



ALBERTA MEN'S NETWORK

Experiencing Masculinities Symposia

Perspectives on Liberatory and Healthy Masculinities
and Violence Prevention



Experiencing Masculinities Symposia:

Sharing Perspectives on Liberatory and Healthy Masculinities and Violence Prevention

We would like to express our gratitude for the incredible work that the Alberta Men's Network undertook to organize Experiencing Masculinities Symposia and the amazing presenters who shared their knowledge. We would extend our appreciation to all the community volunteers, and organizational partners that made this event possible, and the funders that supported this event.

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Presenters: (Calgary) Abbas Mancey, Adrian Wolfleg, Arya Boustani, Doug Murphy, Emily Ophus, Fanny Oliphant, Jeff Halvorsen, Justin Otteson, Kyle Campiou, Lahn Jones, Lemlem Haile, Liza Lorenzetti, Madan Nath, Maksim Kilmov, Michael Hoyt, Ryan Valley, Stafford Perry, Stefan de Villiers, Travis Pederson, Vic Lantion. (Edmonton) Punch Jackson, Corey Wyness, Kyle Campiou, David Long, Janki Shankar Mohammad Ayyash (REACH), Jasvinder Chana, Garima Khatri (PARIVAAR), Joseph Luri (EMCN).

Organizational partners: Action Dignity, Alberta Human Rights Education and Multiculturalism Fund, Alberta Men's Network, Alberta Network of Immigrant Women, Dad Central Alberta, Faculty of Social Work department University Of Calgary, Men's Action Network Calgary, Men Edmonton, Women's Resource Center University Of Calgary.

Videography: Arya Boustani (Merge Point Audiovisual)

Funders: Office of the Vice-President (Research) University of Calgary, Alberta Human Rights Education and Multiculturalism Fund, Calgary Foundation,

Suggested citation: Lorenzetti, L., Wright, A., Haile, L., Murphy, D., Shankar, J., Hoyt, M. & Sehgal, K. (2018). Experiencing masculinities symposia: Sharing perspectives on liberatory and healthy masculinities and violence prevention. Calgary, AB: Alberta Men's Network/University of Calgary, Faculty of Social Work.

Introduction

The Alberta Men's Network¹, supported by Men's Action Network Calgary, Men Edmonton and many partner organizations, is a community committed to nonviolence and working across the gender spectrum to create healthy families and communities. We support healthy masculinities by identifying and working within a human rights, anticolonial and antiracist framework. The Network is made up of dedicated members who belong to community, non-profit, academic, social service, government, business, and other sectors across Alberta. Our human rights and anticolonial lens is a firm foundation from which to build community supports and programs to transform our structures and the social norms that perpetuate violence and inequality. Working with diversity as our strength, AMN believes that cultural humility, respect, and solidarity through love are cornerstones of men's violence prevention work.

AMN works to promote healthy and positive masculinities by recognizing and working to end all forms of oppression, including, patriarchy and gender inequity, colonization, racism, white privilege, economic inequality, gender and sexual stigma, ableism and other dehumanization. These historical relationships of power and oppression create various levels of marginalization and social exclusion, which together, promote enduring systemic inequality over generations. In the Canadian context, historical and intergenerational trauma through European colonization and ongoing colonial relations maintain white, male privilege. This resonates with histories around the world.

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights² underscores important issues related to intersectional oppression, and the need for multi-sectoral collaboration to address and prevent discrimination and the violation of fundamental human rights³.

¹ This section is taken from: Lorenzetti, L., Valley, R., Lantion, V., Haile, L., & Wolfleg, A. (2018). *Men as agents of change: Adopting an antiracist and anticolonial lens in gender justice*. Calgary, AB: Alberta Men's Network/University of Calgary, Faculty of Social Work.

² United Nations Declaration of Human Rights UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948, 217 A (III),

³ AMN understands 'fundamental human rights' is an unfolding and evolving concept.

Further, the United Nations and the World Health Organization⁴ recognize gender-based oppression and gender-based violence as significant violations of fundamental rights.

Research emphasizes that socialization towards male dominance in both public and private spheres and intergenerational patterns contribute to systemic gender inequality. A growing body of literature also suggests that gender inequality and violence work in tandem with other forms of oppression⁵. In the area of gender inequality, rigid gender/sexuality stereotypes and expectations can have negative consequences for men and boys, as they do for women, girls, transgender and two-spirit peoples. For example, researchers associate gender non-conformity to increased levels of discrimination and violence against boys and young men in particular⁶. Moreover, societal expectations put upon men to demonstrate and uphold 'masculinity scripts' can lead to risk-taking behaviours that can decrease physical and mental health, men's self-care and help seeking activities. An intersectionality analysis⁷ is needed in order to uncover strategies that engage organizations and communities to work against inequities in their various forms.

