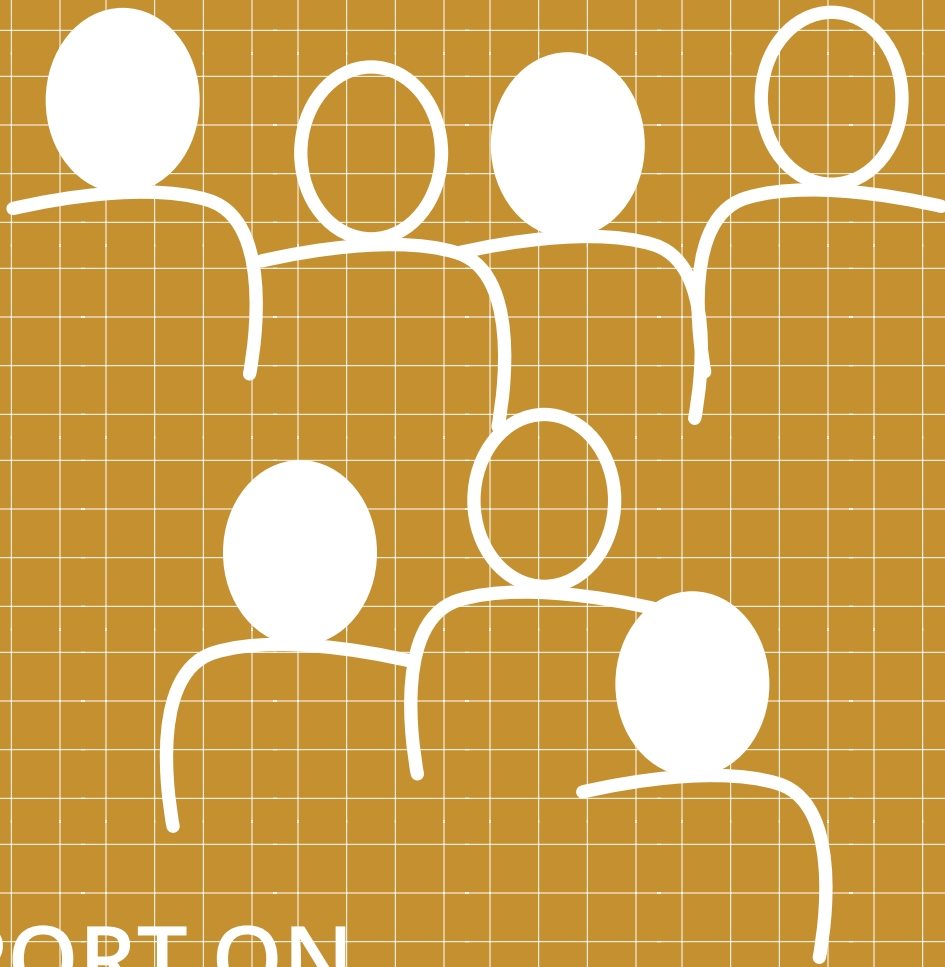


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# REPORT ON PARTNERSHIPS WITH ORGANIZATIONS FOR RACIALIZED PEOPLE

As part of the project “Family diversity: Creating a regional and intersectional network”  
**LGBTQ2 Community Capacity Fund Women and Gender Equality Canada**



Femmes et Égalité  
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# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Introduction to the LGBT+ Family Coalition (LGBT+FC)

Founded in 1998, the LGBT+ Family Coalition (LGBT+FC) is a community rights organization that advocates for the social and legal recognition of families that come under the umbrella of sexual and gender diversity.

Our mission is to work to build a world free of homophobia, transphobia, heteronormativity<sup>1</sup> and cisnormativity<sup>2</sup> where all families are celebrated and valued, regardless of their composition or the ethnic origin or nationality of their members.

Our actions are inspired by our values of equity, inclusion, kindness and solidarity.

As the only organization defending the rights of LGBTQ2+<sup>3</sup> families in Québec, the LGBT+FC aims to represent all families, particularly families that are under-represented.

## 1.2. Introduction of phase 4 of the project: Partnership with organizations for racialized people

In 2015, the Ministère de la Famille du Québec stated that most families with same-sex parents (64%) live outside major urban<sup>4</sup> centres. These families have urgent needs for support, information and networking. However, in cities, for many families, ironically the situation is the same: First Nations families living off reserve and racialized families may be isolated and lack resources and support. Although the LGBT+FC has some 1700 member families throughout Québec, the organization has a difficult time reaching these families and serving them sufficiently.

The main objective of this project, funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada, is to put new measures into place to attempt to remedy these lacks.

This report includes analyses and recommendations for the fourth phase of the project, which aims to meet with and establish partnerships with organizations for racialized people that can offer services to racialized LGBTQ2+ families.

While the LGBT+ Family Coalition serves more than 1,700 member families, very few of them are racialized families. As we are the reference when it comes to LGBTQ2+ families, we're very concerned with reaching all types of LGBTQ2+ families, but it appears that racialized families are rendered invisible and do not use our services.

1. A school of thought that takes heterosexuality as the norm and favours people with this sexual orientation.

2. A school of thought that takes cisgender people (people whose gender matches the one they were assigned at birth) as the norm and favours cis people to the detriment of trans people

3. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, two-spirit. Two-spirit is a First Nations concept that refers to both an Indigenous identity and sexual and gender diversity and includes an important spiritual aspect.

4. Research report: Structures familiales et vécu parental dans les familles homoparentales – État des recherches. Ministère de la Famille, 2015. <https://www.mfa.gouv.qc.ca/fr/publication/Documents/familles-homoparentales-rapport.pdf>

We are aware that LGBTQ2+ communities in Québec are mostly made up of white people and that racism exists within our communities, which could prevent racialized LGBTQ2+ people from seeing the Coalition as an organization that has their interests at heart. As such, we decided to contact organizations that offer services to racialized people in order to establish partnerships with them to be able to provide services to racialized LGBTQ2+ parents and future parents.

As a first step, we made observations about racialized communities, in regard to the categories and types of people they are made up of, their presence in the LGBTQ2+ sphere or the community sphere, inequalities between the white establishment (and its Western practices) and racialized communities, and finally, openness to parenting. As a second step, we established recommendations for actions the LGBT+ Family Coalition should take in order to establish lasting partnerships with the organizations for racialized people we met with, and in so doing, reach a greater number of racialized LGBTQ2+ families.

