



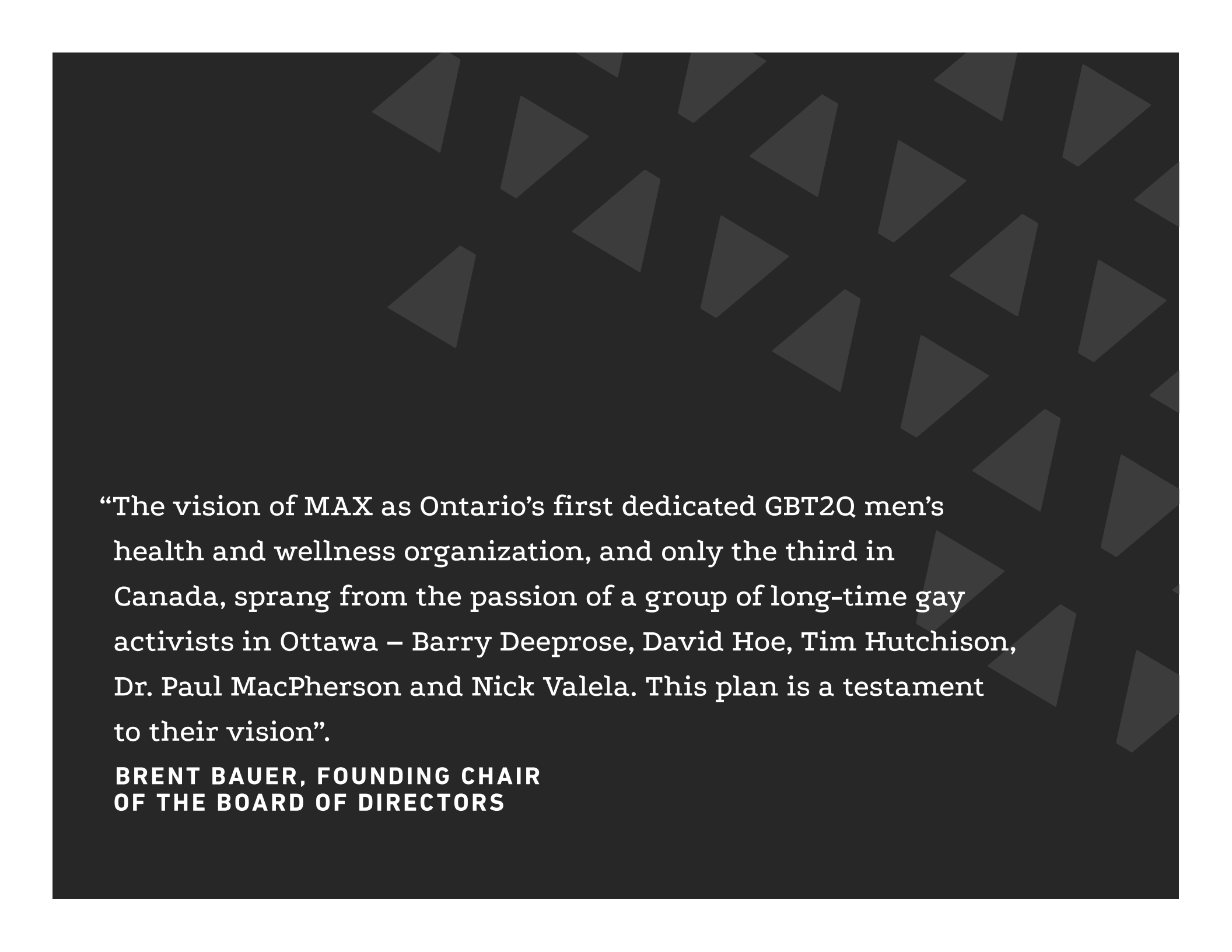
MAX OTTAWA

STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2022

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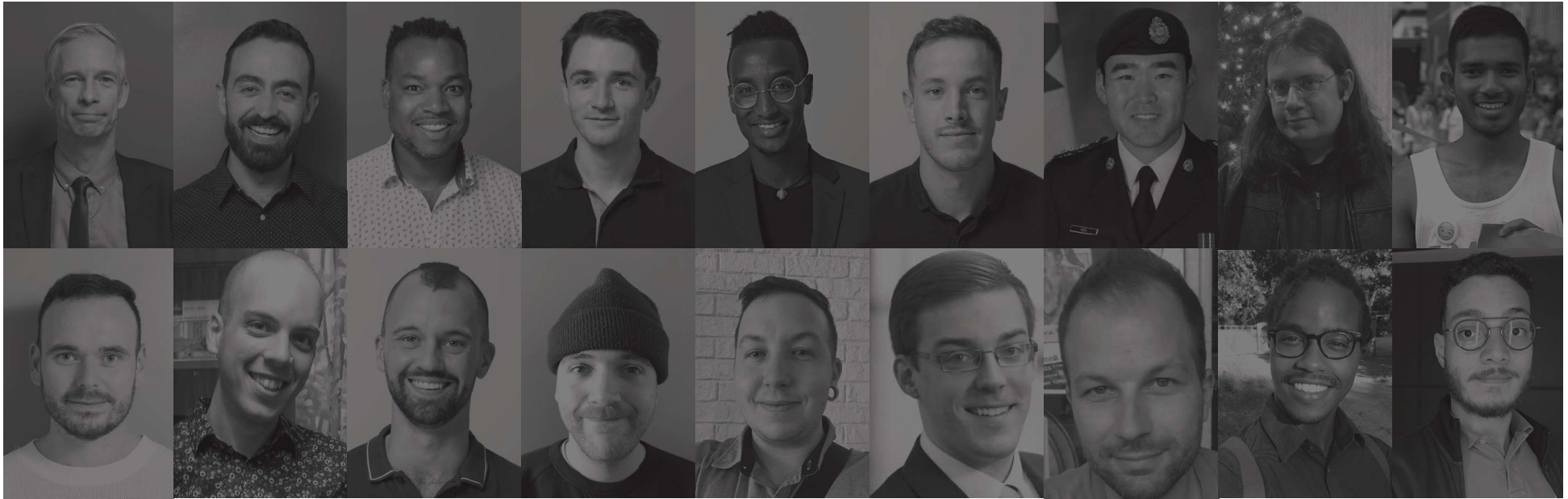
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MAX Ottawa was launched in March 2017 by community members advocating for a more holistic vision of the health of guys into guys. We are now proud to present our first Strategic Plan.



