



Discussion Paper

Environmental Justice for 2SLGBTQIA+ Communities:

Dimensions on Queering Environmental Policy in North America



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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Abstract | 5 |
| List of Abbreviations and Acronyms | 6 |
| List of Boxes | 7 |
| List of Figures | 7 |
| Acknowledgements | 8 |
| Preface | 9 |
| Executive Summary | 11 |
| 1 Introduction | 13 |
| 1.1 2SLGBTQIA+ Disparities in North America | 14 |
| 1.2 Queering Environmentalism on North America | 15 |
| 2 Conceptual Framework for 2SLGBTQIA+ Environmental Policy in North America . | 17 |
| 2.1 Environmental and Climate Change Crises | 17 |
| 2.2 Intersectionality in Environmental Policy | 18 |
| 2.3 North American Opportunities to Include 2SLGBTQIA+ Perspectives | 20 |
| 2.4 Queering Just and Equitable Transitions | 22 |
| 3 Climate and Environmental Impacts on North American 2SLGBTQIA+ Communities | 22 |
| 3.1 Poor Air Quality | 24 |
| 3.1.1 Higher Exposure to Air Pollution | 24 |
| 3.2 Restrictive Access to Green Spaces | 24 |
| 3.2.1 Discrimination and Policing within Parks | 24 |
| 3.3 Climate-related Disasters | 25 |
| 3.3.1 Discrimination Within Disaster and Climate Infrastructure Leads to Worsened Outcomes | 25 |
| 3.3.2 Heightened Negative Experiences During Disasters | 26 |
| 3.3.3 Lack of Financial Security Prior, During, and After Disasters | 27 |
| 3.4 Food Insecurity | 27 |
| 3.4.1 Higher Rates of Food Insecurity | 27 |
| 3.5 Land and Water Pollution | 28 |
| 3.5.1 Negative Impacts on Human Health | 28 |
| 3.6 Limited Access to Green Finance | 29 |
| 3.6.1 Limited Access to Green Investment Capital | 29 |
| 3.6.2 Limited International and National Funding | 29 |
| 3.7 Lack of Protection of Environmental Activists and Siloed Political Participation | 30 |
| 3.7.1 2SLGBTQIA+ People Tend to be More Socially Aware and Active | 30 |
| 3.7.2 2SLGBTQIA+ Environmental Activists Experience Increased Levels of Violence and Discrimination | 30 |

| | | |
|------------|---|-----------|
| 3.7.3 | 2SLGBTQIA+ Elected Officials and Public Servants are Usually Siloed to Work on Matters Related to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity..... | 30 |
| 4 | Advancing 2SLGBTQIA+ Considerations in North America..... | 31 |
| 4.1 | Select 2SLGBTQIA+ Projects and Policies Across North America | 31 |
| 4.1.1 | Canada..... | 31 |
| 4.1.2 | Mexico..... | 32 |
| 4.1.3 | United States | 33 |
| 5 | Policy and Research Recommendations | 35 |
| 5.1 | Recommendations for the CEC | 35 |
| 5.1.1 | Inclusion..... | 35 |
| 5.1.2 | Data and Information Infrastructure..... | 36 |
| 5.1.3 | Communication | 37 |
| 5.1.4 | Capacity Building | 37 |
| 5.1.5 | Finance | 38 |
| 5.1.6 | Multilateral Engagement..... | 38 |
| 5.2 | General Recommendations to Effectively Advance 2SLGBTQIA+ Considerations in the Protection and Conservation of the Environment in North America or Other Regions | 39 |
| 6 | Conclusion | 40 |
| | Bibliography | 41 |

Abstract

This discussion paper captures discussion and expands on concepts shared at a roundtable on LGBTQIA+ Dimensions of Climate Change and Environmental Justice in North America held at the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) headquarters in Fall 2023. The roundtable participants outlined how Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and other sexually and gender diverse (2SLGBTQIA+) communities are left out of North American climate and environmental policies despite being disproportionately impacted. This is especially true for Indigenous, Black, Latinx/e, Asian, Arab, Caribbean people, Pacific Islanders, those with disabilities, immigrants, undocumented, women, children, youth, and elders living in the region. These populations are on the frontlines of environmental degradation and climate change. In addition, the participants underscored how 2SLGBTQIA+ communities' special insights and resilience are not being leveraged in response to the climate crisis. This discussion paper provides an overview of the impacts on 2SLGBTQIA+ communities across the United States, Mexico and Canada and opportunities to advance their considerations through the CEC and more broadly in North America. It also highlights that queer experiences bring effective solutions to the climate and environmental crisis to create better tomorrows.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| 2SLGBTQIA+ | Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning, intersex, asexual and others |
| AEC | Agreement on Environmental Cooperation |
| CBD | Convention on Biological Diversity |
| CEC | Commission for Environmental Cooperation |
| EJ | Environmental Justice |
| ENDISEG | <i>Encuesta Nacional sobre Diversidad Sexual y de Género</i> (National Survey on Sexual and Gender Diversity) |
| EPA | Environmental Protection Agency |
| FEMA | Federal Emergency Management Agency |
| GBA+ | Gender-Based Analysis Plus |
| HAP | hazardous air pollution |
| INECC | <i>Instituto Nacional de Ecología y Cambio Climático</i> (National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change) |
| INMUJERES | <i>Instituto Nacional de la Mujer</i> (National Women's Institute) |
| IAA | Impact Assessment Act |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change |
| JPAC | Joint Public Advisory Committee |
| IPF | Investment Project Financing |
| LGBTTTI | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transex, Transgender, Travesti and Intersex |
| NBSAP | National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan |
| NDC | Nationally Determined Contribution |
| Semarnat | <i>Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales</i> (Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources) |
| SIDS | Small Island Developing State |
| SOGI | Sexual orientation and gender identity |
| SOGIESC | Sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics |
| SRE | <i>Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores</i> (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) |
| TEK | Traditional Ecological Knowledge |
| TEKEG | Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group |
| UNCCD | United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Practice |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| USDA | United States Department of Agriculture |

List of Boxes

| | |
|---|----|
| Box 1. 2SLGBTQIA+ and Indigenous communities intersect in environmental issues. | 16 |
| Box 2. 2SLGBTQIA+, youth, and intergenerational equity. | 19 |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1. Dimensions of Environmental Justice. Cited from the United States Fifth National Climate Assessment (USGCRP 2023). | 18 |
| Figure 2. Impacts of compounding systemic oppression and extractive policies on 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. | 21 |

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This document is intended to consider the different identities, intersections, sexual orientations, and gender expression of 2SLGBTQIA+ people, including but not exclusive to Indigenous, Black, Latinx/e, Asian, Arab, those with disabilities, immigrants, women, children, youth, and elders. However, we acknowledge that there are constraints in showcasing all lived experiences. We apologize in advance for any omissions or inaccuracies. Considering that there need to be more efforts to include all people into environmental matters, this document is simply a stepping-stone toward that holistic inclusion.

¹ <http://twospiritdrylab.ca>

Preface

by **Jorge Daniel Taillant, Executive Director of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation**

In January of 2023, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) launched a series of inquiries under the guidance of the Executive Director's Office. Recognizing that the environment plays an important role in the economic, social and cultural well-being of communities across North America, the CEC is vested in exploring ways to improve the CEC's meaningful engagement of Black, people of color, youth, people with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, in the long-term conservation of the environment.

The leaders of the United States, Mexico and Canada have affirmed through various North American Leaders Summits the intentions of North America, as a region, to promote diversity, equity and inclusion, to expand protection, and combat violence against 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals and to work to reverse historical and systemic environmental inequities and the unfair and discriminatory environmental burdens faced by some communities in the region.² To this end, understanding environmental *injustices* in all their dimensions is a critical first step to identify persistent inequities and vulnerabilities that are still faced by many groups and individuals as it is a fundamental starting point to explore potential actions that could be taken in the North American region to overcome these injustices.

The environmental justice movement has helped us understand that not everyone suffers in the same way the impacts of air, water and land pollution, of extreme heat, of flooding, and the many ills brought by deepening climate change and other forms of environmental degradation. Some individuals, simply because of their race, their gender or sexual preference, their age, their immigrant status, or some other aspect of their identity, face multiple layers of vulnerability. In 1989, Kimberle Crenshaw offered us a framework lens to think about the compounded *intersectional* vulnerabilities faced by certain communities and cohorts. Her example was focused on African American women who suffer multiple layers of discrimination because they are Black, because they are women, because of their religion or because of whom they chose as a life companion. Crenshaw defined intersectionality as: "a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking."³

This discussion paper explores one such intersectional issue, the interrelationship between environmental justice and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. It is the first in a series of thought articles from the CEC's Executive Director's Office, exploring different but interrelated topics about environmental justice and intersectionality. This paper will look at how environmental pollution, climate change, and their resulting impacts on people and communities, affect 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. It is about environmental justice dimensions that we are only now beginning to understand and discuss, shedding light on compounded vulnerabilities, which are affecting a significant portion of the North American population.

I would like to thank the authors of this discussion paper, Leo Goldsmith, Emiliano Reyes and Diego de León, for taking up the challenge of drafting it, bringing their own expertise and life experiences as environmental justice activists to the drafting table, but also the even greater challenge of incorporating

² See: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/01/10/fact-sheet-key-deliverables-for-the-2023-north-american-leaders-summit/> and <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/01/10/declaration-of-north-america-dna/>

³ See 2018 interview with Crenshaw, at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViDtnfQ9FHc&t=3s>

the rich and multi-layered input of the participants of the landmark roundtable we held at the CEC in October 2023, on 2SLGBTQIA+ Dimensions of Climate Change and Environmental Justice in North America. The roundtable experts included (in addition to the authors of this discussion paper): Natalia Villarán Quiñones, Reilly Hirst, Al Phillips-Shinn, Lilian Barraclough, Harlan Pruden, and Beth Teper. I would also like to recognize the work of the CEC team that provided logistical and intellectual help to make the roundtable happen, including Jose Antonio Casis García (*aka* Pepe), Malika Elhadj, Giulia Brito Pound (then acting as EJ Fellow) and the CEC's Meeting Services team.

A special thanks and recognition go to Beth Teper, a life-long environmental justice activist of the highest caliber as well as a leader in promoting 2SLGBTQIA+ rights and engagement. She helped spark our initial discussion on this topic, she scoped 2SLGBTQIA+/environment-related activities happening across North America, and she was instrumental in helping to identify the roundtable experts, as well as shaping the roundtable format and discussion platform.

