



JUST BE YOURSELF

THE COMMUNITY REPORT

x^wməθk^wəyəm Territory
Healthcare Ethics & Equity Team
School of Nursing
The University of British Columbia
©2024



HEALTHCARE
ETHICS & EQUITY
T E A M

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

UBC Vancouver is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam, who for millennia have passed on their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.¹

We offer our acknowledgement, gratitude, and respect to all Indigenous communities on whose traditional territories this report is shared, recognizing this report will be shared beyond so-called Canada. We celebrate and honour Indigenous transgender, nonbinary, and Two-Spirit people and communities. We recognize the harms of colonization and the ongoing role colonialism plays in disrupting Indigenous Ways of Knowing, including through imposing binary concepts of gender and sex.

This report addresses wellness-related questions from Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth from across so-called Canada. We recognize that Indigenous transgender, nonbinary, and Two-Spirit youth have unique experiences with healthcare services and our work to improve health information and health services must be intersectional. We encourage everyone seeking to improve gender-affirming care and wellness services to strive to do this in a good way, engaging with cultural humility² as we collectively work toward cultural safety³, truth and reconciliation, and the eradication of Indigenous-specific racism.

1 UBC Vancouver Indigenous Portal: <http://aboriginal.ubc.ca/community-youth/musqueam-and-ubc/>

2 “Cultural humility is a process of self-reflection to understand personal and systemic biases and to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust. Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a learner when it comes to understanding another’s experience.” (<https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/cultural-safety-and-humility>)

3 “Cultural safety is an outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the health care system. It results in an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe when receiving health care.” (<https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/cultural-safety-and-humility>)

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OVERVIEW

Just Be Yourself was a participatory action research project. Transgender, Two-Spirit, and nonbinary (TTNB) youth from across Canada worked with researchers from The University of British Columbia from May 2023 – April 2024.

Our project had three goals. First, was to find out what questions TTNB youth had about their health and healthcare. Second, was to create health information resources to answer as many of these questions as possible. The last goal was to develop an agenda for future research on health topics that were important to TTNB youth.

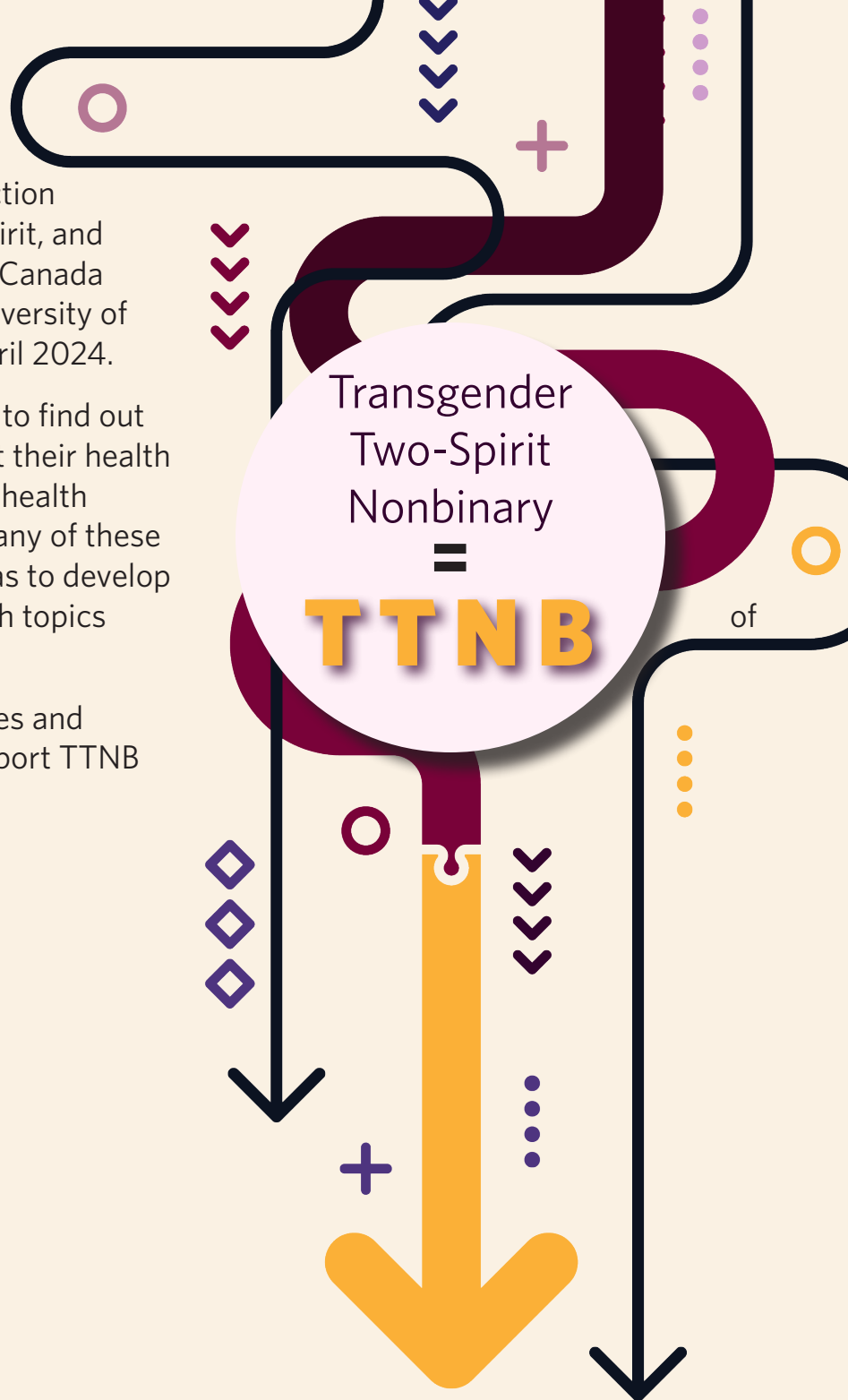
We hope that the information resources and research agenda from this project support TTNB youth on their gender journeys.