“The vision of MAX as Ontario’s first dedicated GBT2Q men’s health and wellness organization, and only the third in Canada, sprang from the passion of a group of long-time gay activists in Ottawa – Barry Deeprose, David Hoe, Tim Hutchison, Dr. Paul MacPherson and Nick Valela. This plan is a testament to their vision”.

**BRENT BAUER, FOUNDING CHAIR
OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**



WHO IS MAX OTTAWA?

We're Ottawa's health connection for guys into guys

MAX is a community-based organization that focuses on maximizing the health and wellness of gay, bisexual, Two-Spirit, queer, and other guys who are into guys, both cis and trans (GBT2Q), in the Ottawa region.

We're front line

MAX is on the ground in the Ottawa region, reaching out to guys into guys where they meet and socialize, raising awareness, providing prevention and education materials, and getting them connected to information and resources.

We have great services for you and your community

MAX offers individual, group, and community support and education services by and for guys into guys in the Ottawa region; and we work with the health care providers that serve them.

VISION:

We envision a community of self-affirming guys into guys caring for ourselves, caring for each other, and enjoying complete health equity.

MISSION:

To champion improved health outcomes of guys into guys in the Ottawa area, living with HIV or not, through building awareness and improving system responsiveness within a dynamic networked and partnership model.

GOAL:

Build a reliable, credible, and trusted service hub able to generate ways to connect guys into guys to improve their health and well-being, reduce HIV and other preventable illnesses, and bring systems and knowledge to address the health disparities affecting GBT2Q guys.

ENGAGING IN THE PATH TOWARD TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

In 2019-2022, recognizing that we do our work on the unceded and unsundered Algonquin territories, MAX Ottawa is committed to engaging with Indigenous and Two-Spirit partners and leaders in the path toward Truth and Reconciliation. By walking with our Indigenous communities, we will identify tangible and meaningful actions we can undertake together. These could include:

- Formalizing partnerships with key Indigenous and Two-Spirit groups and leaders;
- Purposeful consultation and engagement with Indigenous and Two-Spirit members of our communities;
- Adapting our existing programming and/or jointly developing and delivering targeted programming;
- Incorporating relevant indicators and seeking representative sampling in our data collection and analysis (e.g., community consultations, surveys, research projects); and,
- Conducting ongoing critical analysis of our programming to ensure we contribute to decolonization, anti-racism and anti-oppression efforts.

In these ways, MAX could contribute to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, in particular #22: “We call upon those who can effect change within the Canadian health-care system to recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders where requested by Aboriginal patients”; as well as to the Calls to Justice from the Final Report of the National Inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, in particular #7.3: “We call upon all government and health service providers to support Indigenous-led prevention initiatives in the areas of health and community awareness, including, but not limited to programming: for Indigenous men and boys; related to suicide prevention strategies for youth and adults; related to sexual trafficking awareness and no-barrier exiting; specific to safe and healthy relationships; specific to mental health awareness; related to 2SLGBTQQIA issues and sex positivity”.

A NOTE ON GENDER:

- As we are constantly unlearning sexism, gender essentialism, and colonialism, we recognize and we welcome the shifts in our understanding of gender that have been greatly influenced by a colonial lens.
- We also acknowledge the existence of gender diversity from time immemorial and the need to reclaim each of our own cultural heritages.
- We welcome all individuals who identify with, are represented by, or feel at home at least some of the time with the term “guys into guys”.

Our Values

As guys who are into guys, we have the right to health and well-being. Our health and wellness have physical, mental, spiritual, sexual, and social aspects and include community building and working for social justice. The following core values guide our decisions.

GBT2Q Sex Positive

- Our sexuality in its myriad expressions is an integral and natural part of our being and gives meaning and pleasure to our lives.
- We have the right to satisfying sex lives free from guilt, stigma, coercion, violence, and shame.
- We have the right to choose our forms of sexual intimacy. This will be enhanced through strengthening of our ability to be fully informed about risks and safety.
- Our harm-reduction approach enhances the capacities and right of guys into guys to make informed choices that fit with our personal values and help us to manage risk in our lives.

Assets-Based Approach

- We are not victims, but have a proud tradition of overcoming adversity and oppression as individuals and communities.
- We believe that guys into guys are individually and collectively healthy, reasonable, life-affirming, and successful in creating fulfilling and meaningful lives.
- We are resilient, creative, and strong, and we build on our strengths and commitment to thrive even under formidably difficult circumstances.

Diversity

- We acknowledge, embrace, and celebrate our diverse communities as a source of strength and insight.
- Trans and gender-fluid guys who are into guys are included in our community.
- We acknowledge and respect the various stages and forms of self-acceptance in the lives of the GBT2Q guys we serve.
- We strive to free ourselves of biases to enable us to work across our differences.

Hassle Free Service Delivery

- Services are delivered in a congenial environment in a manner that is respectful, non-judgmental, and affirming.
- Services are culturally appropriate to the various communities of GBT2Q guys.

Community Building

- Advocacy at the individual, community, and systemic level is fundamental to community building.
- The health of guys into guys emerges from healthy GBT2Q communities.
- HIV disease continues to have a cataclysmic impact upon our private and communal lives. In view of this, we work to achieve well-being by creating spaces to heal our losses and rebuild and revive our communities.
- We foster community by reaching across generations to provide mentors and role models for younger GBT2Q guys and other men new to our community.

Participation

- Guys into guys are involved in all phases of planning, development, delivery, and evaluation of programs.
- We aim to engage guys into guys in their health and wellness.