Executive Summary

The intention of this discussion paper is to highlight key issues in the engagement of Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and other sexually and gender diverse (2SLGBTQIA+) communities in public participation and provide recommendations and priority actions for the Commission on for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) in their environmental activities.

In Fall 2023, the CEC's Executive Director invited 2SLGBTQIA+ experts from United States, Mexico and Canada to join a one-day roundtable titled "LGBTQI+ Dimensions of Climate Change and Environmental Justice in North America." At this roundtable, participants identified the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in North America, with a special mention to Puerto Rico and other incorporated and unorganized territories and their respective variations according to the national jurisdictions of each participating country, as well as opportunities to meaningfully engage these communities.

The inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and governed territories were an integral part of this conversation. This was the first time that the CEC has specifically invited 2SLGBTQIA+ experts to meaningfully engage regarding these issues. In addition, this discussion paper is the first document of its kind that describes some of the environmental and climate impacts on 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in North America and creates a conceptual framework for their inclusion in environmental policy in the region. It will also serve as an example for other regions to consider similar inclusion and policy frameworks.

The discussion paper draws from peer-reviewed and gray literature as well as from the thematic expertise and the lived experiences of the roundtable participants and others within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. This analysis serves to underscore the worsened disparities faced by 2SLGBTQIA+ communities living in North America, particularly those who identify as Indigenous, Black, Latinx/e, Asian, Arab, Caribbean people, Pacific Islanders, those with disabilities, immigrants, undocumented, women, children, youth, and elders. These intersectional populations further experience compounding impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. These inequities encompass an array including but not limited to health, housing, and employment, where comprehensive protections for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals are lacking.

The discussion paper delineates the specific ramifications experienced by North American 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and proposes potential solutions within the framework established. We integrate concepts of systemic oppression, intersectionality, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) to advocate for fair and inclusive environmental and climate policies. To foster positive outcomes, it is imperative to emphasize an intersectional perspective that prioritizes gender-transformative strategies, to ensure intergenerational equity, and to amplify the voices of Indigenous and local communities. Our approach to queering environmentalism offers a dynamic pathway towards achieving a cooperative and equitable future for all stakeholders.

Studied climate and environmental impacts include:

- Disproportionate exposure to air pollution
- Discrimination and policing within green spaces
- Discrimination and bias in disaster response during extreme weather events
- Higher rates of food insecurity
- Uncertainty and disinformation on health impacts due to land and water pollution
- Lack of green finance

- Violence and criminalization due to environmental activism

Recommendations are tailored to the CEC and to the North American environmental ministries and other relevant agencies. We divided up the policy recommendations into seven sections:

- Inclusion
- Data and Information Infrastructure
- Communication
- Capacity Building
- Finance
- Multilateral Engagement
- General recommendations

1 Introduction

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) invited Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer⁴ and Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and other sexually and gender diverse (2SLGBTQIA+⁵) experts from different backgrounds from the United States, Mexico, and Canada to identify key issues; provide priorities; and recommendations to include the perspectives of people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual characteristics (SOGIESC) within environmental and climate justice on North America. This roundtable took place in Montreal, Canada, at the CEC headquarters in the Fall of 2023. The results of the gathering included unique North American level exchanges and insights on 2SLGBTQIA+ environmental opportunities and challenges within the region; a detailed [report](#)⁶ of the discussions (published on the CEC's [webpage](#)⁷); and this discussion paper to follow up and deepen the roundtable discussion.

This discussion paper builds off roundtable outcomes, collects input from all experts who attended, provides a deeper dive to increase awareness and visibility, and strengthens the argument for including 2SLGBTQIA+ communities within the North American environmental and climate strategies. People with diverse SOGIESC have profound experience in climate resilience, environmental justice and sustainable development, and unique perspectives for the region. North America, for the purpose of this discussion paper, includes both continental plate and insular territories under the jurisdiction of the United States, Mexico and Canada. This discussion paper will introduce disparities faced by 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and the long history of queer environmentalism; an overview of the environmental and climate impacts faced by these communities; a compilation of relevant examples of effective inclusion; and recommendations for the CEC member states and for the CEC secretariat, as well as North American communities more broadly. We aim for this discussion paper to be useful in other contexts internationally. The content of this paper pulls widely from the roundtable summary⁸ as well as academic literature, lived and/or living experiences, interviews, and knowledge dialogues.

⁴ Although queer has historically been used as a slur, it has been reclaimed by the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. This identity is understood in different ways by different people. Some individuals understand it as a term representing a liberatory political stance. Others use it as a general term that encompasses everything under the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and others use it to describe an identity in which there is no label that exists for that identity.

⁵ The 2SLGBTQIA+ acronym is flexible and constantly evolving. Different letters representing gender identities and sexual orientations might be added in different contexts. Throughout this document it is used the umbrella “2SLGBTQIA+” however, some institutions or document cited might use different versions.

⁶ See: <http://www.cec.org/wp-content/uploads/2slgbtqi-roundtable-summary-en-1.pdf>

⁷ See: <http://www.cec.org/events/lgbtqi-dimensions-of-climate-change/>

⁸ See: <http://www.cec.org/wp-content/uploads/2slgbtqi-roundtable-summary-en-1.pdf>

1.1 2SLGBTQIA+ Disparities in North America

Within North America, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities make up a significant portion of the population. According to Statistics Canada (2021), there are approximately one million 2SLGBTQIA+ people, accounting for 4% of the total population aged 15 and older. In the United States, about 7.2% of adults identify as LGBT+, according to a national poll (Jones 2023). Meanwhile, in Mexico, insights from the National Survey on Sexual and Gender Diversity (ENDISEG) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) revealed that about five million inhabitants in Mexico, self-identify with an LGBTI+ sexual orientation and gender identity, which translates to about 5.1% of the population 15 and over (INEGI 2021). It is important to note that these percentages may fall short of actual numbers due to inefficient SOGI data collection and individuals who may conceal their identity. It is vital to incorporate 2SLGBTQIA+ into public policy in the region, especially recognizing the human right to a healthy and sustainable environment without leaving anyone behind.

Similar to other parts of the world, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities on North America experience marginalization and oppression, resulting in a state of vulnerability. Homophobia, transphobia, racism, sexism, cis-heteropatriarchy,⁹ and colonialism collectively form oppressive systems that perpetuate dominance and injustice against people marginalized by their cultural, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and gender identity. These overlapping systems have led to higher rates of homelessness, incarceration, migration, unemployment, and lack of access to resources to cover basic needs. Those who have intersecting marginalized identities can experience compounding impacts and risks.

For example, Two-Spirit individuals experience individual, interpersonal, and structural scale disparities because of colonialism and intergenerational historical trauma (Ristock et al. 2017). Black women who are raising children together as lesbians, are already less likely to have jobs that sufficiently support their families, face food insecurity, are typically living in areas with a higher likelihood of containing toxins, are at high risk during disasters, and may not have the support of their biological families due to their sexual orientation or gender identity (e.g., transgender women who identify as lesbians). Each of those layers: female, Black, lesbian, parent, poverty are not just single issues, but compound what monies, social capital, health issues, day-to-day discrimination they may encounter. These compounding impacts are multiplicative. Overlapping systems of oppression can lead to worsened environmental and climate impacts for many intersectional 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

The gender binary system shapes how societies only recognize two biologically determined genders with preferences aligned with heteronormativity (e.g., one-man, one-woman monogamy). This organizes hierarchical social relations in a manner that dismisses and marginalizes sexual and gender diversity and creates harmful gender roles that affect everyone, but especially women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people. Any deviation from the prescribed gender norms and the heterosexual system is stigmatized as unnatural, manifesting as oppression, discrimination, and violence (Ortiz-Hernández 2004; Hernández 2017). The gender binary system also entrenches power structures that cause oppressed victims to fight amongst themselves for a slightly “better” position in the hierarchy. For example, there are instances where white men have leveraged their class and racial privilege to overshadow other members within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community (Ross and Sullivan 2012; Ross 2018). The pervasive impact of these systems contributes to the ongoing condition of vulnerability of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, hindering their ability to fully participate and thrive in society.

⁹ The cis-heteropatriarchy refers to a social system where power is predominantly held by cisgender, heterosexual men, and their perspectives, norms, and values dominate society, often at the expense of women, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, and others who don't fit within these dominant norms.

At the policy level, 2SLGBTQIA+ focused strategies among the three North American countries do not include specific activities or budget allocations that address the intersection of this community and the environment.¹⁰ It is up to the discretion of the relevant public policy implementing agencies whether to include climate and environment sustainability considerations, provide the resources, and include 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in reporting instruments. The lack of federal guidance and budget to this issue hinders the ability to enact a cohesive national strategy and elevate the individual work of government agencies to the federal level. As human rights activist and author, Arundhati Roy, states, “There’s really no such thing as the ‘voiceless’. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard” (Roy 2004).

Other persisting challenges are the lack of uniformity in laws regarding the procession of 2SLGBTQIA+ and environmental conservation, making it difficult to create regional synergies. For example, regarding the protection of environmental activists, there are already efforts implemented in North America, such as Mexico’s ratification of the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, also known as the Escazú Agreement; or the convening of the United States Government to a virtual meeting of Summit governments to strengthen the protection of environmental defenders during the 2023 Summit of the Americas. Yet, there is still a lack of mainstream participation of people with diverse SOGIESC in these processes, meaning that 2SLGBTQIA+ considerations and participation have not been formally included in the agenda. Stronger efforts must be made, and actions need to be implemented to ensure the meaningful inclusion and empowerment of this population in decision-making processes.

It is important to note that although this issue is becoming more important in public discourse, little empirical evidence exists worldwide, especially in the Global South that encompasses Mexico (Kilpatrick et al. 2023). This deficiency presents a significant opportunity for the region, as the generation of new data and rigorous analysis of the distinct impacts will enhance the quality of political decision-making.

1.2 Queering Environmentalism on North America

Despite the substantive work of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities engaging in environmentalism and climate activism, they have not been integrated within environmental and climate planning and policies. Furthermore, the needs and experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, especially Indigenous, Black, Latinx/e, Asian, Arab, Caribbean people, Pacific Islanders, those with disabilities, immigrants, undocumented, women, children, youth, and elders, are neglected in disaster recovery and resilience, and inequitable ecological distributions. Decision-makers and practitioners, especially on North America, should actively include the voices, experiences, and knowledge of people with diverse SOGIESC and intersecting marginalized identities, especially those on the frontlines of climate change and environmental degradation. This especially includes Puerto Rico and other insular and Indigenous territories, as they are already experiencing devastating effects of the ongoing planetary crisis, while also experiencing compounded impacts due to restrictive legal frameworks that limit the speed and volume of relief support.

