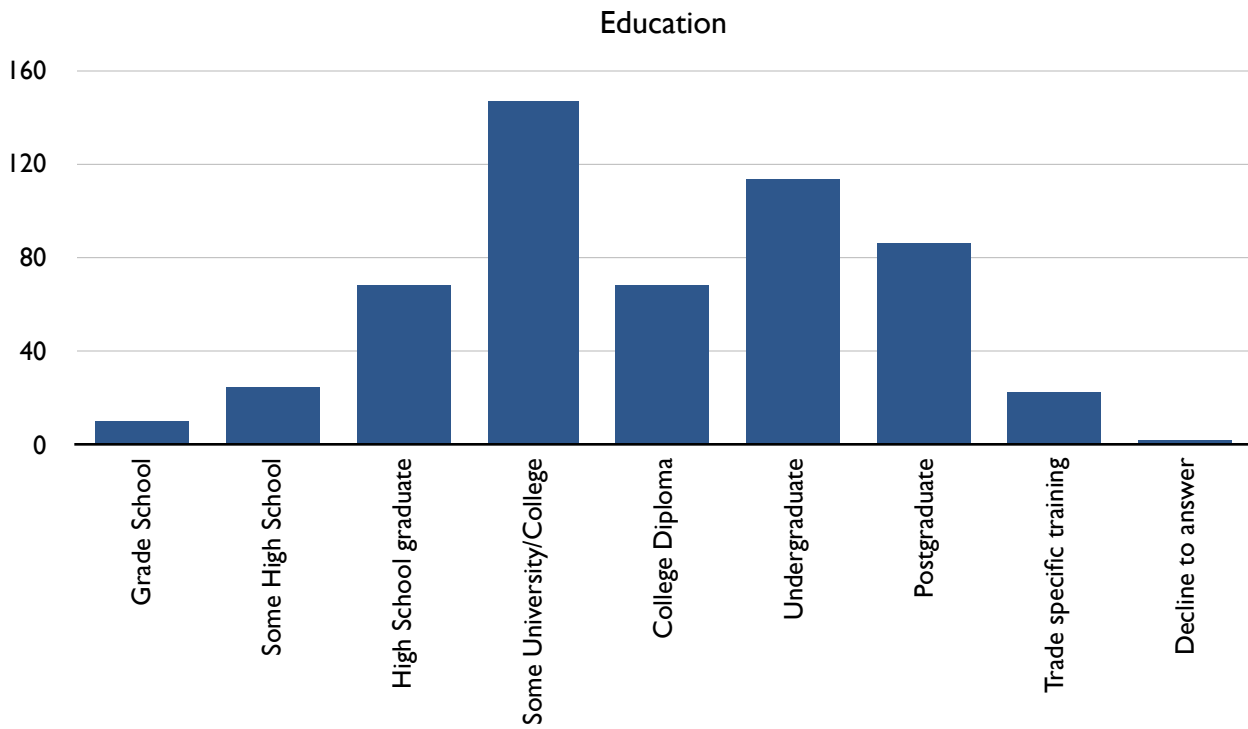
Income Category of Respondents by Age



³ Source: Statistics Canada, Victoria Census Metropolitan Area, 2013
 Median total income: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/famil107a-eng.htm>

Education

Overall, the survey respondents had high levels of education. The “Some University/College” category is dominant when all ages are aggregated, but this seems to be due to the high rate of responses from people who are currently of the usual age for pursuing post-secondary education.



Current Community

The Current Community questions were intended to get a snapshot of how respondents are currently relating to and engaging with Victoria's Queer / LGBT communities.

