Gay Zone Gaie – A Sexual Health Clinic and more for guys into guys.

Objective: To increase capacity building and access to prevention and testing of STI’s and HIV/AIDS for gay, bisexual men and men who have sex with men (MSM). Gay Zone evolved in response to a need to create a space where MSM can access culturally-appropriate services such as; screening and treatment of STIs, anonymous testing for HIV and complementary programming that enhances their wellness and builds community.

Target Groups: Ottawa Public Health has been working with the Gay community to find innovative ways to address the constant increasing rates of STI and HIV in MSM. Issues surrounding accessibility to testing for gay men prompted the local gay men’s association to bring their concerns to the attention of the Medical Officer of Health.

Activities: This unique project builds on strong partnerships in which cultural competence is pivotal. Gay zones tries to address the different factors that influence the decision making process leading to high-risk sexual behaviors such as social isolation, depression, addictions through health and wellness activities such as yoga and workshops. It also provides a Peer volunteer approach in supporting and guiding men.

Deliverables: This innovative model allows OPH to reach a high-risk group in a culturally appropriate, respectful and inclusive way. Building partnership and trust within the community is crucial to the success of this model of sexual health service. After two years, number of clients has doubled.

This appears to be an effective health promotion and service delivery strategy for disseminating information and raising awareness of health issues in the gay community.