¹⁰ This includes Canada's 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan, Mexico's program for equality and non-discrimination 2021 - 2024, and 2022 US Presidential Executive Order on Advancing Equality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Individuals.

The discourse on environmental and climate impacts on 2SLGBTQIA+ communities has grown from a long history of queer environmentalism. In the United States, Mexico and Canada, environmental and climate activists with diverse SOGIESC have been connecting the dots between the heteronormative and binary ways of thinking about nature and its conservation (Gaard 1997). Coming from a uniquely queer perspective, they are able to deconstruct and challenge the binary framework between nature and culture that has been perpetuated by the patriarchal, colonial and capitalist idea that humans are separate from ecosystems and are free to exploit the land. Furthermore, black queer feminist ecology identifies how the oppression of marginalized communities are interlinked and rooted in colonialism, slavery, and extractive economies. By reconstructing marginalized identities not in opposition to dominant identities, such as those along a binary (e.g., whiteness, maleness, heterosexuality, etc.), but as fully realized entities, it becomes possible to envision healthy, cooperative relationships with non-human animals and our environment (Bowmani, 2021).

There are multiple examples of queer environmentalism across North America. In the United States, during the seventies, some 2SLGBTQIA+ people intentionally relocated from cities to rural areas in search of safer and more sustainable living environments. This included women and femme gay men who sought to create safe ecological spaces to grow sustainable food and create affirming spaces away from the patriarchal and heteronormative gaze. One well-known lesbian-founded space is Wimmin's Land. Primarily existing in southern Oregon, but present in other states, such as Ohio and New Mexico, lesbians moved to one of the many separatist rural homesteads that ranged from seven to 150 acres (Archibald 2021). They shared meals, broke down the gender division of labor, and created a community both with each other and with the Earth. Although highly important spaces, some of these groups were and are exclusionary toward transgender women, micro-aggressive toward women of color, and not aware that the land belongs to Indigenous Peoples. However, there are homesteads in Wimmin's Land that are made up solely of Black individuals, other people of color, and Two-Spirit individuals (Kaylor 2023).

Another group comprised of gay, bisexual and queer men that named themselves the *Radical Faeries* began gathering and creating sanctuaries in rural spaces in the US, and later internationally, reclaiming Indigenous European pagan traditions and recentering land-based spirituality in relationship with queerness (Barrett 2023; Hennen 2004; Morgensen 2009). While the original *Radical Faeries* were predominantly a white community, Indigenous, Black, Two-Spirit, Latinx/e, Caribbean, Asian and Pacific Islander members have always existed and made many cultural contributions to what the group calls a spiritual non-movement, referring to the belief that the sacredness of 2SLGBTQIA+ people is internally sourced, indicating a refusal to be removed from that natural place of power.

Across the region, Indigenous and Two-Spirit individuals serve as protectors of nature and to this day, are actively involved in opposing the construction of large infrastructure projects that jeopardize the functioning of our ecosystems (Smithers 2022). Likewise, in the region, young people, women, and Indigenous communities, including those with diverse SOGIESC, are at the forefront of the current climate movement as central organizers of strikes and community-based actions. In general, youth-based organizations are more likely to highlight the inequalities marginalized communities face from climate impacts and directly point out the system of oppression that is the root cause of the climate crisis (Poma and Gravante 2022; *Futuros Indígenas* 2022).

In response to the exclusion and oppressive realities from public and private environments, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, especially Black and Latinx/e people in most urban centers in North America, have created alternative safe spaces such as Ballroom communities (Bailey 2014; Nero 2005). In some cities, Ballroom Houses are using parks and green spaces for voguing practices, for example, in the *Alameda Central* in

Mexico City, considered the oldest public park in the continent, it is now common to see groups of people practicing for their next Ball. Ballrooms are an example of community-building that utilizes greenspaces and challenges oppressive systems.

2 Conceptual Framework for 2SLGBTQIA+ Environmental Policy in North America

This section aims to highlight, draw attention to and make visible the interactions between the environmental crises and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and how they are disproportionately affected due to overlapping systems of oppression. There is a strong need to employ an intersectional lens that includes gender-transformative approaches, intergenerational equity, and considerations of Indigenous and local communities to enhance environmental and climate action inclusively and effectively.

2.1 Environmental and Climate Change Crises

In the context of sexual and gender diversity in North America, there are opportunities to create better tomorrows that rewrite our relations with the land, the climate, and biological diversity. As the organization Rising Tide North America states:

*“Climate justice is more than just a goal; it’s a practice in the movement against climate chaos. **No effort to create a livable future will succeed without the empowerment of marginalized communities and the dismantling of the systems of oppression that keep us divided**”* (Foran et al. 2019, emphasis added).

Including 2SLGBTQIA+ people in North American environmental policy making is necessary. It is crucial that proposed environmental and climate solutions create a system of co-existence, respect, and resonance. Just as the natural system needs biological diversity to thrive, human societies must embrace people in all their expressions. Queer experiences teach that diversity, cooperation, and non-binary thinking are possible and essential. Similarly, most Indigenous communities understand that humanity is not separate from nature but part of it. Both emphasize that solving the multiple environmental crises cannot be done through a binary lens but that they must be viewed holistically. These ways of thinking and living highlight how biodiversity and gender are deeply intertwined. Biodiversity is a story of diverse life forms cooperating with one another, creating biotic communities, and resulting in collectivity and synergies, thus consciously choosing coexistence and resilience (Morton 2010).

Current socio-economic systems are responsible for the depletion of our natural resources and the multiple crises that include climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. These systems assign no intrinsic value to our natural resources or the health of life and ecosystems. Anthropogenic activities are unequivocally responsible for global warming, hitting global temperature records of 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels, causing major disruptions, compounding, and cascading risks (IPCC 2023). Seventy-seven percent of the land (excluding Antarctica) and 87% of the ocean area have been modified by the direct effects of human activities (IPCC-IPBES 2022). According to the Stockholm Resilience Center, six of nine

planetary boundaries have been crossed, putting in peril the safe operating space of the biosphere (Richardson et al. 2023). Yet, vulnerable communities who have historically contributed the least to current climate change are disproportionately affected (IPCC 2022).

2.2 Intersectionality in Environmental Policy

No group is inherently vulnerable; rather, vulnerability is the result of interlocking systems of oppression, situations, and historical context (BCCDC 2020). Vulnerability to climate change and environmental degradation in certain communities, sectors, or regions is socially differentiated. For example, data in the United States has shown that Black and African American individuals are 40% more likely than non-Black Americans to live in areas with a high projected increase in mortality due to climate-driven changes. Likewise, Hispanic and Latinx/e individuals in the United States are 43% more likely to live in areas with the highest projected labor hour losses in weather-exposed industries due to climate change (US EPA 2021). Indigenous reserve lands in Canada also have higher flood risk as 22% of residential properties are at risk for flood events that currently have a 1% chance of happening every year (Thistlethwaite et al. 2020).

Vulnerability should be assessed in biophysical and economic terms but also through social and cultural lenses that consider and include TEK from Indigenous Peoples and “subjective values” inherent to the culture and identity of communities. Policy responses should address the multiple intersections of communities in the face of climate change and other environmental impacts, through integrated and equitable actions (Munshi et al. 2019).

As a result of colonization and the creation of the reservation system, Canada and United States’ apartheid system, Indigenous and Two-Spirit people were systematically relocated to remote and inaccessible areas with often only one road in and out or that were only accessible by plane or boat. This was purposefully done so Indigenous People and communities could be monitored and their movements more easily controlled by Indian Agents. The people in these communities are inextricably tied to the land and as a result bear the weight of environmental impacts such as wildfires and flooding, more so than urban-based populations (Elbein 2019; De Flaviis 2023). Today, this policy continues to place these communities in harm’s way as many communities still have only one way in and out of their homes. This is just one example of how colonial history is still impacting Indigenous communities, including Two-Spirit people.

Box 1. 2SLGBTQIA+ and Indigenous Communities Intersect in Environmental Issues

The 2S in 2SLGBTQIA+ acronym specifically refers to the Two-Spirit communities on Turtle Island¹¹. Two-Spirit can mean different things to different individuals, but overall, it refers to a large range of identities and roles within Indigenous communities regarding sexual and gender diversity. For the Two-Spirit Dry Lab (2SDL), Two-Spirit is the reclamation of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being that existed prior to Western or colonial framing and ways of gender and sexuality, and a result is the decolonization of sexuality and gender (2SDL 2023). Two-Spirit is a term translated from an *Anishnaabemowin* word, *niizh manidoowag* that arose in 1990, but the concept has existed since pre-colonial times (Thurston 2023).

Two-Spirit is a community organizing strategy or tool to describe oneself and to embody diverse sexualities, gender identities, roles, and expressions. Two-Spirit calls into question Western, binary notions of sexual orientation and allows for reconnection to Indigenous cultures (Pruden and Salway 2020). Excluding 2S from LGBTQI+ discussion, is considered as an active erasure of Indigenous history, particularly within Canada and the United States. It is important to note that not all Indigenous communities manifest the Two-Spirit concept. In North America, other alternative gender-diverse identities exist; for example, the *muxes* community is a Zapotec Indigenous group in the region of Juchitán de Zaragoza in Oaxaca, Mexico. A muxe is recognized as a sexual-gender practice that is different from the traditional binary, it is considered a third gender in their community (Hernandes and Ferreria 2022).

Uplifting and centering Two-Spirit and Indigenous knowledge and ways of life is important to achieving equitable environmental and climate policy. Indigenous and Two-Spirit people, in all of their diversity and manifestations, have historically been stewards of land and biodiversity and are frontline communities on territories of resistance and conservation of nature. For example, Two-Spirit people opposed the Dakota Access pipeline at Standing Rock and hosted the Winyan Camp, a safe space for women, children, and Two-Spirits. This resistance to violence is augmented all the while because of intersectional identities (Amor 2018; Graul 2023). European settlers had devastating impacts through the imposition of colonial conquest, but also violently imposed Christianization and the residential school system, which included the imposition of a gender binary and heterosexual norms on Indigenous communities (RRC 2024). This historical intergenerational trauma compounds on environmental impacts that Two-Spirit communities endure (Vinyeta et al. 2015).