# ORGANIZATIONS, PEOPLE AND HEALTH CENTRES WE MET WITH

## Organizations providing services to racialized LGBTQ2+ people

[AGIR](#)

[Montreal LGBTQ+ Community Centre \(CCLGBTQ\)](#)

## Organizations providing services to racialized people

[Accompagnement des femmes immigrantes de l'Outaouais \(AFIO\)](#) (in french only)

[Carrefour ressource en interculturel \(CRIC\)](#) (in french only)

[Centre d'aide aux familles latino-américaines \(CAFLA\)](#) (in french and Spanish only)

[Centre social d'aide aux immigrants \(CSAI\)](#) (in french only)

[Côte-des-Neiges Black Community Association \(CDNBCA\)](#)

[Femmes du monde à Côte-des-Neiges](#)

[Institut universitaire SHERPA](#)

[Maison internationale de la Rive-Sud \(MIRS\)](#)

[PINAY](#)

[Regroupement Les Sages-Femmes du Québec \(RSFQ\)](#)

[South Asian Women's Community Centre \(South Asian Youth\)](#)

[Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées ou immigrantes \(TCRI\)](#) (in french only)

## Health centres

These centres were contacted because in one of our interviews, we received the suggestion to consult them, as often they provide psychosocial services to racialized people. For this reason, we approached the psychosocial services of these health centres.

[Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal](#) (in french only)

[Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux de Laval](#)

[Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux de la Montérégie-Est \(CISSME\)](#) (in french only)

[Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux de l'Outaouais](#)

[McGill University Health Centre \(MUHC\)](#)

## Resource people

Mei Chiu, family lawyer and former executive director of Chinese Family Services

Veronica Jane Bertiz, member of the LGBTQ2+ community and of Pinay. She was referred to us by Pinay.

# METHODOLOGY

## 3.1. Sample

- **13 organizations**
- **Five health centres**
- **One lawyer**
- **One referred person**

## 3.2. Questionnaire (see appendix)

The questionnaire included the following sections:

- **The organization's operations**
- **Individual and family services**
- **Collaboration**
- **Communications**

## 3.3. Adaptable interviews

According to the type of organization we were speaking with, we adapted our questionnaire and our interview method. For example, the questions were more specific when we were speaking with respondents from organizations that served an LGBTQ2+ population.

## 3.4. Change of perspective

Along the way, we discovered that the majority of (non-LGBTQ2+) organizations for racialized people we were meeting with had few or no LGBTQ2+ people—whether that's because racialized families don't use these services or because they are not vocal about their gender identity or sexual orientation. We realized that these families were rendered much more invisible than we had thought. As such, we adapted the questionnaire and our interviews in order to learn why racialized LGBTQ2+ people don't make use of community services rather than doing our research only on families.

With the help of the frontline workers, we attempted to better research relevant information in order to understand why nearly zero data are available on the topic of racialized LGBTQ2+ families.



# ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION AND OBSERVATIONS

Before beginning this report, it is important to underscore that the average age of racialized users of the services provided by LGBTQ2+ organizations is generally between 18 and 30. We did not succeed in finding constructive information on older groups within these organizations.

Since services for LGBT+ people in non-LGBT+ organizations for racialized people and in social services centres were not a priority or do not exist, it is entirely possible that older LGBT+ people use them, but are not recognized as such.

Only three of 20 organizations knew about trans and non-binary people using their services, but they did not have enough information to include in our observations.

## 4.1. The racialized communities we met with

To produce this report, we contacted a number of organizations that work directly with racialized communities and that may have racialized LGBTQ2+ people among their service users, and by extension, racialized LGBTQ2+ families.

We met with representatives from organizations serving the following ethnocultural communities:

- Black
- Arabic
- Latina/o
- Philippina/o
- Chinese
- South Asian

## Percentage

According to the results of a 2017 pan-Canadian survey by the Fondation Jasmin Roy, about 13% of the population identified as LGBTQ2+<sup>5</sup>. We consulted the 2016 census to calculate the above-mentioned populations. The result gives us a potential total of 115,913 LGBTQ2+ people. Within this result, we don't have a percentage for people who are part of an LGBTQ2+ family, and apart from AGIR and the Montreal LGBTQ+ Community Centre, none of the organizations we met with had clearly established how many LGBTQ2+ families use their services. They did mention people who were part of same-gender couples, but the numbers remained low. Only four organizations—AGIR, SHERPA, CAFLA and the Montreal LGBTQ+ Community Centre—noted these, but did not provide much information.

## Specificities

Over the course of our interviews, we noted that each of these communities, in addition to the common denominator of being made up of racialized people, had other specificities, including:

- their traditions
- their culture
- their religion
- their customs
- their colonial history, including their assimilation of colonialist LGBTQ2phobic attitudes
- homonationalist<sup>6</sup> attitudes in their host society
- education
- social perceptions about them

5. Fondation Jasmin Roy, 2017. LGBTQ+ Realities Survey. <https://fondationjasminroy.com/initiative/sondage-realites-lgbt/> / Page consultée le 15 juin 2021

6. The term "homonationalism," coined by Jasbir Puar in the work *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007), has become a broad term designating activist strategies and public policy that promotes the acceptance of queer citizens and the recognition of LGBTQ+ rights at the expense of the Other, in particular racialized individuals that are not as progressive. See, for instance, Smith, Miriam, 2019. "Homophobia and Homonationalism: LGBTQ Law Reform in Canada." *Social & Legal Studies* 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0964663918822150>

## Definitions

**Family:** During our interviews, a number of respondents said that for many racialized ethnocultural communities, the definition of “family” is broader than the one we had come in with. A family is not only two parents and children or a single-parent family. Family can be:

- Siblings who are raising children together;
- Grandparents who are raising children along with their parents or who have even more authority due to their position as elders;
- Non-legalized adoptions of relatives’ children by one or more members of the family;
- Distant parents who no longer have ties with their children entirely because of rejection due to their sexual orientation or gender identity as trans or non-binary.

**Adult:** The definition of “adult” is not the same for ethnocultural communities<sup>7</sup> as compared to people from the dominant non-racialized Québécois culture. In these strongly patriarchal families, parents and elders retain the right to oversee and control their adult children even when they become parents themselves. In many communities, age can be unimportant when it comes to respecting customs.