Holistic

- We believe that wellness and good health encompass physical, mental, spiritual, sexual, and social well-being.
- Although HIV remains a priority in our lives, it does not define GBT2Q guys.
- Our services are not crisis-driven but are part of a long-term strategy to enhance our health and wellness.
- Our wellness model is more than just a response to symptoms but extends to health promotion to address the determinants of health and reduce vulnerability.

Realizing that there was still more to be done by and for gay, bisexual, Two-Spirit, queer and other guys who are into guys, both cis and trans (GBT2Q), in Ottawa, OGMWI incorporated in January 2014. In 2015, OGMWI secured funding from the AIDS Bureau of Ontario to address the well-being needs of our communities by establishing a reliable and trusted service hub able to connect queer men to culturally competent services. The first OGMWI staff members were hired in 2016 and OGMWI rebranded and launched the MAX organization to our communities in 2017.

As part of this process, MAX developed its vision, mission, goal and values. Building on this momentum, MAX undertook the next logical step—the development of its first Strategic Plan.

Sexual Health Alliance (GMSH) in Ontario in 2010, and the Edmonton Men's Health Collective in 2015.

MAX is now working closely with these Canadian partners on several ground-breaking research and programming initiatives that directly impact the health of our communities. However, MAX's focus remains resolutely local, working in close collaboration with partners such as OPH, CCHC, SWCHC, ACO, BRAS Outaouais, The Ottawa Hospital—and most importantly its community members—to maximize the health and wellness of guys into guys in the Ottawa region.

Our strategic directions provide a clear path forward, outlining how MAX will achieve its ambitious goals.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

BECOMING MAX

The Ottawa Gay Men's Wellness Initiative (OGMWI) was founded in 2002 by community members advocating for a more holistic vision of gay men's health. The OGMWI worked with public health and other stakeholders to create and launch innovative health promotion strategies for guys into guys (e.g.: syphilis prevention, anti-smoking campaigns). The most significant outcome was the establishment of Gay Zone in 2008, in partnership with Ottawa Public Health (OPH), Centretown Community Health Centre (CCHC), the AIDS Committee of Ottawa (ACO) and other community organizations and leaders. GayZone is a place where guys into guys can access sexual health testing and treatment as well as a wide array of health promotion activities and events, in a congenial and non-judgmental environment.

MAX—A KEY PLAYER IN THE GBT2Q MEN'S HEALTH MOVEMENT

MAX's evolution and growth from 2002 to today in many ways parallels the emergence of a new wave of gay men's health mobilization across Canada and internationally.

Over the same period, several organizations emerged or refocused around similar goals of holistic health for guys into guys. For example, the Global Forum on MSM & HIV (MSMGF) was founded in 2006 at the Toronto International AIDS Conference and later rebranded as MPact Global Action for Gay Men's Health and Rights in 2018. Within Canada, we saw the refocusing of RÉZO around a holistic vision of gay and bi men's health in Montreal in 2009, the growth of CBRC's Gay Men's Health Summit since their first edition in 2005, and the emergence of the Health Initiative for Men (HIM) in Vancouver in 2009, the Gay Men's

THE PATH TO OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

Between August and December 2018, MAX conducted an extensive community consultation process, consisting of four (4) main components:

1. Consultations with community members.

We received input from approximately 100 community members through seven targeted focus groups to reach specific constituencies (see Appendix or a full list), an online survey and a video booth at Pride.

2. Consultations with partners.

We received input from approximately 20 community partners through three partnership tables, committees and networks (See Appendix) and 13 key informant interviews and surveys (see Appendix).

3. Consultations with the MAX Board and staff.

We consulted the MAX Strategic Planning Committee, the Executive Committee and conducted an all-day Board and staff strategic planning retreat.

4. Key document review.

We analyzed over a dozen documents, including health assessments from the National Capital Region, MAX-specific documents such as communications and evaluation frameworks, and examples of strategic plans from other organizations.

Findings from the environmental scan outlined key themes that emerged from the focus groups, survey, video booth, key informant interviews, and discussions with partners. These were discussed and expanded upon during a full day Board/staff strategic planning retreat and subsequent discussions, eventually forming the basis of the Strategic Directions presented in the following section.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Each Strategic Direction includes four sections:

