

Welcome to the Webinar

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Everyone, welcome. Thank you so much for coming. My name is Kirstin McLaughlin. I'm a nurse educator with Camosun College, and I am very honored to be here today, working with Tanysha. Tanysha, I'm going to let you introduce yourself

Tanysha Klassen:

For sure. Hi, everybody. My name's Tanysha Klassen. I'm the chairperson of the BC Federation of Students. But originally I came from Douglas College where I did my second degree.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Awesome. We are here today talking about LGBTQ2S+ students in the time of COVID. It is the second of two webinars looking at how we build resilience in the community, how we find connection. Next slide please.

Tanysha Klassen:

Yeah. This is just what we're going to go through today. We've kind of already done our welcome, but before we get started, we'll do a territorial acknowledgement and then we're going to get into self-care and mental health promotion. And then that's going to kind of transition us into community connection where we're going to have a broader discussion and then we will wrap up.

Territorial Acknowledgement

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Perfect. I just wanted to acknowledge as well, all the different folks that are on the call today. Thank you, everybody first of all for coming. Certainly we welcome LGBTQ2S+ students, but I also really want to acknowledge the allies in the room, so to speak and to just let folks know that you are most certainly welcome. We're very, very happy to see such participation from allies. I think the work of equity is the work of all of us. And so thank you to the many service providers and allies that have also shown up today. Please feel free to fully participate your voices. Absolutely welcomed and appreciated in discussion. Just a quick note about that. Next slide please.

Tanysha Klassen:

Awesome. We gratefully acknowledge and honor the territory and the lands on which we are gathered. For myself, I'm located in New Westminster, which are the traditional unceded lands of the Qayqayt First Nation.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

I am a very grateful uninvited settler to the ancestral territory of the Cowichan Tribes and want to express my gratitude for that as well. Next slide please. Folks can also type in the chat, perhaps the indigenous territories where they are visiting or settled right now. Just as an acknowledgement of where we are and acknowledgement of place. We also wanted to start by saying Happy Pride. It is Pride Month. I know it may not feel like Pride Month all the time, but hopefully with some connection today, we get at least a sense of that, a sense of being amongst peers and allies. And so we really want to

acknowledge Happy Pride to folks. Next slide please. A quick note about terminology before we get started you'll notice that the name of the presentation referred to the LGBTQ2S+ community.

A Note About Terminology

Kirstin McLaughlin:

I just want to acknowledge that there are many different acronyms that we use within the community and that other folks use when describing the community. For example, I use the term queer. I'm comfortable describing myself as queer, but certainly acknowledged that that's not a comfortable term for everyone. I also acknowledge that there are other members of the community whose identity is not always captured in the acronyms that we use. For example, LGBTQ2SIA referring to our intersex and asexual communities and please know that the intention today is to include all folks. Even if sometimes the acronyms that we use are imperfect. Something that we wanted to mention heading in, so that folks see themselves represented in the discussions that we're having.

Webinar One Takeaways

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Next slide, please. Some takeaways from the first webinar. The first thing that really comes through quite strongly is that the LGBTQ2S+ community really does have a strong history of resilience. What we also took away from the last session and which really sort of directed what we want to do with today's session, is that community members and allies, service providers, they're looking and finding for ways to connect amidst physical distancing, and that that's still a need for our community members. We want to be able to connect even if restrictions around physical distancing mean that we can't be in close proximity. We're hoping today that we can give folks some ideas or stimulate some conversation. We're hoping that folks come today with some ideas around what we could do so that we can share and learn as a group. Next slide please.

Self-Care and Mental Wellness Promotion: LGBTQ Mental Health and Wellbeing

Tanysha Klassen:

Yeah, we're just going to first talk about self-care and mental wellness promotion, and that's really going to lead us then into our conversation about connectedness and community care. Next slide please. Some people have probably seen some aspect of this before, but this is from the Canadian Mental Health Association talking about LGBTQ mental health and wellbeing and things that help foster positive mental health and positive wellbeing. So, having support from family and friends, supportive workplaces at neighborhoods, low levels of internalized homophobia, these are things that can be fostered and supported through community building and needing other LGBT individuals as well as experiencing positive responses to coming out and addressing the social determinants of health. A lot of these really are talking about those support networks and how important they are for individuals. And that's kind of what we're going to get into with the community care. Kirstin, do you want to talk about the last point a little bit?