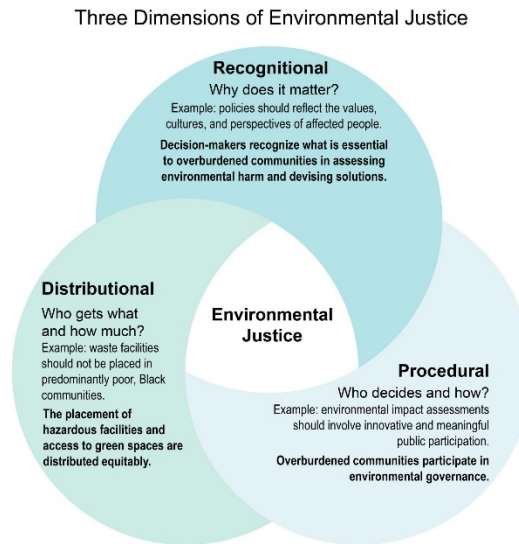
Understanding the different social dimensions and context of people, including but not exclusive to sexual orientation, gender identity, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic class, age, citizenship, ability, and Indigeneity, will contribute to more accurate environmental policies and actions that address the root causes and solutions to the global ecological collapse (MacGregor 2019). Using intersectional scopes as analytical tools enhances risks and vulnerability assessments and highlights that environmental impacts affect various communities differently.

To strengthen an intersectional approach, it is key to consider and include environmental justice (EJ) principles. Even though there is no universal definition of EJ, for this paper, it will be understood as the goal of promoting justice and accountability in environmental matters, focusing on the respect, protection,

¹¹ "Turtle Island" is a name used by some Indigenous Peoples in North America to refer to the continent. It is a term commonly employed in various Indigenous cultures, including those of some Native American tribes in the United States and First Nations in Canada. The name has deep cultural and spiritual significance, often rooted in creation stories and traditional beliefs.

and fulfillment of environmental rights. It goes beyond fair distribution of benefits and harms (*distributive justice*), requires participation in environmental decisions of those affected by them (*procedural justice*), acknowledges the histories and relationships between peoples and the non-human world and the multiple injustices of the past and present to find ways to repair them (*corrective or recognitional justice*), and recognizes that environmental struggles are inextricably intertwined with struggles for social and economic justice (Kuehn 2000; UNDP 2022; Arora-Jonsson 2019; Tornel et al. 2022).

Figure 1. Dimensions of Environmental Justice



Source: US Fifth National Climate Assessment

An approach through intersectionality can make visible the marginalization of communities identifying as 2SLGBTQIA+ in addition to other marginalized identities concerning their experiences with environmental challenges. Intersectional vulnerable communities experience compounded vulnerability in which systemic oppression towards their identities intensifies discrimination, rejection, and worsened and disproportionate climate and environmental impacts. In addition, these systems are widening the inequality gap, as marginalized communities are excluded and face greater violence in disaster situations. Concrete examples of these situations will be shared in the following sections of this paper.

2.3 North American Opportunities to Include 2SLGBTQIA+ Perspectives

Environmental justice advocates across the region have fought for their communities to be involved from the beginning of structural planning and policies related to the distribution of environmental goods (e.g., land, clean air, clean water, and green spaces). The EJ movement has historically focused on dismantling systemic racism, patriarchy, classism, and colonialism. In parallel, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities have fought for their political emancipation and the recognition of their Human Rights (e.g., housing, health, employment, and acknowledgement of their relationships). Although these movements are often seen as

being separate, there has been overlap through queer ecology, eco-queer movement, queer environmentalism, as well as the 2SLGBTQIA+ environmental and climate activism.

Building solidarity between intersectional, queer, gender, environmental and human right-based approaches is needed to spotlight 2SLGBTQIA+ perspectives and address inequities regarding environmental and climate impacts. In addition, Two-Spirit and TEK place the Earth at the center of their value system, creating a more sustainable outlook, in contrast with the dominant cis-heteronormative human-centric system that is leading to ecosystem collapse. Therefore, it is critical to approach solutions through TEK principles.

Box 2. 2SLGBTQIA+, Youth, and Intergenerational Equity

Intergenerational equity refers to the need for justice between generations to ensure that young people are guaranteed the right to development and a safe and sustainable environment. To foster intergenerational equity, youth must be part of decision-making spaces and be equipped with the means to propel actions toward a sustainable future. Young people, especially those who are Indigenous Peoples, Black, and people of color, have a disability, transgender, and/or girls, are among the groups most affected by the multiple planetary crisis.

Observed and projected changes in global surface temperature are already changing and will continue to rise. The younger generation will face the biggest impacts of our current and deepening climate crisis, depending on how climate change is addressed today (IPCC 2023). Also, according to a new report, younger generations in the United States identify as LGBTQ+ at much higher rates than other generations. In addition, it is estimated that 28% of Gen Z adults identify as LGBTQ+ (PRRI 2024).

The youth climate movement has spearheaded the integration of a queer perspective into environmental issues. Some notable examples are the *Asamblea Ecologista Popular, Legado Gaia* (Legaia), Out for Sustainability, Queers for Climate Justice, Shelterwood Collective, Queer Nature and Queers X Climate; youth organizations focused on climate justice in line with sexual dissidence, and the 2SLGBTQIA+ movement. They recognize that defending territory also means defending diverse bodies. Furthermore, although not properly documented, existing testimonies show that among different age and racial groups, it is youth, women, Indigenous Peoples, Black, and people of color, who are most active in environmental and climate activism.

The youth climate activist, Pepe Villalobos from the *Asamblea Ecologista Popular*, has implemented a project to assess the vulnerability due to climate change of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in their community in Soconusco, Chiapas. The project included a capacity-building program on themes such as racism, classism, and the nexus of queer and environmental issues and a survey to identify risks to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Outcomes from the project revealed limited 2SLGBTQIA+ involvement in environmental issues due to fear and perceived risk. Also, people struggled to identify the violence they had experienced and had not made the connection that the ecological degradation of their community was linked with climate change. Finally, most participants were young people. They grappled with identity-related challenges, such as not being able to disclose their gender and sexual identity within their family and communities due to an actual or perceived lack of safety within their homes.

2.4 Queering Just and Equitable Transitions

A queer intersectional perspective is essential for inclusive climate and environmental policy, aligning with a just transition approach that prioritizes people and nature. This viewpoint advocates for sustainable pathways that reject oppressive and discriminatory systems and promote intergenerational equity, fairness, and gender-transformative approaches. Enhancing inclusive governance and fostering international cooperation are crucial for achieving an equitable and just transition, including considerations for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in North America (WRI 2023; IPCC 2022; UNEP 2022).

Addressing the intersections between environment, race, culture, Indigeneity, age, ability, sexuality, and gender that foregrounds climate and environmental impacts on 2SLGBTQIA+ people should be embedded within public policy to alleviate current and future vulnerability experienced by this group (Gaard 2019). People with diverse SOGIESC also make critical contributions towards building resilient communities that go beyond the binaries, uprooting systems of oppression. Queer experiences can offer significant, unique and important input to formulate effective and inclusive solutions to the climate and environmental crisis.

However, it is important to understand how 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals and communities are currently being affected by environmental crises. The next section will illustrate diverse environmental impacts, specifically focusing on North America.

3 Climate and Environmental Impacts on North American 2SLGBTQIA+ Communities

This section will focus on the disproportionate environmental and climate impacts that 2SLGBTQIA+ communities experience compared to the non-2SLGBTQIA+ population, with an emphasis on those who have intersecting marginalized identities living on North America. This section is useful for researchers looking for a review of the literature base and for decision-makers interested in taking a deeper dive into this subject.

Across North America and worldwide, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities face systemic discrimination and exclusion that can lead to human rights violations and disproportionate health impacts from environmental and climate hazards (Goldsmith and Bell 2021, See Introduction). Impacts are multiplied if people from this population hold more than one marginalized identity, such as identities based on race/ethnicity, Indigeneity, ability, undocumented status, or age. For example, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals with disabilities have been found to experience a lack of access to transportation and health care during disasters. In addition, these individuals notice that they are treated differently from their able-bodied counterparts and experience intersectional discrimination (Crawford et al. 2023).

In all three countries, Black 2SLGBTQIA+¹² communities, especially Black transgender individuals, often do not have their basic needs met before and after disasters. During Hurricane Katrina, two Black transgender women were arrested for using the bathroom that aligned with their gender at a temporary emergency shelter (Goldsmith et al. 2022). Although there are increased impacts, it is essential to acknowledge that

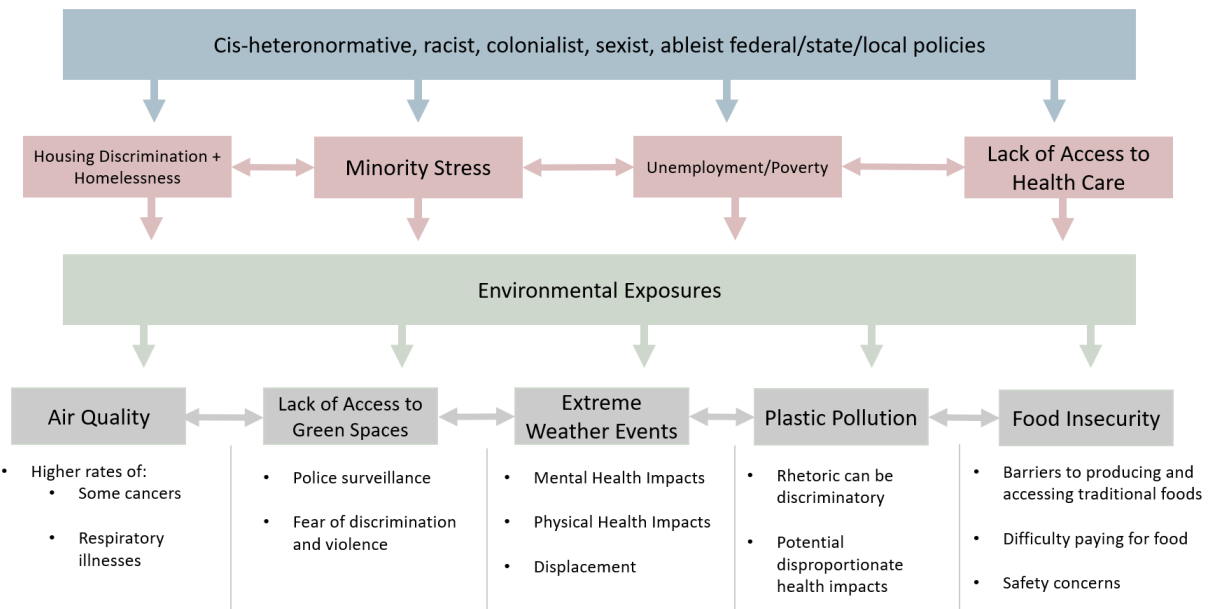
¹² We use 2S here to refer to Black individuals who are “defined as Native American due to being affiliated with Native American communities and being culturally Native American - who also have significant African American heritage” (Katz 2012).

people with diverse SOGIESC are not passive, and there is resilience through mutual aid networks and involvement in adapting to difficult situations. While these systems are vital, nonetheless, they are borne out of necessity and do not replace the need for institutional and formal support.