WHY THIS IS A PRIORITY

A brief description of the rationale for each Strategic Direction

WHAT WE ARE DOING NOW

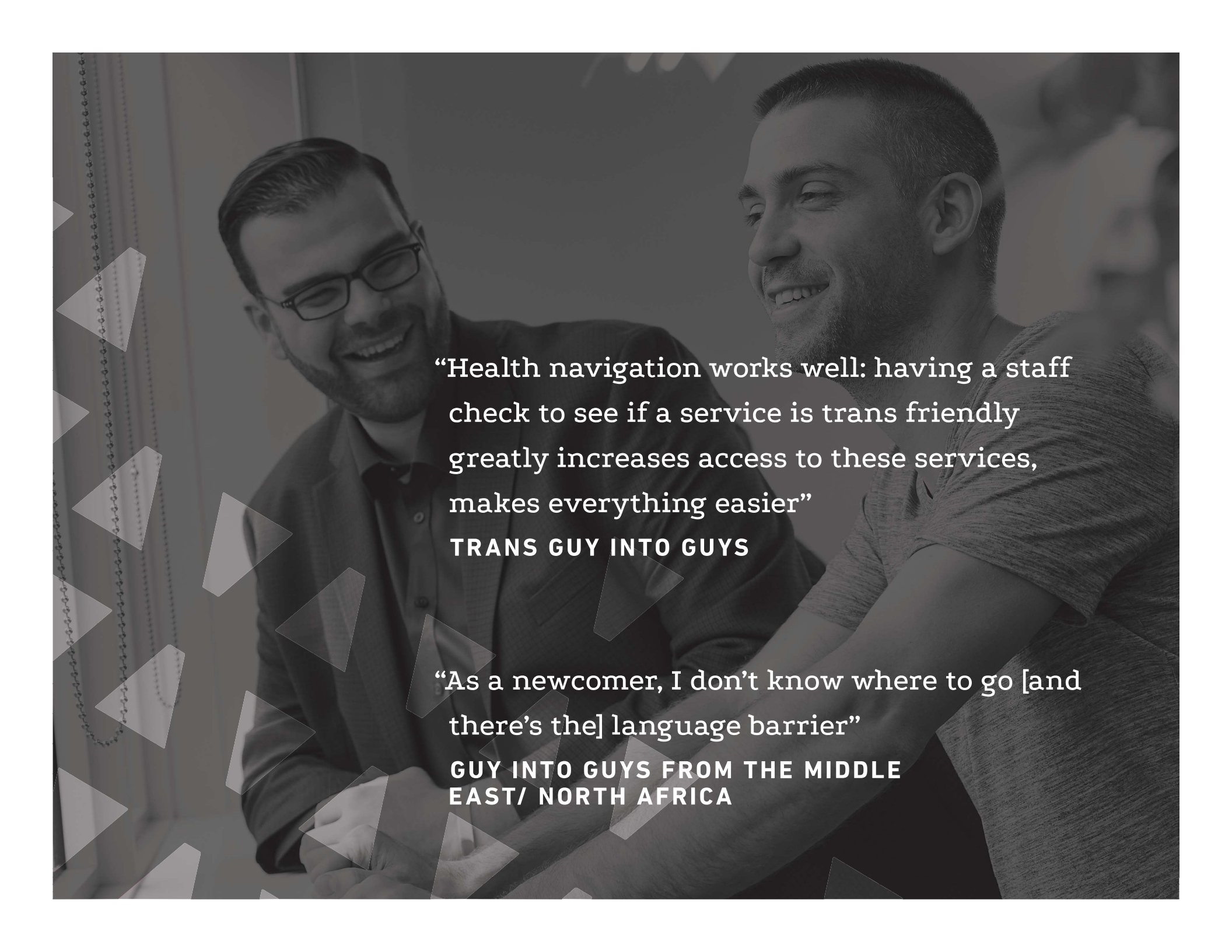
A description of existing MAX programs in this area

WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT

New directions and program elements, based on input from the strategic planning process

SMART OBJECTIVES

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound objectives relating to each Strategic Direction



“Health navigation works well: having a staff check to see if a service is trans friendly greatly increases access to these services, makes everything easier”

TRANS GUY INTO GUYS

“As a newcomer, I don’t know where to go [and there’s the] language barrier”

GUY INTO GUYS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST/ NORTH AFRICA

1. Enabling Guys into Guys to Navigate Health and Wellness Pathways Across their Lifecourse.

The consultation with community members and partners confirmed the value of MAX's focus on holistic health, including physical, sexual, mental, emotional, social, spiritual and financial health.

This includes recognition of the ways in which health needs and identities are closely linked, underscoring the importance of an intersectional approach to meet the holistic health needs of our diverse communities.

WHY THIS IS A PRIORITY

We heard and recognize that the community would like us to address gaps in a number of areas, including mental health (such as depression and anxiety), social health (such as fostering connection and combating isolation), spiritual health (such as the desire for connection, spiritual practice, and a sense of belonging), financial health (such as concerns around aging), and sexual health (such as access to PrEP, expanding messaging surrounding U=U or undetectable = untransmittable, and improving access and engagement in HIV prevention and care).

In addition, there are concerns about access to basic health services, such as having access to a family physician and access to services outside the downtown core. The need to improve cultural competency of health services (for GBT2Q in

general and for specific communities in particular) remains a priority for community members and partners.

There is also a desire for greater intergenerational links and more opportunities for interaction between younger and older generations of GBT2Q. Finally, substance use and dependency remain a concern.

While MAX will strive to address as many of these issues as possible over the next three years, a few specific and interconnected areas of health emerged as being of particular concern. As a result, MAX programming will emphasize:

- Mental health, including depression and anxiety
- Social health, including fostering connection and combating isolation (see Strategic Direction #2 for further details)
- Access to basic health services, including outside the downtown core
- Anti-oppression, social justice and health equity

WHAT WE ARE DOING NOW

To support our foundation, we worked with a consultant to undertake a literature review and an environmental scan around local mental health and wellness services. Her findings confirmed the challenges in navigating the health system for guys into guys, as well as the impact of mental health on our overall health, including HIV prevention and treatment.

As our very first service offering, we opened the Mental Health Navigation service in March 2017.

We help service users who have thought about counselling or mental health support but do not know where to start, to create a navigation plan, connecting them to the proper resources through our three-step approach: intake, referral, and follow-up.

WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT

MAX Ottawa will enable guys into guys to navigate health and wellness pathways across their life course. This encompasses several elements:

- **Health navigation to access basic health services.** In order to improve access to basic health services, we will build on the expertise and experience we have gained through our existing mental health navigation program. For instance, we could adapt our programming and expand it to encompass other types of services (e.g., access to PrEP, substance use or financial services). This would facilitate linkages to existing services for community members.
- **Basic health, wellness and sexual health information for all.** We will work with our partners to ensure community members can easily locate basic health and wellness services in our community. Developing a “welcome package” could be useful for those who are new to the community, while simultaneously serving to meet the goal of enhanced health service navigation. Additionally, the provision of relevant basic sexual health information would fill gaps for community members who either come from cultures that don't include sex education at all or who have a gender identity and sexual orientation that is not addressed in mainstream sex education.
- **Peer-led mental health and social support programs.** MAX will continue to deliver a

wide range of mental health and social support programs and to develop new initiatives (e.g., peer coaching and motivational interviewing) that cultivate community-led mental health and social support efforts, which will be delivered at least in part through web-based and phone-based means.

We will ensure that our resources are available in multiple formats (e.g., telephone line, online, printed ads, referrals, in-person, mobile units). Such services are essential not only for community members who are already well established in Ottawa, but also for those who are new to the community—whether as a result of migration to Ottawa from other parts of Canada or from another country, as a result of newly coming out and living as a guy into guys or transman, or as a result of life transitions (e.g., change in relationship status, new diagnosis, retirement).

Furthermore, our approach to health navigation goes beyond conventional referral services to encompass an assessment of accessibility and cultural competency.

