

# Become 2SLGBTQIA+ Literate

Everyday Strategies  
for Educators



# Acknowledgements

**This project was generously supported with funding from Martha LA McCain.**

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**Please Cite This Resource As:** Cavanaugh, L., Applebaum, J., Kawolics, K., Izzo, M., Kraft, K., Laing, M., Martin, T., Owis, B., & Wilson, S., & Wright, J. (2022). *Become 2SLGBTQIA+ Literate: Everyday Strategies for Educators*. The ArQuives.

**About The ArQuives:** The ArQuives is one of the largest LGBTQ2+ archives in the world and the only LGBTQ2+ archive in Canada with a national scope. Its mandate is to acquire, preserve, organize, and give public access to information and materials in any medium, by and about LGBTQ2+ people, primarily produced in or concerning Canada and to maintain a research library, international research files, and an international collection of queer and trans periodicals. You can read more about The ArQuives [here](#).

**A Note About Language:** In this document, we use the initialism 2SLGBTQIA+. In other materials, The ArQuives uses the initialism LGBTQ2+. Within this educational resource, we are making an intentional choice to situate '2S' (Two-Spirit/two-spirit), Indigiqueer, and other Indigenous LGBTQIA+ folks first because we think it's necessary to emphasize the role colonization has played in reproducing cis-heteronormativity. Our initialism within this educational resource also includes 'A' and 'I' (asexual and intersex) because we want to highlight these identities for people who are new to learning about queer and trans communities. These (and other) identities are sometimes encompassed in the '+' (plus sign) of the LGBTQ2+ initialism. Ultimately, there is no singular "correct" initialism for queer and trans communities.

Please give us feedback about this resource by clicking [here](#).

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# Introduction

*Become 2SLGBTQIA+ Literate* was first developed and piloted in 2021 to support educators in creating more affirming learning spaces for queer and trans students. This version has been updated based on educator feedback.

In 2021, Lindsay Valve and Lindsay Cavanaugh interviewed a number of K-12 educators (both those who are 2SLGBTQIA+ and those who are not), asking them what resources would help them better support 2SLGBTQIA+ students. Many of those who were less comfortable teaching about queer and trans issues said it was because they were worried they would do the work “wrong.”

It’s understandable that some teachers might worry about being “wrong”—teacher education programs do not require that teachers learn about gender and sexuality. This means that many teachers have been systemically denied education about queerness and transness.

That being said, it’s okay if you don’t understand everything! Would you get upset with a student for not knowing something they were never taught? Making mistakes is a part of learning, but it’s also important to learn how to respond to mistakes with care. **Learning about 2SLGBTQIA+ communities is a literacy that requires practice, both for those who are part of queer and trans communities and those who are not.**

**As you develop this literacy, you can become part of a long history of 2SLGBTQIA+ educational activists in Canada.**

# Did You Know...?

## A Brief Timeline of Canadian 2SLGBTQIA+ History

Between 1841 and 1869, sodomy was punishable by death in what was then the Province of Canada; in 1869, the death penalty was replaced with a maximum sentence of life in prison. Sodomy (and some other non-procreative sexual acts) remained illegal until 1969, and until 1985, these acts could lead to charges of “gross indecency” under the *Criminal Code*. The language was intentionally vague, covering any acts that suggested same-sex attraction between men, including dancing, touching, and kissing. [Homosexuality was only partially decriminalized](#) in 1969, and people would continue to be arrested for meeting for sex in bathhouses into the 2000s. On February 5, 1981, in what was called [Operation Soap](#), over 306 people were arrested in Toronto bathhouses. You can watch an interview with one of those men, Peter Bochove, [here](#)<sup>1</sup>.



**Top:** [Photograph](#) of people protesting the 1981 police raids of four Toronto bathhouses as part of Operation Soap. Protestors are carrying a banner with the text “Enough is Enough; Stop Police Violence” and images of pink triangles.<sup>2</sup>

**Bottom:** [Sticker](#) featuring a 1967 quote by Pierre Trudeau, produced by The ArQuives (then the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives).<sup>3</sup>

**In the 1950s and 1960s**, approximately 9,000 individuals who were gay or suspected of being gay were purged from the military, police, and various other federal departments. This was part of a national security campaign that sought to remove people who had perceived character weaknesses, including queer people, people of colour, and socialists. Commissioned by the RCMP and the Canadian Armed Forces, Dr. Robert Wake created a device called the 'Fruit Machine' to identify homosexuals. Suspected homosexuals were forced to look at sexually suggestive photos, after which their pupils were measured; pupil dilation supposedly indicated that they had become aroused. These tests were not scientifically accurate.

Lieutenant Commander Wm. Atkinson, MBE, CD, RN, RCN,  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
15th April, 1983

499-1042 DWP  
CWP

Mr. Ed Jackson,  
The Body Politic,  
[REDACTED]  
Toronto.