While there is little data on environmental and climate impacts on Two-Spirit people and communities, it is known that Canadian wildfires are disproportionately affecting Indigenous People at a greater rate than non-Indigenous Canadians, and that would include Two-Spirit individuals. The audit published by the Auditor General of Canada and authored by a Metis fire researcher, found that Indigenous communities had more than 1,300 wildfire-related emergencies leading to more than 580 evacuations over the past 13 years (OAGC 2023). The wildfires impacted over 130,000 Indigenous People. Indigenous communities make up 42% of wildfire evacuations in the past decade, yet only make up 5% of Canada's population (Flaviis 2023).

Figure 2. Impacts of Compounding Systemic Oppression and Extractive Policies on 2SLGBTQIA+ Communities

Pathway to Environmental and Climate Impacts on 2SLGBTQIA+ Communities



Source: Leo Goldsmith, Yale School of the Environment

3.1 Poor Air Quality

Highlights

- Neighborhoods with higher density of same-sex couples experience higher levels of hazardous air pollution.
- Leads to higher rates of respiratory illnesses and some cancer in same-sex couples.
- Unknown if this applies to other 2SLGBTQIA+ communities due to limited data collection on SOGI.

3.1.1 Higher Exposure to Air Pollution

Research in the United States has found that neighborhoods with a higher density of same-sex couples are more likely to experience higher levels of hazardous air pollution (HAP) (Collins et al. 2017). HAP is defined as “pollutants that are known or suspected to cause cancer or other serious health effects, such as reproductive effects or congenital disabilities, or adverse environmental effects” (US EPA 2023). This includes pollutants such as, but not limited to benzene, methylene chloride, and dioxin. Disproportionate health outcomes such as cancers and respiratory illnesses for those in same-sex partnerships are related to this environmental exposure. This is the case even when controlling for race/ethnicity and socioeconomic class, two demographics that are primary factors for environmental injustices and health outcomes due to systematic racism and classism. In addition, air pollution has been linked to an increase of mental health issues already existing at a higher prevalence in 2SLGBTQIA+ communities such as anxiety and depression (Braithwaite et al. 2019). There needs to be more research to analyze how race/ethnicity, class, Indigeneity, ability, age, sexual orientation, and gender identity intersect concerning HAP exposure and health outcomes in all three North American countries.

3.2 Restrictive Access to Green Spaces

Highlights

- Discrimination in accessing parks, expressing oneself, and showing displays of affection.
- Targeted policing of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

3.2.1 Discrimination and Policing within Parks

It has been documented that communities with access to green spaces and that use them regularly have better mental and physical health outcomes, including improved mood, less anxiety, and reduced diabetes and coronary artery disease (Lee et al. 2015). Despite this, research from Canada has found that 2SLGBTQIA+ communities often experience discrimination and policing while accessing parks. Discrimination experienced by 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in green spaces ranges from verbal harassment, physical violence, fines, or imprisonment, often due to the perceived unnaturalness of queerness. For example, in the media, cis-heterosexual couples are often celebrated for kissing in public green spaces, while same-sex couples may be harassed if they exhibit any form of public display of affection (Davis et al. 2022).

There have also been police campaigns in Canada and the US to target and solicit gay men in public spaces, which sometimes end in criminal charges (Davis et al. 2022; Deino 2017). This has been a long-standing problem for the community, with police discriminatory surveillance and harassment spanning back to the 1890s (Maynard 1994). Particularly in the US, police discrimination is worsened for Black 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, who, in addition to their sexual orientation or gender identity, are targeted and discriminated against due to their skin color. A study found that 43% of Black sexual minority men surveyed experienced police discrimination within the past year (English et al. 2020). It is important to note that although much of these conversations focus on cisgender gay men, often sex workers, especially transgender women, are policed within these spaces as well (Ross and Sullivan 2012). All 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals deserve to feel safe accessing green spaces to enjoy their benefits and to be able to safely organize outdoor activities for community building.

3.3 Climate-related Disasters

Highlights

- Higher risk of climate exposure.
- Discrimination within disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.
- Not included in disaster and climate policy or guidelines.
- Higher rates of disaster displacement, food insecurity, water insecurity, social isolation, and fear of crime after disasters.
- Less access to risk transfer mechanisms, such as health and property insurance.
- The impacts are further exacerbated by factors of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, income, and geographic location, with Indigenous Peoples, Black, and people of color living in coastlines and island territories the most affected.

3.3.1 Discrimination Within Disaster and Climate Infrastructure Leads to Worsened Outcomes

Data predominantly from the United States has shown that 2SLGBTQIA+ communities are disproportionately impacted by climate-related disasters such as, but not exclusive to, wildfires, hurricanes, and heat waves (Goldsmith et al. 2022; Nguyen 2023). These communities experience discrimination within disaster and emergency services, lack of access to critical services (e.g., health care or shelter), displacement, food and water insecurity, unsanitary conditions, social isolation, and fear of crime during and after disasters (Goldsmith et al. 2022, Geiger et al. 2023). In addition, these communities have health outcomes that can be worsened by extreme weather events, such as some cancers, respiratory illnesses, cardiovascular disease, and HIV/AIDs (Goldsmith and Bell 2021). These impacts are further exacerbated by factors of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, income, and geographic location, due to the different levels of marginalization the individual might experience. For example, evidence has shown that Black, Latinx/e, and Asian communities in the United States experience significantly higher rates of displacement compared to white 2SLGBTQIA+ and non-2SLGBTQIA+ communities (Geiger et al. 2023).

The lack of census data specific to 2SLGBTQIA+ members of society hamper the ability to fully understand the impacts of climate change on 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, especially when considering an intersectional perspective. However, there is anecdotal data on these differentiated impacts. For example, Black 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in Puerto Rico have reported not having their basic needs met. After disasters like

Hurricane Maria and Fiona and the 2020 earthquakes, those existing disparities were worsened. In addition, these disasters closed schools, hospitals, pharmacies, and affirming 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations, and many parts of the island continue lacking power. This has shown to be a similar case for communities living in other coastal and insular territories, some under the jurisdiction of the CEC's Member States such as, but not limited to, Guam, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, Hawaii, and the US Virgin Islands; where the impacts of climate change are experienced the hardest due to geographic conditions and impacts faced by the most marginalized populations: all while also facing restrictive legal frameworks that limit the full enjoyment of their human rights.

To further exemplify this, in 2018, the Pride in the Humanitarian System held a regional consultation in Bangkok that brought together over 120 representatives from diverse SOGIESC Civil Society Organizations, United Nations agencies, and donors working in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific. One of the main outcomes of this event was the compilation of various case studies that documented the differentiated impacts of extreme weather events on the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in insular territories. In addition, they described how local communities and Indigenous organizations led by people with diverse SOGIESEC had significantly contributed towards the preparedness and response of disaster (Devakula et al. 2018; Dwyer 2021).

3.3.2 Heightened Negative Experiences During Disasters

2SLGBTQIA+ communities are much more likely to experience displacement and other negative experiences during and after disasters. Exclusionary environmental, disaster, and climate policies and guidelines leave disaster and emergency services without the capacity, knowledge, and experience to adequately serve people with diverse SOGIESC. Additionally, local and state legislation may ban gender-diverse individuals' ability to access gender-appropriate bathrooms or medical care, or medication. 2SLGBTQIA+ communities are most displaced by wildfires, flooding, and tornadoes (Geiger et al. 2023). In addition, they are more likely to be food (46%) and water (43%) insecure one month after a disaster, consistent with research findings that these communities have high food insecurity rates overall and during health emergencies such as COVID-19 (Conron et al. 2022). Food and water insecurity and unsanitary conditions can be devastating, particularly for people who have HIV/AIDS (Hamill et al. 2023).

Social isolation (52%), which primarily impacts older 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, is much higher in 2SLGBTQIA+ communities one month after disasters. This is the consequence of years of estrangement from their family of origin, resulting in higher negative health impacts and rates of social isolation across this population (Peterson et al. 2020). Fear of crime (52%) is also much higher for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community one month after a disaster. Fear of crime in 2SLGBTQIA+ communities is often based on previous experiences of victimization and discrimination and is higher among women (Otis 2007). Although it is important to note that the increase in anti-2SLGBTQIA+ bills may be a factor to high fear of crime experienced in 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. More research and data are needed to expand the understanding of the patterns of negative experiences during disasters in all three countries of North America.

Historical trauma, in the context of Indigenous communities, is highly important to consider within disaster response and recovery. There is a longstanding generational impact of cultural disruption that has led to compromised physical, spiritual, and psychological health outcomes among Indigenous People. Indigenous 2SLGBTQIA+ elders experience heightened impacts that increase the impact of historical trauma, as they go through higher rates of psychological and physiological distress during disasters (Bryer et al. 2023). Further evidence has shown this to be a challenge globally (Seglah and Blanchard 2021).

3.3.3 Lack of Financial Security Prior, During, and After Disasters

Despite its limitations, health insurance continues to be one of the most effective indicators to measure the degree of risk a person or organization has to climate exposure (Otto et al. 2023). As such, this measure can be used to identify the level of exposure the 2SLGBTQIA+ population has relative to environmental risk. Data from both the US and Mexico show that people with diverse SOGIEC still experience a general lack of health insurance and harbor concerns about medical bills compared to non-2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. This is in line with the finding of the US FEMA 2023 National Household Survey on Disaster Preparedness, which showed that only 25% of the participants with diverse SOGIESC had insured their property, compared to 33% of cis-heterosexual counterparts (US FEMA ICPD 2024).