7. The term “ethnocultural communities” is used in this document to describe communities of people who have common characteristics proper to or recognized by their group, including cultural traditions, ancestral origin, language, national identity, country of origin, and physical traits. We recognize that white people from the dominant Québécois francophone culture also have a community with shared ethnic origins and a culture, and as such, make up one ethnocultural community among many. However, we are using the term here to make it clear that groups that are recognizable by a visible characteristic (often skin colour, but also other shared physical traits) are more likely to be the victims of discrimination or to be subjected to disadvantages.

## Activities and access to services

Most of the groups we met with offer family activities. However, even if in theory LGBTQ2+ people are welcome, in practice, participants are strongly rejected and the organizations experience backlash—sometimes violent—for having “endorsed” the LGBTQ2+ “lifestyle” by allowing these families to attend. The organizations MIRS, CSAI and CAFLA all indicated this to us. The learning of tradition is primordial, and family activities are held in centres catering to the ethnocultural community and very infrequently in other types of community centres.

A number of respondents describe parental roles as being often well defined in these families, and very few cis men attend family activities at cultural centres.

**« YOU CAN COMPARE IT WITH TALKING ABOUT VIOLENCE. [...] WHEN WE SAY THE SENTENCE ‘THE AIR CHANGES,’ WE KNOW THAT OUR WOMEN ARE UNCOMFORTABLE, BECAUSE THEY THEMSELVES ARE EXPERIENCING IT, BUT DON’T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT. A LITTLE BIT OF DENIAL THERE. A LITTLE BIT OF ‘MY CULTURE SAYS A WOMAN CANNOT TALK ABOUT VIOLENCE.’ OR JUST THE STIGMA AROUND IT. I THINK IT’S THE SAME THING, A BIT, WHEN WE TALK ABOUT GENDER AND SEXUALITY. »**

**— HARLEEN, SOUTH ASIAN YOUTH**

Cis men have greater freedom than women, which gives them an ease of movement and greater privacy to take part in activities other than those offered within the community. Many respondents noted that women's activities are much more heavily scrutinized than those of men, who must mostly respect their commitments as men, fathers, husbands, and above all as heterosexual people. Otherwise, individuals can be shunned, abandoned or punished, including:

- Corporal punishment;
- Forced conversion therapies;
- Expulsion from the church;
- Being sent back to their country of origin, even if the person understands themselves as Québécois and has never lived in the country in question, regardless of age.

Women, for their part, are expected to be irreproachable and may suffer heavy consequences targeting their honour if that's not the case. Some respondents explained that they sometimes cannot attend activities alone, regardless of their age.

The question of LGBTQ2+ orientations and non-conforming gender identities in the non-dominant ethnocultural communities within the province of Québec is taboo, but very present. There is a culture of silence around these issues, a lack of understanding, and reference to a "white problem" which must not take root in racialized communities, according to respondents from the AFIO, CSAI, South Asian Youth and AGIR, among others.

The CAFLA respondent told us that when same-gender couples come to activities with their children, they are automatically set apart. These couples are rare and don't come back to activities or to the centre itself. There were also no openly LGBTQ2+ individuals at online activities. The family structures or climate with regard to LGBTQ2+ issues often don't permit privacy or safety for online meetings on LGBTQ2+ topics when they're offered in the evenings, with the exception of people living alone or as a couple in a single-family unit.

With the exception of AGIR, the Montreal LGBTQ+ Community Centre, South Asian Youth, SHERPA (with the Clinique Mauve<sup>9</sup>) and CSAI, none of the centres we met with clearly provided services or activities for LGBTQ2+ people or families, even if sometimes the workshops they offer touch on these issues.

### **Generations and LGBTQ2+ realities**

To conclude this section, we must mention generational divides. This element came up multiple times in our interviews.

The third generation faces the weight of tradition, marked cisheteronormative anchors, and the pressure of customs, while it is nonetheless more open to accepting others. LGBTQ2+ people who are at the age when they might want to start a family were raised with strong ancestral values when it comes to family. This sometimes constrains them to making drastic choices between their culture of origin, their religious beliefs, and belonging to LGBTQ2+ communities.

9.The Clinique Mauve is a pilot project with SHERPA that offers integrated services to LGBTQI+ immigrants and racialized people.

**« WHAT SURPRISED ME AT FIRST WAS THE DEFINITION OF BISEXUALITY, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH WE DON'T USE IT THE SAME WAY. I SEE THAT IT'S USED IN A MUCH BROADER WAY THAN HOW I WOULD DEFINE IT PERSONALLY ACCORDING TO MY WESTERN STANDARDS. WOMEN WHO WERE LIKE, 'I WAS MARRIED TO A MAN.' AND I'M LIKE, 'OK, BUT SINCE THAT ENDED?' 'AH, NO, I'LL NEVER BE WITH MEN AGAIN. BUT I'M BISEXUAL.' WE WERE USING THE SAME TERM, BUT WE DIDN'T HAVE THE SAME DEFINITION.. »**

**— VALÉRIE, CCLGBTQ+**

## **4.2. Distinguishing various categories of racialized people**

In our interviews, we noted different categories of racialized people in Québec. We attempted to obtain the maximum possible information about racialized LGBTQ2+ people despite the lack of resources self-identified as such.

Parenting was very rarely mentioned in these categories, and the audience mentioned is mostly cis men under the age of 30. However, there are some exceptions.

### **Asylum-seekers<sup>10</sup> and the question of LGBTQ2+ issues**

According to frontline workers, for asylum-seekers (in the category of belonging to a social group), the concepts of LGBTQ2+ issues are often abstract and only really show up at the moment when a given person reveals their sexual orientation or gender identity, at which point they are force into exile.

The idea of LGBTQ2+ and its associated vocabulary are very Western, and they often don't at all describe the realities of many asylum-seekers. These ideas are also sometimes heavy with meaning and attached to trauma. Knowing that many speak neither French nor English, it can be challenging to address certain questions in a way they can understand. LGBTQ2+ websites are mainly in English and French, and access to information is difficult, except through activists and other frontline workers who work in the field and are themselves LGBTQ2+.

10. An asylum seeker is someone who is seeking international protection but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been determined. In contrast, a refugee is someone who has been recognised under the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees to be a refugee.