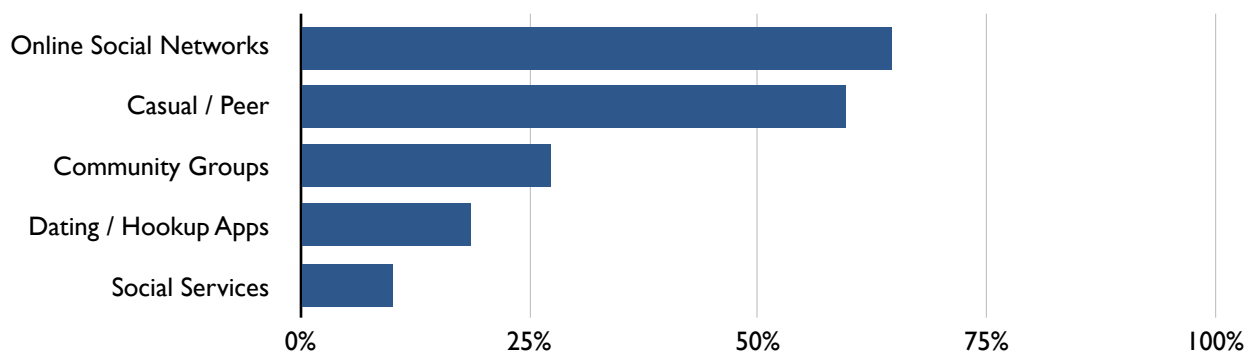
Engagement and Participation

The two main modes that respondents use to engage with other members of their Queer / LGBT communities were Online Social Networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) and Casual / Peer (hanging out with friends).

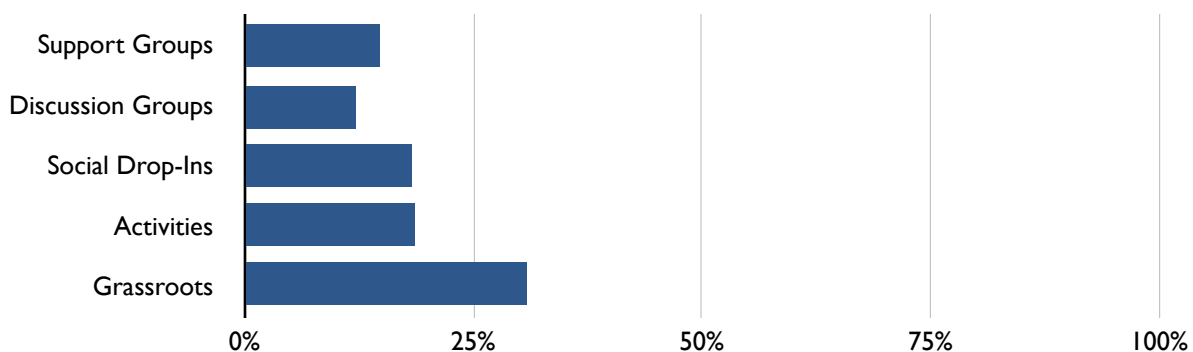
The main type of Queer / LGBT events, programs, or services that respondents participate in was Grassroots (potlucks, house parties, etc.).

Three themes arose from the 254 responses to "What sorts of Queer/LGBT events, programs, or services are missing?" Casual social space was the main one, described as a space to informally meet and be in Queer / LGBT community such as a coffee shop or a community centre, specifically one that is all ages and not focused on alcohol. The other two themes were programs and services for youth and trans / genderqueer / non binary people.

How are you currently engaging with other members of your Queer/LGBT communities?



What types of Queer/LGBT events, programs, or services do you participate in?



Satisfaction and Improvement

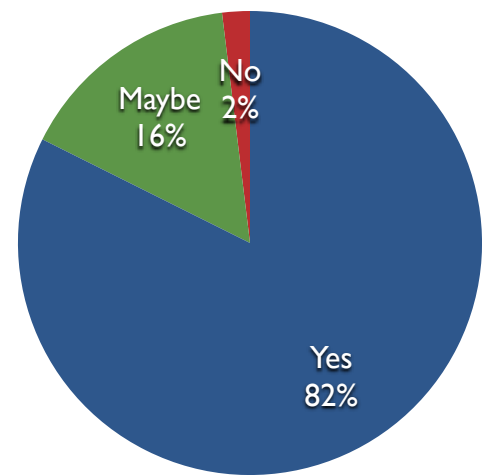
Neither question around satisfaction and improvement showed any clear pattern that would suggest an obvious priority. The weighted average for the “How satisfied are you with current events, programs etc.” showed an overall level of “neutral,” with very slight positive skew for the “add my own” category and a very slight negative skew for “discussion groups”. The “How could connection be improved?” question had a similar response, with the data showing that participants agreed that all the categories we assumed could improve connection would indeed improve connection, but not one in particular stood out. The weighted average showed a general level of “agree.”