While Canada's universal healthcare system ensures that a relatively small number of people (many of them immigrants) do not have access to healthcare, a statistically significant number of people have reported delays using healthcare services due to costs (Garasia et al. 2023). Although further research is needed on this point, it serves as a reminder of the prevalence of forced displacement of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals.¹³ Furthermore, gender-affirming healthcare varies dramatically throughout Canada, because such policies lie with the provinces. This is particularly relevant when 2SLGBTQIA+ requires access to gender-affirming healthcare, such as hormone replacement therapy, in moments of climate disaster. It is also important to make a distinction on the possession of other types of insurance, such as that for property protection, for which no information was found in the case of Canada and Mexico. In addition, SOGI data is also not required to be collected within electronic health records across North America.

3.4 Food Insecurity

Highlights

- Higher rates of food insecurity due to higher poverty and unemployment rates.
- In some cases, unable to go out to buy food due to safety concerns.
- 2SLBTQIA+ women and people of color, especially Black and Indigenous individuals, have the highest rates of food insecurity.
- Two-Spirit individuals are unable to subsist on their own land due to discriminatory policies in addition to being discriminated against based on their sexual orientation and gender identity.

3.4.1 Higher Rates of Food Insecurity

2SLGBTQIA+ communities have a higher food insecurity rate than non-2SLGBTQIA+ communities. This is especially true for transgender women and cisgender lesbian and bisexual individuals (Conron et al. 2022). In the United States, lesbian and bisexual women were 52% more likely to experience food insecurity than heterosexual women (Jabson et al. 2022). This may be worsened if one has an intersecting marginalized identity. For example, Black and Indigenous LGBT individuals have much higher rates of food insecurity compared to white LGBT and non-LGBT individuals (Brown et al. 2016). Sex workers who are food insecure

¹³ Unlike Mexico or the United States, where health coverage is linked to employment status, Canada's health system is considered universal health coverage funded through a health system called Medicare. This implies that it is publicly administered, has comprehensive coverage, is portable across provinces, and is accessible to the population. Medicare covers 100% of the population and each province or territory manages all of its own residents with their specific residency requirements. However, the health system is funded mainly by provincial or territorial general tax revenue with some federal transfers and is free at the point of delivery for citizens. As such, each province and territory can determine the extent of coverage.

report higher rates of condom refusal by clients, elevating their risk for contracting STIs and HIV (Barreto et al. 2017).

Higher poverty rates, employment discrimination, housing instability, difficulty paying for household expenses, not being able to get out to buy food, and safety concerns are a few reasons for the high rate of food insecurity among 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. This also includes reduced access to better quality food, which in turn also has great consequences for the health of 2SLGBTQIA+ people (Ferrero et al. 2023). This is especially important when considering the higher rates of poverty, unemployment, and homelessness experienced by 2SLGBTQIA+ that intersect with other marginalized groups, which increases their reliance on food access-related support such as food banks and food stamps.

Indigenous communities in particular face food insecurity because of marginalization and the barriers to producing and accessing traditional foods and all foods (James 2020). Discriminatory policies preventing hunting and fishing on their land, contaminated wildlife and plants, environmental degradation, isolation and lack of connection of communities, lack of health and education services, climate change that is diminishing crops, and loss of traditions are a few barriers (González-Martell et al. 2021). Two-Spirit individuals live at the intersection and are likely to face compounding systemic oppression, leading to higher food insecurity rates.

3.5 Land and Water Pollution

Highlights

- Endocrine-disrupting chemicals found in solid and water pollution have proven to harm sexual and reproductive organs.
- Pollution's effect on human health has been prone to being used as part of mis- and disinformation campaigns against the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.
- There is an urgent need for the government to support research under a queer lens and further enact stronger regulations to the plastic industry enshrined in the right to a healthy environment.

3.5.1 Negative Impacts on Human Health

Anthropogenic endocrine-disrupting chemicals prevalent in solid and water pollution, predominantly associated with plastic waste and pesticides, including but not limited to organochlorine pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyls, bisphenol A, phthalates, dioxins, and furans, have been demonstrated to have deleterious effects on the sexual and reproductive organs of people (UNEP and Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions 2023; Hliseníková et al. 2020; Lynn, Rech, and Mantingh 2017). In turn, this restricts the full and free enjoyment of a healthy and clean environment and bodily autonomy for those affected, including people with diverse SOGIESC.

As with its non-2SLGBTQIA+ counterparts, 2SLGBTQIA+ people are not exempt from the health hazard of chemical pollution, including cancer. However, there is insufficient research to understand the specific health impacts in this population. For example, it is still unknown what the possible implication of endocrine disrupting could have while undergoing hormone replacement therapy. Nonetheless, there are many instances where homophobic and transphobic misinformation and disinformation have been

used as part of political discourse against 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals because of chemical pollution, especially towards transgender and intersex people (Contreras and Holzman 2023).

There is an expectation that a new wave of plastic pollution legislation might happen once the negotiations of the United Nations internationally legally binding agreement to end plastic pollution conclude. It is critical that governments, including the United States, Mexico and Canada, support research under a queer lens and further enact stronger regulations to the plastic industry enshrined in the right to a healthy environment, including that of 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

3.6 Limited Access to Green Finance

Highlights

- Factors like wage gaps and limited connections impede 2SLGBTQIA+ access to green finance¹⁴.
- Less than 1% of international aid to 2SLGBTQIA+ civil societies address environment and climate change.
- Only about 5% of domestic private finance for development in the US focuses on economic issues for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals.

3.6.1 Limited Access to Green Investment Capital

Research has found that multiple factors hinder the capacity of 2SLGBTQIA+ people to participate in access to venture capital. This includes wage gaps in comparison with their cis-heterosexual counterparts, limited access to connection, and technical capacity (De Leon and Kashner 2022). Nevertheless, no data was found on the specific relation between these groups and green finance. Despite public and private initiatives to enhance access to venture capital for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, such as Canada's 2SLGBTQIA+ Entrepreneurship Program, no information was identified on whether these funds contain environmental priority clauses.

3.6.2 Limited International and National Funding

Less than 1% of international aid flowing to 2SLGBTQIA+ civil societies target environment and climate change (Landesman 2023). Domestically, private finance for development operates similarly. According to a 2018 report by Funders for LGBTQ Issues on LGBTQ Grantmaking by US Foundations, an average of 5% of the total 2018 and 2017 funding reported was focused on economic issues (Funders for LGBTQ Issues 2019). Equivalent data on Mexico or Canada was not found.

Additionally, non-profit organizations and policies may not be adequate to provide financial support for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. A notable example of an organization that has worked around this is OUT for Sustainability. OUT for Sustainability has supported 2SLGBTQIA+ activists to unlock and expedite financial resources by signing fiscal sponsorship agreements with smaller organizations, predominantly in Puerto Rico, that do not have the legal capacity to formalize their legal structure.

¹⁴ In the absence of a unifying taxonomy, this paper understands green finance as financial flows mobilized by public and private entities that focus on supporting environmental suitability and addressing the effects associated with environmental degradation.

3.7 Lack of Protection of Environmental Activists and Siloed Political Participation

Highlights

- Higher environmental consciousness observed among 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, especially youth.
- 2SLGBTQIA+ environmental activists face heightened violence and discrimination.
- Need for specific safeguards addressing unique needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, including access to information and participation in decision-making that look at 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals.

3.7.1 2SLGBTQIA+ People Tend to be More Socially Aware and Active

Recent research has shown higher levels of environmental consciousness among the 2SLGBTQIA+ population, especially young people (See Box 2). In other words, people with diverse SOGIESC tend to agree on the importance of environmental conservation and proactively take steps toward promoting a sustainable lifestyle. For example, a 2018 study found that lesbians, bisexuals, and gay people “...were more than twice as likely as heterosexuals to join anti-war, environmental, and anti-corporate movements.” This was mainly due to their deeper awareness and less acceptance of social inequalities than heterosexuals (Swank 2018).

3.7.2 2SLGBTQIA+ Environmental Activists Experience Increased Levels of Violence and Discrimination

Despite the importance of this type of work in the advancement of environmental advocacy and awareness, in turn, this has also resulted in increased levels of exposure to violence, which is exacerbated by existing homophobia and transphobia. While not studied in depth, it is common to find instances in which environmental activists with diverse SOGIESC face physical and verbal harassment mixed with slurs alluding to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

In this context, it is the State that should hold the prime responsibility for the full protection of the life and integrity of 2SLGBTQIA+ environmental activists. As such, it is critical to advocate and implement safeguards that specifically address the needs and experiences of this segment of the population. This includes, but is not limited to, the access to and generation of information; participation in the decision-making process; access to justice; free prior and informed consent; and ensure protections.

3.7.3 2SLGBTQIA+ Elected Officials and Public Servants are Usually Siloed to Work on Matters Related to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity

In legislative bodies, 2SLGBTQIA+ elected officials often face limitations, as they are frequently confined to roles focused solely on human rights and equality, neglecting their potential contributions to other critical areas like environmental and climate change issues. Despite their expertise, this pigeonholing reinforces harmful stereotypes and curtails 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals' potential broader impact to fields and issues unrelated to their identity.

All said, there has been notable progress in ensuring representation for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals across North American governments, with initiatives creating safe and empowering spaces for meaningful

participation. Yet, significant challenges persist at local levels, where discriminatory cultures and laws hinder full inclusion. Addressing these disparities demands comprehensive efforts at all governmental tiers, emphasizing collective action and persistent advocacy to foster environments where all 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals can thrive. Additionally, acknowledgment and support for public servants openly championing SOGI are essential in advancing a more inclusive and equitable future.

4 Advancing 2SLGBTQIA+ Considerations in North America

This section provides a snapshot of existing projects and policies across North America that address 2SLGBTQIA+ considerations in climate and environmental policies and activities. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but rather, it's offered as a general review of what is currently happening, and to inspire further actions.

4.1 Select 2SLGBTQIA+ Projects and Policies Across North America

4.1.1 Canada

Gender-Based Analysis Plus

The Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) is a framework for including a gender and intersectionality lens to policies, projects, and activities within the Canadian government. This intersectionality lens was added in 2011, and since then, some agencies within the government have mandated GBA+ training for their employees. Environment and Climate Change Canada has incorporated GBA+ by explicitly including 2SLGBTQIA+ communities into their work, including climate adaptation, youth programs, data collection, and public participation in the UNFCCC negotiations process.¹⁵

In the report “Queers, Closets & Mancamps,” prepared for the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, the authors document how the Canadian government has implemented the Impact Assessment Act (IAA) to broaden the scope of assessment of major infrastructure and natural resource development projects to include the experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ people through the GBA+. The document shows how the amount of information available has substantially increased, allowing for a better understanding of potential implications for infrastructure projects and inclusive decision-making by relevant stakeholders (MacKellar and Westwood 2023). This is important since 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals at the resource development site or in neighboring towns experience higher rates of violence and social isolation. The report includes detailed recommendations for better inclusion of marginalized peoples in impact assessment processes.