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Yeah. I just wanted to highlight that when we look at this slide, I think these particular factors are important because they're looking at LGBTQ mental health from a Canadian perspective. And what we

know is true in the Canadian context. And I just sort of challenged folks to maybe take a look at the list and think about the factors that we can impact and the factors that are perhaps a little more challenging to impact. For example, experiencing positive responses to coming out. We can certainly be folks that have very, very positive responses in working with members of the LGBTQ community or being friends or family of LGBTQ community members in terms of their coming out experience. But unfortunately we can't necessarily impact the ways in which folks in the queer community are received by others in their coming out experience.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

That being said again, I sort of challenge folks to look at the list and think about what are areas that we can impact, and whether that's in your capacity as a member of the community, whether that's in your capacity as a support person, a service provider, an ally. What can we do to really elevate the mental health and wellbeing of our queer community members? In terms of the different factors listed here, you also notice that some of them are at more of an individual level, whereas some of them are more community level and some are even sort of wider societal structural level things. One of those being the social determinants of health. And so for folks who may not be as familiar, the social determinants of health in a Canadian context include income and social status, employment and working conditions, education and literacy, childhood experiences, physical environments, social support and coping skills healthy behaviors, access to health services, biology and genetic endowment, gender, culture, race, and experiences of racism.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

I'm conscious looking at the chat that we have a lot of folks who work in service provision within campus communities. What things can we do to shift or move some of those social determinants of health? If for example, we look at income does your particular post-secondary institution have perhaps scholarships or bursaries specific to queer students? Are there opportunities for employment or work for students in your campus community? Physical environments, can you think of ways in which to make physical environments more inclusive for queer students? Are there safe spaces for them? I think there's a lot of things in here that we could think about and look at ways to impact. I just wanted to highlight that because again, there's lots of different levels we can look at in targeting the mental health and wellbeing of our queer community. And hopefully we gather a few more ideas at an individual level and a community level in the next hour or so. Next slide please.

Improving Your Mental Health

Tanysha Klassen:

Yeah. We also wanted to include some things about improving your mental health or self-care, for example. A lot of these people have heard before exercise, nutrition, sleep, positive thinking. Things like reframing your thoughts, not necessarily looking at everything through rose colored glasses, but trying to move away from perpetually negative thoughts, purpose and connection. That's the whole reason why we're all here today to talk about connectivity and how people can get involved and find community, as well as having healthy support networks and seeking help. We encourage help seeking if people are struggling. Sometimes you need to seek those more formal supports if you are in need of them and that's completely okay.

Tanysha Klassen:

On this slide, I just want to highlight something, especially as folks [inaudible 00:10:06] drinking, what and why? For any of these really you can think more critically about what it is exactly you're doing, why you're doing it and how you're doing it in any form of self-care that you practice. I like to say in terms of self-care, it's not what you do. It's how and why you do it. Even something like exercise, for example, if you're doing it too much or you're doing it for the wrong reasons, it might not end up being self-care and it might not end up helping to improve your mental health.

Tanysha Klassen:

And on the flip side, people might think, I don't know, doing something like having a drink might not be the best form of self-care, but if you're doing it in moderation, you're doing it for the right reasons. Maybe you just need to relax. Then it actually can be a form of self-care and it can be something that can improve your mental health. We try not to be too rigid in terms of defining what is self-care and what's going to improve your mental health and then that way people can do what is best for them. And we can trust the people can look within themselves and figure out what is best. I think we need to take this into when we talk about caring for people in a community sense as well.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

That's awesome. Thank you, Tanysha. I totally agree. There's probably nothing here that's earth shattering a new, but I think if we're all sort of honest with ourselves, how many of us are sort of paying attention to all these areas all the time. I know for myself this morning, I hit the snooze button instead of getting up to work out, which was my intention. And I'm on an obscene amount of coffee cup numbers for the day at this point. I'm thinking about caffeine consumption and how that can contribute to just sort of anxiety and feeling a bit anxious. Know these aren't earth shattering.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

They're probably not new, but I think repeated exposure to them and really encouraging folks to take the time to really invest in their own wellbeing particularly now, when folks are feeling quite isolated is really, really paramount. And I just want to echo Tanysha's comment as well about certainly seeking professional help if, and when folks need it. That social support networks are absolutely phenomenal and wonderful, but if there is a time at which folks are ever feeling unsafe or at risk to please make use of community and emergency resources within mental health. Next slide please.