**« PEOPLE START GOING BACK TO THEIR COMMUNITIES. IT STARTS SHIFTING WITH TIME. IF YOU'VE BEEN LIVING WITH YOUR OWN PEOPLE WHO LOOK LIKE YOU FOR A VERY LONG TIME AND YOU NEVER HAD TO EXPLAIN YOUR COLOUR OR WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE, IT'S A REALLY BIG SLAP WHEN YOU COME HERE AND YOU HAVE TO FIT INTO THOSE BOXES. THIS IS WHERE THE GAP HAPPENS. [...] PEOPLE THINK WHEN LGBT IMMIGRANTS COME HERE, THEY'LL FIT IN THE LOCAL LGBT COMMUNITY, BUT IT'S ACTUALLY VERY, VERY HARD. »**

**— AGIR**

### **Refugees and the question of LGBTQ2+ issues**

According to frontline workers, LGBTQ2+ refugees are more aware of the issues, but nonetheless remain sensitive and facing a dilemma when it comes to community spaces and social services. A number of times, it came up that refugees were not comfortable dealing with a racialized worker from their ethnocultural community (unless the person proclaimed themselves as LGBTQ2+), and were also reluctant to be paired with a white worker for fear of their racism or lack of knowledge about racialized LGBTQ2+ people. They're facing institutional and systemic racism, injustice in regard to their social status, and racism, colorism or fetishization within LGBTQ2+ communities. Many have the sense that they can't find a place anywhere, as AGIR told us.

Some people prefer to maintain cultural ties and hide their LGBTQ2+ identities in order to not risk solitude and to minimize the risk of depression, despite strong reticence or LGBTQ2+ phobias that hold sway in their communities of origin.

According to the respondents from AGIR, the Montreal LGBTQ+ Community Centre, CSAI and MUHC, the majority of asylum-seekers and refugees are cis men. Trans and cis women are present, but in smaller numbers. Unfortunately we didn't get any data on trans men (or other gender-diverse people) from the respondents, which prevented us from learning about the realities of such individuals in the various communities we met with.

LGBTQ2+ asylum-seekers and refugees don't really bring up the question of parenting, unless they were already parents in their country of origin. Often, ties with their children have been

severed. For LGBTQ2+ people, the pathway to bringing their children to join them is long. They often cut all ties with organizations when they obtain residency and sometimes before they've had time to become parents or to reunite with their children.

### **Racialized permanent residents or citizens and the question of LGBTQ2+ issues**

These individuals belong to three generations: first, second and third. Third-generation people<sup>11</sup> use some services for youth and young adults, and are often under the age of 30. In Canada, in 2016, there were 5,968,475 third-generation people from visible minorities. These numbers clearly show us that a growing percentage of the Canadian population comes from ethnocultural communities. If we return to the 13% found in the pan-Canadian survey, that means about 775,901 potentially LGBTQ2+ people in 2016, and we suspect this number has grown since then.

While the third generation and previous generations are growing, the discourse shows that they continue to be raised in cisheteronormative family environments, which sometimes makes it difficult for LGBTQ2+ people to find acceptance and to come out with regard to a sexual orientation or gender identity that doesn't conform with the gender norms in effect.

While remaining within the social spheres of the ethnocultural communities to which they belong, they are increasingly open to other ways of thinking and to the mixing of cultures. However, it remains very important to take care to not stain the family's or community's honour, which means choosing not to reveal the ways in which they are different from what's customary. This way of thinking was common in all the communities we met with.

This third generation is conscious of LGBTQ2+ realities and issues, and some make attempts to figure out how to live openly despite the various directions they're pulled in (religions, traditions, specific social constructions, living in a neighbourhood primarily occupied by people from their ethnocultural origin, and so on), but these remain in the minority. The majority remains attached to a cisnormative and heterosexist ideology. We were clearly told that young cis men are very closed when it comes to the question of LGBTQ2+ people, more so than cis girls.

11. Information from Statistics Canada on the status of generations: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=F&Geo1=PR&Code1=24&Geo2=PR&Code2=01&Data=Count&SearchText=24&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom=&TABID=3>



### **4.3. White institutions and racialized communities: a portrait of inequality**

Of 21 interviews, nine respondents did not come from racialized communities, but were responsible for the files of newcomers and ethnocultural communities. A number of staff members responded to our survey who were social workers and psychosocial workers who identified as being white, cis and heterosexual, and who, by their own admission, are not always well equipped to help racialized LGBTQ2+ people while taking into account all the intersecurities these people may face.

All the non-racialized respondents told us that it would be better to at least have racialized people (if not racialized LGBTQ2+ people) to take care of these files and to ensure that these workers are familiar with LGBTQ2+ issues.

### **The problem of counting racialized LGBTQ+ people**

The interview process with users follows government guidelines when it comes to newcomers, asylum-seekers and refugees, according to the MIRS and several CI(U)SSS. Questions about sexual orientation or about transition process are not on the form, which prevents them from correctly counting the number of LGBTQ2+ people who use these services (unless they come specifically for needs related to immigration applications on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity). As a result, even if these people are LGBTQ2+ parents or future parents, the information is not captured. As well, many respondents from non-LGBTQ2+ centres told us that in their interviews, they simply don't think to ask whether people belong to the LGBTQ2+ community.

One important fact to note in our interviews: some non-racialized workers who work with young people from ethnocultural communities, in workshops about gender and sexuality, don't know the terms and acronyms such as "LGBTQ2+," "racialized" or "intersectionality." There is a lack of knowledge about what an intercultural approach is, and the ways to practice it appropriately. They also don't have the necessary resources to properly understand the intersectional aspects that come with being a racialized LGBTQ2+ person or all the other nuances proper to these various groups.



### **Problematic structures and approaches**

During our interviews, a number of people easily recognized many of the harmful points about centres and organizations that are not tailored to the realities of racialized people:

- The presence of a white saviour complex;
- Systemic racism and discrimination, institutional racism;
- Discrimination against sexual orientation and gender identity;
- Homonationalism;
- White institutions have had white Western bases, structures and ways of thinking for many years. As such, it can be difficult to reshape them without taking the time to recognize the baseline problems;
- The use of images of racialized people to fill visual quotas;

**« WHEN THE FOUNDATIONS ARE WHITE FROM THE START, AFTER THAT IT'S REALLY DIFFICULT TO UNDO IT ALL. I'VE OBSERVED THAT IN THESE INSTITUTIONS, THEY COME VERY LATE IN THE PROCESS TO THE POINT OF SAYING 'OMG! WE'RE LACKING DIVERSITY. WHAT CAN WE DO NOW? »**

**— ME CHIU**

- The association between various ethnocultural communities and charity;
- A lack of consideration on the part of white workers in regard to what skin colour and intersectionality represent;
- Professional training and learning that do not help people understand the essence of the lives of racialized people (which only they understand) and even less so racialized LGBTQ2+ people.