Dear Ed,

The following somewhat long-winded account requires some explanation. It was written in 1959/1960 at a time when, to the best of my knowledge there was no visible support, tolerance or understanding of the trials and tribulations endured by members of the gay community. Incidentally before the events described, the malevolence of one security officer - who was unaware of my own homosexuality - can be best stated in his own words; he declared that any and every underhand trick would be employed to trap and "crucify queers". I might add I had serious mental reservations concerning his own sexual proclivities..

Apart from the humiliation and feelings of degradation I suffered, I felt compelled to set down the whole episode in writing. How naive can one get? It seemed to me that the basic unfairness of the situation, once published, might be remedied. To that end, I submitted the ms. to The Readers' Digest. The reply....

"We have read your personal story with sympathetic interest and we appreciate your views. But, unfortunately, your piece must be returned. We feel that a single 'case' such as you present would be far less educational than a forthright objective discussion of cases, social obligations etc.

Our gratitude, just the same....."

A psychiatrist;

"...I'm not surprised the article was refused by publishers... its too descriptive. There is not enough uplift for the general public."

Nevertheless, turgid though the article <sup>is</sup> may be, it represents my inmost thoughts at that time and, strangely, seemed to be of some therapeutic value.

Like so many of us, I have maintained a facade for most of my life - for viewing by non-gay society. The article removes that curtain and I hesitate to expose my unhappiness for general inspection. Time is a great healer, as I know, but I feel the RCMP et al is/are more than sufficient individuals/departments to have pierced my defenses. After all these years, if I remember, I still hurt.

For the above reasons, with the exception of my name or photograph, you are at liberty to do with the article what you will.

Yours sincerely,  
Bill Atkinson

**Above:** Letter from a former Lieutenant Commander to The Body Politic about his experience trying to come forward about the homophobic environment experienced in the Navy.<sup>4</sup> PDF can be read [here](#).

**From 1952 to 1974**, homosexuality was listed as mental disorder in the *Diagnostic Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders* (DSM), a diagnostic tool developed by the American Psychiatric Association. Its removal was largely the result of the work of activists in the civil rights, women's rights, and gay liberation movements.



**Above (left):** Click [here](#) to see a clip of Gary Kinsman discussing the slow depathologization of homosexuality in response to the work of queer activist communities.<sup>5</sup>

**Above (right):** Listen to an interview [here](#) with BH that was part of the Foolsap Gay Oral History Project, wherein the interviewee discusses the harm caused by psychiatrists to gay individuals.<sup>6</sup>

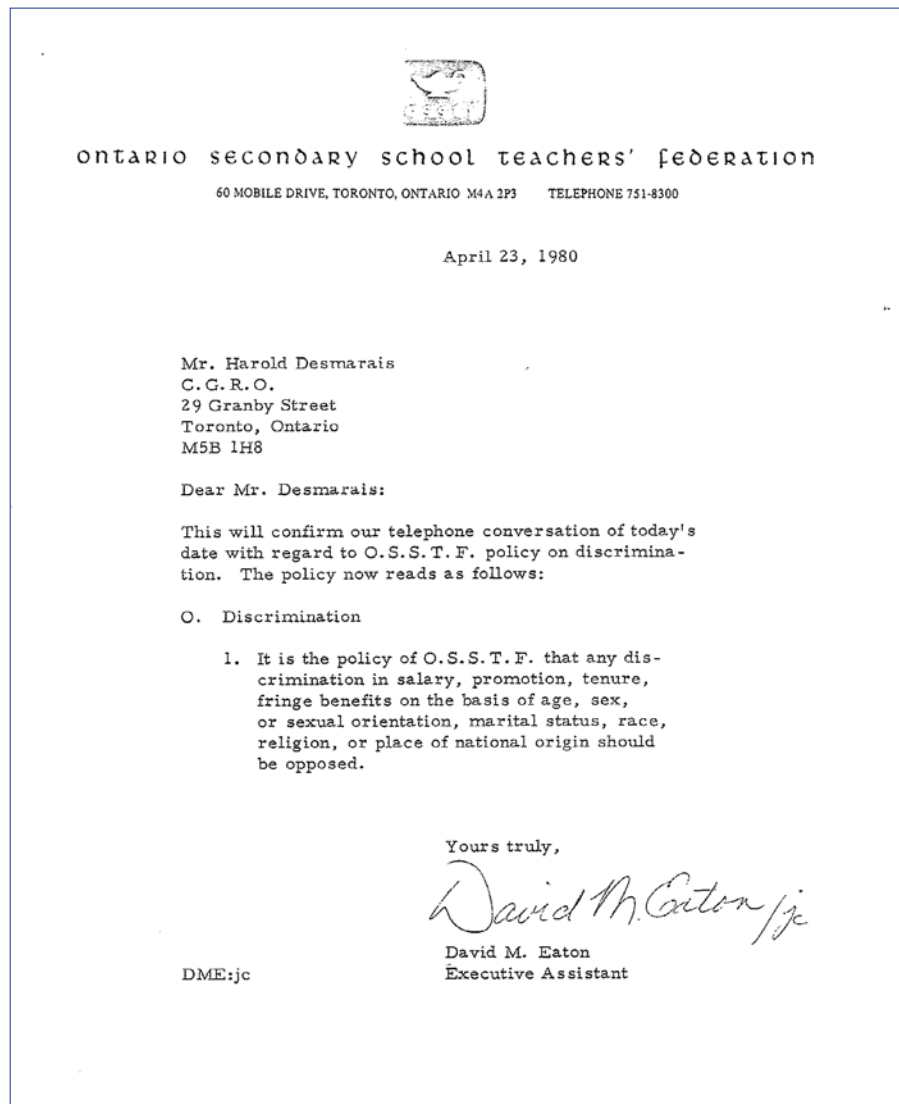
**In 1975**, the University of New Brunswick's faculty union signed its first collective agreement protecting 2SLGBTQIA+ faculty members from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