OUR TEAM

- Drew Clark, Primary Researcher
- Kaeden Seburn, Youth Co-Researcher
- Elizabeth Saewyc, Co-Researcher
- Lorraine Grieves, Knowledge User
- Chase Willier, Indigenous Advisor
- Julie Temple, Co-Researcher
- Daniel Ji, Postdoctoral Fellow
- Elijah Foran, Research Assistant

Citation

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PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

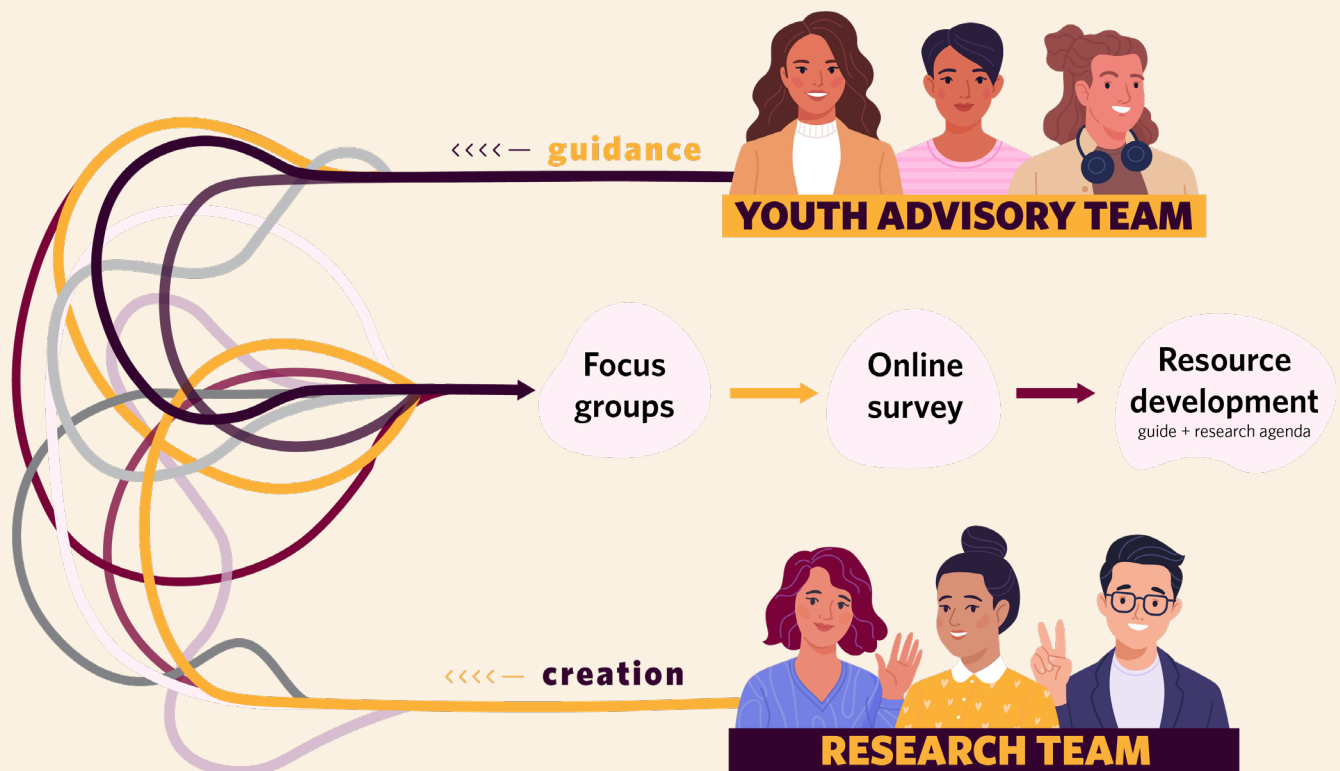
Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach guided this project. PAR involves researchers and community members working together to better understand and address an issue. Awareness of social and political contexts is important in PAR, and the values of community members shape the research process and guide the action strategies to create meaningful change.

We began this project with the hope of better understanding and addressing health information needs of TTNB youth. Youth and researchers worked together to design and carry out the research activities. Throughout the process we were aware of the social and political environments in which TTNB youth are seeking care, including political efforts to restrict access to gender-affirming care. Based on the data collected, youth recommended taking action through creating resources to directly address health information needs of TTNB youth.

Participatory
Action Research
=
PAR

PARTICIPANTS

Youth participated in this project in three ways: Youth Advisory Team, focus groups, and an online survey. Youth were eligible if they were TTNB, age 14-25, lived in Canada, and could participate in English. We connected with youth interested in participating through over 300 organizations in Canada who provide services to TTNB youth.



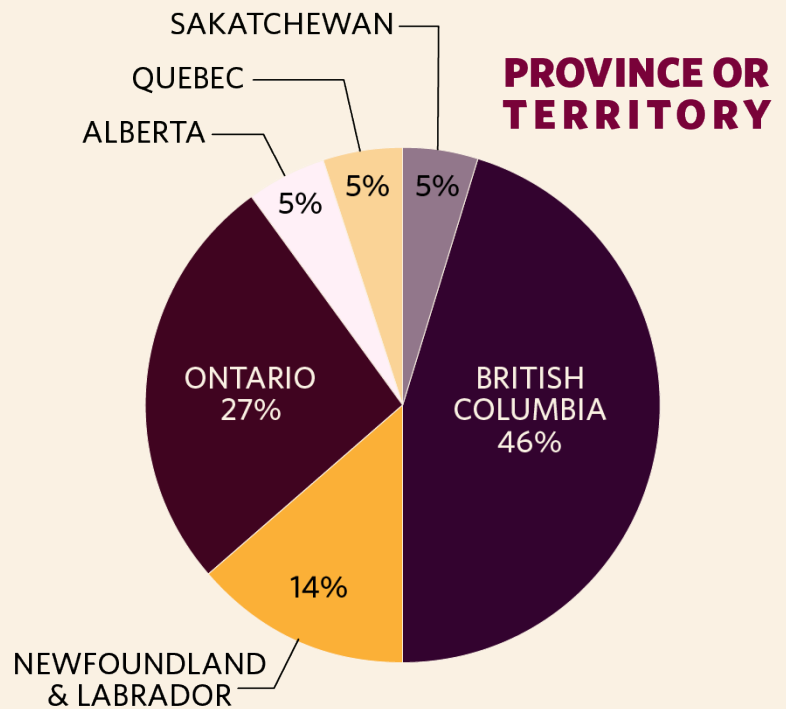
YOUTH ADVISORY TEAM

The Youth Advisory Team (YAT) guided research design and knowledge translation by providing input on key project activities. The research team supported YAT members in learning about health research and knowledge translation methods.