**« WE HAVE TWO LESBIAN COUPLES AND THEY ASKED ME: 'HOW CAN I HAVE CHILDREN HERE?' AND THEY ARE SPANISH SPEAKERS. AND I KNOW THERE IS NO [SPANISH SPEAKING ORGANIZATION] FOR LGBT FAMILIES. THE LANGUAGE BARRIER IS REALLY BIG. EVEN IF I WANT TO INVITE THEM TO A FRANCOPHONE THING, THEY'RE NOT GONNA BE ABLE TO ATTEND. THAT'S WHY WE DO OUR SERVICES IN FOUR LANGUAGES.» »**

**— AGIR**

Respondents from non-LGBTQ2+ organizations for racialized people also mentioned certain points that are harmful to the advancement of LGBTQ2+ issues:

- Unconscious biases and lack of awareness regarding LGBTQ2+ issues as well as some racialized workers' personal barriers with regard to LGBTQ2+ people prevent them from offering appropriate services.
- Lack of information about the multiple intersections faced by racialized LGBTQ2+ people.
- The personal religious convictions of some racialized workers that sometimes go against their mandate to provide services (ex.: suggesting conversion therapies).
- Insufficient space for listening to racialized LGBTQ2+ people in racialized but non-LGBTQ2+ centres.
- Lack of resources on non-traditional forms of access to parenting (ex.: adoption, assisted reproduction, surrogacy, and so on).

In rural and remote areas, the situation is much worse, because the issues faced by racialized LGBTQ2+ people are practically unknown or are silenced because of the low representation of these people in the area. Services, resources and activities for LGBTQ2+ people are almost nonexistent, whether in racialized groups or otherwise.

**« SOME OF US ARE ALSO QUEER,  
BUT WE ARE NOT VISIBLE. THEY  
ARE THERE, BUT THE THING IS THAT  
THEIR REPRESENTATION IS STILL  
HIDDEN IN THE CLOSET. I CAN  
ALREADY SAY THAT SOME OF MY  
FRIENDS WILL NEVER COME OUT,  
BECAUSE THEY ARE DEEPLY AFRAID.  
[...] BECAUSE OF OUR CULTURE, WE  
ONLY MOVE OUT WHEN WE ARE  
ABOUT TO GET MARRIED. »**

**— VERONICA**

#### **4.4. Community services and racialized LGBTQ2+ people: a void to fill**

We sent our interview request to 32 organizations that mainly serve ethnocultural communities. Of these 32 organizations, seven refused to meet with us due to lack of interest; eight never replied to our multiple emails and calls; six referred us to non-racialized organizations they worked with; and 11 agreed to meet with us.

The reality is stark when it comes to talking about racialized LGBTQ2+ communities. On the one hand, there are organizations that are closed to discussing the issues facing LGBTQ2+ people; and on the other hand we're looking at a white establishment, in non-racialized centres, where most of the staff is white even in areas where there is a large population of people from ethnocultural communities.

Many of our respondents strongly recognized that for users, the impression is that white institutions, social centres and organizations not specific to racialized people represent the State and a colonial past. This engenders a mistrust among racialized people, because of:

- the lack of racialized people in many professional spheres;
- the lack of activities held in languages other than English or French;
- the lack of consideration regarding what approach to take to racialized LGBTQ2+ people.

**« MANY PEOPLE THINK OF THEIR PARENTS AS PEOPLE WHO PROVIDE A ROOF. BUT SOMETIMES IF YOU COME FROM A COUNTRY WHERE IT'S UNSTABLE, IT'S YOUR FAMILY WHO IS LIVING UNDER YOUR ROOF. AND THEY BECOME VERY SENSITIVE. I THINK IT HURTS THE PARENTS' PRIDE WHEN THEY ARE THE ONES RECEIVING HELP FROM YOU. IF SOMEONE SPONSORS THEIR PARENTS, THAT ELDER IS GONNA FACE LOTS OF HARDSHIPS. [...] MANY LGBT PEOPLE END UP COMPROMISING. IT CHANGES SOMEONE'S FEELINGS WHEN THEY SEE THEIR PARENTS BEING VULNERABLE, LOST IN THIS COUNTRY THAT IS ACTUALLY RACIST AGAINST THEM. »**

**— AGIR**

For racialized communities, community services are strongly seen as a way to preserve a cultural heritage, more so than as a way to gain rights or receive services in the host society. They're looking to keep the culture of origin intact as much as possible. Anything that relates to the West doesn't necessarily have a place. LGBTQ2+ issues are seen as aspects that don't relate to the culture of origin, but rather, to a white culture. As such, it's difficult to place them at the heart of an organization's concerns, according to our racialized respondents. As such, racialized people, and LGBTQ2+ people even more so, often find themselves at an impasse when it comes to wanting to use an organization's services.

#### **4.5. Coming out: A Western concept**

One of the aspects that stood out in our interviews with respondents from organizations such as AGIR, PINAY and CSAI is that the concept of coming out is very white and Western. It does not have the same significance or importance in a number of racialized communities.

When someone feels a sense of belonging to LGBTQ2+ communities, it can encourage someone to come out; the simple fact of being able to do so and live with the impacts (such as the risk of being rejected by family and community) comes from occupying a social position that allows people certain privileges. During our interviews, we learned that this sense of belonging is not always present among racialized LGBTQ2+ people, as noted by AGIR, the Montreal LGBTQ+ Community Centre and Mei Chiu. Racism and discrimination within the LGBTQ2+ communities are a major factor for many.