Community Connection

Kirstin McLaughlin:

At this point, I think we'd like to move into ... We wanted to really spend the majority of our time in discussion with folks. And so for those who were at the last webinar, we broke out into small breakout rooms. I don't think we're going to do that this time. I think this time we're going to stay together as a wider group to really see what ideas we can garner from one another. What kind of thoughts and ideas, folks have, questions, concerns, things that are coming up. We have a series of guided questions that we're going to work through as a group and we're going to put up a whiteboard. If folks are most comfortable, please feel free to type in the white board or to draw on the whiteboard.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

We also certainly welcome folks to turn on their mics, ask questions, have a back and forth dialogue. It'll probably be much more interesting if it's not just Tanysha and I talking. Are there any additional directions you would like to provide around that, Duane, just in terms of using these thanks features?

Duane Seibel :

Sure.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Thanks.

Duane Seibel :

In order to write or draw on the whiteboard, go to the top of your screen under view options, click on that and then choose annotate. And that'll allow you to add to each slide. As we move to the next slide, you'll have to do that again. Thank you.

Whiteboard Exercise One: How did LGBTQ2SIA+ communities keep connected before COVID?

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Beautiful. Thanks, Duane. Okay, next slide please. So, we'll start with a question that might seem obvious, but let's just break it down and think about it and throw ideas out there. How did LGBTQ2SIA+ communities keep connected before COVID? Yes. What were we doing? How did we stay connected? How do we stay engaged? Front and center, first answer Pride.

Tanysha Klassen:

Yeah, absolutely. Again, feel free to unmute yourself and join in on the conversation. We'll write down things that people say verbally as well. If you have something you want to describe, that's probably a good way to do it.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Yeah. And we're aware that some folks may want to be more anonymous during this portion, which is absolutely fine, but please know that if you come on the mic, you don't need to introduce yourself. We welcome folks' thoughts whether they'd like to identify themselves or not.

Group Participant One :

On the slide, I wrote club meetings for the TRUSU Pride Club at TRU. And just up until COVID meant we had to cancel our in-person meetings. We all work with the wellness center at our school. And we started a group called Queer Connections where we met every two weeks.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Awesome. That's great.

Tanysha Klassen:

I see a few that are kind of related to that. Yeah. Pride Clubs and spaces on campuses, monthly social meetings, drop in spaces on campus club meetings. That's great. In-person events, games, movie nights, et cetera. I might-

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Getting out of the house and talking to people. Yes. I fight with my wife over who gets to go do the groceries because it's just like, "I want to get out of the house. I want to go." Yeah. Some online platforms as well, apps, support groups. I'm just moving my images around the screen so I can see what everyone's saying here.

Tanysha Klassen:

This is great. People went out as a group to drag shows.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Awesome.

Tanysha Klassen:

I see support groups. I know that I used to, I'm in the lower mainland and I used to volunteer with community at their youth drop-ins that they used to do a couple of times a week. And we did all sorts of things like went swimming, played board games, arts and crafts, just things for people to come in and hang out, clothing swaps, good stuff.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Social media, that's interesting. That's one of the few kinds of ideas here that's kind of popping up that looks like it's perhaps something that could be done more to distance. A lot of these ideas or face-to-face things that folks are used to getting involved in.

Tanysha Klassen:

See Dungeons & Dragons. That's cool.

Group Participant One :

Yeah. Also, I forgot to mention, but sometimes I would go to Kamloops Pride events, such as Beers for Queers, which happen every month as well.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Awesome.

Tanysha Klassen:

Yeah. It really seems like there, regardless of where you are, prior to COVID that there were spaces for people to keep connected and more events for people to kind of find that community connection, which I know we're all reminiscing on what happened pre-COVID, but we'll get into some stuff for now soon.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Yes. And it's interesting as well, I like this Pride Parade Float. That'd be fun. I've never been involved in that. But that a lot of these events did center around folks in a campus space, but a lot of them didn't as well. Anyone else have any thoughts or anything they'd like to add to this particular? Oh, here we go. Campaigns. Interesting. I'm wondering perhaps from like political-type campaigns or education campaigns, awareness raising. I know that I was quite involved. I moved to the Island from Kamloops, so was quite involved with Kamloops Pride.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Yeah, there were a number of events from certainly Pride and drag shows, but there were also health events where we did prick STI testing events and perhaps not a way to necessarily stay connected, but it was resources that we were involved in and working as volunteers within the organization to put on different health, educational, social events. That was a big thing for me. Anything else here? Okay. Maybe we can move to our next question. What do you think, Tanysha?