**Also in 1975**, Douglas Wilson does outreach to try to form a gay society at the University of Saskatchewan, and is informed by the Dean of Education that he is no longer permitted to supervise student teachers.

**From 1980 to 2013**, 'transsexualism' (updated in 1994 to 'gender identity disorder') was also listed as a mental disorder in the DSM. As of 2022, 'gender dysphoria' is still listed in the DSM; some trans activists are working to have that term removed, as well.



**In 1980**, the Ontario Secondary Schools Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) added sexual orientation to its anti-discrimination policy. This came six years before sexual orientation was added to the *Ontario Human Right Code* (OHRC) and sixteen years before it was added under the Canadian Human Rights Act.

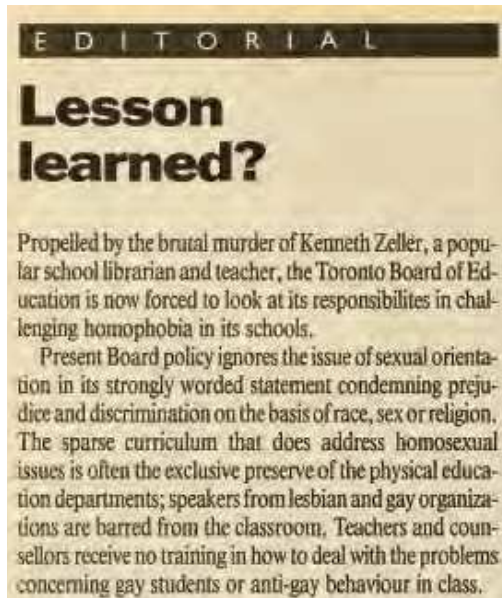


**Above:** Letter to Harold Desmarais of the Coalition for Gay Rights in Ontario from David M. Eaton of the OSSTF regarding the addition of sexual orientation to its policy on discrimination, 1980. You can find the PDF [here](#).<sup>7</sup>








In 1985, one year before sexual orientation was added to the OHRC, teacher-librarian Kenneth Zeller was murdered in a homophobic hate crime High Park. The work of queer educators and activists to draw attention to Zeller's murder would later lead the Toronto Board of Education to develop one of Canada's first anti-homophobia programs in schools.



**Left:** Excerpt from an editorial in the March 1986 issue of *The Body Politic* on the 1985 murder of teacher-librarian Kenneth Zeller.<sup>8</sup> You can find the PDF [here](#).

**In 1991,** Gay and Lesbian Educators of British Columbia (GALE BC) was formed, and later grew into the Pride Education Network, which advocates for safe, respectful, and inclusive learning spaces nationally and internationally.

**Below:** Pamphlet published by GALE BC outlining the organization's policy-making objectives, 1995.<sup>10</sup> You can find the PDF [here](#).

<p><b>For Further Information</b></p> <p>Our monthly meetings are held at the BCTF Building at 7:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month. It is a good idea to phone the GALE B.C. information line at 688-WEST Ext. 2004 ahead of time or check the newsletter to confirm the time, date and location.</p> <p>Membership in GALE-BC is \$ 10.00 per year. With this membership you will receive a monthly newsletter that will keep you informed about topics relating to lesbian and gay educators.</p> <p>If you would like to join our organization, please fill out  this form and mail  to:</p> <p> <b>GALE-BC</b> P.O. Box 93678 Nelson Park P.O. Vancouver, B.C. V6E 4L7</p> <hr/> <p>Name .....</p> <p>Address .....</p> <p>City/Province .....</p> <p>Postal Code .....</p> <p>Telephone Number .....</p> <p>If you would like to join GALE-BC please check <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> where appropriate:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I would like my name put on the contact list that is open to other members of GALE-BC</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I would like to receive the newsletter but I do not want my name on the membership list available to other members.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am interested in social events</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am interested in monthly meetings.</p>	<p><b>SOCIAL EVENTS</b></p> <p>Although we (GALE-BC) advocate positive social change in educational settings, we are also concerned with providing opportunities to meet our colleagues in relaxed and non-threatening settings.</p> <p>Aside from our monthly meetings, we periodically organize a variety of social events such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pot-luck dinners</li> <li>• wine and cheese parties</li> <li>• theatre evenings</li> <li>• dessert nights</li> </ul> <p>We feel it is important for lesbian and gay educators to meet one another. Social events provide opportunities for us to share common experiences, frustrations, concerns and successes in our professional lives with our colleagues.</p> <p>All gay and lesbian educators and their friends are welcome.</p> <p><b>EDUCATION=UNDERSTANDING</b></p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="1008 1062 1227 1650"> <p><b>GALE</b></p> </td> <td data-bbox="1227 1062 1357 1650"> <p><b>BC</b></p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1008 1650 1227 1927"> <p>COMMITTED TO ACCEPTANCE AND UNDERSTANDING THROUGH QUALITY EDUCATION</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1227 1650 1357 1927"> <p>Gay And Lesbian Educators of B.C.</p> </td> </tr> </table> <p>January 1995</p>	<p><b>GALE</b></p>	<p><b>BC</b></p>	<p>COMMITTED TO ACCEPTANCE AND UNDERSTANDING THROUGH QUALITY EDUCATION</p>	<p>Gay And Lesbian Educators of B.C.</p>
<p><b>GALE</b></p>	<p><b>BC</b></p>					
<p>COMMITTED TO ACCEPTANCE AND UNDERSTANDING THROUGH QUALITY EDUCATION</p>	<p>Gay And Lesbian Educators of B.C.</p>					