Human rights organizations worldwide recognize the need to focus on engaging men in gender equality work, with a focus on capacity-building and peer mentorship roles as primary strategies for the prevention of gender based inequality and violence⁸. Building on this momentum, organizations and communities in Alberta have important roles to play in shifting social norms and advocating for progressive policy changes. Applying an intersectional lens, the Alberta Men's Network, supported by a Leadership Team of eighteen organizations and dozens of citizens, developed and distributed a survey for men in the late months of 2015 regarding barriers and enablers to men's well-being,

⁴ World Health Organization (2008). *Preventing violence and reducing its impact: How development agencies can help*. Retrieved from http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241596589_eng.pdf

⁵ Benson, M. L., Fox, G. L., DeMaris, A., & Van Wyk, J. (2003). Neighborhood disadvantage, individual economic distress and violence against women in intimate relationships. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 19(3), 207-235. Goodmark, L. (2012). Transgender people, intimate partner abuse, and the legal system. *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, 48(2), 51-104.; Lorenzetti, L., Walsh, C. A., Mack, K. D., Sebastian, B., Ngeth, P., & Mancey, A. (2014). *The 2014 West East Institute*, 82-89.

⁶ Lorenzetti, L., Wells, L., Logie, C., & Callaghan, T. (2017). Understanding and preventing domestic violence in the lives of gender and sexually diverse persons. *Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 26(3), 175-185.

⁷ Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing intersections of race and sex: A black feminist critique of anti-discrimination doctrine, feminist theory and anti-racist politics. *Chicago Legal Forum*, 1(8), 137-169.

⁸ MenEngage: Boys and Men for Gender Equality. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.menengage.org/>

healthy relationships and violence prevention. Responses by over 2200 men underscored that issues such as discrimination, the absence of financial security, and violence are significant barriers to well-being, healthy relationships and harmonious communities⁹. Key identified barriers included financial insecurity, housing, discrimination, family conflict and trauma. For certain communities of respondents (Latino, South Asian, Indigenous and GBT2SIQ [Gay Bisexual, Trans and Queer] men, challenges related to social or structural inequality were more frequently reported. Building on the results and recommendations provided by men through this survey, the Men as Agents of Change project proposed that an intersectional lens would promote strategies to address sexism, racism, classism and other forms of oppression. AMN was tasked with working with agencies and community organizations to develop competencies and engagement skills and build tools and strategies to engage men in anti-oppression work and decrease social isolation and stigma created by marginalization.

AMN: Men As Agents of Change

The promotion of gender equality, healthy relationships, and communities free from oppression is an important step in fostering harmonious families and communities in Alberta. In 2017, the Alberta Human Rights Education and Multiculturalism Fund provided critical funding to the Alberta Network of Immigrant Women to work with AMN in implementing "Men as Agents of the Change". The project focused on building the capacity of organizations and various other stakeholders to support men's involvement in human rights work and creating Toolkits and Community Research Briefs for community use. The objectives of the project were established from the results of the Alberta Men's Survey (AMS), led by AMN. The AMS created a foundation for AMN's next phase of work.

Centered on AMN's community-based model to support men's engagement in actions to address and prevent inequities related to gender and racial oppression,

⁹ Lorenzetti, L., Valley, R., Lantion, V., Haile, L., & Wolfleg, A. (2018). *Men as agents of change: Adopting an antiracist and anticolonial lens in gender justice*. Calgary, AB: Alberta Men's Network/University of Calgary, Faculty of Social Work.

colonialism and other forms of oppression¹⁰, Men as Agents of Change provided foundational support to a diverse group of community, agency and academic leaders to develop capacity in understanding and responding to the impact of gender inequity, culture and various forms of discrimination impact men in their relationships. A number of research briefs, toolkits and a social media platform were developed. The Symposia, “Experiencing Masculinities” was a long term vision of MAN-C founding members Vic Lantion and Liza Lorenzetti, that would bring together the passion and practice knowledge of community and agency leadership and participatory research led by engaged social justice community members, students and scholars.

Experiencing Masculinities: The Symposia

Experiencing Masculinities was hosted in both Calgary and Edmonton in June 2018 by the Alberta Men’s Network and the Faculty of Social Work (FSW) at the University of Calgary, in collaboration with Alberta Network of Immigrant Women, Men’s Action Network Calgary, Men Edmonton, the City of Edmonton, Action Dignity, The University of Calgary, Women’s Resource Centre and numerous community leaders. The Symposia, a free public event, brought together community members, academics, students, service providers, and community-leaders for a unique experiential learning opportunity focused on disseminating the research completed by AMN and the University of Calgary FSW in collaboration with on community-based approaches to violence prevention, men's well-being, and family wellness.