These new and expanded initiatives will be founded on the following principles.

- **Anti-oppression, social justice and health equity.** MAX recognizes that one size does not fit all—specific attention needs to be paid to the

particular needs of our various communities in order to ensure health equity and social justice. Therefore, we will continue to practice an intersectional approach to address the context of the lives of guys into guys from historically marginalized communities, including (but not limited to) Indigenous and Two-Spirit, Middle-Eastern and North African (MENA), African, Caribbean and Black (ACB), newcomers and refugees, trans guys, seniors, francophones, guys who do sex work, and guys who party and play.

- **Syndemics and assets-based approaches.** As part of its work on holistic health, MAX will balance its focus on syndemics (which recognizes the compounded and synergistic effects of multiple co-occurring health problems in the community, such as mental health, addictions, violence and abuse and HIV), with a dedication to remaining resolutely assets-based, through efforts that value gay men's lives, celebrate success, and build community.

SMART OBJECTIVES

1.1


By 2022, MAX will expand current mental health navigation services to include health navigation for at least two additional core services (e.g., PrEP navigation, substance use, financial health).

1.2

By 2022, MAX will develop a navigation service and/or resource providing basic health and wellness information for guys into guys and a basic orientation to relevant services available in the community, including links to existing information, in collaboration with community partners.

1.3

By 2022, MAX will deliver at least one new peer-led mental health and social support program (e.g., coaching, motivational interviewing), which will be delivered at least in part through web-based and phone-based means, and which will include content designed to meet the needs of communities that are historically under-represented, with at least 25% of participants identifying as being from those communities.



“I like to attend K1 when I can because it’s nice to know the experiences (good and bad) I have as a black gay man don’t just happen to me. Representation matters and makes me feel less alone.”

KEEPING IT 100 PARTICIPANT

“People don’t socialize outside of the bar [scene]. Finding good friends and people is difficult in Ottawa”

GUY INTO GUYS WHO LIKES TO PARTY AND PLAY

2. Fostering Cohesive Community-led Social Spaces and Connections.

WHY THIS IS A PRIORITY

As described in the previous Strategic Direction, social health emerged as a clear priority for community members, including the need to foster connection and combat isolation through the creation of community-led social spaces where guys into guys can congregate. Several conditions are in place for MAX to address this priority successfully.

First, throughout the strategic planning consultation, community members and partners expressed strong support for MAX to continue grounding its work in the communities it serves. Indeed MAX is committed to ongoing consultation and the meaningful engagement of community members, Board and staff, beyond the limited time-frame and purposes of strategic plan development.

Second, as mentioned previously, MAX recognizes how our communities are evolving through migration, changes in ethnic profiles, generational shifts, and evolving social and cultural perspectives on queerness, gender and sexual expression... all while acknowledging the relatively large geographic Ottawa region.

Third, as outlined below, the solid foundation of

community engagement MAX has laid will greatly facilitate efforts to foster cohesive community-led social spaces and connections in a manner that will work for our various communities in the Ottawa context.

WHAT WE ARE DOING NOW

Soon after launching MAX, we piloted the Community MAXimizers program. Community MAXimizers are individuals that want to help promote the health, well being and social connections of guys into guys. If community members have an idea and want to become a MAXimizer, MAX can help support and fund a pilot of their project.

The Community MAXimizers program has proven successful at increasing and diversifying the reach of MAX and the impact of our efforts. MAX has added successful Community MAXimizer projects to our permanent programming: Keeping it 100!, a bimonthly group for African, Caribbean and Black cis and trans guys into guys; Now What?!, a monthly group for GBT2Q men over 40 years old; and MAXpress Yourself, an art-based monthly group for guys into guys interested in arts and crafts. We continue to support another successful Community MAXimizer project: Gais, Francophones et Fiers. This planned annual social event for francophone guys into guys in the region helps get them connected to appropriate resources and with each other.

Through this innovative 'social innovation incubator', best practices are being identified, new community peers are emerging, and our communities are finding new social spaces to connect with each other. We are committed to continue building on these successes and supporting new community pilot interventions.

Thanks to financial support from ViiV Healthcare we were able to develop, and pilot two mental health community interventions named MAX Groups and Spill the Tea. Based on groups created by ACT, MAX Groups are 8-week closed peer support groups covering different topics related to health and wellness (anxiety, body image, meth and sex). Spill the Tea focuses on safer partying education and getting guys into guys in the Ottawa region connected to harm reduction and safer sex information and resources. We are hosting events at local social venues with drag queens to provide a fun and safe environment, in partnership with Capital Pride and Somerset West Community Health Centre. The first two editions proved a success with over 150 participants each and a media coverage that included radio interviews and newspaper stories.

WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT

MAX Ottawa will foster cohesive community-led social spaces and connections. This encompasses several elements:

- **Supporting the creation of peer-led social spaces and support programs.** MAX will continue to facilitate a wide range of social and support groups and will support efforts to create even more free, sober, non-sexualized, non-fetishizing intergenerational social spaces that are targeted and welcoming to various specific communities of guys into guys. Some will be safe spaces for a given specific community only while others will include allies.
- **Meeting guys where they are.** MAX will conduct outreach to guys who are not out, in

spaces where our various communities (e.g., ACB, MENA) already meet.

- **Community leadership.** Community members identified many great potential Community MAXimizer projects, as means of addressing the concerns they raised during the consultation. MAX is committed to maintaining and expanding this successful program, which would also serve to foster community-led social spaces and connections. It also acts as a key component of leadership development, which could be expanded to include Totally Outright (a leadership training program for GBT2Q) and a “big brother” program for intergenerational exchange.
- **Ongoing consultations and meaningful engagement of the various communities we serve.** As part of its commitment to ongoing consultation and the meaningful engagement of community members beyond the limited time-frame and purposes of strategic plan development, MAX will continue and expand its work with various communities of guys into guys, including MENA, ACB, Indigenous and Two-Spirit, transguys, bisexual guys, francophones, sex workers, guys living with HIV, and guys who party.
- **Enhancing our volunteer base.** Through our support of peer-led social spaces and our commitment to ongoing and meaningful engagement, we will continue to nurture a bold and ambitious volunteer engagement program.
- **Creating a physical space for our communities.** (See Strategic Direction #5)

2.1

By 2022, MAX will have seven Community MAXimizer pilots per year—prioritizing projects for communities that are historically under-represented.