Future Community

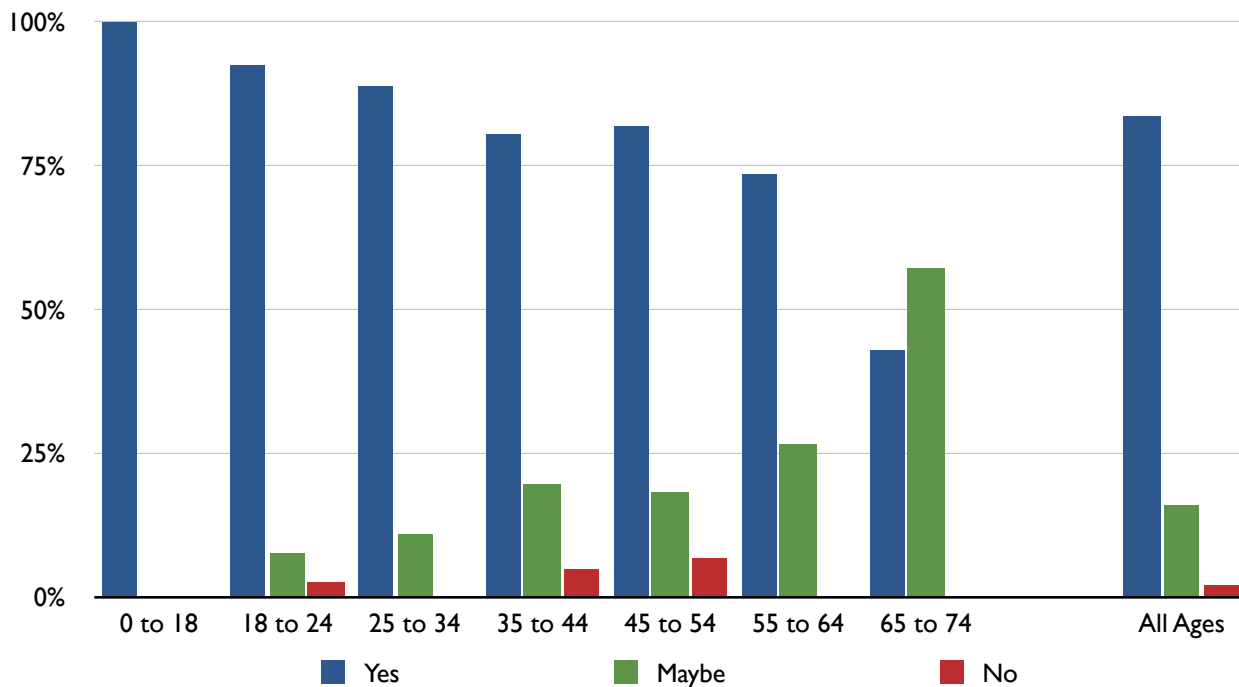
Future Community questions focused on the role of a potential Queer / LGBT Community Centre in Victoria, what priorities respondents had for it, and what factors would make it accessible and welcoming.

Respondents provided a strong yes (82% yes) to the question of “Does Victoria need a Queer/LGBT Community Centre?” The maybe responses (16% overall) increased with age, and had two distinct themes. Younger responses of maybe tended to focus on details of how the centre was implemented or run: “yes we need this, if certain conditions are met.” Older responses of maybe were more focused on doubts of the success of the project: “yes we need this, but it won’t work for certain reasons.” Overall, very few people disagreed with the need for a community centre, more with the feasibility of it actually being successful.

Does Victoria need a Queer/LGBT Community Centre?