In 1993, a group of educators, parents, students, social services professionals, and community members formed under the name Education Against Homophobia and hosted a conference to learn whether initiatives were being undertaken within the Toronto Board of Education to combat homophobia and support queer students and staff, and to combat myths about homosexuality propagated by opponents of these initiatives such as Citizens United for Responsible Education (CURE), which was formed in 1992.

## Conference Agenda

6:00 p.m.  
6th floor lobby

**Registration**

6:30 p.m.  
Auditorium

**Introduction**  
John Campey  
(Downtown Trustee)  
Terrie deFreitas  
(Co-Chair, Toronto Board of Education Consultative Committee on the Education of Lesbian and Gay Students)  
Carmen Paquette  
(Ontario Human Rights Commissioner)

6:45 p.m.

**Keynote Speech**  
Dr. Bruce MacLeod  
(President, Canadian Council of Churches)

7:45 pm

**Workshops Session I**

8:45 pm

**Workshops Session II**

All workshops will be offered in both sessions, unless otherwise indicated. Panelists listed are those confirmed at time of printing the programme.

**1. Everything you wanted to know about lesbians/gays/bisexuals but were afraid to ask.**  
An informal workshop to answer all of your questions, conducted by members of PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). Carroll Jewitt, (PFLAG)

**2. AIDS Education: What works in our schools?**  
Education is our major defense against this serious epidemic, yet our educational efforts are attacked and undermined. What are the most effective strategies to save lives?  
David Kelley (Executive Director, Toronto People With AIDS Foundation)

**2. What is happening at the Toronto Board of Education?**  
There has been a great deal of misinformation spread about the Toronto Board's initiatives aimed at challenging homophobia. Panelists will describe the Board's efforts in this area.  
John Campey (Downtown School Trustee)  
Tony Gambini (Human Sexuality Program)  
Krin Zook (Human Sexuality Program)  
Carl Miller (Gay Fathers, TBE Advisory Committee on Human Sexuality)  
Kathleen Wynne (Area North Education Council Executive member)

**4. Religious perspectives on homosexuality**  
Much of the opposition to homosexuality is couched in religious terms. Panelists will explore alternate interpretations in the Christian, Jewish, and Moslem traditions. Panelists will include Rev. Brent Hawkes (Metropolitan Community Church)  
Rev. Jim Ferry (Anglican Church)

**5. Why are we getting attacked?**  
Homosexuality has suddenly become an important political issue in Canada and the U.S.A. South of the border, the right wing has used homophobic rhetoric to gain political control of local governments and to shape state politics. Panelists will discuss these developments.  
Julia Creet (University of Toronto)  
Ed Jackson (Journalist)  
Helen Lenskyj (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education)

**6. Responses to CURE**  
'Citizens United for Responsible Education' is a new homophobic organization which emerged last year to attack the Toronto Board's efforts to challenge homophobia in education. How do we confront CURE's stealth and smear campaign, designed to forward it's anti-gay agenda.  
Vanessa Russell (Education Against Homophobia)  
Susan McGrath (TBE Equity Advisor/Women)

**7. Making the Links**  
There are connections between homophobia, racism, sexism, and class bias. What are the similarities and what are the differences in these forms of oppression?  
Doug Stewart  
(Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention)  
Debbie Douglas  
(Parent and anti-racist educator)  
Sherene Razak  
(Ontario Institute for Studies in Education)  
Linda Torney  
(President, Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto)

**8. Student Panel**  
How does homophobia affect the learning environment in our schools? Lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual students will describe their experiences.

**9. Is Homosexuality an illness, can it be cured?**  
CURE claims that homosexuality is a disorder which can be cured. What is really known about human sexual variation and how does the medical profession "treat" homosexuality?  
Dr. Phillip Berger (Family Physician)  
Dr. Saul Shapiro (Clarke Institute of Psychiatry)

**10. "Not So Straightforward"**  
A play written and performed by lesbian and gay students in Toronto schools, which speaks to their experiences.