2.2

By 2022, MAX will support the creation of at least five (5) community-led wellness interventions (through online or in person spaces), including at least one (1) new peer support group and one up-scaled Community MAXimizer pilot.

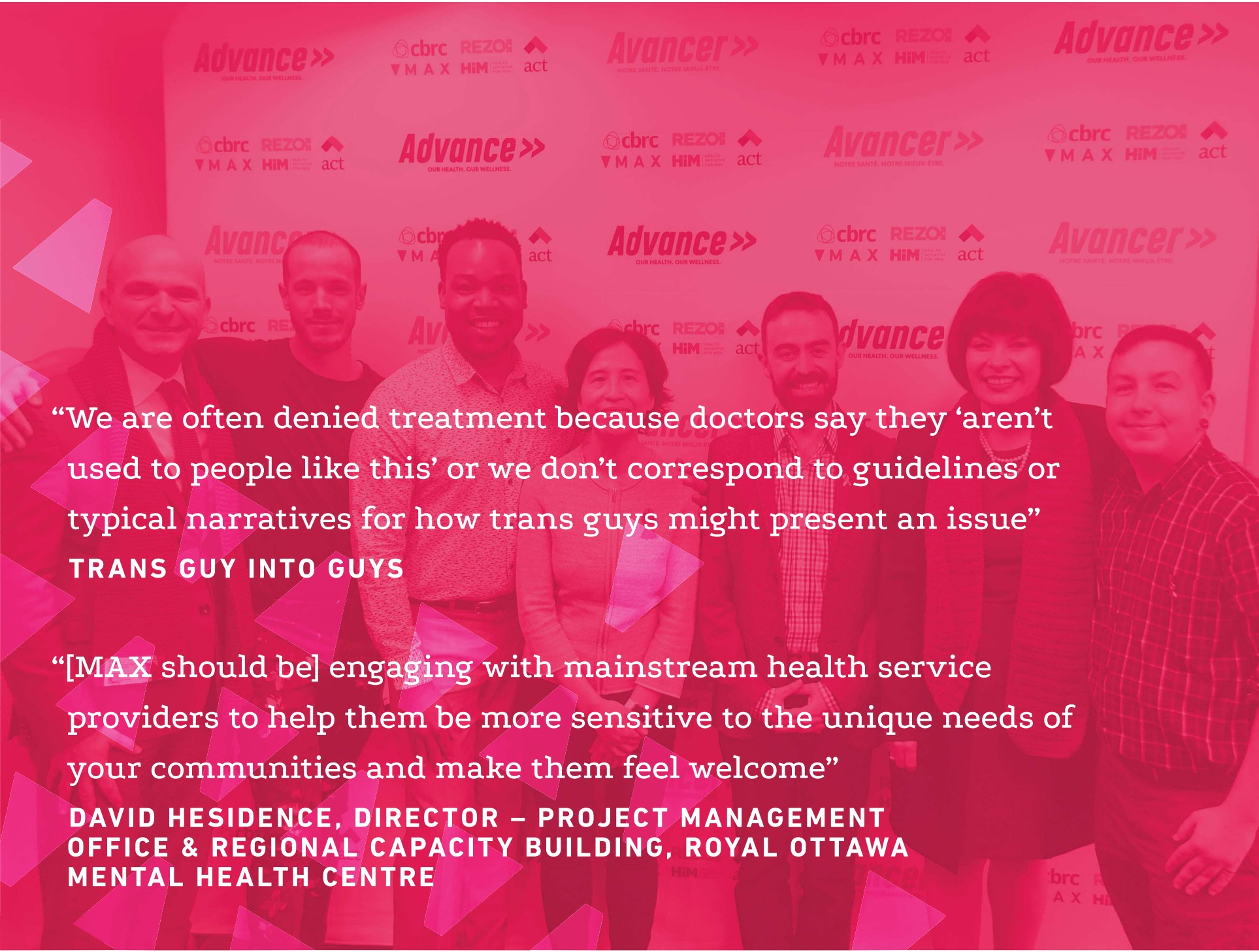
2.3

By 2022, MAX will deliver at least one (1) new community leadership program (e.g., Totally Outright, “big brother” intergenerational exchange), which will include content designed to meet the needs of specific marginalized communities.

2.4

By 2022, MAX will consolidate its volunteer program (recruitment, orientation, training, supervision and recognition) by enrolling at least 15 new volunteers per year who will, on average, serve 10-15 hours per month each.

SMART OBJECTIVES



“We are often denied treatment because doctors say they ‘aren’t used to people like this’ or we don’t correspond to guidelines or typical narratives for how trans guys might present an issue”

TRANS GUY INTO GUYS

“[MAX should be] engaging with mainstream health service providers to help them be more sensitive to the unique needs of your communities and make them feel welcome”

**DAVID HESIDENCE, DIRECTOR – PROJECT MANAGEMENT
OFFICE & REGIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING, ROYAL OTTAWA
MENTAL HEALTH CENTRE**

3. Building Partnerships to Achieve Responsive Systems for Guys into Guys.

WHY THIS IS A PRIORITY

As described in our first Strategic Direction, the consultation with community members and partners underscored the desire to see MAX continue and expand its current efforts to address a host of holistic health needs. These range from mental and financial health services, to PrEP access and culturally competent health and social services for GBT2Q men in general and for specific communities.

Achieving these ambitious goals requires MAX to continue working at multiple levels. This work will include developing and delivering services ourselves, ensuring an effective referral and linkages network to existing programs and services, and undertaking policy and education work to ensure appropriate services are available to meet the needs of our communities.