Tanysha Klassen:

I think so. And if anybody has anything else, we can always jump back. We're flexible here.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Perfect. All right. Next slide please.

Whiteboard Exercise Two: What are the most valuable parts of this connectivity?

Tanysha Klassen:

We just talked about all the things that we did pre-COVID but moving a little bit away from that, thinking about all those things that we just talked about, what parts of them were the valuable parts? Like what were the best parts of those scenarios? We really want to try and pull out the less tangible things, the things that are very values-based and kind of how these things made us feel because that'll help us move into the next question as well. What did you get out of participating in these kind of events? We were doing so good on the last one, everybody.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Okay. We're thinking, we're thinking. It's the afternoon law. We need a coffee. We need time to type. Yeah. Feelings of inclusion. Yeah. Connecting with folks with similar life experiences, sense of belonging of course, being around so many visibly queer folks, sense of normalcy, sharing stories, safe spaces. A lot of folks don't realize that for many members of the queer community, we can't necessarily count on safe spaces. We have to carve them out. And so knowing you're going to a space that's safe is a really powerful thing. Opportunity to have fun and distress. Fun, yes, particularly during Pride. Pride is a riot. It's so much fun.

Tanysha Klassen:

Literally and figuratively a riot.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Yes. Yeah. Silly question, but where is everyone posting their responses for these? No not silly. At the very top of your screen, you'll see a view options button. If you click on that and hit annotate, you're able to then draw on the screen or right on the screen, whatever you prefer.

Tanysha Klassen:

Yeah. If you want to type, make sure you click the text thing and then as long as you click then you'll be able to type.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Awesome. Connecting with other people and learning to become more confident with yourself. Absolutely. Gave me the chance to get to know the members and make friends. Teaching children about inclusion. Well, that's really powerful.

Tanysha Klassen:

I see peer support, referrals.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Yeah. Totally.

Tanysha Klassen:

Becoming more confident. I'm probably reading things again, but-

Kirstin McLaughlin:

No, no, that's okay. This is awesome. Connecting with folks. Yeah. Ooh, we've discovered star features and little arrows. We're getting pretty good at the Zoom business.

Tanysha Klassen:

Yeah. And if people have any specific stories they want to share, this is the space for you to do that as well.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Yeah. What a great one, introducing friends and family to this community. Absolutely, hey. Yeah. Bringing folks together who are from other cultures and haven't experienced many queer events. Fun plus, plus, plus. Absolutely. Yeah. It certainly is different. Folks sometimes have a perception of what the queer community looks like or is. And it's not until folks get to know members of the community that they have a greater sense of that there's great variety. We're not all the same. And it's great to introduce our family and friends to our community when we have the opportunity.

Tanysha Klassen:

Yeah. Like a lot of people think obviously Pride is a huge and very visible event and it's something that's a lot of fun, but for those people who maybe are a bit quieter, I've heard of so many queer book clubs or you can go to both. There are no rules for all of this. And there's a bunch of different ways that we have learned to keep connected.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). And finding space for all different interests within the community. That's awesome. Okay. I think we've got a bit of a sense. We're building towards this, folks. We're building towards the final slide here. We've got a sense of, okay, what were we doing before COVID that we really, really valued as a community. We've kind of looked at why did we value it? So, we didn't value Pride just for the sake of colorful balloons. That is a part of fun. But we had sense of belonging and connection and safe spaces and all these things that are really important to folks. With that in mind, perhaps we're okay to move to the next slide where we would love for folks to turn on their mics, if they're comfortable and look at our final sort of question, which brings us to sort of the tangible piece.

Whiteboard Exercise Three: How do we replicate the value of that connectivity during COVID times?

Kirstin McLaughlin:

What we really took away from the last webinar is, folks are looking for something tangible. Tell me what I can do. How can I get involved? And so we're really looking at what are folks doing to replicate the value of the connection that you felt pre-COVID. What are folks doing now to keep queer events happening or to keep connection happening? What can we learn from each other?