**11. Video Presentations**  
A selection of homophobic videos such as "The Gay Agenda," and others, such as "Sacred Lies, Civil Truths" which expose the tactics used by the far right in its campaign of misinformation will be screened.


**Above:** Conference agenda for the first Education against Homophobia conference, which took place in Toronto in 1993, with organizers including Carroll Jewitt (PFLAG), John Campey (trustee), Greg Pavelich and Patty Barclay (teachers), Kathleen Wynne (parent) and Nicki Scott (student).<sup>11</sup> You can find the PDF [here](#).

### BOARD of REFERENCE

<p>Bishop Donald N. Bastian, B.A., B.D., D.D. President Free Methodist Church in Canada</p> <p>Mrs. Sue Careless, B.A., B.Ed. Curriculum Consultant</p> <p>Rev. Robert Gould District Superintendent The Christian &amp; Missionary Alliance in Canada</p> <p>Rev. Hudson T. Hilsden Director Family Concerns Ministries</p> <p>Mrs. C. Gwendolyn Landolt, B.A., LL.B. National Vice-President REAL Women of Canada</p> <p>Rev. James M. MacKnight General Superintendent The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada</p>	<p>Rev. Peter Moore, M.A., M.Div., D.Min. Rector Little Trinity Anglican Church</p> <p>Rev. John Niles, B.A., M.Div. Pastor Victoria Park United Church</p> <p>Rev. Alex Parechin, B.Th. Executive Vice-President Christian Broadcasting Associates</p> <p>Mrs. F. Dolina Smith President Canadians for Decency</p> <p>Rev. W. Bill Solomon, D.Litt. Executive Minister Metropolitan Toronto Black Clergy</p> <p>Rev. J. Karl Thomas Executive Officer The Apostolic Church in Canada</p>
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## WHOSE CHILDREN?

### Ours -or- The Toronto School Board's



**Awareness RALLY**  
5:30-6:30

**Awareness WORKSHOPS**  
4:00-5:30    6:30-8:30

*See Below.*

**Thursday  
February 25, 1993**

**155 College**  
(College and Beverley)  
West of the Queen's Park Subway

Addressing the proselytization of Homosexuality via:

- The Sexual Orientation Guide
- The homosexual counselling service
- The distribution of "How To" homosexual sex pamphlets

### AWARENESS WORKSHOPS

<p>Bev Hadland</p> <p>Dr. John McComick</p> <p>Dr. Laurie Morgan</p> <p>T.B.A.</p> <p>Rev. John Niles</p> <p>T.B.A.</p> <p>Judy Anderson Sue Careless</p>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px;">4:45 - 6:15pm</p> <p>"Chastity"</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px;">6:30 - 9:00pm</p> <p>"Psychological Effects of Heterosexual and Homosexual Promiscuous Lifestyles"</p> <p>"Medical Consequences of Homosexual and Heterosexual Promiscuous Practices"</p> <p>"How to Teach Abstinence and Chastity in the Public Schools"</p> <p>"Helping Those Dissatisfied with Their Homosexual Feelings"</p> <p>"How to Get Elected to Public Office"</p> <p>"Think Tank on Alternative Programming"</p>
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\*Note: 4:00-5:30 Auditorium Use  
6:30-9:30 Cafeteria

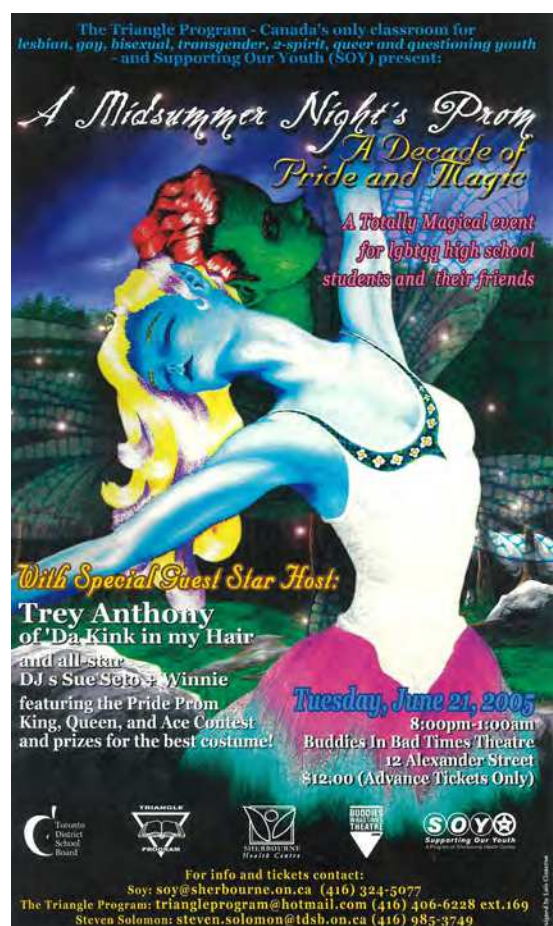
Booked through Alex Chumak, Trustee for a "parent meeting"

**Above:** Poster announcing an "Awareness Rally" in 1993 being hosted by the Citizens for Responsible Education (CURE). The rally was organized based around the group's concerns and opposition to the promotion of homosexuality as positive and healthy within the Toronto School Board, in addition to opposing sexual orientation counselling and distribution of safe sex information. The group advocated for the complete removal of this curriculum, services, and information.<sup>12</sup> You can find the PDF [here](#).