Recognizing that service-providers, academics, students, community leaders, and community members all come to the table with diverse skills, approaches, and learning needs, the Symposia included sharing theoretical perspectives, research, networking, discussions, panels, a world cafe, community-building and participatory experiential learning. The primary objectives of the Symposia included a) sharing the antiracist and anticolonial lens adopted by AMN, b) presenting AMN’s research briefs and toolkits, c) sharing knowledge that is relevant to participants’ work and daily lives, d) involving participants in transformative experiential learning related to prevention work

¹⁰ Lorenzetti, L., Valley, R., Lantion, V., Haile, L., & Wolfleg, A. (2018). *Men as agents of change: Adopting an antiracist and anticolonial lens in gender justice*. Calgary, AB: Alberta Men’s Network/University of Calgary, Faculty of Social Work.

with men. The first day of the Calgary and Edmonton Symposia focused on knowledge sharing and community building to develop best practices. Calgary hosted a second day in a community setting focusing on experiential learning for men and families and an Indigenous Community Feast. The symposia provided an engaging and interactive forum to explore cultural and contextual approaches to addressing issues related to men and masculinities through an intersectional, human rights, and Indigenous lens. The Calgary event was attended by 95 participants on day one, and 53 on Day 2 for the experiential activities component. Edmonton hosted a 1 Day session with an attendance of 65 people.

Calgary Event

The symposia explored cultural and contextual approaches to addressing issues related to men and masculinities through intersectional, collective-cultures, human rights, antiracist, transmasculine and Indigenous lenses. The Calgary event, hosted by Justin Otteson, offered sixteen sessions. Adrian Wolfleg opened the event with a land acknowledgment and Indigenous teaching. Liza Lorenzetti, Kamal Sehgal, and Ryan Valley welcomed participants, and Vic Lantion presented the original work of founding organization *Men's Action Network Calgary*. Jeff Halvorsen offered a session on *Racism, Masculinities, and Whiteness*; here, participants explored how well-meaning white men may perpetuate racism and support oppressive systems and what can be done to overcome these insidious behaviours and move to allyship. *The World Cafe* focused on *Toolkits to Work With Men* and was hosted concurrently by Adrian Wolfleg (Indigenous), Michael Hoyt, Lahn Jones (Masculinities), Travis Pedersen (Strategies for Working with Men) Abbas Mancey and Liza Lorenzetti (Consensus Decision Making) and offered participants a chance to talk about the AMN's framework and community tools.

Afternoon sessions included *Empathy and Equity: Working with Latino Men*, where Fanny Oliphant shared the responses from over 80 Latino Albertan men, who shared their perspectives on well-being and healthy relationships. Participants learned how a deeper connection to our own values and origins can enhance empathetic and compassionate work with others. In *Indigenous Approaches to Grief and Loss*, Adrian

Wolfleg taught participants how to use Nature's University and self-help techniques to break down masculine stereotypes. Emily Ophus and Stafford Perry facilitated *Mobilising Men in Community-Based Settings*, introducing participants to Calgary Sexual Health Centre's approach to engaging men in positive social change. *Super Dads, Super Kids Essentials Part 1 and 2* was hosted by Kyle Campiou as a full afternoon training session geared towards engaging father figures by utilizing best practices and action planning to emphasize father-friendliness in organizations.

During the final breakout sessions of Day 1, Stefan De Villers presented *Liberatory Masculinities from a Transmasculine Perspective*; in this workshop, participants were invited to reflect on their own relationship with masculinity/ies while learning from the lived experience of a trans man. In *South Asian Men & Mental Health: Findings from the Men's Survey and Yoga as a Prevention Approach*, Madan Nath, Vic Lanton and Adrian Wolfleg explored the well-being challenges and service barriers for South Asian men, and involving them in violence prevention work. The reconvening session, *Remembering, Actioning, and Reconciling*, hosted by Adrian Wolfleg, Lemlem Haile, and Liza Lorenzetti, shared on the importance of anti-racism and anti-colonial practices when working towards men's violence prevention work, including reconciliation, healing, and ending domestic violence.

Day 2 of the Calgary event offered four experiential and participatory sessions. The day began with *Healing Circle: A Traditional Approach to Wellbeing and Violence Prevention*, hosted by Adrian Wolfleg. Madan Nath then led *Yoga as a Violence Prevention Approach* followed by Maksim Klimov, who guided an *Ecstatic Dance Practice*, an empowering journey of self-discovery using different meditation techniques such as breath work, visualization, as well as different styles of movement. Doug Murphy's and Lemlem Haile offered information on an *Emerging Men's Shed: Community Bike Repair*. The day concluded with an Indigenous Community Feast.

Edmonton Event

The Edmonton event had eight sessions, beginning with Kyle Campiou and Adrian Wolfleg who opened the session with a land acknowledgment and Indigenous teachings. Dr. Janki Shankar introduced the event with *The Importance of Engaging*

Ethnocultural Men, followed by Liza Lorenzetti and Adrian Wolfleg who presented on *The Alberta Men's Survey*. David Long shared a *Historical Perspective on Men's Organizing*, followed by the *World Cafe workshops on Alberta Men's Network Toolkits* (Adrian Wolfleg, Travis Pedersen, Aizhan Zhumasheva, Michael Hoyt and Liza Lorenzetti) which yielded a number of engaging conversations on the emerging toolkits for working with men.