**« FORMING A FAMILY WITH CHILDREN, IT'S LIKE A TRADITIONAL VISION OF WHAT MAKES A FAMILY. WITH THAT, THERE'S ALSO THE LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE. [...] EVEN IF YOU'RE A MEMBER OF THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY, YOU MAY WANT TO ENTER THESE THINGS. AT THE SAME TIME, JUST BECAUSE OF YOUR SEXUAL ORIENTATION, YOU'RE PARTING WAYS WITH A TRADITIONAL VISION. SO REALLY THERE'S NOT MUCH SPACE FOR PEOPLE LIKE THAT. »**

**— ME CHIU**

As such, the movement from a racialized community to an LGBTQ2+ community in case of rejection after coming it is not a very comforting option for racialized people who are discovering their sexual orientation or gender identity. Some prefer to never have to openly state their belonging in order to avoid, as much as possible, an association that could compromise the ties between them and their ethnocultural communities where they don't experience racism. As many of our respondents noted, for many racialized people, racism is a bigger issue than the question of their sexual orientation, which they can more easily hide.

According to AGIR and SHERPA, when a person is establishing themselves in a new country, it's not unusual for them to want to sponsor their parents, children or other members of their family to come and join them. Even if the racialized person is out and involved in LGBTQ2+ communities before their family members arrive, the family reunification (often multigenerational) may lead them to go back into the closet. For the racialized LGBTQ2+ person, the priority at that point is to connect their family with their ethnocultural community, even if being part of this community sometimes means going back in the closet and leaving LGBTQ2+ life without having previously built a family, for these same reasons.

#### **4.6. Barriers to building family as racialized LGBTQ2+ people**

Discrepancies in terms of access to parenting sometimes arise even when they don't affect only LGBTQ2+ people.

##### **Parenting and tradition**

The understanding of what parenting is, or of ways to start a family, remain traditional even if their meaning and form take other routes.

**« SOME OF US ARE ALSO QUEER, BUT WE ARE NOT VISIBLE. THEY ARE THERE, BUT THE THING IS THAT THEIR REPRESENTATION IS STILL HIDDEN IN THE CLOSET. I CAN ALREADY SAY THAT SOME OF MY FRIENDS WILL NEVER COME OUT, BECAUSE THEY ARE DEEPLY AFRAID. [...] BECAUSE OF OUR CULTURE, WE ONLY MOVE OUT WHEN WE ARE ABOUT TO GET MARRIED. »**

**— VERONICA**

For some communities, adoption is not done with children outside a known circle, and adoption of children through youth protection holds no appeal; medically assisted reproduction is often not in line with religious or traditional beliefs. When people are open to these ideas, sometimes the lack of racialized donors puts the brakes on things; surrogacy is still very poorly seen and misunderstood. These various modes of access to parenting are thus not very well accepted by some ethnocultural communities, and most organizations had no resources regarding LGBTQ2+ access to parenting.

The tug-of-war between belonging to biological or traditional family and chosen family is strong among some racialized people, as a number of our respondents underscored. Respect for elders is primordial, as they are very important when it comes to child-raising and passing on traditions, as well as when it comes to babysitting, since in many diverse ethnocultural families, the grandparents babysit the children. This tradition has become even stronger with the pandemic, but it's also ideal for many families with lower incomes. Some people, in this case, prefer to remain in a hetero marriage and keep these ties intact rather than openly living out their true sexual orientation or gender identity. Many respondents mentioned that they have seen the populations they serve dealing with this kind of issue.

When LGBTQ2+ people make a decision to start a family, the issues also affect their parents, grandparents and other family members. Individuals or couples without children can choose not to show their sexual orientation, but once they become parents, it's almost impossible to hide from their loved ones. Children can be very vocal about their family composition, which can risk exposing the parents as well as the rest of the family. This can quickly become problematic, as many of our respondents attested. As such, we note that for racialized LGBTQ2+ people, becoming parents can be a decision with heavy consequences for family honour and ties to their communities of origin, without even counting that customs and religion can represent nearly insurmountable barriers, according to respondents from PINAY, South Asian Youth, and AGIR, as well as Mei Chiu.

### **Don't Ask, Don't Tell**

LGBTQ2+ people who hold conventional and well-paid jobs will be much more accepted in their communities. However, there is a tacit notion of "don't ask, don't tell."

Professional respect is a very important aspect for the family image, and this creates tolerance for a bit more freedom, according to a number of respondents. These kinds of professionals—as well as those who no longer spend much time in their communities due to careers that are more artistic or less traditional, or that go against cultural values—are more easily found among large-scale LGBTQ2+ activities, social groups or events, and may potentially create families, according to Mei Chiu and the respondents from South Asian Youth and AFIO.

# CONCLUSION

The initial purpose of this report was to build ties with organizations that provide services to racialized people in order to reach racialized LGBTQ2+ families and offer them services tailored to their needs. While we had to revise our approach, we were nonetheless able to glean useful facts in our interviews with the workers we met, about the various realities that prevent racialized LGBTQ2+ people from being centre stage.

To do this, we had to understand the realities of racialized people without the intersection of LGBTQ2+, as well as understanding LGBTQ2+ realities, and then associate the two to understand racialized LGBTQ2+ people and families. It was detailed work with plenty of nuance and complexity, but it explains why we found nearly no results when we looked for such families within organizations, centres and social services.

The vast majority of the people mentioned to us by the workers we met with were cis people under age 30. We would have liked to obtain more information about non-cis and older users, but once again, this information was lacking.

The discoveries we made by speaking with various racialized communities revealed the strong ties their members have with their ethnocultural groups, traditions and customs—ties so strong that some of them choose them at the expense of their personal lives.

The reason some racialized people voluntarily exit the LGBTQ2+ scene is racism in all its forms and all its instances. The continued marked presence of a strong colonial past today still perpetuates discriminatory ideologies with regard to LGBTQ2+ communities among racialized communities, as well as the strong heteronormative and cisnormative structures that are nowhere near crumbling.

Services and activities for racialized LGBTQ2+ people within non-LGBTQ2+ organizations are practically non-existent, with the exception of some pioneers in the area, but much work remains to be done.

The issues faced by racialized LGBTQ2+ people are thus very present for racialized LGBTQ2+ families. As such, we will put into place recommendations developed based on our observations, and attempt to make the Coalition more inclusive and up-to-date on issues for racialized people in order to eventually reach the LGBTQ2+ people and families that exist somewhere, but that, for all the reasons described in this report, don't dare to come forward.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## 6.1. Create partnerships with the organizations we interviewed

Following our interviews, we discussed the possibility of partnerships with the organizations we met with, and all were in agreement. However, it would be wise to put in more efforts into establishing partnerships with the organizations that demonstrated an interest and said they need training in order to be more inclusive toward LGBTQ2+ communities in general. These organizations are:

- AFIO
- CAFLA
- CSAI
- Femmes du monde Côte-des-Neiges
- MUHC
- PINAY
- RSFQ
- South Asian Youth
- TCRI

We suggest that these partnerships should have four aspects:

### **Ask a few partner organizations to train us on the issues and realities facing racialized LGBTQ2+ people**

AGIR, SHERPA and the Montreal LGBTQ+ Community Centre also agreed to work with us more closely in order to strengthen our knowledge and expertise about LGBTQ2+ racialized people.