Tanysha Klassen:

Yeah. And I think also how we can take the values that we just talked about. Like maybe your organization is still trying to figure it out or maybe you're still trying to figure it out, but how do you take those values that we talked about and put them in an online space or put them in a distance space because they're values, they're feelings we got out of things. They're not necessarily like you have to do X, Y, Z. It's kind of what we're trying to get at here.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Awesome. Posting daily self-care resources on a Facebook page. That's awesome. If folks are interested or if the author of that is interested, I wonder if it's a Facebook page that other folks could also access for some self-care resources. That's a great idea. Asking members of the campus queer community how we can help keep them connected. That's perfect. And that's sort of, I think part of what we're doing here today is, what can we do, how can we help? There are many service providers on this call and on the last call who are looking for ways to add value for the queer community right now. What does that look like?

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Participating in Fraser Valley Pride online? I'm curious about that. What's that look like? Can our institutions help us to create space? What an awesome question. I wonder if there are any service providers on the call who might be able to speak to capacity around creating either chat areas. See just a note here, I'm the person keeping it active. Hasn't been as active lately, but lots of Blackboard resources. Okay. Are there any folks who can think of ways that we could create spaces? Can post-secondary institutions create spaces for queer students to get together to connect?

Group Participant One :

I am currently looking at what different ways to just have online meetings like this. Once I started the Pride Club meetings back up in September, we would have a way for the Pride Club to still meet, but just

online and then also since I'm also the LGBTQ+ representative with TRUSU, we're also looking at making a Pride at home event where people just share what Pride means to them.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Awesome.

Group Participant One :

Instead of the usual Pride parade.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

That's awesome. Organizing a virtual Pride, I love this idea. I'm curious what that could look like. There's such potential around that.

Group Participant Two:

I'm wondering if there's any groups that we're doing in person like regular, weekly events that have moved to online settings and what their experiences with that in terms of fostering the same sense of community. And if you're getting the same people as you're getting in person, as a consistent group of people, more or less. I'm just really curious about who shows up to those events.

Tanysha Klassen:

Totally. Anybody has answers to that, please feel free to jump in. This is also a place for us to ask questions too. It's sort of a bit of a workshop webinar mix. We can really all kind of hash that out here and try and come up with some answers and ideas. I see things like having Pride gear available in the bookstore and available to order online. That would be great. That would be an awesome way for institutions especially to show their support. If you're comfortable wearing that on campus, then you can very visibly find your own little community when you do get back on campus

Kirstin McLaughlin:

I like this virtual dance parties. This is outside of the queer community, but I know that a colleague of mine sort of wrapped up the semester with their students doing a virtual dance party on Zoom. So, it is possible if you're interested. Netflix Party Pride movies. That can be pretty fun. Jackbox party nights online.

Tanysha Klassen:

Yeah. For people that don't know necessarily what a Jackboxes or some of these online things like Netflix Party, Jackbox is a game and you can play it. You can like screen-share and then people can play virtually via their phone. That's a great way to keep connected, if you have the game and can share a screen on Zoom or something. Netflix Party, I believe is a, I think it's a website. Might be an app. I've actually never used it, but you can share Netflix screen and then you can watch the same movie in real time with people. I don't know much about online DND. So, if somebody wants to expand on that, that would be cool.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Just reading the comments here. What about a book club highlighting LGBTQ authors? That's an absolutely brilliant idea somewhere that it would be really accessible for students to find, and also a

great idea for other service providers, faculty, staff. One of the challenges we're facing is creating a safe online environment for online social groups. Are there any guidelines that other groups have developed for this? Great point.

Tanysha Klassen:

Just going back to the book club aspect, especially if people are looking to get the institutions involved. In my previous experience when I was a part of a student's union and we actually worked really closely with the library staff to create a Pride Month display of different books, but I'm sure that there are ways to kind of organize that through the library, but virtually, so that might be an interesting way to get the institution side involved.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

I recommend ... Sorry, I can't see writing this small, I'm sorry. It's an Instagram. It's an online Latin party created by queer women in Toronto. They do it every Friday. That's kind of fun.

Tanysha Klassen:

So unique.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Sorry, I don't want to skip over that question about guidelines for online safety because of course safety came up in one of the previous slides. It's really prerequisite for folks to really want a meaningfully engage. And so certainly a lot of online Pride groups, if you just go on different online PR Pride community Pride groups will have sort of rules of engagement or codes of conduct for using online spaces, whether it's Facebook or different areas. But in my experience, working in community Pride organizations, there does seem to be a need at times to have monitoring going on and to have folks sort of rotating through just monitoring the content so that it is safe for folks.