In the afternoon, Mohammad Ayyash (REACH), Jas Chana and Garima Khatri (PARIVAAR), and Joseph Luri (Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN) participated in the *Masculinity and Multiculturalism Panel*. Panelists shared experiences of working with multicultural communities to think about and express healthy masculinities in this new cultural environment. Punch Jackson and Michael Hoyt presented on *Men Sheds*; this session explored the development of local Men's Sheds, which are community-based organizations accessible to all men and whose primary activity is the provision of a safe and friendly environment where men work on meaningful projects. Corey Wyness hosted a workshop entitled *The Comprehensive Health Education Workers (C.H.E.W.), LGBTQ Men, and Masculinities*. This workshop offered participants an opportunity to see masculinity through the lens of the LGBTQ community. The interactive session included stories and feedback from this diverse community and some of their challenges/successes defining and living healthy masculinities. Capitalizing on the wisdom of the participants, the event concluded with breakout sessions that provided the opportunity for us to imagine how we can stay connected and work together to build healthy masculinities in a diverse world.

Symposia Evaluation: Method

The Symposia was evaluated in order to assess whether the key objectives were met. The organizing team created location-specific session feedback sheets to evaluate the impact of the Symposia, and included questions related to session content, event organization, and application to participants' work and daily lives. Participants had the opportunity to evaluate all of the sessions and workshops presented at both events. We asked what participants liked about the activities, key learnings or take-aways, if

participants planned on using any of the information from the sessions in their work or life, and invited them to join an AMN's email list for future activities.

In addition to the evaluation forms, participants at the Edmonton Symposia were invited to provide feedback to five "big questions" written on posters in the main event room. The poster questions were:

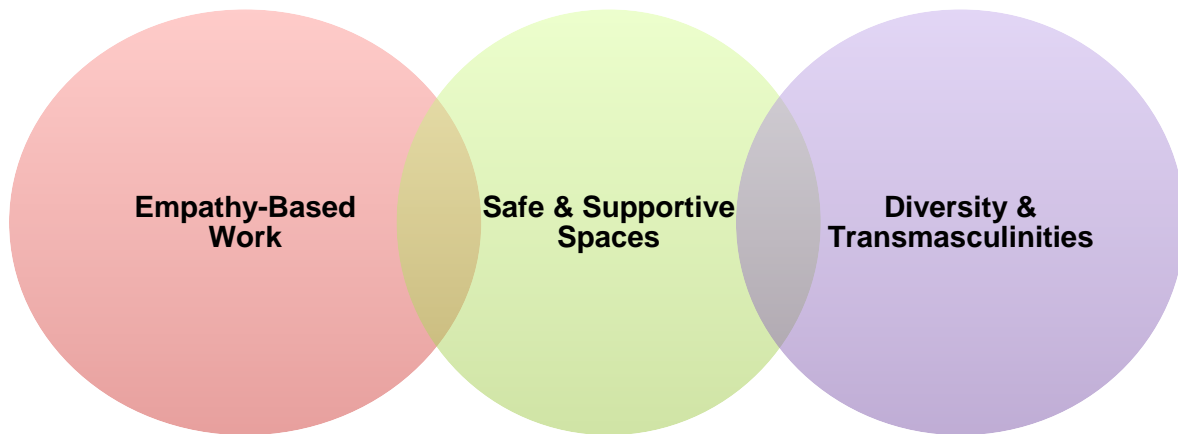
- What are the current barriers to collaborating/developing partnerships, and how can these be overcome?
- What collaborations/partnerships benefit you in your work with men?
- What would you like to see happening within the next 12-months in Edmonton to address the challenges associated with engaging men?
- What challenges do you experience engaging men?
- Who are the men you work with and what have they told you they need?

Evaluation Results: Calgary Symposium

A total of 84 evaluations were completed from the Calgary Symposia. Participants provided feedback on the morning session (36 submissions), the afternoon sessions (25 submissions) and Saturday sessions (23 submissions). Respondents included those working in the human services field (51%), students (28%) and community members (22%). Most respondents identified as female (73%), followed by male (19%), queer (6%), and transgender (2%). Respondents represented a number of disciplines, including social work practitioners, social science students, sociologists, agency leaders, doctors, lawyers, and family mediators. In this section, we review the key learning themes that participants discussed, how the toolkits were received, and how participants will apply the key learning in their daily work and lives.

Key Learning Themes

There were three interconnected themes that emerged as the key learning themes for participants: (a) empathy-based approaches to engaging men in the process of helping and healing, (b) creating safe and supportive spaces for meaningful conversations, and (c) including transmasculinities and diversity in the masculinities dialogue.



Empathy-Based Work. Empathy was repeated as a key learning throughout the participants feedback as an important reminder that to work holistically is to work empathetically. Participants identified the importance of engaging men from the beginning of any initiative aimed at helping and healing men. Findings from the Alberta Men's Survey (Lorenzetti, et al., 2016) showed that 44% of men surveyed thought they could contribute to men's wellbeing and healthy relationships, affirming participants' calls for engaging men throughout the work rather than at token intervals. Engaging men in the process of helping and healing was particularly important in regards to improving awareness of and access to supportive spaces, programs, and services. While many respondents simply wrote phrases such as "engaging men", "connecting", and "strategies", some participants left comments that provided more context. The following are some strategies suggested by the participants for working and engaging with men.