Ensuring an effective and responsive referral network requires working closely with partners. Systems-level work requires engaging with a broad range of stakeholders since it is multifaceted. To be successful we must analyze and challenge complex policy frameworks, including the ways in which existing programs and services are conceived, organized and delivered. We must identify gaps and propose innovative ways of bridging them, not to mention critically examine and dismantle the

systemic barriers facing our communities—such as heterosexism, cis-genderism, racism and HIV stigmatization—which permeate the institutions, agencies and organizations that are supposed to address our health needs.

WHAT WE ARE DOING NOW

As described above, the founders of MAX had a history of successes engaging partners to improve systems responsiveness to the needs of our communities. Gay Zone is the best example!

Before launching the Mental Health Navigation service in 2016, we created the GBT2Q Men's Mental Health Partnership Table. Twelve community, clinic, public health, and research partners sit to get feedback on our programs and services, to increase their knowledge and competency to work with our communities, to discuss issues relevant to our communities, and to understand how we can collaborate to address these barriers systemically. Thanks to this partnership table, a new walk-in counselling clinic coordinated by Jewish Family Services opened in March 2019. Held at Centretown Community Health Centre, this clinic offers urgent and rapid access to mental health counselling for 2SLGBTQ+ individuals and those close to them.

In 2017, we received confirmation of funding for a national GBT2Q men's health alliance (today called Advance-Avancer). Together we will be working to increase access and uptake of combination prevention services for guys into guys in Canada (HIV/STBBIs testing and treatment, mental health, addictions, etc.).

In 2018, we invited several multisectoral partners from Ottawa and Gatineau to join a coalition to create a National Capital Region PrEP/PEP Strategy

for Guys into Guys. We will be adopting a two-year region-wide strategy in 2019.

WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT

In order to undertake the demanding systems-level work described above, MAX will continue its purposeful process of nurturing partnerships with other stakeholders in the community, education, public health, clinic, research, and social services sectors as well as those working with specific communities we want to reach. Such partnerships with the “usual and unusual suspects” will help us increase our reach and achieve our goal of improving health outcomes on the range of issues identified as priorities through the consultation with community members and partners.

A critical component of this work is our commitment to engaging with Indigenous & Two-Spirit partners in the path toward Truth and Reconciliation.

MAX will improve the capacity to measure regional health outcomes for our communities through partnerships with key regional and provincial health systems agencies, Ottawa Public Health, researchers, community-based organizations, health and social service agencies, and community members. This could include a focus on collecting disaggregated data for specific marginalized communities.

SMART OBJECTIVES

3.1

By 2022, MAX will have formalized at least six (6) partnerships involving organizations representing various sectors (e.g., community, public health, research, labour, healthcare) to address policy and service delivery barriers faced by our communities. The six partnerships will include our work with four ongoing partnerships—GayZone, the Mental Health Partnership Table, the PrEP/PEP Strategy and the Advance Community Alliance—plus new partnerships that will emerge over the next three years. The partnerships will have actionable goals to reduce service or policy barriers.

3.2

By 2022, MAX will work with partners (including research partnerships) to improve measurement of at least four (4) health outcomes for our communities.

3.3

By 2022, MAX will formalize partnerships with key Indigenous and Two-Spirit stakeholders (community agency and/or Indigenous leaders) to identify at least three (3) tangible and meaningful actions we can undertake to support the implementation of the Calls to Action of the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission—specifically TRC# 22.



“MAX a une réputation bien établie et s’impose comme un incontournable. Il a des communications très efficaces et une grande visibilité”

FRANCOPHONE GUY INTO GUYS

“Organizations that stay stuck in safe sex promotion messages are getting left behind; I see organizations that shift away from the practical, and toward the more nuanced sexual wellbeing narratives have success at engaging people in the behaviour change that benefits communities”

DAVID STUART, CHEMSEX CLINIC MANAGER, 56 DEAN STREET

4. Solidifying our Organizational and Policy Foundations.

WHY THIS IS A PRIORITY

MAX and its staff received many accolades throughout the consultation process from community members and key partners. Respondents highlighted the breadth and quality of MAX programming and commended MAX staff for creating a safe and inclusive environment for our diverse communities. They wanted to ensure this became part of MAX's organizational culture and not dependent on the individuals working at MAX at any given time.

There were partners who did communicate concerns about sustainability. They pointed out that MAX's highly visible launch helped quickly build credibility and achieved an impact well beyond its size. They questioned whether this auspicious start could be maintained in the face of the high expectations MAX has created. They suggested to focus on building a strong base—carefully selecting key programs, doing them well, and building on that momentum.

Community members and partners also expressed support for MAX's efforts to build solid organizational and policy foundations. This includes the development of its strategic plan, the diversification of its funding base, the consolidation of its board and staff, the establishment of a bold human resources framework, and the ongoing implementation of its ambitious communications strategy.

They encouraged MAX to position itself strategically, carefully framing its niche, making itself essential, and taking public positions on key issues that affect our communities.

Finally, partners encouraged MAX to document and evaluate what it does in order to demonstrate its impact.

WHAT WE ARE DOING NOW

Since the incorporation of the organization in 2015, we have been taking important steps every year to solidify the foundations. From securing funding from different levels of government, and the private sector, to launching a new MAX brand, our organization has quickly demonstrated our commitment to be a key community health player in the city, in the province, and in the country.

We have built up the board governance structure to a total of nine members, including the Chair, Vice-Chair/Secretary, and Treasurer, constituting the Executive. The board has undergone two comprehensive training sessions in the past two years, delivered by services funded by the Government of Ontario.

From one staff member hired in the summer of 2016, MAX now has 4.6 FTEs, including the Executive Director.

MAX recognizes the need for an evidence-base to underpin the state of GBT2Q health and rights. Thus, the need to improve our mechanisms to collect and mobilize data as well as to position ourselves on the themes that matter to our communities and have an impact on our health and wellness. We have been part of different

research projects in partnership with top GBT2Q men's health researchers from The Ottawa Hospital, UQÀM, CBRC, Ryerson University, Dalhousie University and University of Victoria. We also contributed to draft a report on the state of LGBTQ health, coordinated by the Champlain LHIN.