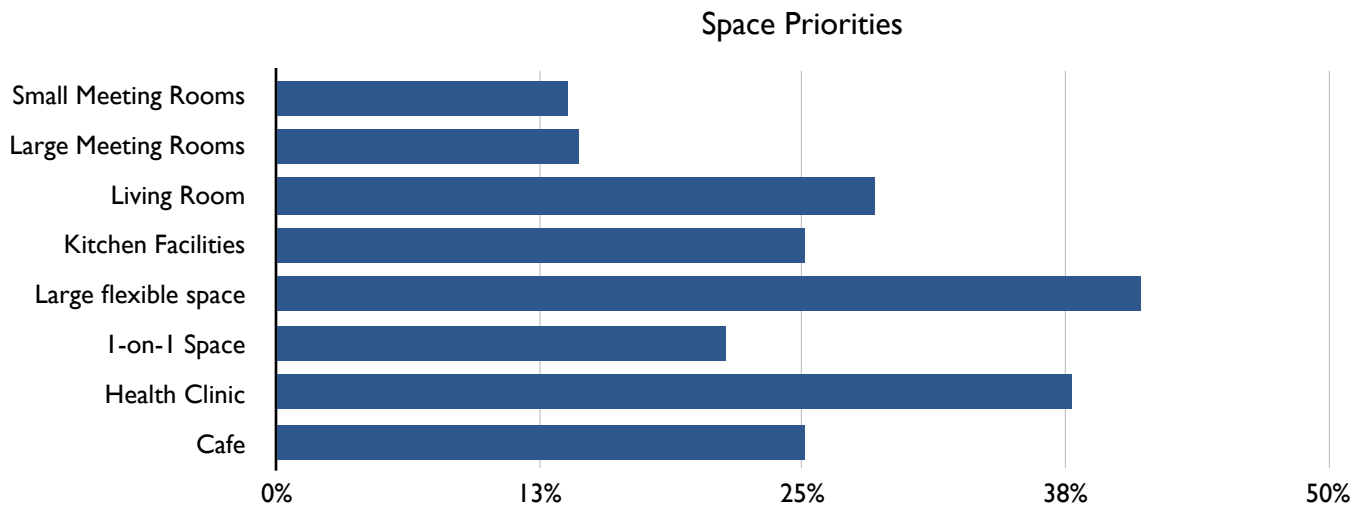
Does Victoria need a Queer/LGBT Community Centre, by Age Category



Space Priorities

- Large flexible space
- Health clinic
- Living room

A large flexible space (e.g. multipurpose room) was a clear priority for almost every identity and age group. Health clinic space (which could be used for: STI testing, hormone injections, naturopathy, etc.) was the other clear priority and was the highest priority for many groups⁴, often by some margin. Living room space (couches, comfy chairs, etc.) was not identified as a priority for any specific age group or identity except for the Questioning identity, but had high support overall. This suggests that the need is based on something experienced across identities, potentially introversion. Please see Appendix A for a detailed break-down of space priorities by identity.