Participant Responses

"Connection with the community through physical and emotional."

"Meet people where they are at"

"Thinking about empathy and compassion in working with men" ^[L]_[SEP]

"Okay to be flexible with program[ming] as [established by] community atmosphere established" ^[L]_[SEP]

"Asking community what they want"

“Providing positive options for modeling masculinity” ^[1] _[SEP]

Safe and supportive spaces. One of the valuable components of the Symposia was the creation and maintenance of safe spaces for reflection, vulnerability, and bonding through shared experiences. As one respondent told us, “Vulnerability is key in learning and self awareness.” Participants shared their concerns that most resources and supports for men are temporary, difficult to access, and inconsistent. Participants had some suggestions for addressing this challenge by facilitating meaningful and growth-orientated conversations and maintaining supportive spaces: ^[1] _[SEP]

Participant Responses

“Find the support among your circles - friends, family, community”

“The value of social connection and empathy building” ^[1] _[SEP]

“Focus on the shared experiences to find support” ^[1] _[SEP]

“Awareness of what work is being done and how to connect men with supports”

“Peer support for men #1 service would be” ^[1] _[SEP]

“Men are willing to open up if they feel safe” ^[1] _[SEP]

“How much willingness to share happens in supportive spaces” ^[1] _[SEP]

“Value of creating safe spaces and social connections” ^[1] _[SEP]

“Opening the door and keeping it open”

Transmasculinities and diversity. Participants were keenly aware of the importance of including transmasculinities and diversity in the masculinities dialogue. Some wanted more transmasculinity content and attention to preparing an inclusive space, including all-gender washrooms and language. Participants recognized the challenges of intersectionality faced by immigrant men and also acknowledged that all men need safe spaces for support.

Participant Responses

“How the idea of gender can change”

“Challenging ideas of masculinity” 

“Trans people are people too - acknowledging humanity of diverse others”

“Evolution of identities” 

“Transmasc[ulinites] can expand societal understanding of masculinity”

“Non-binary identity was brought up and explained (didn't understand this before)”

“White cisgender men can have discourses as well”

“Intersectional, challenge, racism, masculinity “

Use of AMN Toolkits, Research and Skill-Building Guides

The AMN toolkits were another resource that participants found valuable and readily accessible in their work, with one respondent realizing that “there are toolkits and strategies” for working with men and facilitating conversations on masculinity. Participants wanted “longer toolkit sessions [because] it requires more time” and more interaction with the toolkits that are currently available. Participants expressed keen interest in using future toolkits that are in the process of being developed, affirming the usefulness and value of AMN's resources across communities and groups.

Application of Key Learnings

Participants reflected on the importance of “doing with, not for” and acknowledging that “men do need and want support.” “Speaking without offending, listening without defending” was another take-away that captured much of the learning that took place during the Symposia. As one participant said, “men are open to change regarding [concepts of] masculinity. Participants stated that they would apply the information and knowledge they gained from the Symposia in their work and/or daily life. When asked how they would use what they learned from the Symposia, participants

said they would use the learnings for a personal perspective shift, community and family, and specific approaches to working with men as professionals. Nearly all respondents shared that they would use the key takeaways and learnings in their daily life and work. Participants explained how they plan to use their learning their work or community environments:

Participant Responses

“It is important for my personal and professional journey and challenges with my decision to work with the veterans in my war-torn country”

“Making connections in my communities and family to be more supportive role in men's lives”

“Working to establish men's groups in Grand Prairie”

“Being aware of masculinity and the role it plays in my life”

“To work empathetically”

“Working with and understanding, having empathy for diverse others.”

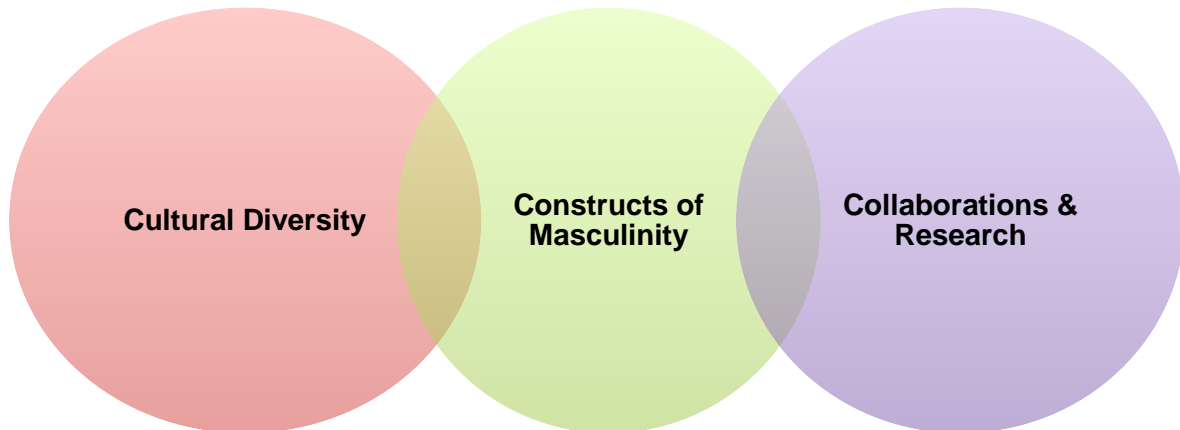
“Use in my practice and its teaching classes and clients “