¹⁵ The full details of the GBA+ policy can be consulted here: <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-based-analysis-plus.html>

2SLGBTQI Action Plan

In 2022, the Canadian government announced its 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan, which has a budget of \$100 million over five years.¹⁶ The Action Plan includes several new initiatives organized in 6 priority areas based on an extensive engagement process with 2SLGBTQI+ community members, organizations, advocates and experts. Priority areas include:

- [Prioritize and sustain 2SLGBTQI+ community action](#)
- [Continue to advance and strengthen 2SLGBTQI+ rights at home and abroad](#)
- [Support Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ resilience and resurgence](#)
- [Engage everyone in Canada in fostering a 2SLGBTQI+ inclusive future](#)
- [Strengthen 2SLGBTQI+ data and evidence-based policymaking](#)
- [Embed 2SLGBTQI+ issues in the work of the Government of Canada](#)

While the plan addresses critical issues pertaining to environmental sustainability such as the incitement of Indigenous People's resilience and provides capacity-building opportunities to community organizations, no environmental consideration or safeguard was identified.

4.1.2 Mexico

Mexico's NDC and Human Rights, Gender and Climate Change Action Plan

In Mexico's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) 2022 update presented to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)—which constitutes the instrument that guides the Paris Agreement implementation—there is an emphasis on benefit sharing and prioritizing the most vulnerable communities. The NDC clearly states that the climate and environmental agenda are intrinsically linked to inclusive development that includes well-being, health, employment, gender equality, and innovation. This instrument clearly mentions that climate action must be respectful of human rights for all groups in situations of vulnerability, such as women, Indigenous and Afro-Mexican native peoples, boys and girls, youth, migrants, people with disabilities, the LGBTQ population, low-income groups, and older adults. This direct mention of LGBTQ recognizes that including 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals is paramount to a climate-resilient development that protects human rights.¹⁷

Based on this, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), together with the National Women's Institute (INMUJERES), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE), and the National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change (INECC), in technical cooperation with the German Development Agency (GIZ), are working on the creation of Mexico's Human Rights, Gender and Climate Change Action Plan, that will guide the NDC and its climate policy through an intersectional approach that will ideally include queer visions and contributions.

Multilateral awareness and advocacy

During the celebration of 2020 Pride Month celebrations, the Deputy Ministry for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights of the SRE organized two virtual panels on inclusive climate negotiations, one focused on the work Member States and Multilateral Organizations could enact and another one centered on

¹⁶ The full policy can be consulted here <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/free-to-be-me/federal-2slgbtqi-plus-action-plan.html>.

¹⁷ Mexico's 2022 NDC: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-11/Mexico_NDC_UNFCCC_update2022_FINAL.pdf

international climate activism led by civil society. These efforts were meant to inform the Mexican delegation of the importance of advocating for inclusive and equitable climate action. Along this same line, the SRE enacted in 2019 its Feminist Foreign Policy, which includes striving for Mexico's leadership in gender equality. While the policy does not have explicit references to include the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community, it is a positive precedent that could lead toward more inclusive foreign policies.¹⁸

Local Advancement of 2SLGBTQIA+ Human Rights

Progress has been made at the subnational level, particularly in Mexico City, which has played a pioneering role in advancing the 2SLGBTQIA+ human rights agenda in Mexico. As a notable achievement, the city has recently approved the Law for the Recognition and Care of LGBTTTI¹⁹ people in Mexico City, setting a significant precedent.²⁰ This legislation not only establishes a framework for recognizing and addressing the rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals but also serves as a model for developing broader laws and policies that safeguard human rights, mandating specific actions and programs for their fulfillment. Importantly, the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in Mexico City can leverage this law to exert more influence on environmental policies and activities that directly impact them. In this same line of work, the Council to Prevent and Eliminate Discrimination mentioned in its 2021 report "Friendly City with the LGBTTTI Population" that they had carried out activities with the Ministry of Environment of Mexico City (Sedema). However, no further details were provided.²¹

4.1.3 United States

Strengthening Equity and Inclusivity in Disaster Preparedness and Response Policies

In the Spring of 2023, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Homeland Security Center for Faith-based Organizations and Neighborhood Partnerships collaborated with OUT for Sustainability, a nonprofit dedicated to promoting climate resilience and environmental justice for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. They organized a two-part workshop focused on "preparedness and mitigation" and "response and recovery" for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.²² OUT for Sustainability published a guide titled "Inclusive and Equitable Emergency Management for LGBTQIA+ Communities" based on the discussion of the panelists during those two workshops.²³ In addition, FEMA has also collected preparedness data for those who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ in the 2022 National Household Survey.²⁴

In addition to FEMA's endeavors, in 2015, the US Department of Forestry of the US Department for Agriculture (USDA) published a technical report on gendered vulnerability and resilience in Indigenous communities. This report sheds light at the national level on the impacts of climate change on Indigenous

¹⁸ Recording of sessions:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7eIU28wv3k&t=2388s>, and

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFmCNnC3MKs>

¹⁹ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Transvestite, Intersex

²⁰ See: https://paot.org.mx/centro/leyes/df/pdf/2021/Ley_reconcocimiento_atencion_LGBTTTI_CDMX.pdf

²¹ The full report can be consulted here <https://copred.cdmx.gob.mx/storage/app/media/Informe-Acuerdo-LGBTTTI-2021.pdf>

²² The recording of the workshops can be accessed here <https://www.fema.gov/event/helping-lgbtq-survivors-after-disasters-response-and-recovery-considerations> and here <https://www.fema.gov/event/helping-lgbtq-community-disasters-preparedness-and-mitigation-considerations>.

²³ The Inclusive and Equitable Emergency Management for LGBTQIA+ Communities Guide can be found at <https://out4s.org/resources>

²⁴ Read the full report here <https://community.fema.gov/PreparednessConnect/s/article/Results-from-the-2022-National-Household-Survey-on-Disaster-Preparedness>

Women and 2SLGBTQIA+, allowing a well-documented understanding of the main challenges and opportunities (Vinyeta et al. 2015).

Increasing National Data

As a follow-up from 2022 Executive Order 14075 on Advancing Equality for LGBTQI Individuals,²⁵ The White House National Science Technology Council Subcommittee on SOGI Data released the Federal Evidence Agenda on LGBTQI+ Equity in January 2023.²⁶ They included a question to frame their Learning Agenda to develop an evidence-building plan: “How effective are federal programs and policies at mitigating the impacts of occupational and environmental factors, including climate change, on health outcomes among LGBTQI+ people?”

In addition, the US Global Change Research Program, which sits under the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, published the Fifth National Climate Assessment in 2023.²⁷ Several chapters named sexual and gender minorities as a population vulnerable to climate impacts for the first time in any US climate assessment. In both efforts, there needs to be an intentional effort to include and consult Puerto Rico and other territories.

State and Local Initiatives

Both the emergency services and health departments at the state level can have resources or initiatives for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, although it is not common. California’s Office of Emergency Services also has an equity working group that is working towards incorporating 2SLGBTQIA+ considerations into its activities. In addition, the Maryland Department of Public Health created an LGBTQ+ Emergency Preparedness Guide for their local communities.²⁸

²⁵ Consult the executive order here <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/06/21/2022-13391/advancing-equality-for-lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-queer-and-intersex-individuals>

²⁶ Consult the full document here <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Federal-Evidence-Agenda-on-LGBTQI-Equity.pdf>

²⁷ Consult the full assessment here <https://nca2023.globalchange.gov>

²⁸ See guide here: https://mdemergencyprepnetwork.org/resources/Resources/Fact%20Sheets/2022-0328%20FS_%20EPG%20LGBTQ%20Plus%20Community%20Members.pdf

5 Policy and Research Recommendations

To conclude this exploratory discussion paper, some recommendations will be made to advance towards an effective inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ considerations in the protection and conservation of the environment and climate action, especially in the North American region, but these recommendations can be applicable in other regions of the world. Additionally, guidance will be formulated for the CEC for the enhancement of its work program through the incorporation of 2SLGBTQIA+ considerations.

5.1 Recommendations for the CEC

At the heart of the CEC lies cooperation, as emphasized in the preamble of the trilateral Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA),²⁹ “the importance of public participation that is **inclusive and diverse**”. Integrating a 2SLGBTQIA+ perspective is necessary not only for strategic decisions but also for enhancing a holistic policy approach for cooperative efforts among the three nations. This framework aims at the integration of building a North American community that protects and values the environment and all communities, acknowledging the intrinsic connection to nature, climate, and queer and transgender leadership in the role of shaping the future. Some recommendations based on the ECA and overall for the CEC are the following:

5.1.1 Inclusion

- **Ensure greater and direct involvement of 2SLGBTQIA+ people in regional climate and environmental policy.** An integral way to create environmental justice for disenfranchised communities is to include and recognize them (See Conceptual Framework). 2SLGBTQIA+ people should be part of decision-making in activities such as: environmental risk management, environmental disaster preparedness and responses, climate adaptation and mitigation, loss and damage associated to climate change, biodiversity conservation, ensuring a clean and healthy environment, energy transitions, just transitions, increasing green finance, enhance food security, and the protection of environmental activist and defenders. This must include a strong emphasis on the perspective of Black, Two-Spirit and Indigenous communities, and insular territories.
- **Consider and address the root causes of 2SLGBTQIA+ marginalization,** such as racism, colonialism, cis-heteropatriarchy, when designing transformative public policy and use intersectionality as a tool to reduce the inequality gaps.
- **Foster diverse 2SLGBTQIA+ representation** across the different CEC advisory bodies, including the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC), the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Expert Group (TEKEG), and the Secretariat.
- **Promote 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion in the CEC** and identify how to improve comfortability, such as sharing pronouns and providing all-gender or gender-neutral bathrooms.
- **Identify 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations and networks to recruit or advertise** job positions to as well as promote cooperation action with these networks.

²⁹ <http://www.cec.org/about/agreement-on-environmental-cooperation/>

- **Include intersectional JPAC selection criteria** that explicitly consider diverse 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals and intergenerational equity.
- **Integrate gender-sensitive TEK and queer ecology** approaches within all environmental activities and policies.