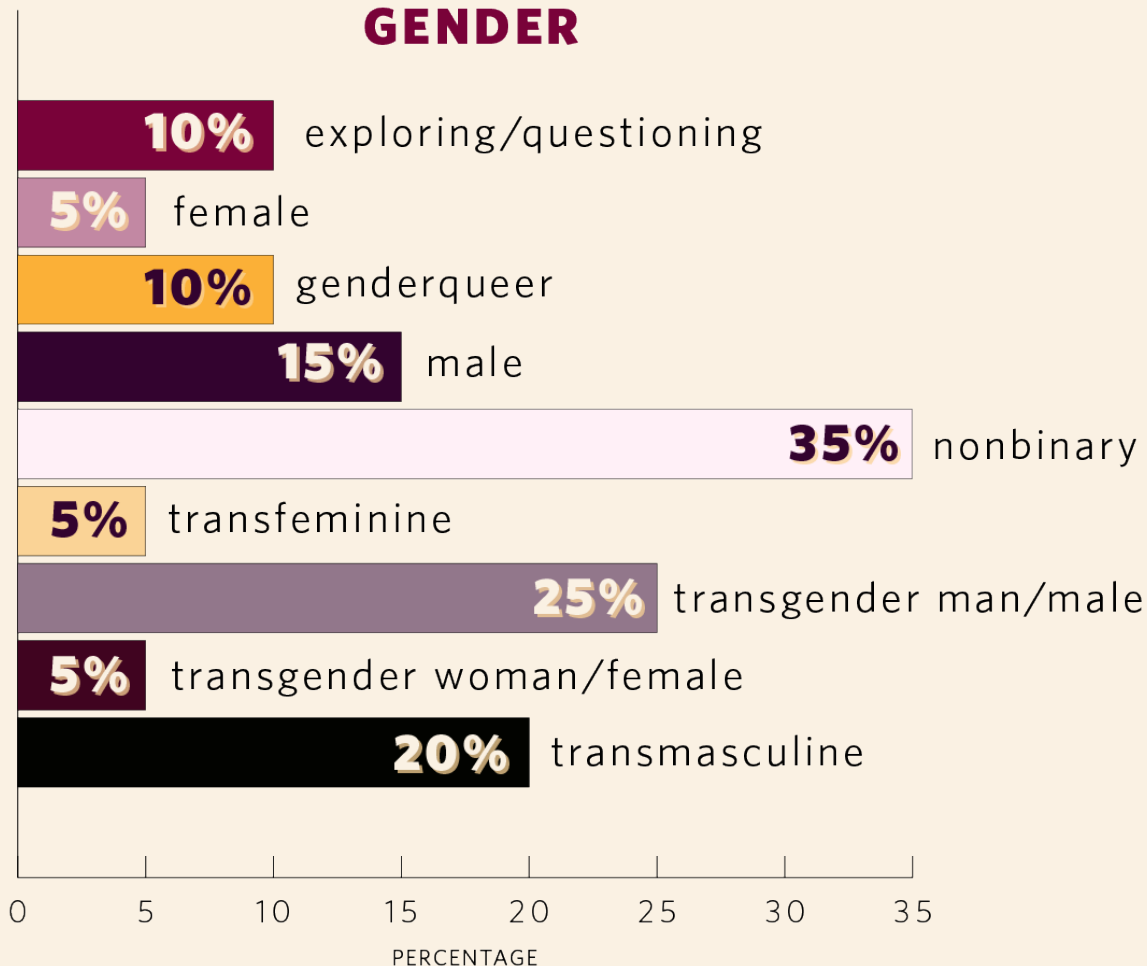
The YAT met virtually 5 times from May 2023 through June 2024. Each meeting included opportunities to learn and to advise. Members received honoraria for their time and expertise.

Youth Advisory Team Members

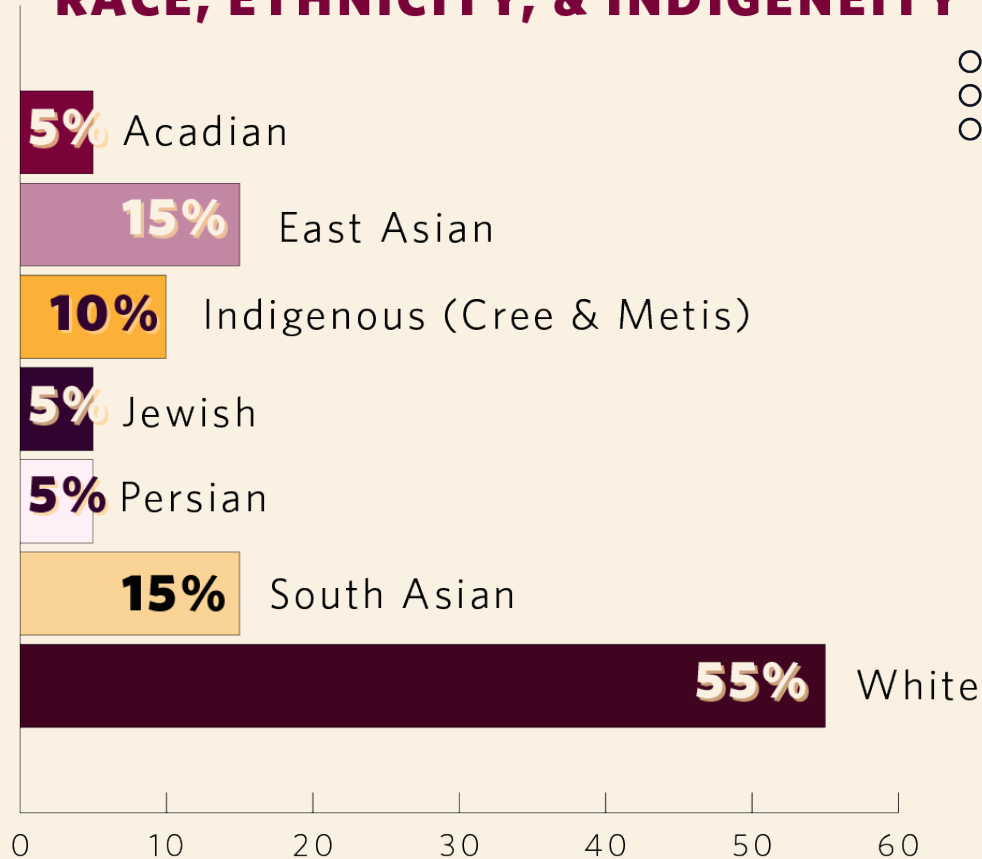
The YAT included a diverse group of 20 youth from across the country.



GENDER



RACE, ETHNICITY, & INDIGENEITY



Youth Advisory Team Activities

1	Design	
	LEARN	Research design & recruitment
	ADVISE	Focus group data analysis validation, survey format & recruitment
2	Implementation	
	LEARN	Data collection & analysis
	ADVISE	Survey data analysis validation, action planning
3	Action Strategies	
	LEARN	Knowledge translation
	ADVISE	Health information resource planning
4	Validation	
	LEARN	Approaches to TTNB health research
	ADVISE	Health information resource validation, research agenda development
5	Celebration	
	LEARN	Future opportunities to engage in research
	ADVISE	Sharing resources with TTNB youth