In 1995, University of Calgary researcher Pierre Trembley published “The Homosexuality Factor in Youth Suicide Problems.” Trembley found that lesbian, gay, and bisexual teenagers were approximately fourteen times more likely than their straight peers to experience suicidal ideation, and that one-third of teenage suicide deaths are related to sexual orientation.

In 1996 the Toronto District School Board launched its first classes for The Triangle Program, Canada’s only queer high school, which used Oasis Alternative Secondary School campus as its home. The Triangle Program collaborates with Support Our Youth in putting on its annual Pride Prom. In addition to this specialized program, workshops and programming for students of all ages were being brought forth despite efforts of opposition groups to keep 2SLGBTQIA+ education out of schools. This included elementary school anti-homophobia programming, which began in the mid 1990s.



Above: [Questions](#) from students as part of the Toronto District School Board elementary school anti-homophobia programme (1997-1999).<sup>13</sup>

Left: [Poster](#) from one of the Triangle Program’s Pride Proms, in collaboration with Support Our Youth (SOY).<sup>14</sup>



**In 2003**, teacher James Chamberlain won a court case against the Surrey [British Columbia] School Board about the right to teach books about children with same-gender parents in kindergarten and Grade 1 classrooms.

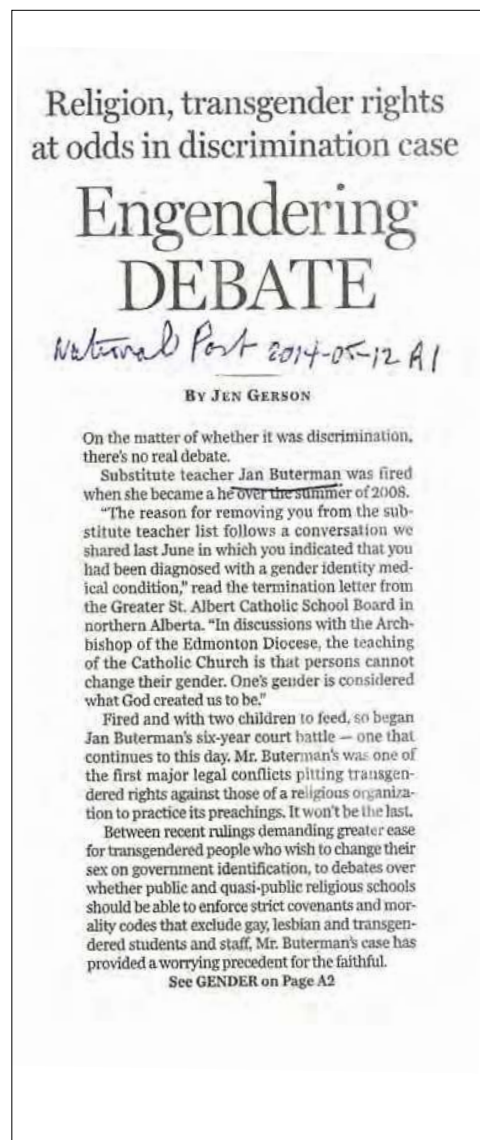


**Above:** [Watch](#) Nancy Nicol interview James Chamberlain about this case.<sup>15</sup>

In 2007, the New Brunswick Teachers Association adopted Policy NBTA 598-3 (Anti-homophobia, Anti-transphobia and Anti-heterosexism policy) and a year later, Pride in Education was born to advocate for inclusive schools and for awareness of and for sexual and gender minorities in the province, to establish a GSA network through the province, and to partner with community allies.

In 2008, Kitchener, Ontario teacher Debbie Samson started one of the first elementary school Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs; now sometimes also called Gender and Sexuality Alliances) at Sunnyside Senior Public School. GSAs had been around throughout North America for some time in high schools; listen to S. Bear Bergman, Toronto writer, activist and storyteller, talk about establishing one of the first GSAs in North America in 1990, at Concord Academy in Massachusetts [here](#)<sup>17</sup> (listen to 1:00-9:10).

Also in 2008 in Edmonton, substitute teacher Jan Buterman was fired for being trans. In response, he launched a human rights complaint against the Greater St. Albert Catholic School Board.



Left: Excerpt from a 2014 article on Jan Buterman's then-ongoing court case against his former employer. Buterman was fired in 2008 after notifying his school board that he had started transitioning.<sup>18</sup> You can find the PDF [here](#).