### **Suggest that our partners survey their membership with regard to their users' gender and sexual orientation**

If our partners were to record the gender identity and sexual orientation of their users when they first show up, this could also be a way to identify LGBTQ2+ parents and future parents in order to better target their needs.

### **Create a partner newsletter**

As for LGBTQ2+ organizations in rural and remote regions, we want to create a newsletter for partners, which could be sent to LGBTQ2+ groups as well as to organizations for racialized people. However, it would be preferable to create two separate mailing groups, as each of them has their specificities, which will likely require the creation of two distinct newsletters based on needs.

### **Create ties with organizations that offer services to youth in order to support them in relation to their questions about LGBTQ2+ parenting**

Lastly, we recommend keeping close contact with organizations for racialized youth, such as South Asian Youth, as these are places where queer young adults are building their identities, and may be deciding whether or not they want children. Once they've passed the age limit for using these services, these young people will often find themselves lacking a space designed for them. The Coalition could become this space for future parents.



## **6.2. Offer trainings and workshops on LGBTQ2+ families to our partners**

As it emerged that the common modes of access to LGBTQ2+ parenting don't necessarily speak to racialized communities, whether due to misunderstanding or to reticence, it would be useful to offer trainings or workshops on LGBTQ2+ families to the members and staff of partner organizations. In fact, a number of them have expressed their interest in this. It will be important to offer these trainings and workshops in our partners' space, which are already safer spaces for their racialized users.

We also suggest working in close collaboration with the organizations for racialized people in organizing these workshops and trainings, and in choosing their form and content. Because the workers in these organizations are the ones who hold expertise in the realities and issues faced by racialized communities, it will be beneficial to follow their approach and listen carefully to their needs and recommendations.

## **6.3. Train the employees and board members of the LGBTQ+ Family Coalition on the intercultural approach and concerns particular to racialized communities**

While the people who gravitate around the LGBTQ+ Family Coalition have already received several trainings on the realities and issues faced by racialized communities, we need to make sure to offer trainings on this topic and on the intercultural approach to the board and to employees. It's very important that our anti-racist and anti-oppressive approach be as complete as possible, and that we be able to properly serve all racialized communities. We need to educate non-racialized and cis people on ways to recognize their privileges related to their skin colour and shade, and their gender identity and presentation, in order to avoid reproducing the oppressions committed by the patriarchy, or by white, cis hetero people, toward people and communities that are marginalized by society and by people's failure to acknowledge their privilege.

We must avoid homonationalism in terms of conveying the false idea that Western communities excel in respecting the rights of LGBTQ2+ people, set up in opposition to LGBTQ2phobic understandings present in racialized communities, and avoid asking them to change by critiquing their cultural notions.

Trainings on the intercultural approach would help our non-racialized team members take a step back when they need to address topics related to issues facing racialized people and help them better understand the subtleties.

#### **6.4. Offer activities by and for racialized LGBTQ2+ people**

As Mei Chiu said, it's essential to encourage the initiatives led by our racialized parents and future parents while providing them with the resources they need to create activities and workshops, without getting involved in the process. We need to establish a trust bond by showing that not only are racialized communities welcome in our centre, but also, it's their centre too, from the beginning. We can get there by offering them information, content and activities by and for them.

##### **Create workshops for future parents in partnership with organizations that serve racialized LGBTQ2+ people**

As AGIR and the Montreal LGBTQ+ Community Centre have told us they have LGBTQ2+ families—in the broad sense—among their users, it would be worthwhile working with them to offer workshops on access to parenting for newcomers to Québec.

##### **Provide documentation on access to LGBTQ2+ parenting**

The same process needs to happen in rural and remote areas, where there is sometimes a severe lack of resources and information on racialized LGBTQ+ people. We need to work to create pamphlets on the issues, realities and intersections facing racialized LGBTQ2+ people and distribute them to CISSS and CIUSSS as well as to our LGBTQ2+ partner organizations in these areas.

#### **6.5. Adapt our language and make our content accessible in several languages**

Since we understand that a good number of racialized LGBTQ2+ newcomers speak neither French nor English, we would recommend making our content accessible in other languages by:

- Recruiting volunteers to provide simultaneous translation of some of our workshops and conferences from French into English, Spanish and Arabic.
- Recruiting volunteers to translate some of our web-based documents from French into English, Spanish and Arabic.
- For each of our activities and in our communications, making a glossary available to explain some of the words we often use, which may not be well known to people who didn't grow up in the West. As well, it's important to simplify information, LGBTQ2+ jargon and our services to make them less academic in order to make the Coalition more accessible to certain ethnocultural communities.

## **6.6. Create a safer space during workshops, lectures and activities**

We think it would be beneficial to create a safer space within our various activities for people who are immigrants or who are members of ethnocultural communities. They could gather together and ask their questions without fear of being judged or experiencing racism. On the Zoom platform, that could mean that at the beginning we identify a racialized employee with whom participants could exchange messages and ask their questions using the chat function, in full confidentiality. In person, that could mean creating an identified physical space where one of our racialized employees could be available for the requests and needs of our parents and future parents from ethnocultural communities.

It's important to know the various types of racialized people who come to us (refugees, asylum-seekers, third-generation immigrants, and so on) when possible, in order to provide appropriate references. We need to pay particular attention to asylum-seekers and refugees in order to avoid exacerbating their traumatic experiences.

## **6.7. Adapt the definition of "family" and the image of the LGBT+ Family Coalition to include racialized communities**

As mentioned above, the definition of family that we use at the Coalition is very Western. To reach more racialized LGBTQ2+ families, we need to review our understanding of what makes a family in order for the meaning to be representative for a broader population.

We need to make sure we don't come across as marketing Blackness or as fetishizing when we create visual content for our activities. We need to be aware of the Coalition's white roots, and in our new image, we need to reformat ourselves as an organization that holds the issues of racialized LGBTQ2+ families at heart just as we do for other families.