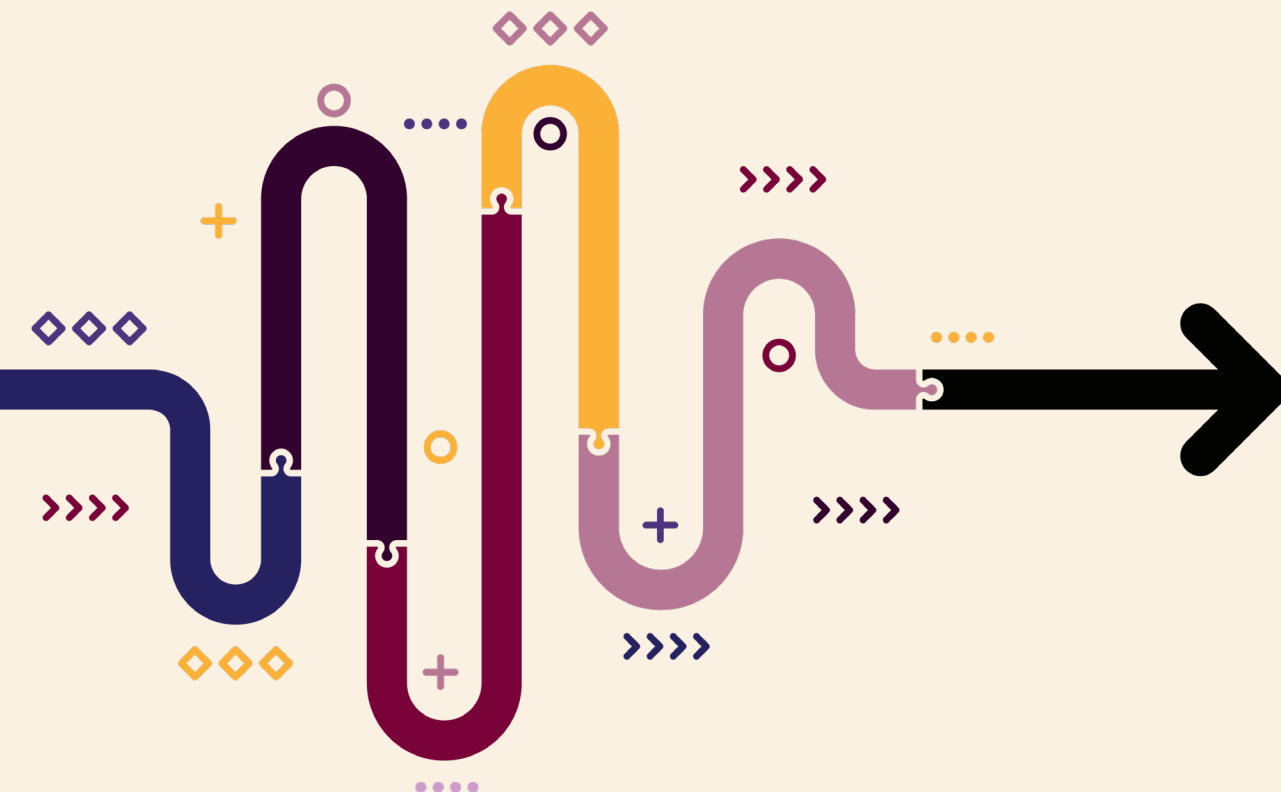
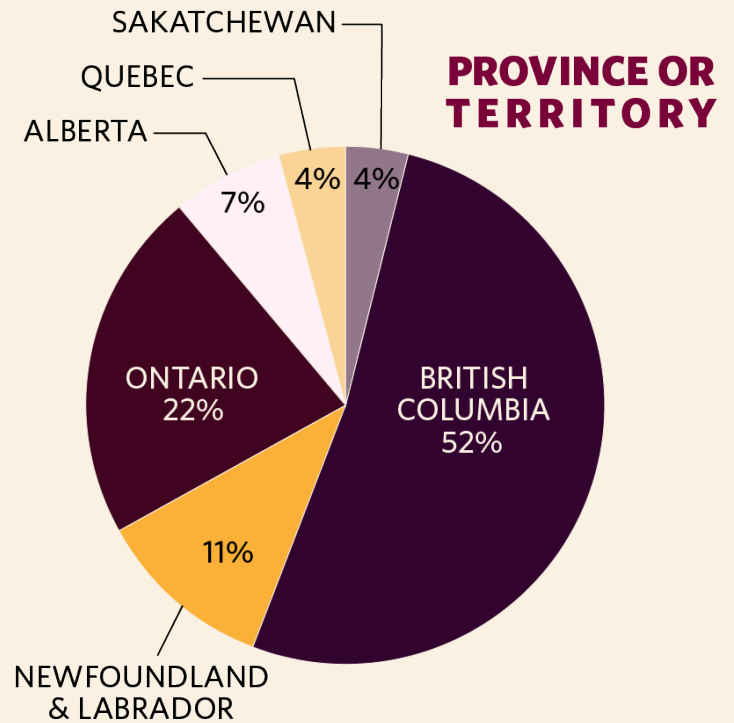
FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups are a way to gather people together to discuss a specific topic. Researchers learn from these discussions with people who have different lived and living experiences.

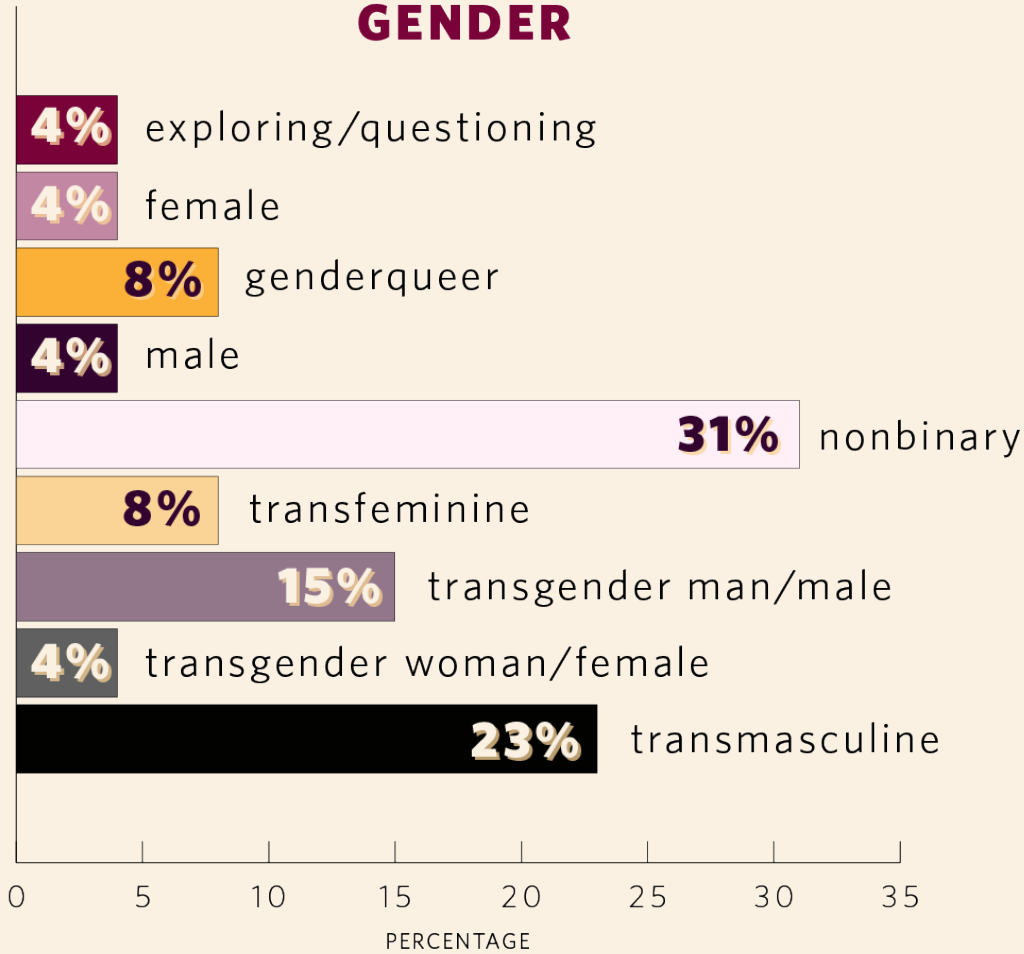
We held six, one-hour, anonymous, online focus groups in 2023. One group was specifically for Indigenous youth and co-facilitated by Two-Spirit research team members.