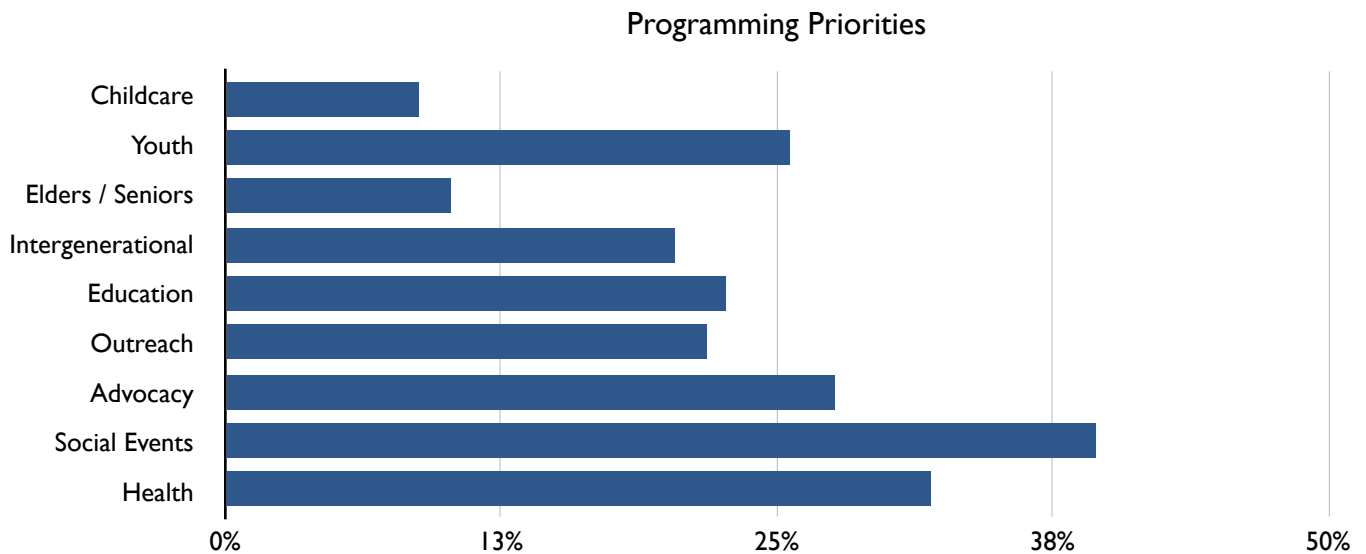


⁴ Health Clinic space was the highest priority for the following identities: agender, asexual, bisexual, FTM, genderqueer, pansexual, transgender, transsexual. It was the second highest priority for queer and woman.

Programming Priorities

- Social Events
- Health
- Advocacy

Social Events was the highest priority for the overall sample, as well as for many specific identities and age groups. Similar to the space priority of a Health Clinic, Health programming was a notable priority for a similar list of identity groups⁵. Advocacy was a clear third priority overall, being a top priority for many identities. Please see Appendix B a detailed break-down of programming priorities by identity.



⁵ Health programming was a priority for the following identities: agender, asexual, FTM, genderqueer, masculine, MTF, pansexual, queer, transgender, transsexual, woman

Creating a Welcoming and Accessible Space

Two open ended questions asked the respondents what factors would make the community centre either a safer space or an inaccessible space for them. The diverse responses have been grouped as either concrete needs or into four themes for how the culture / policy of the centre should be organized.

CONCRETE NEEDS

- Location / Proximity to Transit (central location, near frequent transit, safe neighbourhood)
- Hours (weekdays, evenings, and weekends)
- Physical Accessibility (space accessible to people with diverse bodies and mobilities)
- Financial Accessibility (ensuring that cost is not a barrier to participation in programs or events)

GENDER INCLUSION

The theme of gender inclusion was present in two main forms. First was the need for gender neutral physical spaces such as washrooms. Second was programming, which included desires for both gender inclusive programming and when programs had reason to be gender specific, that they remained trans inclusive.

CENTRING EDGES, FEELING REPRESENTED

Across identities, respondents expressed that they wanted to feel welcomed in the space, and that they wanted to see themselves represented in the staff / governing body of the organization. To ensure that this is a reality, work must be done to help bring those who are often on the edges of our communities closer towards the centre. In an LGBT context this often means remembering to focus not just on lesbian and gay, but to bring transgender and bisexual people to the forefront. In a broader Queer context, this often means remembering to centre the diversity of sexualities and genders beyond LGBT. This also applies to other intersections of identity with Queer / LGBT, especially Indigenous and People of Colour communities.

POLITICS OF THE SPACE

Respondents' desire for the political nature of the space provided a bit of a paradox. Groups expressed needs for the space to be political and also for it to be not too political, or apolitical. Further, members of both groups felt excluded by the other: (e.g. "I feel excluded when the space is too political." and "I feel excluded when the space is not political enough.") From the perspective that personal actions are political and that a marginalized community supporting itself or simply gathering is also political, there is no way for a Queer / LGBT community centre to be completely

