

# **IRGF Final Report**

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## **Exploring Gender Euphoria through Arts-Based Action Research with Youth**

### **1.1 Project Summary**

Exploring Gender Euphoria was a participatory arts-based action research project that investigated how Calgary-based trans and gender creative (TGC) youth and their caregivers define and experience “gender euphoria” in local social contexts, such as within peer groups, families, educational settings, healthcare (physical and mental), and sports and recreation. The research team conducted two arts-based focus groups with i) TGC youth (aged 8-12), and ii) their caregivers.

### **1.2 Student involvement**

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### **1.3 Dissemination and Knowledge Mobilization**

Outputs from this project include: 1. One community showcase event to participants; 2. Two co-created murals, which have been distributed to participants and to community organizations serving trans and gender creative youth; 3. One artistic submission to Trans Resistance Through Artful Existence: A Zine; 4. One student-led presentation at the OriTical: queer + trans research hub student colloquium. In addition, we have 5. One abstract submitted to the peer-reviewed CBRC Summit 2025 conference (results pending), and 6. Are in the process of writing one manuscript for a peer-reviewed journal.

### **1.4 Project Outcomes and Impacts**

“Gender Euphoria” has emerged in trans and gender diverse (TGD) communities as a response to the framing of gendered experiences through the psycho-medical lens of gender dysphoria (Austin et al., 2021) and in academic communities against “deficit-based” framings whereby challenges, issues, and risk are foregrounded as central to TGD lives (Jacobsen & Devour, 2022; Jones, 2023). While few studies exist on gender euphoria in youth (Horton, 2021; Jones, 2023; Mann, 2023; Skelton et al., 2023), early research indicates that a focus on gender euphoria can help youth develop a positive self-understanding, help to shape meaningful connections with caregivers, and offers youth a framework to imagine their futures (Horton, 2021). Our research explored gender euphoria among trans, intersex and gender diverse youth and their caregivers in Alberta, a province in which the current UCP government has passed a slew of anti-2SLGBTQIA+ legislation explicitly targeting youth. In this project, we engaged trans, intersex and gender diverse youth (n=9) aged 7-12 and their caregivers (n=6) separately in arts-based focus groups, in which participants worked with social artists and researcher co-facilitators to explore experiences of and dreams

for experiencing gender euphoria in local social contexts (e.g., peer groups, families, school). This engagement resulted in the creation of 2 co-created digital murals, as well as several key research findings including (a) the importance of social affirmation, belonging, and inclusion; (b) the importance of play; and (c) compersion as caregivers supported and witnessed their youths' gender euphoria. To date, the artworks have been distributed to the participants as well as to local community groups (Skipping Stone; Metta Clinic; MRU Childcare Centre). As a research team we will continue to mobilize this artwork and findings through presentations and publications in public and academic venues.