Focus Group Participants

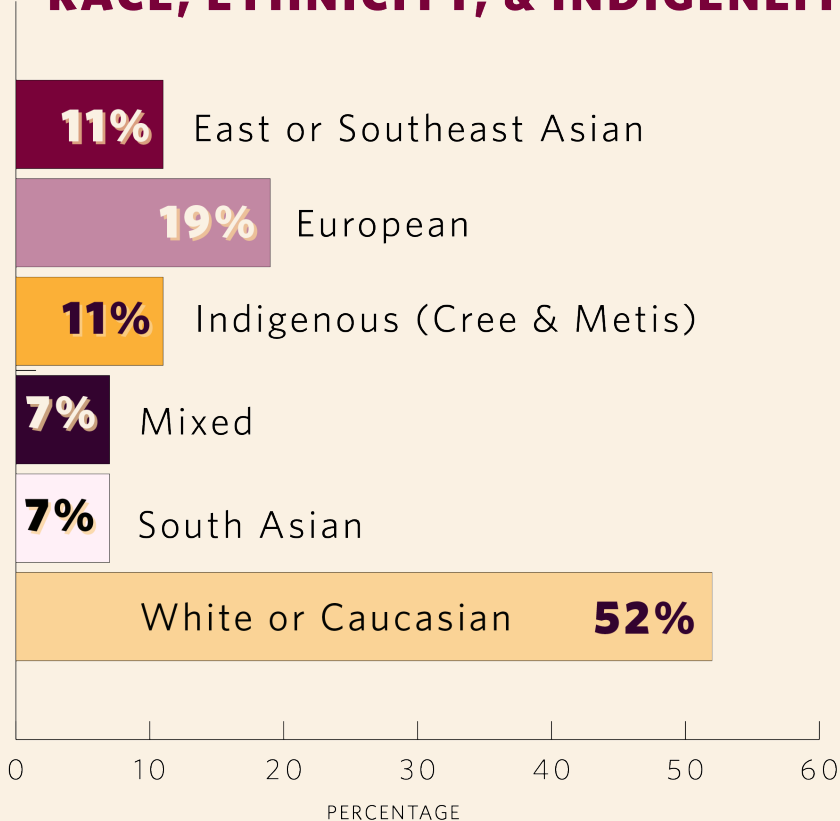
Twenty-seven youth participated in Focus Groups, with an average age of 21 years.



GENDER

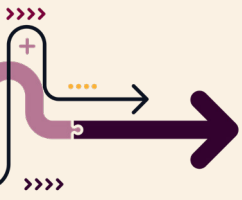


RACE, ETHNICITY, & INDIGENEITY



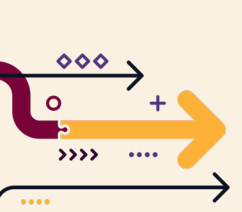
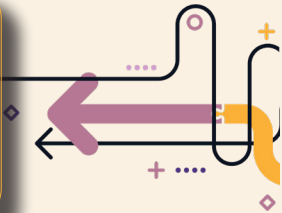
Focus Group Questions

These questions guided our focus group discussions:



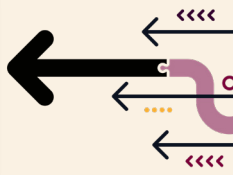
What kinds of information do you think youth need about accessing gender-affirming healthcare?

Are there other things that can support gender health that you would like to have information about?



What kinds of information are needed about puberty blockers, hormone therapy, and gender-affirming surgery?

What do you wish you knew when you started your journey? What would you like to know now?



Focus Groups Themes

Participants discussed the need for accessible, clear, and up-to-date health information resources for TTNB youth. Twelve themes were identified through analysis of notes from the focus group discussions.

1
Accessing Care

2
Talking with Providers

3
Rights, Privacy,
& Consent

4
Safety

5
Family, Partner,
& Peer Support

6
School, Workplace,
& Community Support

7
Mental Health &
Spiritual Support

8
Social Transition Support

9
Puberty Blockers

10
Hormone Therapy

11
Surgeries

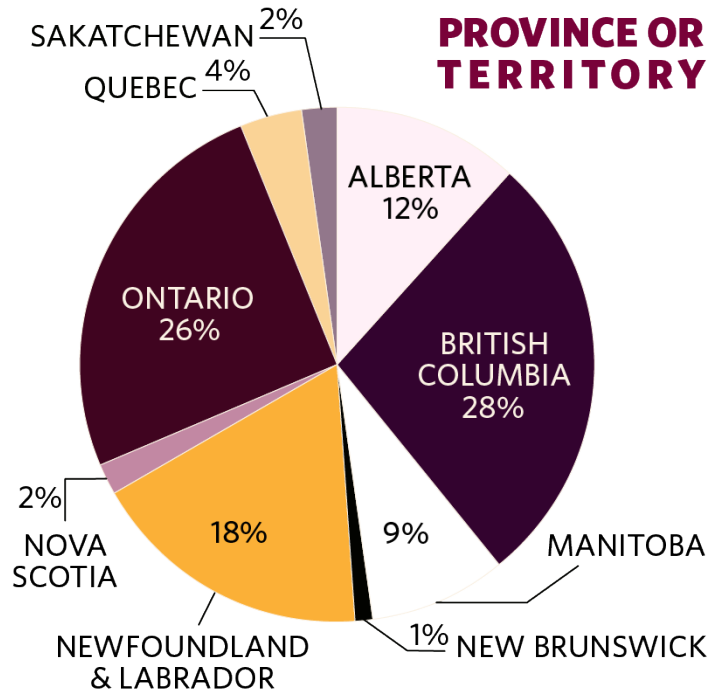
12
Sexual &
Reproductive Health



ONLINE SURVEY

Online surveys in health research can collect data from larger numbers of people. The research team and YAT members developed survey questions based on the twelve themes from our focus groups. The survey was designed to gather information about the health information needs of TTNB youth across Canada.