Evaluation Results: Edmonton Symposium

A total of 18 evaluations were completed from the Edmonton Symposium. The majority of respondents (71%) worked in the human services field and the remaining respondents were community members, students, teachers, and community leaders. Most respondents identified as female (44%), six as male (33%), two as queer (11%), and one as transgender (6%). This section includes the key takeaways and learnings that participants discussed, how the toolkits were received, and how participants will apply the key takeaways and learning in their daily work and lives.

Key Learning Themes

Similar to the Calgary event, there were three overlapping themes that emerged from the responses from participants: (a) inclusion of cultural diversity when contextualizing masculinities ; (b) intersections in the construction of masculinity; and (c) intersectional collaborations and research.



Cultural Diversity. A striking thread throughout the respondents' feedback was that of valuing cultural diversity and the sharing of Indigenous knowledge. Participants reflected on the refraction of masculinities through diverse cultural lenses, which both subtly and explicitly influences community discourse on masculinity and men's wellbeing:

Participant Responses

“Multicultural individuals see masculinities uniquely according to their own cultural norms”


“Critical to understand cultural practices when providing services”

“Hearing from many perspectives. Adrian's info on Indigenous stories/background/context“

“Got to learn new perspectives or understand them better”

Participant Responses

“Meet people where they are geographically, culturally, and educationally”

“I found the multicultural panel and the men's survey presentation very informative interesting and insightful as well as very helpful” 

“Empower and strengthen the participation in groups through language and activity”

Constructs of masculinity. Following the theme of cultural diversity, participants talked about how masculinity is constructed and understood according to cultural, racial, and social influences. One respondent observed similarities in “hang ups and barriers” in understanding masculinities as they have been present in the women’s movement. All of the participants recognized the intersection of culture and masculinities, particularly in relation to men’s wellbeing and supportive environments.

Participant Responses

“Masculinities must be looked at through a context and system lens”

“Complexity of our identities, communities, work”

“There is no one way to address masculinity issues”

“All human beneath social structures of masculinity/femininity “

“Thinking about addressing this concept and men in my family”

“Seeing a different point of view about masculinity” [L] [SEP]

“Same binary hang-ups and barriers as women's movement”

“Better understanding of ethno-cultural communities”

Collaboration and research. Participants identified that since people from multiple disciplines are working in the area of men and masculinities, an interdisciplinary collaborative approach will be the most effective means for promoting masculinities research, creating spaces for dialogue and meeting men’s needs for support.

Participant Responses

“Intersections are always present”

“Men may benefit more from non-programmatic approach where they take part in decision-making”

“Men's needs and supports are not well understood“

“Who to connect with for collaborations”

“People from various disciplinary backgrounds are working in this area” ^[1] _[SEP]

Application of Key Learnings in Daily Life and Work

The respondents shared how they would use the key takeaways and learnings in their daily life and work. They also identified ways of bringing their experience at the Symposium into their communities .

Participant Responses

“Lots of room for growth personally and professionally” ^[1] _[SEP]

“By being conscious of gender and cultural difference“

“I plan to be more mindful about how I think about masculinities” ^[1] _[SEP]

“Hope to partner and connect and provide training to various cultural groups”

“Sensitive to the needs of men”

Respondents valued the diversity of perspectives presented in the Symposia, which created an open discussion and interaction with the material:

Participant Responses

“The openness of discussion was and is always refreshing” ^[1] _[SEP]

“I really liked the smaller workshops and the toolkits”

“Variety of attendees, breadth of experience”

Edmonton Poster Questions

Participants were invited to answer five questions related to men's needs and engaging men as agents of change.

Who are the men you work with and what have they told you they need?

Participants identified a broad spectrum of men who they work with, including Indigenous men, new fathers, working class men, LGBTQ2S+ individuals, men in

abusive relationships, university-age males, youth males, newcomers, and men living in poverty. One respondent contended that the social expectations for men, men's health, and social relationships is too low, which sets men up for failure from the start.