Tanysha Klassen:

I think in a lot of those online groups, just from the experience that I have, is that you can assign moderators that then get to approve the posts. I think it's a good idea for those moderators to be pretty quick on top of things, so it's not stifling any sort of conversation or connection, but at least it goes through one person before it gets posted. Or I know in terms of Facebook groups, you can set it up, so then when people asked to join the group, they have to answer a couple of questions. It could be just an answering that they read the code of conduct, for example. Even just putting up the little barriers like that, really deter the people that are trying to be maybe not so great. Even just a simple thing like that, it doesn't create too many barriers for people to access the connection and the group, but it's enough of a barrier to try and keep other folks away.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

There's also a great idea here about delivering diversity and inclusion training, and unconscious bias to faculty and staff. I think a really important point as well, that a lot of our biases assumptions prejudices may be unconscious in nature, or we may sort of engage in this term, we refer to as microaggressions with or without perhaps knowing about it. And it's really important that those in service delivery to folks in the queer community really have the time and space to sort of unpack that and understand their own social locations and how that impacts the way in which they interact with members of the queer community.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

That's really important. Sorry, I'm just trying to look at the chat at the same time here. An idea around LGBTQ peer mentoring, that's a really interesting idea. If there was capacity for institutions through their Pride Clubs or otherwise to perhaps ask folks if they might want to be on a volunteer basis paired up, that could be an interesting opportunity to just connect with someone they don't know.

Tanysha Klassen:

Yeah. In the chat, I've heard that some of the community support groups that have moved online, like Fraser Valley Youth Society or Foundry have come up with some, I believe that's like code of conduct and stuff like that, so people could approach them. Yeah, I find a good way to try and find things that are in your community is just looking up your city followed by Pride. There is usually some sort of group in your city or in a neighboring city and hopefully they are a group that is doing something, especially now that it's getting into Pride Month here in June, but then also when a lot of VC's Pride stuff also happens in August. It kind of gives a period of time for us to check out, see what those groups are doing.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

The one potential benefit I could see of having a lot of queer connection online is that we won't be leaving out folks in rural and remote areas because of course not every student or every member of the community lives in Vancouver on Davie Street. Everybody wants the opportunity to connect. My hope is that some of these platforms could potentially facilitate that. A couple of the things that came up here. Keeping conversations going with students to listen to their needs. I think that's really, really important. Students, unfortunately and fortunately need to be really great advocates of what they need from their institutions, whether it's accessing healthcare services or education that is delivered in a way that's culturally safe for members of the queer community. Just that student advocacy is paramount.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

I noticed the note here as well about chat rooms. Have people had experience with Discord, WhatsApp, et cetera? Interestingly enough, Discord came up on the last webinar as a platform that one individual in particular really liked and found to be really effective. Some of the conversation we had centered around trying to find these online platforms like this, where you could get together but ones that weren't where socio-economics [inaudible 00:36:29] barrier that didn't cost money or were challenging for folks to access. I don't know if anyone can speak to that at all.

Tanysha Klassen:

Okay. If anybody has anything to add, in regards to that, then feel free to jump in. I just saw our social distance hangs possible, and I think they totally are, especially if you have a group that is already been established beforehand, that's obviously how it would be the easiest, but it would just be finding an appropriate place. We are lucky to live in a province that has so many beautiful parks and places where we can go outside and hang out with people. But especially when we're moving into the fall semester, we know that institutions are going to be opening up partially. It might be a time to think about where on campus or where around campus would you be able to facilitate that kind of hangout, obviously accounting for weather and all those things, but especially over the summer, I think it would be a great idea for those groups that have already kind of been established to try and do something like that.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

That's a great, great question. I think as long as we're sort of working within the provincial health offices guidelines around how big our bubbles can be and how far apart we need to be and getting outside in particular, I think it's an awesome idea because it really does make a difference. Even if you're just meeting a couple of folks in a park to discuss a book that you read or just to connect. I think it's an awesome idea. Hopefully as things get better with COVID, that's always the hope, we'll have increasing amounts of folks that were able to be around safely.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Okay. Any sort of last minute thoughts, feelings, ideas? Oh, just notice a chat here. Another challenge we face is creating meaningful connections in online environments. Some of the online supports we are looking at like speed friending provide quick connection, but how can we help foster longer-term connections? That's a great question.