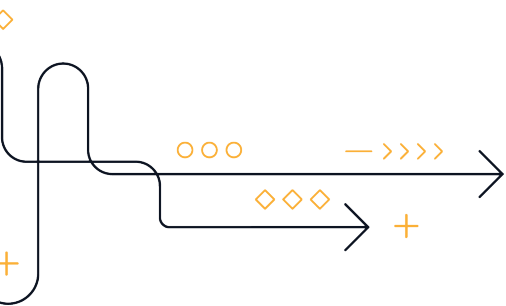
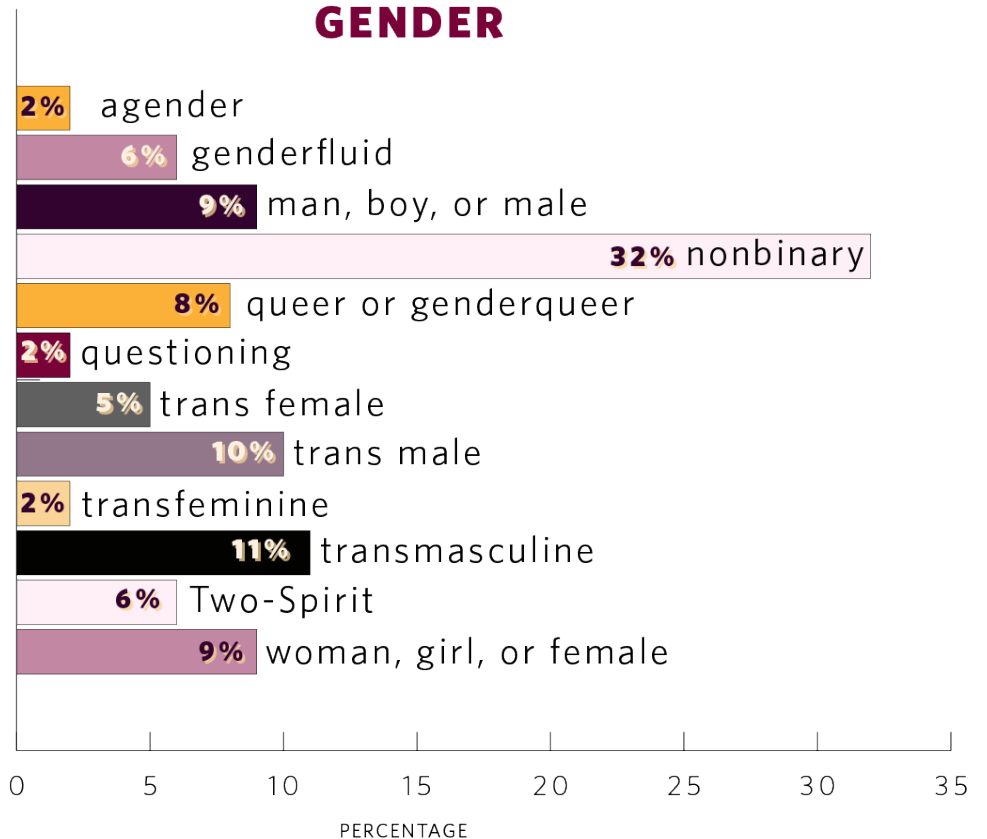
We asked participants to rate how important each of the twelve information themes was to them (*not important, somewhat important, very important*). Participants could also share their own questions related to each theme. Finally, we asked what researchers should study to improve healthcare for TTNB youth.

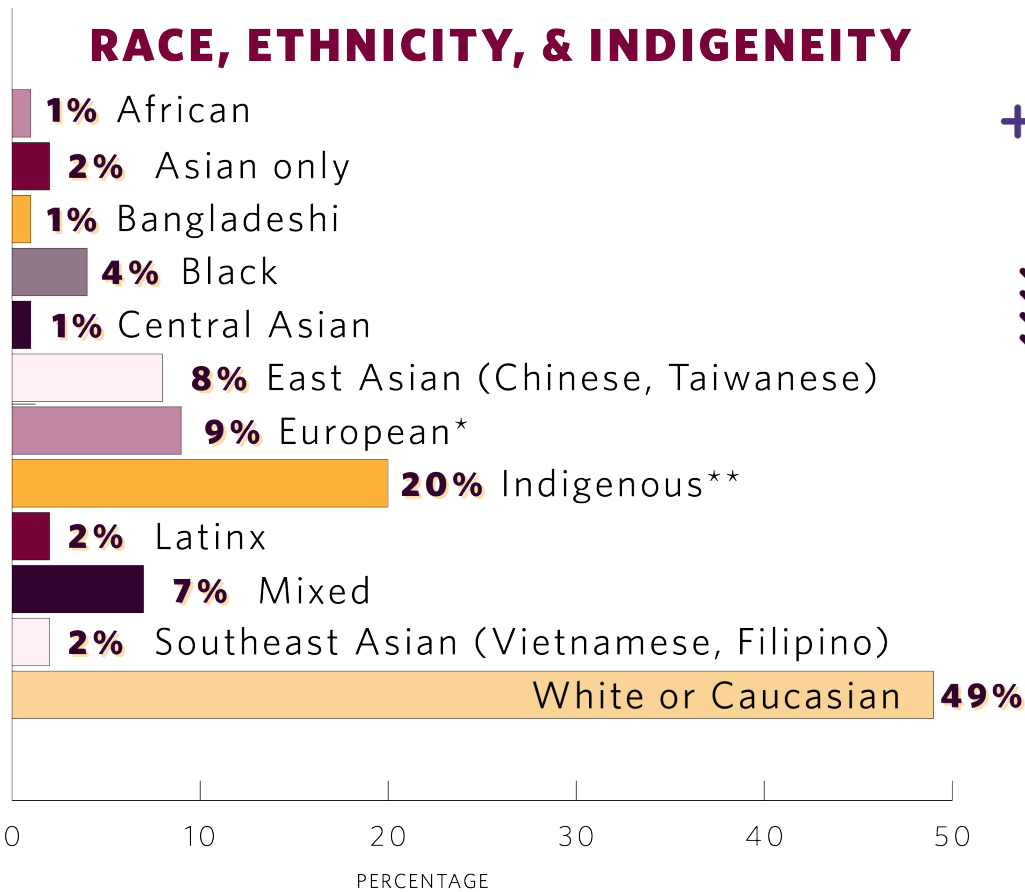


Survey Participants

The survey was completed by 132 TTNB youth, with an average age of 21 years.