Respondents emphasized the importance of creating safe and supportive spaces for men to access help, being supportive and non-judgemental, and hearing what men have to say about their experience:

Participant Responses

“They tell me they need food, to be respected, listened to, mentally healthy” [1] [SEP]

“Educational programs and services helping them navigate Canadian systems especially for immigrants“

“Working class men who need community employment” [1] [SEP]

“More knowledge, language, vocabulary around LGBTQ communities”

“Allowing them to participate in decision making and opening discussions about issues and problems among themselves, their families, and society”

“To work from a strengths based position to help enhance men accessing their own solutions”

“Acknowledging that men are negatively impacted by power structures too (poverty, classism, patriarchy, etc)”

“Modeling empathetic and intentional conversations around mental health and healthy relationships”

What Challenges Do You Experience Engaging Men?

Participants reported a multitude of barriers to engaging men in their work, from getting men to attend events and limited time for establishing trust. They also commented on the difficulty of creating and maintaining supportive spaces where men feel comfortable and confident to share their experiences. Also shared was the challenge of “providing consistent offerings, predictability, and availability” and the difficulty of creating “a safe space where men feel confident sharing their emotions.”

One participant noted that “they [men] are often afraid to open up and even afraid to show up that fear.” While comments about the fear of vulnerability and lack of time/space to focus on wellbeing were common, participants mentioned other barriers such as:

Participant Responses

“The greatest challenge is to get them to attend events” ^[1]_[SEP]

“Stigma around mental and MH supports”

“They are often afraid to open up and even afraid to show up that fear” ^[1]_[SEP]

“Motivating men to get involved who don’t already self-ID as victimized by patriarchy etc.”

“Lack of time to focus on their wellbeing they often have to work and then take care of children at home”

“Worried about others finding out they needed help – worried it will affect employment prospects”

“Convincing youth/young cis-hetero men that these issues affect them.”

“Fear of vulnerability”

What are the Current Barriers to Collaborating/Developing Partnerships, and How Can These Be Overcome?

The most significant barriers to collaborating and developing partnerships were organizational and financial. Participants stated that “funding structures” have created a competitive and resource-scarce environment that has restricted collaborative practice and fragmented services. This “fragmentation of services and not being well connected” means that it can be challenging to “know all the groups that exist.” Participants suggested that “sharing of resources and funding restrictions/structures” may be needed to “support collaboration” and create collective action with a shared mission, vision, and values. Interdisciplinary collaborations are absolutely necessary. Community-based services, programs, resources, and planning may overcome this

barrier, as noted by a respondent through “more university researchers serving research needs of community partners and acknowledging key research needs of communities.” Another participant suggested that service providers could “perhaps create values and mission that meet community needs as a collective, therefore collaboration would be city wide without barriers.” Other comments included:

Participant Responses

“The social work echo chamber doesn’t help to bring other voices into the mix”

“The gender binary that reinforces and reproduces unhelpful and harmful antagonism” [L] [SEP]

“Lack of awareness about availability of services and programs“

“The lack of true understanding and empathy of domestic violence and gender based violence” [L] [SEP]

“Time and financial restraints are barriers, increased community awareness and recognition of legitimate needs are slow to respond but do occur in time”

What Collaborations/Partnerships Benefit You in Your Work With Men?

From family members to organizational to social partnerships, participants found that developing and maintaining relationships and collaborations at different levels was the cornerstone of success in working with men:

Participant Responses

“Collaborations between community, agencies, government agencies, and healthcare sector – multi level approach” [L] [SEP]

“Collaborations with clients/participants, stakeholders, and experts in engaging men and boys e.g. policy makers and stakeholders such as REACH Edmonton > working groups/focus groups helping shape policies and program initiatives. Including men and boys to decide what they need most“

“Partnership with other community agencies like the community, mental health workers, and health” [L] [SEP]

“Research collaborations doing work we could not do on our own”

“Creating collaborations and networking with non-partisan partners who do not have hidden agendas”

“More public awareness about how men could contribute to reduce gender based violence as well as awareness about available services men could access”

What would you like to see happening within the next 12-months in Edmonton to address the challenges associated with engaging men?

There was a unanimous call for increasing the number of programs, resources, services, and events that focus on men’s health, wellbeing, and relationships. A common theme throughout the feedback was the need to break up “silos” among professionals and engaging community members and leaders more significantly in the development and deployment of masculinities services and resources.

Participant Responses

“Have community-led engagement and info-gathering that encourages different generations to openly talk about challenging rigid masculine expression. We need people that can channel #trends into meeting face to face” ^[1] _[SEP]

“Have more opportunities for men to discuss their issues and come up with supportive recommendations of how best it could be addressed”

“I’d love to see agencies everywhere using these toolkits, inspiring more work and connection” ^[1] _[SEP]

“More sessions on LGBTQ2ST for immigrant and refugee communities. Still very hidden and stigmatized. Working on it through REACH”

“Have the men start advocating for themselves without fear of judgment and finger pointing”

“A true community of practice that brings in all workers so we can share and collaborate instead of working in silos”

“Have more workshops for men addressing their issues and advertise these workshops through ethnic radio, newspaper, etc”

Experiencing Masculinities Symposia: Recommendations for Future Events

Logistics

Participants found incredible value in the sessions and activities during the symposia. Many participants reported that they wanted to have more sessions and a longer event due to the depth and breadth of topics covered. As one Calgary participant said, “two full days would be great allowing sessions to be longer to create more room for dialogue, engagement, brainstorming.” One participant said that they “hope this event occurs regularly” and another person told us that they “would like to attend more [events] like this and would like to attend all of the sessions.” Another participant indicated that they wanted:

More booths/exhibits and time to explore them after lunch. More small group discussions. Keynote speaker to share life story. Different activity for multicultural panel (lecture didn't work). Wanted longer, fewer sessions.