Tanysha Klassen:

A very good question. I think it-

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Sorry?

Tanysha Klassen:

I think it might be, and obviously everybody else please feel free to jump in. I think it could be something that is combined with those social distance hangouts and I think consistency is probably a very important piece. It might also make people feel more secure to have that kind of consistent connection, but I'd be curious to see what other people have been doing since we have been in this COVID world for three months now, how people have been tackling that.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Speed friending. I've never heard of that before. It's a whole new world. That's an issue that's very, very interesting. Longer-term connections. Yeah. I suppose if there was just the opportunity for folks, if they felt a connection or felt a desire to continue engaging with another, but there was an option around that. Okay. Well, I think these are some great ideas. If anyone has anything further around sort of any online websites, Facebook groups, social media, that they know of, of places where we can actually send folks that they have some knowledge or experience of, and know that it's a safe space for community members and a place where community members might get something out of, we certainly welcome those. Please feel free to continue using the chat or to annotate as we go. A question around in terms of the speed friending, what platform are folks doing that on?

Group Participant Three:

Hello. I can answer that. I posted that question about the speed friending suggestion. Well, I'll try to answer it. It's actually one of my colleagues that is investigating different platforms to do this on. But some of the ideas that we were looking at is any platform with breakup rooms. Like for example, Zoom has a breakup rooms. Any platform that has that capacity to be able to split students into smaller groups for mini-interactions is kind of what we were looking at.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Awesome. I hadn't even thought of that. Yeah. Many breakout rooms where you can set the number of people, I guess, hey, two, three, or whatever you want to do. That's a great idea.

Group Participant Three:

Yeah. That's right. Like a bunch of students would enter the main room and then you can split them up into smaller rooms for a set amount of time that's set beforehand.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Right. Thank you for that.

Tanysha Klassen:

Something else that I, and I don't know specifics, but if people do and you want to throw them in the chat, that would be great. I know that a lot of things have been happening over Twitch, which is a live streaming platform. I've seen so many virtual DJ nights and stuff happening there. There's got to be ones that are specifically for the queer community. There's got to be online drag shows that are being streamed over Twitch, that kind of thing. That might be an interesting thing for people to look into, even just typing, I don't know, drag online Twitch or something like that. It's a pretty vast platform. People know anything about that and want to share, that would be great.

Resources

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Awesome. Okay. If folks are okay. I think maybe we'll move on to the next slide please. All right. We just wanted to share a couple resources with folks that they might want to check out because of course we are conscious that folks are coming from different areas of the province and have different needs as a result of that. First thing we really suggest is that folks check out their own campuses, students, union, and Pride collective groups, to see if they are active, especially now as we're heading into the summer months, or if they can recommend anything, link you to any other sites. Checking out local Pride groups.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

We appreciate that this won't apply to all students depending on where they live. There's a great website or great links through Egale Canada Queerantime 101, which has all kinds of different links to different things around, whether it be for parents, for youth, for all, and in all sorts of different areas, looking at health services. There's lots to unpack and quarantine. I recommend taking a look at that. You can also find resources with PFLAG Canada, QMunity based on the Lower Mainland, CAMH Rainbow Services, Trans Care BC and Prism. Thank you for coming. I see someone just in saying that they have to step out.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Next slide please. And one that we really wanted to highlight in terms of a couple really socially focused resources, the first being whatsonqueerbc.com. I don't know if folks are familiar with this website or not, but on whatsonqueerbc.com you'll find things like a virtual Prides, family Prides. They have

Saturday morning queer tunes, there's drag hour, there's art walks, there's drag story time, queer podcasts, radio yoga exercise. I think there's actually quite a bit there for folks that's going on in different areas of the province.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Of course the benefit of things being online is that even if you're not in that area of the province, you can attend. Certainly something to check out, whatsonqueerbc.com. I also wanted to highlight MOSAIC BC and their services for LGBTQ folks. MOSAIC BC works with newcomers and I'm just hyper-conscious of the effect of COVID and physical distancing on international students who may not have a tremendous support network here in the province. So, for service providers to please also be mindful of our students, many intersections and particularly for newcomers who identify as part of the community, there may be additional supports needed that we could connect to.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Last one I wanted to highlight was heretohelp.bc.ca. It's a wonderful website that looks at folks mental health and wellbeing and links to all sorts of different tools that folks can take advantage of. There are screening tools. If folks are concerned about depressive symptoms or feeling anxious right now, there are links to different support. Certainly as students you'll have access through your campuses to hopefully counseling services. And I know that a lot of counseling services right now are still providing service from a distance, so either over the phone or video conferencing, but they're also on heretohelp.bc.ca.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