GENDER





*European includes responses of Polish, Italian, Ukrainian, Celtic, British

**Indigenous includes responses of Anishinaabe, Cree, Inuk, First Nations, Indigenous, Non-status, Metis, Mi'kmaq, Mohawk, and Ojibwe

Survey Results

Most participants rated all of the themes as very important. Below are examples of the kinds of questions youth asked under each theme.

ACCESSING CARE:



What are the costs of different types of gender-affirming care, with and without insurance coverage?

TALKING WITH PROVIDERS:



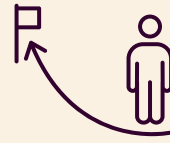
How can I tell my medical provider about my gender and the names and pronouns I wish to use?

RIGHTS, PRIVACY & CONSENT:



How do I access my own medical records and what are my rights for getting this information?

SOCIAL TRANSITION SUPPORT:



How do I find places that sell gender-affirming gear (e.g., binders, trans tape) in-person when a majority is online?

SAFETY:



How do I travel safely with my passport/ID if it does or does not reflect my gender?

PUBERTY BLOCKERS:



Where can I find evidence-supported information about blockers so that I can educate my family?

FAMILY, PARTNER & PEER SUPPORT:



How can I find local trans (and gender questioning) support groups?

HORMONE THERAPY:



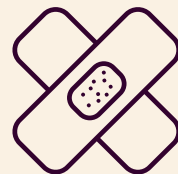
How can I learn if there was a recall for a specific hormone medication?

SCHOOL, WORKPLACE & COMMUNITY SUPPORT:



What do I do if I need time off from work or school to access gender-affirming care?

GENDER-AFFIRMING SURGERIES:



Where can I find clear visual examples of what different types of surgery look like?

MENTAL HEALTH & SPIRITUAL SUPPORT:



How can I find a mental health provider who is knowledgeable about Two-Spirit experiences?

SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH:



Where can I find educational resources on practicing safer sex for TTNB folks (e.g., contraception, testing, school-based resources)?

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

The YAT recommended creating online health information resources based on what we learned through the focus groups and online survey. The format of these resources balanced needs for in-depth information and quick-reference resources.

Guide

Just Be Yourself: A Health and Wellness Guide for Trans, Two-Spirit, and Nonbinary Youth is a detailed guide that answers youth questions on a range of health-related topics. The research team developed content that then the YAT members reviewed. The guide is openly available online as both website content and a downloadable PDF file. The guide is organized around the following topics.

SOCIAL TRANSITION AND AFFIRMATION

- Names, Pronouns, and Gender Markers
- Clothes, Accessories, and Makeup
- Hairstyles and Hair Removal
- Voice and Mannerisms
- Binding, Tucking, Padding, & Packing

NAVIGATING SOCIAL SPACES

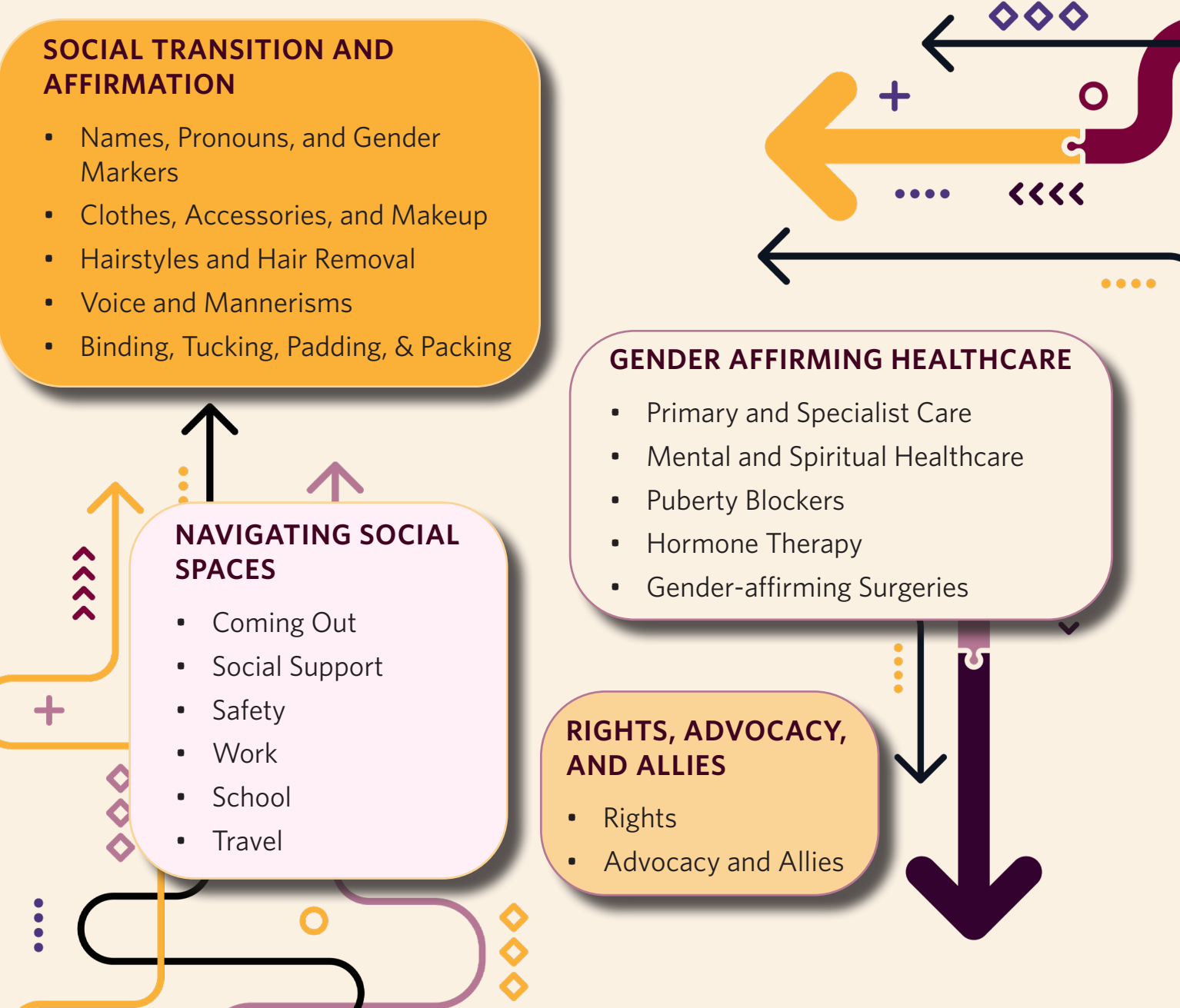
- Coming Out
- Social Support
- Safety
- Work
- School
- Travel

GENDER AFFIRMING HEALTHCARE

- Primary and Specialist Care
- Mental and Spiritual Healthcare
- Puberty Blockers
- Hormone Therapy
- Gender-affirming Surgeries

RIGHTS, ADVOCACY, AND ALLIES

- Rights
- Advocacy and Allies



Information Sheets

We also produced concise information sheets to address the need for quick-reference resources. One-page information sheets were developed based on questions frequently asked by young people. These are freely available as downloadable PDF files.