We need to let go of any white saviour complex in our speeches and lectures (surrogacy or adoption, for instance, where we need to bring some sensitivity to how we discuss these topics). Same thing for our discussion groups and workshops, even when they are not specifically aimed at racialized people.

It will be necessary to find trainers among our members, or to recruit from our networks, to find racialized people who want to get involved with our training teams, on our board of directors, and as volunteers. The Coalition must be transparent about our motivations and make it clear in our communications that their voices are necessary in order to best represent the needs of racialized LGBTQ2+ people.

# APPENDIX

## 7.1. Description of the organizations met with

### **AGIR**

AGIR provides support services to vulnerable LGBTQIA+ migrants, including support groups, intake meetings, individual accompaniment, and more.



### **Carrefour ressources en interculturel (CRIC) (in French only)**

CRIC brings together and develops resources in the intercultural field with and for organizations and residents of the Centre-Sud area, in order to foster intercultural bridging between all communities in the neighbourhood.



### **Centre d'aide aux familles latino-américaines (CAFLA) (in French and Spanish only)**

CAFLA offers its clientele first-line community services and implements specific projects aiming to support youth and their families in their process of integrating into Québec society.



### **Centre social d'aide aux immigrants (CSAI) (in French only)**

The Centre social d'aide aux immigrants (CSAI), founded in 1947, is an autonomous community organization devoted to welcoming immigrants and refugees who are the responsibility of the State.



### **Côte-des-Neiges Black Community Association (CDNBCA)**

The Côte des Neiges Black Community Association (CDNBCA) proudly serves Montreal's Black community by offering programs and support services particularly designed for English-speaking youth, families, and seniors.



### **Femmes du Monde à Côte-des-Neiges**

Femmes du monde à Cote-des-Neiges is a women's centre whose mission is to provide a meeting place, solidarity, mutual assistance, and sharing among women.



### **L'Accompagnement des Femmes Immigrantes de l'Outaouais (AFIO) (in French only)**

L'Accompagnement des Femmes immigrantes de l'Outaouais, a regional non-profit community organization, has served women immigrants since 1984 and meets these women's needs in order to help them integrate harmoniously into the host society.



### **Le Regroupement Les Sages-Femmes du Québec (RSFQ)**

Le Regroupement Les Sages-Femmes du Québec (RSFQ) is Québec's professional midwifery organization.



### **Maison internationale de la Rive-Sud (MIRS)**

The Maison Internationale de la Rive-Sud is an independent community organization whose mission is to support new arrivals and public refugees in their settlement procedures and in their socio-economic integration.



### **Montreal LGBTQ+ Community Centre (CCLGBTQ)**

For 30 years, the CCLGBTQ+ has been providing the necessary services to help Montréal LGBTQ+ organizations get started, develop and operate smoothly, in the aim of improving quality of life for community members.



### **PINAY**

PINAY's mission is to empower Filipina women, and in particular domestic workers, to fight for their basic rights and welfare.



### **SHERPA**

The SHERPA University Institute is a research infrastructure. Its research activities and mobilization of knowledge combine practical and academic knowledge with the goal of advancing understanding and developing best practices in primary intervention in a multi-ethnic context.



### **South Asian Women's Community Centre (South Asian Youth)**

The South Asian Women's Community Centre is committed to supporting South Asian women and their families facing struggle and discrimination on the basis of physical and mental ability, religion, colour, nationality, age, sexual orientation and identity, caste, and class.



### **Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes (TCRI) (in French only)**

The Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes (TCRI) is a group of some 100 organizations that work with refugees, immigrants and non-status people.



## 7.2. Questionnaire

### THE ORGANIZATION'S OPERATIONS

- 1.1 Can you describe your organization in a few words?
- 1.2 What cultural communities come to your organization, for the most part?
- 1.3 Do you provide bilingual services?

### SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

- 2.1 Do you have many racialized LGBTQ2+ people or racialized families with LGBTQ2+ parents who come to or contact your organization?
- 2.2 How do the communities you serve perceive LGBTQ2+ questions?  
(Is it a taboo, is there a curiosity, ...?)
- 2.3 Do you have racialized people who openly identify as LGBTQ2+ in your organization? (If yes) Do you think it's an asset for you to have users from this community? Do you think they feel safe?
- 2.4 Do you do awareness-raising work on the question of intersectionality for racialized LGBTQ2+ people, on the question of their relationships with family?
- 2.5 If future LGBTQ2+ parents come to you, do you have family planning information in hand for them?
- 2.6 What sorts of activities would be beneficial for racialized LGBTQ2+ families?
- 2.7 Do you know about the services and activities we offer at the Coalition?

## **COLLABORATION**

- 3.1 With your help, how could we go about reaching LGBTQ2+ people and families?  
Do you hold family activities?
- 3.2 Have you ever done workshops on the realities of LGBTQ2+ families?  
If not, would you be open to us doing this type of workshop with you?
- 3.3 What could attract the LGBTQ2+ people who come to your organization to learn more about us?
- 3.4 Would you like us to work with you on services and activities for LGBTQ2+ families?
- 3.5 Do you work with organizations that have a branch for racialized LGBTQ2+ people or families (refugees, asylum-seekers, newcomers, and so on)? If so, which ones?
- 3.6 Do you work with other multicultural organizations that have or could have racialized LGBTQ2+ families among their members or users (established, refugees, asylum-seekers, newcomers, and so on)? If so, which ones?
- 3.7 Do you think you could add us as a resource in your reference listings available to users, if you have one?
- 3.8 What actions could we put into place so that racialized communities take part in what we offer (workshops, discussion groups, family events)?
- 3.9 Would you be willing to recommend us to racialized LGBTQ2+ people or families?

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

- 4.1 Do you use social media? Do you have a newsletter?
- 4.2 In your view, what's the best way to communicate with the communities you serve (social media, videos, blog, website, billboards, other)?
- 4.3 Would you be inclined to disseminate (in your social media or newsletter) information about our discussion groups for racialized LGBTQ2+ families?
- 4.4 Would you be interested in receiving information on our activities, including on paper, such as posters, pamphlets and so on for your bulletin board?
- 4.5 Is there space in your communications for the LGBT+FC to provide info about LGBTQ2+ families?
- 4.6 Would you be inclined to put on your website, or on your organization's door, a distinctive symbol for the LGBTQ2+ community, such as a rainbow + BIPOC sticker and the LGBT+FC sticker?