You'll find resources for counseling services. If you can't find them or can't access them for some reason through your campus. You'll also find there's workbooks, there are toolkits, there are lots of different things for folks to get involved in and for folks to take advantage of from a mental health and wellbeing perspective. I noticed as well ... Oh, Tanysha, that's you in the chat.

Tanysha Klassen:

Yeah.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

You found your Twitch resource.

Tanysha Klassen:

I suddenly just got an email notification from Twitch saying, "This is what we're doing during Pride Month." So, I included the link here.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Perfect. Folks can click on that and see if there are special events going on for the month of June and perhaps who knows it is officially Pride Month, but as Tanysha alluded to the majority of Pride events in BC tend to kind of happen, or I should say Pride parades, at least in August. Perhaps there'll be things throughout the summer to look forward to it. Any last thoughts, feelings, ideas from participants before we wrap up today? Question, do we know of any research or post-secondary that has been done on the risks faced by LGBTQ youth during the pandemic?

Kirstin McLaughlin:

I don't know of any specific research studies that I can direct anyone to, but I know that certainly there are, this is something that we're going to be looking at post-COVID, there are folks planning to certainly look at the impact on LGBTQ folks. And if you check out some of the resources above, certainly some organizations are sort of predicting that perhaps the COVID-19 requirements around physical distancing will have a disproportionate effect on the mental health of members of the queer community, which is really, really important.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

And that potentially on physical health as well. And a lot of the rationale behind that is around cultural safety of care providers when working with LGBTQ clients. And so this is an area of scholarship that I'm involved in looking at what are the barriers to members of the queer community accessing health services. And oftentimes it is working with care providers who are not sensitive to the needs of the community, who use language that may not be inclusive or in fact offensive.

Kirstin McLaughlin:

And so it really comes down to that emotional, psychological safety. I imagine that that will also play a role in help seeking behaviors during COVID. Are there actual studies that I can point folks to? Not at this point though I do note that folks are including some resources in the chat here to check out. Oh, two research resources. Perfect. Where can you find the research that you just mentioned? Let me see if I can find a link and I can post it here. I have to see which one of those resources it came from. Okay. Any last thoughts, feelings, ideas, questions? Okay.

Tanysha Klassen:

I really hope this was helpful for folks. We really tried to make it more tangible, so people can kind of go away with some ideas. There've been some links shared in the chat, so try and save those as well. We really wanted people to walk away being like, "Okay, this is something that I might be able to do in my community."

Kirstin McLaughlin:

Even if it's one thing, even just one. And maybe we'll just go to the next slide and we'll just end on a brilliant quote from the self-described black lesbian feminist warrior mother, Audre Lorde, who says, "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence. It is self-preservation and not as an act of political warfare." The idea that you are worth investing in and taking care of, and to really promote that message as well with students.

Webinar Wrap Up

Duane Seibel :

Hey, so I'm going to step in at this point. On behalf of BCcampus, I'd like to send a huge, thanks to Tanysha and Kirstin for facilitating the session today. Both of them have done two now. We'll see how long COVID lasts. Well, we might have you back. Also thank you all for participating. You can access this recording and other recordings of BCcampus webinars. I'm going to add the link into the box right now or I'm going to try to and continue to talk. To get more information about BCcampus or to subscribe to the newsletter so you can be kept up to date on upcoming webinars and events, we'll put in another post for you right away. And also at this point, I like to always throw to a special shout out and thanks to

Paula and Kelsey in the background for providing all of our technical support, these go smoothly because of them.

Duane Seibel :

I hope to see everybody else back again soon in our webinars. Next week there'll be one on the Here To Help resource that Kirstin was talking about. And those that are delivering the service, if you'd like to learn more about it, and if you're somebody providing support to students, there'll be a great session to step into and learn who you should be referring to. Thank you, everybody.

Tanysha Klassen:

Take care, Happy Pride.