Resource Accessibility

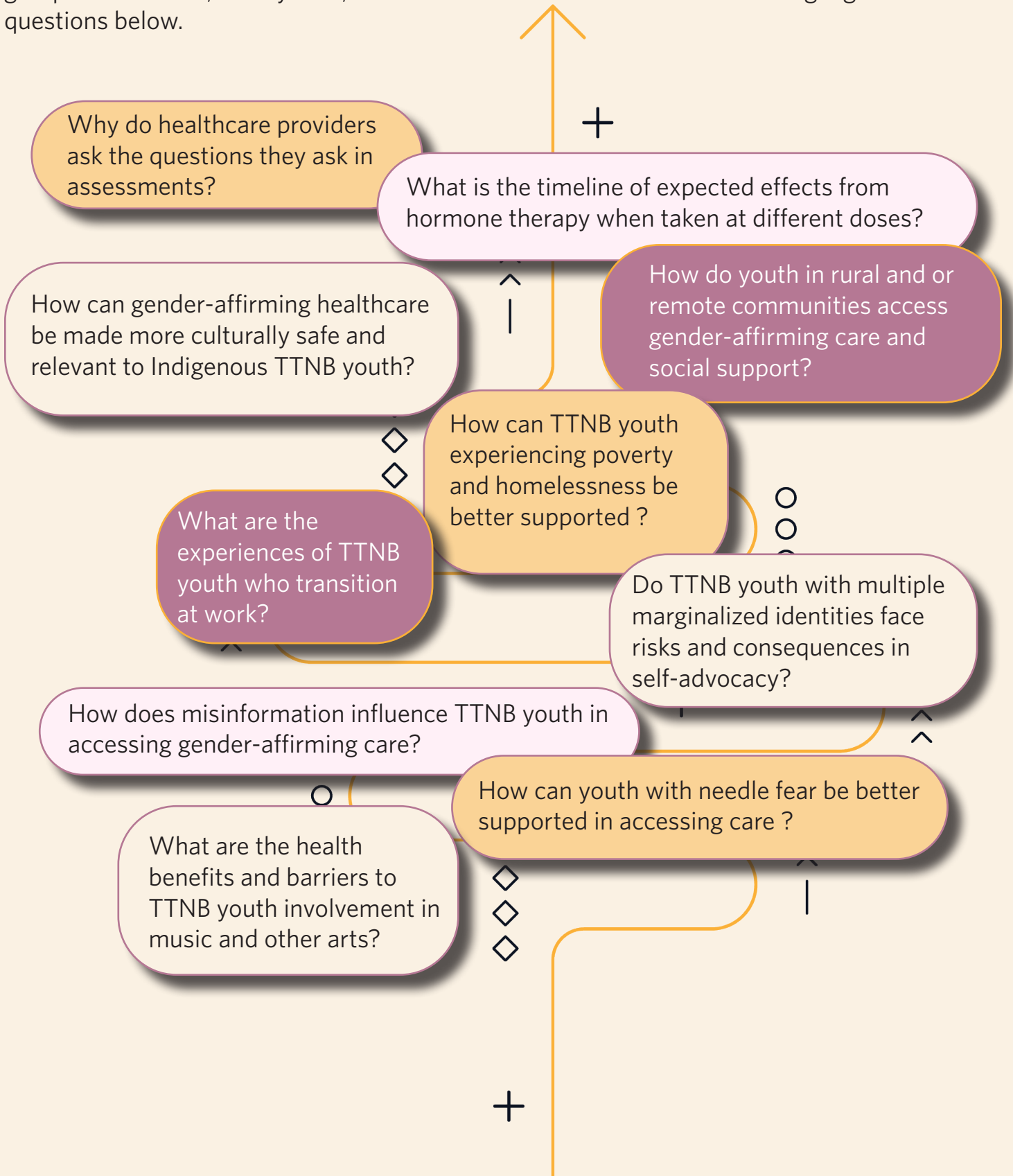
Accessibility was a key priority in developing information resources for this project. We took the following steps to make resources as accessible as possible:

- All content is in plain language wherever possible.⁴
- All materials are available as plain text for screen reader accessibility with full embedded image descriptions following established best practices.
- Our designer (with lived experiences as trans/non-binary and disabled) used Universal Design for Learning principles, emphasizing multimodal accessibility in the layout of text and visuals to make materials accessible to as wide an audience as possible. They also provided an access audit upon completion of the project.
- All resources are openly accessible on the UBC Healthcare Ethics & Equity Team website.
- Content has been shared with our project partner, Trans Care BC, for inclusion in their online health resources.
- Resources have been shared with over 300 youth organizations across Canada.
- The Community Report and Information Sheets are available in French and English.

⁴ Some exceptions were made to plain language for specific medical terms

RESEARCH AGENDA

The final goal of this project was to learn what questions researchers should study to improve health and healthcare for TTNB youth. Research questions were identified through focus groups discussions, survey data, and consultation with the YAT. We have highlighted some questions below.



CONCLUSION

We have learned a great deal about the health information needs of TTNB youth in Canada. It is our hope that TTNB youth will find answers to their questions in our resources. We want all youth to be able to just be themselves as they move through their gender journeys. To support this goal, we encourage researchers to take up the questions youth are asking. We look forward to continuing to support TTNB youth who want to engage in research to improve health and healthcare for TTNB youth.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We offer our gratitude to all youth who generously shared their time and expertise to participate in the YAT, focus groups, and online survey. This project was developed for youth, by youth. We are so proud of all you have accomplished.

Thank you to our project partner, Trans Care BC, for your support with Indigenous consultation, recruitment, resource development, and resource sharing.

We thank 300+ organizations across Canada for sharing information about this project and for the work you do every day to support TTNB youth.

WEB, LAYOUT, & GRAPHIC DESIGN

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TRANSLATION

Mosaic Translation Services

FUNDING

This research project, *Addressing youth gender health information needs via participatory action research: Developing a research agenda and identifying knowledge mobilization priorities with transgender, Two-Spirit, and nonbinary youth in Canada*, was supported by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

RESEARCH ETHICS

This project received ethics approval from the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board, certificate #H23-00711.

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