With the support of directors, staff, volunteers and our pro-bono lawyers (Norton Rose Fulbright), we are putting official policies in place to guide our organization since our incorporation. Every year we have drafted and approved new documents and tools that will consolidate our structures.

In addition, we have started diversifying our funding sources with new public and private agreements or grants. We have almost doubled our original 2016 budget, for a current total operating annual budget of half a million dollars. We have applied for charity status and, upon approval, we will start a fundraising strategy led by the board and steered by community members.

WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT

MAX will leverage the credibility it has established within the community and among partners to solidify its organizational and policy foundations through several interconnected efforts that will enshrine MAX's culture and organizational "personality" as a bold, innovative, impactful and inclusive organization.

As such, governance priorities for the Board will include:

- Grounding our decisions about the organization's evolution and growth over the next three years in our Strategic Plan, informed by careful monitoring and evaluation of our implementation plan.
- Developing a bold human resources framework and policy suite that attract and retain highly qualified and dedicated staff and Board members, while maximizing opportunities for staff and Board development.
- Establishing a funding and sustainability strategy to establish a diversity of reliable funding sources, including fundraising.

Furthermore, we will expand upon our ambitious communications strategy to convey effectively our niche and impact. This will require articulating how we make unique contributions

and measurable improvements to the health and wellness of our communities. By recognizing our quantifiable value-added, partners will seek us out, understanding that there is a gap if we are not at the table.

We will achieve this not only through bold programming and effective evaluation (see previous Strategic Directions and SMART objectives), but also by taking public policy positions on key issues that affect our communities. For instance, we may articulate how immigration policies, Black Lives Matter, Truth and Reconciliation, policy and programing gaps or healthcare coverage have an impact on the holistic health and wellness of our communities.

As our strategic priorities and SMART objectives make clear, MAX is committed to health equity, social justice and meaningful engagement with the communities we serve. Our organizational and policy foundations reinforce accountability to our communities. In order to ensure evidence-based accountability, MAX will document and evaluate its work and impact. This requires not only strong local data, disaggregated for our various communities, coming from available health data sources (see the previous Strategic Direction), but also data from our own community-driven research, consultations and evaluation.

SMART OBJECTIVES

4.1

By 2022, MAX will develop a governance and operational policy suite, including a human resources framework, which will result in at least 75% of staff retention per year and at least 80% of board members and staff reporting satisfaction with their engagement with MAX.

4.2


By 2022, MAX will have funding commitments totalling at least 2018 levels, from a minimum of six (6) distinct sources of funding, none of which shall represent more than 50% of total funding.

4.3

By 2022, MAX will have published public policy positions on at least six (6) key issues affecting our communities.

4.4

By 2022, MAX will have established a multi-faceted evaluation strategy that incorporates available local health data as well as data drawn from its own community-driven research, consultations and evaluations.



“MAX has quickly become a national reference as a cutting-edge vision of health and wellness of guys into guys. This is thanks to the passion and engagement of our community members, volunteers, peers, staff, board, partners, and allies. I’m excited to see the new projects and interventions that we will co-create with our communities and partners over the next three years, and I’m even more excited to picture the day when we will have a one-stop-shop for the health and wellness of guys into guys in the Ottawa region”.

ROBERTO ORTIZ, FOUNDING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

5. Laying the Groundwork for an Integrated Health and Wellness Centre in Ottawa.

WHY THIS IS A PRIORITY

The consultation with community members highlighted their desire to see the establishment of a physical space or spaces for our communities. These could take many forms such as a community centre, scalable community health centre or clinic, or drop-in centre.

WHAT WE ARE DOING NOW

MAX is an active member of Gay Zone's steering committee. Together, the Gay Zone partners have managed to offer a great service to guys into guys with limited resources. However, we do recognize that the health needs of our communities go beyond the sexual health needs that Gay Zone responds to. Therefore, MAX has begun conversations with our community, public health, and research partners to discuss the solutions that we could collectively bring to respond to our communities' holistic health needs.

WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT

While we acknowledge that a “brick and mortar” physical space—namely an integrated health and wellness centre—is beyond the scope of this strategic plan, MAX is committed to identify pathways towards this longer-term goal with our partners. In the meantime, we will explore alternative ways we can create safe spaces that meet our holistic health needs, as described in our first Strategic Directions.

SMART OBJECTIVE

5.1

By 2022, MAX will be leading the development of an Integrated Health and Wellness Centre for guys into guys, with the support of key partners.

APPENDIX

LIST OF COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUPS

- Middle-Eastern and North African guys into guys
- Keeping it 100 (discussion group for African, Caribbean and Black guys into guys)
- Trans guys into guys
- Sex workers
- Now What?! (group for guys over 40 years old, in partnership with Ottawa Seniors Pride Network)
- Francophone guys into guys
- Safer Partying Advisory Committee

LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

- Barry Adam, University of Windsor, Windsor ON
- Bill Ryan, McGill University, Montreal QC
- David Brennan, University of Toronto, Toronto ON
- David Stuart, 56 Dean Street Clinic, London UK
- Jean Bacon, Ontario HIV Treatment Network, Toronto ON
- Joanne Lush and Maria Hatzipantelis, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care of Ontario, Toronto ON
- Joanne Otis, Université du Québec à Montréal, Montreal QC
- Jody Jollimore, Community Based Research Centre, Vancouver BC
- Gillian Connelly, Ottawa Public Health, Ottawa ON
- Phillip Banks, Gay Men's Sexual Health Alliance (GMSH), Toronto ON
- Simone Thibault, Centretown Community Health Centre, Ottawa ON
- Sulaimon Giwa, Memorial University NF

LIST OF NETWORKS CONSULTED

- Ottawa GBT2Q Men's Mental Health Partnership Table
- Ottawa Rainbow Service Providers Network
- National Advance-Avancer Community Alliance (ACT, CBRC, HIM, MAX, REZO)

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Our visionary founders and board directors

Our talented staff and consultants

Our engaged peers and volunteers

RESEARCH AND WRITING: MARG-ANDRÉ LEBLANC

DESIGN: MEGAN DAVIS

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