



2025/26

ANNUAL REPORT

Fyrefly

Institute for Sexual and Gender Diversity

Housed in the University of Alberta's Faculty of Education, the **Fyrefly Institute for Gender and Sexual Diversity (Fyrefly Institute)**, formerly known as the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMSS), provides direct services and leads ground breaking research that affects policy development, intervention, education and community outreach for 2SLGBTQ+ people.

Bringing together research, teaching, wellness services, and community outreach under one umbrella enables us to combine our studies and services in ways that create opportunities for innovative intellectual work and sustained educational and community outreach.

Our advocacy and research not only helps youth at large, but also guides professional development and education for teachers, social workers, family physicians, psychologists, guidance counsellors and other caring professionals, enabling them to be better resources and advocates for 2SLGBTQ+ youth and their families.

MISSION

Fyrefly works to create a society where all queer and trans people are free of discrimination. Hope drives all of our initiatives including education programs, research, policy development, advocacy, and community services. We strive to:

- Decolonize our practices
- Integrate intersectionality in all that we do
- Empower the 2SLGBTQ+ community to thrive
- Strengthen community through collaboration
- Expand public awareness of 2SLGBTQ+ issues
- Inspire and equip community leaders, particularly among youth
- Advance sexual and gender diversity studies to the forefront
- Advocate for human rights

We are unique in that we utilize research to inform our services, and our services drive the direction of our research, which often involve community partnerships.

RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

Current research projects include:

- Social Innovation Lab – Camp fYrefly Outcomes (In partnership with the University of Saskatchewan)
- Outcomes Evaluation - CHEW Project (In partnership with MacEwan University)
- 2SLGBTQ+ Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub - A large-scale national project with a three-research approach focused on identifying 2SLGBTQ+ entrepreneurs in Canada and their experiences.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Fyrefly offers a variety of innovative programs and services, including:

- **Family Resilience Project:** We offer free therapy with registered mental health professionals for 2SLGBTQ+ youth, their families and caregivers. The program is accepting new clients.
- **Camp fYrefly:** A national leadership and wellness camp for 2SLGBTQ+ youth that focuses on their individual needs, socialization, health, and resilience. There are four camps across Canada. In 2025, 98 total attendees were welcomed to the Alberta North location.
- **Rural Fyrefly in Schools (FINS):** An educational initiative focused on effective allyship and reducing homo/transphobic discrimination against 2SLGBTQ+ youth. Our Rural Fyrefly in Schools Education Coordinator, Star Oldring (they/them), provided education to over 1,550 participants across 72 sessions across Alberta and Canada.
- **Where the Rivers Meet (WTRM):** An educational initiative centred on traditional and contemporary perspectives on Indigenous gender and sexual diversity and Indigenous ways of knowing. Our Where the Rivers Meet Program Coordinator, Rae Madge (they/she), provided education to 2,000 participants across 60 workshops and events in 2025.
- **Community, Health, Empowerment & Wellness (CHEW) Project:** Fyrefly partners with Boyle Street Community Services and Youth Empowerment and Support Services (YESS) to provide free, frontline support for 2SLGBTQI+ youth aged 14 to 29. CHEW YEG had 2,087 touchpoints and 162 youth were supported in 2025. Over the past two years, CHEW Calgary supported over 2,000 individuals.

- **University of Alberta Pride Week:** Pride Week is a celebration of the University's 2SLGBTQ+ community. Mayor Andrew Knack offered a proclamation declaring Pride Week in Edmonton to coincide with the YEG Campus Pride Network's. Pride Week 2026 was funded by the Office of the Vice-Provost (Access, Community and Belonging), and Student Success and Experience.
- **Fyrefly's Annual Mayor's Pride Brunch:** MP McPherson, MLA Arcand-Paul along with MLAs Irwin and Schmidt, and Mayor Knack provided remarks alongside City Councillors, with the Mayor providing a proclamation to the Institute declaring Pride Month in Edmonton. Edmonton Public School Board Trustee, Saadiq Sumar, also offered remarks alongside the Edmonton Public School Board Trustees. The event featured local drag performers, Cedar T, Felicia Bonné and Gabe Autumn. Many local businesses generously donated items to raise funds for our programs. Approximately 150 individuals attended.
- **Alberta GSA Conference:** An annual conference that offers educational workshops and resources on 2SLGBTQ+ topics to students and teachers. Students and teachers travelled from all around Alberta to attend the conference. 161 total attendees joined us at the AB GSA conference in 2026.
- **Rainbow Alliance for Youth in Edmonton:** The RAYE is a collaborative network of service providers and community organizations dedicated to improving the lives of 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in Edmonton, growing to 97 members across 70 organizations, securing a \$40,000 grant for a professional development conference, and hosting monthly meetings to share resources and build partnerships. Looking ahead, RAYE is conducting a 2SLGBTQIA+ Youth Survey to drive meaningful, community-led change.

PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Highlights of some major activities from the past year include:

- **CHEW Project:** CHEW YEG took youth out to a sweat lodge and held a pipe ceremony for youth. We also held our second annual CHEW BBQ. Through Wild Wolves Charity's partnership with Boyle Street Community Services and CHEW Project YEG, youth were able to paint a Wild Wolves Charity food truck, which will be used to support our houseless community.
- **Camp Fyrefly:** We have planned expansions for Kelowna, British Columbia and also Canmore, Alberta. For Canmore, we are collaborating with their Family Connection Centre.
- **Intergenerational Arts-based workshops:** Fyrefly onboarded an Arts Workshop Coordinator, Rin Marie Wilson (they/them), who facilitates and organizes free, intergenerational, inclusive arts-based programming across Alberta.
- **Fyrefly Merchandise Fundraiser:** We continued offering our Fyrefly collection fundraiser with the University of Alberta's Bookstore.
- **Fyrefly Scholarships:** We offer scholarships for University of Alberta graduate students focused on 2SLGBTQ+ research, leadership, and community service.
- **Brite line:** We continued our partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association -- Edmonton Chapter for the accredited 24-hour crisis support line.
- **National 2SLGBTQI+ Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (REKH):** We continued our partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association -- Edmonton Chapter for the accredited 24-hour crisis support line.



OUR PEOPLE

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FIND OUT MORE

Visit uab.ca/flyrefly for detailed information about our research, programs and services

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