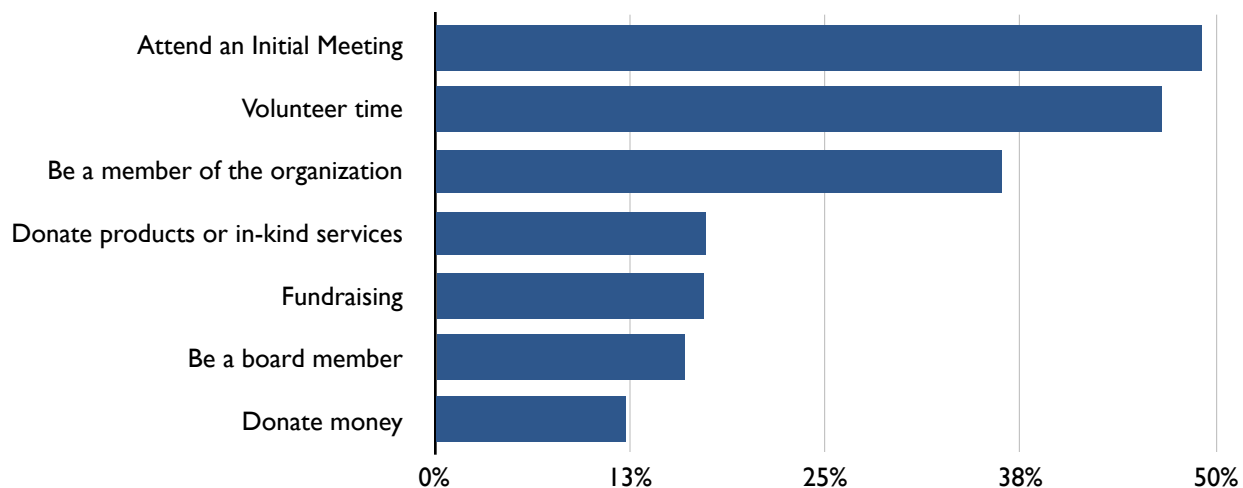
apolitical, nor would it be served by that extreme a position. However, the degree to which the organization itself actively participates in activism (separate from political activism being facilitated by other groups that are able to utilize the community centre’s spaces) and the type of culture the centre has around individuals choosing to participate / choose to not participate in more direct political activism should be deliberately cultivated to find a balance of inclusiveness not just for the two extremes (very political vs. not political), but for the majority of the community who fall somewhere in between.

SAFER SPACE STRUCTURES

In order to actively and consciously facilitate a safer space, many respondents expressed desire for having clear policy and procedure for what kinds of behaviour are appropriate in the space and what responses occur for inappropriate behaviour, along with specific people responsible for facilitating this. These desires were strongly framed with the goal of “education, not exclusion” where the intention is not to brashly exclude anyone who isn’t already on the cutting edge of inclusive language, but to actively work to educate the community preemptively and in the space around how we can best be supportive of and kind to each other. Many people mentioned UVic Pride and Homospun as examples of organizations that do this well and have policy and practice that could be modelled after.

Support

A significant number of respondents expressed interest in supporting a future community centre in a variety of ways. Almost half of the respondents (49%) said they would attend an initial community meeting about this project. 46% indicated they would volunteer their time and 36% would participate in the organization as a member.



Conclusions

The VictoriaNeeds survey showed a strong expression of need for a Queer / LGBT Community Centre. Community priorities for the space were a large flexible space such as a multipurpose room, a health clinic, and living room type space with chairs and couches. Social events, health, and advocacy were all clear priorities for the type of programming this centre would offer. Support was also strongly expressed, with almost 50% of respondents reporting they would attend an initial community meeting and 46% reporting that they would volunteer their time.

A meeting will be called in Fall 2015 to present this report to the community and to determine the next steps of this project.