Some participants stated that they did not have enough notice of the event, as was the case for one participant who had to leave early due to scheduling conflicts, “I would have like to have known of this opportunity sooner - conflicting appointments caused me to leave early.” Another person stated that they “heard about the workshop thru a friend. Would be nice to see the event on Facebook.” Some participants felt that the “space [was] too small for this Symposia” and that a “more comfortable venue would be good (more seats, better accessibility, better acoustics)”, echoing the sentiment that participants desire more interaction and space to network during the Symposia.

The high-demand and interest for the symposia resulted in four logistical recommendations for future events:

1. **Advance advertising:** Event organizers utilize social media, community networks, and flyer advertisements at least two weeks prior to the event.
1. **Web-Based Accessibility:** Live-streaming or recording the sessions so that the information is publicly available during or after the event.

2. **Duration:** Facilitating a full two-day event to allow more time for sessions, networking, and discussion.
3. **Locale and Venue:** Organizers consider community-spaces that are universally accessible, comfortable, and large enough to accommodate socializing, networking, and debriefing.
4. **Frequency:** Developing bi-annual or quarterly events that cover specific topics or areas of interest as they emerge from the community-based work of AMN and other partners.

Content

More on gender diversity. Participants valued the material and sessions presented at the event, though some felt that more discussion on transmasculinity was needed. :

“There was more of a focus on males and cis-men. I would like to see addressing gender variance in future masculinity events and conferences and Symposias (ex pronouns, all-gender washrooms in the facility, use the term men instead of male, sex vs. gender) and how masculinities affect those of any gender and sex but in different ways.

Participant suggested the need to identify strategies to help cis-normative and cis-hetero men that they are a part of the masculinities dialogue. Event organizers have an opportunity to create a safe and inclusive space for these conversations without prioritizing one over the other. By leveraging speakers and workshops that span the spectrum of masculinity, organizers will continue to practice inclusion at each level of planning: conception, implementation, and activism.

Similar evaluation strategies. The Masculinities Symposia was hosted in two different cities with different content and balance of theoretical and experiential content. For example, the Edmonton event was limited to one-day, while the Calgary event was hosted over two days, with additional experiential and community-building opportunities. Further following Calgary event, organizers adapted their feedback collection tools for Edmonton based on their learnings. This resulted in a breadth and depth of feedback from the Edmonton participants that, while rich, resulted in unbalanced data and some

difficulty in making comparisons between the two events. In the future, event organizers may wish to develop a shared evaluation strategy so that comparisons can be made while also identifying differences that emerge from the data.

Summary

The Experiencing Masculinities Symposia was a successful opportunity to share and integrate community, agency and academic teachings related to work with men in the areas of healthy masculinities, well-being and violence prevention. The evaluation of this event s affirms and echos the findings from the Alberta Men's Survey from 2015, demonstrating that there is not only an interest in gaining knowledge and building partnerships in the area of healthy masculinities, there is a *need* for community-based masculinities programming. Participants stated that they wanted to see more discourse on masculinities in community-based work and resources that could be used in different types of practice. 'Empathy' was a key take away for many respondents, who talked about using more empathy in their own work and relationships with men and conversations about masculinity. Importantly, participants indicated that there remains a dearth of supportive programming and services for man. Further, the supports and programming that do exist are underutilized because men simply *do not know where to go for help*. Community-based events such as the Experiencing Masculinities Symposia are an integral part of creating awareness; however, here are more steps that need to be taken to bring about actionable change.

Participants pointed out that collaboration across sectors is imperative for moving this work forward. It will be important for future events to attract participants from different sectors, such as business, government, and service industry as well as community leaders. Overall, the Experiencing Masculinities Symposia was successful in contributing to the public conversation about men's health and wellbeing in Alberta. Future events must evolve around an inclusive vision, including anticolonial and antiracist perspectives, and bringing transmasculine and GBTQ2S+ lives and experiences to the forefront. Participants overwhelmingly endorsed the event and wanted more content delivered on a more regular basis. Future funding requests should consider the need for semi-regular events and content delivery that meets people where they are across Alberta. This may include live-streaming conferences and events,

creating and maintaining podcasts and other digital media, and continuing to deliver toolkits for communities and practitioners. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, is the need to meaningfully engage community leaders at every level of this work. In this way, the masculinities discussion will be community-owned and grow from the commitments of community members, leaders, and motivators across Alberta.