Above: December 2011 newspaper article on Jamie Hubley's parents' efforts to pass anti-bullying legislation. Hubley had been subjected to ongoing homophobic harassment since grade school and, in October of that year, died by suicide.<sup>19</sup> You can find the PDF [here](#).



**In 2012**, following the suicide of Jamie Hubley, the Government of Ontario passed Bill 13 (the *Accepting Schools Act*), requiring that all publicly-funded schools in the province allow students to start GSAs.

**In 2015**, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) voted to approve its Transgender Policy. Also in 2015, the ARC Foundation developed SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) 123 as a resource for British Columbia educators; SOGI 123 is now also in use in Alberta and New Brunswick.

**In 2016**, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice struck down a request by a Hamilton father to be notified if his children were learning about topics he considered incompatible with his Greek Orthodox religion, including 2SLGBTQIA+ people. The court stated that the father's request was in conflict with the *Charter's* commitment to "inclusivity, equality, and multiculturalism."

Saturday, November 25, 2017 | WATERLOO REGION RECORD | Local, B5

## Dad loses case over 'false teachings' in schools

Armela Fragomeni

The Ontario Court of Appeal has rejected a Hamilton dad's five-year quest to have the public school board warn him in advance about discussions about homosexuality and other lessons and conversations he considers "false teachings."

Steve (Eustathios) Tourloukis wanted to be alerted any time his children would be involved or exposed to a list of topics he considered an attack on his Greek Orthodox religion.

Those topics included sex education, sexual conduct like oral sex, homosexual or bisexual conduct and relationships.

The list of topics also included "environmental issues and concerns," placed "above the value of Judeo-Christian principles and human life," according to the appeals court.

In November 2016, a Superior Court judge in Hamilton rejected Tourloukis' court challenge to make the Hamilton-Wentworth

District School Board comply with his wishes. The judge stated the board's refusal to grant the request "was not unreasonable."

Tourloukis, with financial assistance from the Parental Rights in Education Defense Fund, appealed the decision on the basis of freedom of religion guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Appeal Court issued its written decision Wednesday after hearing the matter in June.

The appeal was dismissed on the grounds that Tourloukis "failed to establish any interference with or violation of his religious freedom" and that the board's denial of his wishes "was reasonable and proportionate in light of its statutory mandate to promote equity and inclusive education."

The court noted Tourloukis' children "attend a non-denominational public school with a mandate to provide an open, accepting and inclusive educational experience for all children."

rights in decisions about education "is primary."

Tourloukis' lawyer, Albertos Polizogopoulos, said neither he nor his client would comment on the decision at this time.

Public board chair Todd White said the board is satisfied that its interpretation of religious accommodation and "fair application of human rights" was upheld.

"Our board still goes to great lengths to approve religious accommodation. We don't want to send out the message that we're not open to those requests..."

The problem with Tourloukis' request was that the topics he objected to "worked their way" into everyday topics in school — and it violated the diversity the board is obliged to uphold, White said.

Tourloukis, a dentist, started his challenge when his children were at Gordon Prince elementary. His wife is a high school math teacher in the same board.

The Hamilton Spectator

FILE PHOTO

Steve Tourloukis speaks outside a Hamilton court in June 2016.

The court also said the dad declined the board's proposal that he withdraw his children from sex education. It added Tourloukis' demand to have advance notice about a "false teaching" is an "exercise that would undermine the message of diversity and inclusion which is woven throughout the integrated curriculum."

However, the Parental Rights group says the decision still affirms "that parents — not school boards — are primary educators." It references a paragraph in the 46-page decision that says parental

**Above:** Newspaper article on Hamilton father Steve (Eustathios) Tourloukis' five-year case against the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. He lost his case in 2016 and his attempt to appeal in 2017 was also rejected.<sup>20</sup> You can find the PDF [here](#).



In 2018, three years after SOGI 123 was developed, a group of conservative Christian parents organized a protest in Victoria. Teachers, students, parents, and other community members came together in a counter-protest, chanting “SOGI saves lives.”

In 2018, Ontario students marched for a curriculum that included information about consent, gender, and sexuality. Under the leadership of Kathleen Wynne, the first openly gay premier in Canada, the Liberal party had been working to update Ontario’s sex education curriculum. In 2015, the government announced its plan to include discussions of correct terminology for genitalia, masturbation, 2SLGBTQIA+ identities, and some Indigenous perspectives on health and development. This was met with thousands of parents accusing Wynne of being a “radical gay activist”; despite the protests, the curriculum was implemented in 2015. Although Doug Ford’s Progressive Conservative government tried to revert to the pre-2015 curriculum, student protests were successful in preventing this.