Appendices

A: Space Priorities by Identity

Identities	Small Meeting Rooms	Large Meeting Rooms	Living Room	Kitchen	Large flexible space	I-on-I Space	Health Clinic	Cafe	Responses
Agender	0%	6%	39%	17%	11%	33%	61%	22%	18
Asexual	13%	9%	26%	39%	39%	22%	48%	17%	23
Bisexual	14%	15%	26%	22%	36%	25%	40%	22%	97
Butch	0%	17%	42%	42%	50%	25%	33%	8%	12
Cisgender	14%	16%	33%	19%	51%	20%	30%	23%	86
Feminine	18%	15%	42%	32%	48%	20%	30%	18%	60
Femme	12%	16%	36%	33%	51%	21%	39%	19%	67
FTM	14%	19%	29%	19%	43%	24%	43%	10%	21
Gay	16%	15%	34%	31%	45%	23%	33%	34%	140
Genderqueer	14%	10%	29%	25%	45%	29%	51%	21%	73
Lesbian	15%	17%	27%	26%	55%	20%	37%	34%	82
Man	16%	11%	29%	17%	49%	35%	38%	30%	63
Masculine	18%	18%	44%	24%	44%	35%	44%	15%	34
MTF	19%	38%	25%	13%	44%	13%	31%	31%	16
Pansexual	16%	12%	36%	15%	42%	25%	46%	20%	89
Poz / HIV+	22%	22%	22%	33%	67%	33%	33%	33%	9
Queer	12%	11%	35%	25%	48%	22%	45%	24%	191
Questioning	19%	9%	47%	28%	34%	16%	28%	25%	32
Straight	7%	19%	29%	19%	31%	10%	19%	12%	42
Transgender	20%	20%	24%	27%	42%	32%	53%	18%	66
Transsexual	36%	18%	18%	27%	9%	18%	36%	9%	11
Two Spirit	17%	17%	28%	56%	39%	33%	33%	22%	18
Woman	12%	14%	28%	26%	43%	19%	37%	22%	171
Everyone	14%	14%	28%	25%	41%	21%	38%	25%	482

- Bolded figure represents that identity's highest priority.
- Colour highlight identifies responses that were obvious priorities over other responses.
- If there is no highlight in a row then there were no obvious priorities.

B: Programming Priorities by Identity

Row Labels	Child-care	Youth	Elders / Seniors	Inter-generational	Education	Outreach	Advocacy	Social Events	Health	Responses
Agender	6%	17%	0%	33%	11%	22%	39%	28%	39%	18
Asexual	13%	17%	0%	17%	43%	17%	30%	22%	48%	23
Bisexual	8%	31%	5%	14%	24%	31%	30%	39%	36%	97
Butch	8%	33%	17%	42%	25%	8%	50%	50%	17%	12
Cisgender	16%	33%	5%	15%	27%	24%	27%	35%	28%	86
Feminine	13%	27%	3%	20%	18%	23%	35%	53%	35%	60
Femme	18%	31%	4%	19%	15%	30%	28%	42%	33%	67
FTM	5%	19%	5%	24%	24%	10%	38%	33%	33%	21
Gay	8%	27%	17%	26%	21%	24%	29%	51%	29%	140
Genderqueer	10%	19%	5%	26%	22%	23%	41%	38%	38%	73
Lesbian	11%	27%	13%	23%	26%	21%	33%	51%	24%	82
Man	11%	35%	17%	14%	25%	30%	30%	29%	33%	63
Masculine	6%	29%	6%	26%	44%	26%	38%	29%	38%	34
MTF	6%	25%	6%	13%	31%	25%	19%	50%	44%	16
Pansexual	8%	28%	1%	16%	30%	22%	30%	38%	42%	89
Poz / HIV+	11%	33%	22%	33%	11%	11%	56%	56%	33%	9
Queer	10%	26%	6%	25%	21%	24%	34%	43%	35%	191
Questioning	13%	22%	0%	34%	25%	22%	31%	50%	9%	32
Straight	2%	29%	10%	2%	19%	17%	29%	19%	14%	42
Transgender	6%	21%	6%	27%	23%	21%	39%	50%	52%	66
Transsexual	9%	27%	9%	18%	18%	9%	36%	36%	45%	11
Two Spirit	17%	28%	17%	33%	17%	28%	22%	33%	33%	18
Woman	11%	28%	5%	19%	25%	22%	25%	37%	31%	171
Everyone	9%	26%	10%	20%	23%	22%	28%	39%	32%	482

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