5.1.2 Data and Information Infrastructure

- **Organize an annual roundtable** on “2SLGBTQIA+ Dimensions of Climate Change and Environmental Justice in North America” to evaluate progress and expand action. This roundtable should be for 2-3 days and fully fund the travel and time of the roundtable experts (*Art. 3.6.b*). Include the discussion and findings of these gatherings in CEC programs, initiatives, and key events where these findings are relevant.
- **Enhance information and data collection on 2SLGBTQIA+ communities** to create better informed environmental and climate policy. This data needs to be intersectional along the lines of:
 - Indigeneity (including 2 Spirit)
 - race/ethnicity
 - socioeconomic class
 - ability
 - age
 - gender identity
 - sexual orientation
 - geography (especially insular territories)(*Art. 9.e*)
- **Data should be collected in conjunction with 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and include:**
 - Traditional Ecological Knowledge
 - Quantitative data
 - Qualitative data
- **Quantitative data collection should allow for disaggregation** for effective analysis as long as it can be ensured there is enough privacy and security.
- **Data should be collected on a voluntary and anonymous basis** with mechanisms, policies, and training to ensure privacy and security to the best of the organization’s ability.
- **Utilize existing frameworks proposed by international organizations.** Notable examples include the World Bank’s set of Proposed Indicators for the LGBTI Inclusion Index³⁰; the *Guía para la operacionalización de los indicadores del Protocolo de San Salvador desde una perspectiva transversal LGBTI*³¹; Canada’s Institute of Gender and Health Methods series on “What and who is Two-Spirit?”³²; the data collection and management recommendations issued by the UN

³⁰<https://mcas-proxyweb.mcas.ms/certificate-checker?login=false&originalUrl=https%3A%2F%2Fdocuments.worldbank.org/mcas.ms%2Fcurated%2Fen%2F608921536847788293%2FA-Set-of-Proposed-Indicators-for-the-LGBTI-Inclusion-Index%3FMcasTsId%3D15600&McasCSRF=0bbc56b440b1ac9e65bd4b9d7b34dfd6dea5c19e655d43d784e364ae1626ae87>

³¹ http://www.oas.org/es/sadye/inclusion-social/protocolo-ssv/Guia_Operacionalizacion_Indicadores.pdf

³² <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/52214.html>

Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity³³; and the Asian Development Bank's Summary of the Analytical Study for the Safeguard Policy Review and Update: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC)³⁴.

- **Account for transboundary and cascading risks** associated with climate change and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in climate adaptation policies and planning, especially considering communities living in the border between the countries (*Art.9.e*).

5.1.3 Communication

- **Organize a trilateral high-level 2SLGBTQIA+-Environmental Conference** to facilitate the sharing of best practices and recommendations, promoting an interconnected approach that integrates these concerns into broader climate and environment-related initiatives. The conference planning committee should include 2SLGBTQIA+ roundtable members and other vested stake and rights-holders. The conference will:
 - Target decision-makers from various sectors
 - Fostering an inter-ministerial dialogue
 - Include representatives from civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders
 - Be a space to share experiences, conduct workshops, and align visions
 - Coordinate panels and side events in alternative venues, such as COPs and other environmental or Indigenous forums(*Art. 9.b*)
- **Create communication campaigns** to highlight and promote the engagement in the intersectional issues of diverse 2SLGBTQIA+ communities on the frontlines and environmental and climate justice (*Art. 9.b*).
- **Create submissions of inputs** from the CEC and other actors in North America to inform the three countries on the best practices in policymaking, programs, and environmental governance at the intersection of diverse 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, environment, and climate (*Art 9.c*).

5.1.4 Capacity Building

- **Support of 2SLGBTQIA+, Indigenous, disabled, Puerto Rican and other insular territories, women, and youth professionals and specialists** to strengthen the development of queer and environmental issues in North America (*Art.9.a; 11.4*).
- **Create capacity-building programs** for decision-makers and the general public that will mainstream environmental policy approaches at all levels for youth, 2SLGBTQIA+, gender and human rights (*Art. 9.d*).

³³ https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/Report_on_data_summary.pdf

³⁴ <https://www.adb.org/documents/spru-analytical-study-summary-sogiesc-draft>

- **Establish a 2SLGBTQIA+ Advisory Board**, with an intersectional perspective that includes youth, people of color, those with disabilities, and Two-Spirit/Indigenous and gender-sensitive perspectives (Art. 5.6.a).
- **Employ diverse 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals** in the CEC Secretariat as part of the professional staff (Art. 5.2.b).

5.1.5 Finance

- **Develop grant programs to advance 2SLGBTQIA+ and other marginalized communities' considerations** in climate and environmental actions. This could include grant programs for 2SLGBTQIA+ leadership and entrepreneurship in this space, especially for those who are Two-Spirit and/or Indigenous Persons.
- **Incorporate criteria into existing grant programs** to select projects that address the situation of 2SLGBTQIA+ vulnerability and other intersectionality, including, but not exclusive to, race/ethnicity, Indigeneity, and youth.
- **Work with other 2SLGBTQIA+ and environmental grantmaking institutions** to draft inclusive and equitable language and disseminate it to a wider audience.
- **Replicate and expand good practices** already being implemented by multilateral finance institutions such as the Environmental and Social Framework for [Investment Project Financing \(IPF\)](#) notes for non-discrimination by Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) of the World Bank, and ensure to build on its equity and inclusiveness.

5.1.6 Multilateral Engagement

- **Promote inter-governmental attention to these issues**, for example, promoting an all-government and society approach in policy-making, and at the national and international level in multilateral spaces like the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)(Art. 9.d).
- **Building on applicable existing mandates**. For example, expand on the 2023 North American Leaders' Summit Declaration that called for expanding membership within the Americas to the Equal Rights Coalition and the UN LGBTQI+ Core Group, and seeking a stronger engagement.
- **Engage with other cooperation agencies and multilateral organizations**, including those within the United Nations system and bilateral cooperation, that are tackling the synergies between 2SLGBTQIA+ and environmental issues. This should also help raise awareness of the work of the CEC, as well as enable strategic partnerships that help complete their respective efforts.
- **Report on the inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ issues as a catalyst of equitable just transitions** to the United Arab Emirates Just Transition work program negotiation item from the UNFCCC.

- **Establish a work program on indicators** to include within existing environmental ministry tools (e.g., EPA's EJScreen) and for measuring progress on climate resilience for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.
- **Establish formal relationships with other international civil society organizations** that can help complement the work being conducted by the CEC.

5.2 General Recommendations to Effectively Advance 2SLGBTQIA+ Considerations in the Protection and Conservation of the Environment in North America or Other Regions

- **Include 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in environmental policy goals** such as their National Development Plans, Sectoral Plans, NDCs, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), among others; with clear targets, budget and activities. Intersectional policies that combine climate goals with 2SLGBTQIA+ safeguards can be transformative. It is critical to also ensure the participation of 2SLGBTQ+ individuals in the whole process.
- **Request that the CEC provide input on 2SLGBTQIA+ vulnerability to climate disasters.** The CEC is well suited to research and identify information and solutions needed for environmental ministries to address these issues.
- **Foster support to subnational governments**, including municipalities, provinces, states or others, since they are at the frontlines of implementing actions in disaster relief and inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.
- **Consider spiritually based and culturally mediated actions to face the environmental crisis that focus on issues pertaining to mental health and trauma management**, such as art, Ballroom (see Introduction) and TEK activities.
- **Collect data and conduct research on 2SLGBTQIA+ environmental and climate issues.** North America and other regions have a great opportunity to bridge environmental policy with 2SLGBTQIA+ issues, considering queer and intersectional scopes can create more inclusive actions.
- **Enhance the rights and protection of diverse 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and other marginalized communities, including Indigenous Peoples.** Draft policies protecting 2SLGBTQIA+, Indigenous, and people of color rights related to:
 - Land access and claims
 - Hate crimes
 - Housing security
 - Economic security
 - Health
 - Adaptation
 - Nutrition and food

- **Promote security for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in environmental spaces and disasters.**
 - Conduct public campaigns to increase awareness and also utilize public safety officials instead of police in parks and other green spaces. Train public safety officials and park employees in 2SLGBTQIA+ cultural competency.
 - Signage that signifies that 2SLGBTQIA+ communities belong in green spaces can be beneficial. 2SLGBTQIA+ communities should be a part of planning and managing green spaces.
 - Disaster guidance for temporary emergency shelters, emergency management professionals, first responders, and volunteer organizations should incorporate 2SLGBTQIA+ safety considerations and consult local communities in identifying what those specific considerations are.
 - Incorporate integrated and inclusive approaches into urban infrastructure planning and investment, which encompass social, ecological, and physical infrastructures, can notably enhance the adaptive capabilities of both urban and rural areas. The 2022 IPCC Assessment Report highlighted that this approach towards equitable outcomes yields numerous advantages for health, well-being, and ecosystem services, benefiting marginalized communities.
- **Create interagency working groups to address 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion and impacts within environmental and climate spaces.** These issues are inherently intersectional and will require a whole of government approach to address.

6 Conclusion

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) has enacted the first step to collaborate with 2SLGBTQIA+ experts across North America through the roundtable on “LGBTQI+ Dimensions of Climate Change and Environmental Justice in North America.” This concerted effort will push forward the environmental agenda for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and uplift their knowledge and experiences. The CEC can further boost equity and environmental justice for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities across the local, national, regional, and international level by lifting up these communities as leaders in the environmental and climate space. In addition, environmental ministries are invited to ask for resources and guidance on 2SLGBTQIA+ considerations in environmental and climate policies, programs, and activities from the CEC.

In Puerto Rico and some Spanish-speaking countries, being part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community is colloquially referred to as “being part of the environment” (*ser del ambiente*). There is an opportunity to forge more inclusive and equitable futures in North America. To achieve this, it is imperative to reconsider the relationship between people and the planet, ensuring a societal transformation that positions humanity as an integral part of nature, rather than above it.

2SLGBTQIA+ experiences underscore the necessity of healing to foster diverse communities with resilience, contributing to a better world. Acknowledging Two-Spirit and Indigenous perspectives is crucial in this endeavor. Intersectionality can illuminate the varied impacts individuals and communities face,

prompting a holistic approach to public policy that creates more effective and inclusive governance. Queering the environment is a living solution towards a cooperative, equitable future for all. Mother Earth is calling, and we should listen.

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