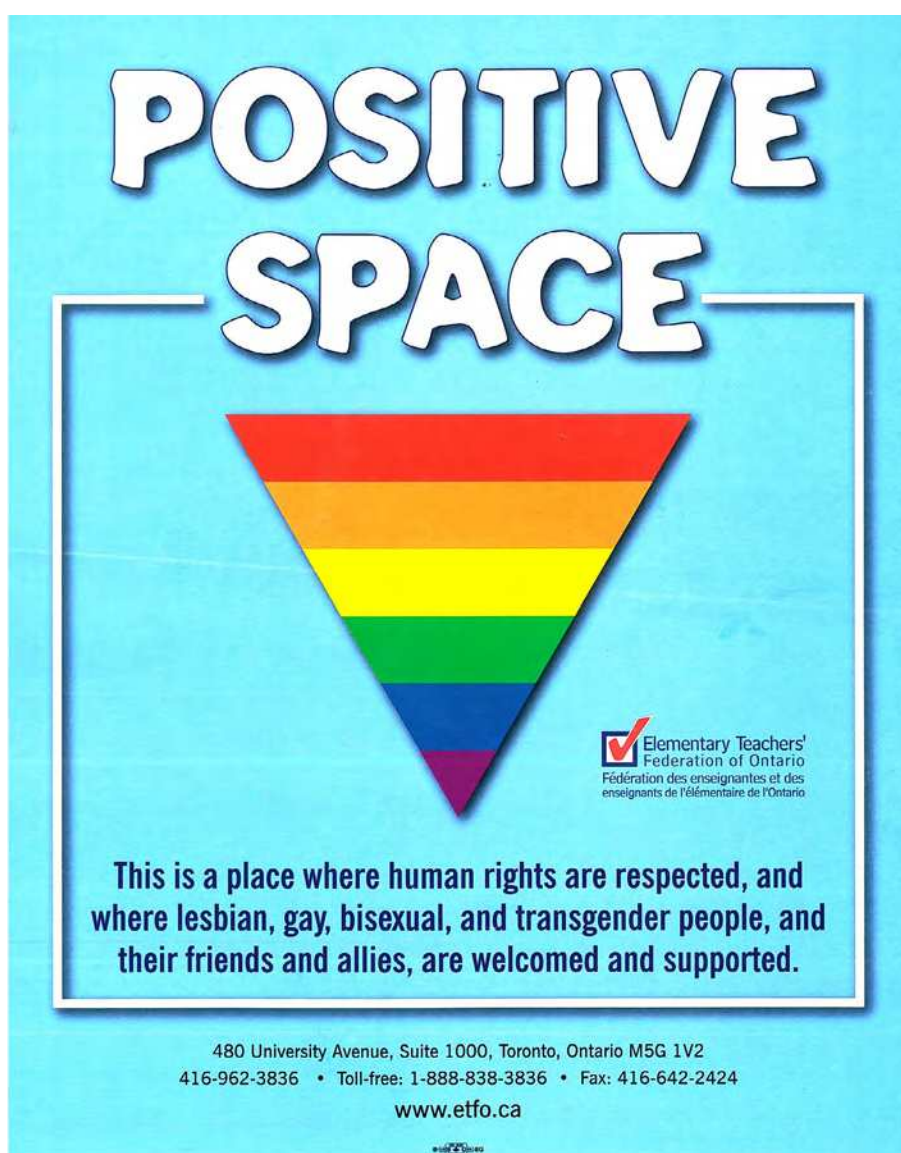


**Left:** Article on the 2018 protest at the British Columbia Legislature against the SOGI 123 curriculum. Members of the anti-trans Canadian Christian Lobby were met with counter-protestors who reaffirmed the importance of 2SLGBTQIA+ education.<sup>21</sup> You can find the PDF [here](#).

For further information and notable dates, visit the [\*LGBTQ Education Timeline\*](#) created by The ArQuives in collaboration with the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario in 2017.



What are my responsibilities as a teacher, administrator, school councillor or educational assistant to support 2SLGBTQIA+ perspectives?



Some people wonder:

## What place does gender and sexuality have in schools?

The simple answer is:

## Gender and sexuality belongs everywhere in schools.

In this guide, you will learn about **cis-heteronormativity (oppressive gender and sexual norms)**, its negative impact on 2SLGBTQIA+ people, and ways to support 2SLGBTQIA+ people and infuse queer and trans perspectives into your teaching.

- 62% of 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents feel unsafe at school, compared to 11% of cisgender heterosexual students
- 64% of all 2SLGBTQIA+ participants reported hearing homophobic comments daily or weekly at school
- 30% of 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents had been victims of cyberbullying compared to 8% of cisgender heterosexual respondents
- 57% of trans respondents had been targets of mean rumours or lies
- 79% of trans students who had been the victims of physical harassment reported that teachers and staff were ineffective in addressing transphobic harassment
- 35% of students who attend Catholic schools reported experiencing harassment based on their perceived sexual orientation
- 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous students were twice as likely to experience harassment based on their racialized identity than cisgender heterosexual Indigenous students
- 77% of 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous students had been harassed at school in the year leading up to the survey, the highest percentage of any group

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Source: Peter, T. Campbell, C. & Taylor, C. (2021). *Still in every class in every school: Final report on the second climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools*. Egale Canada Human Rights Trust. <https://egale.ca/awareness/still-in-every-class>

# My responsibilities as an educator:

- To teach my students about 2SLGBTQIA+ perspectives
- To support 2SLGBTQIA+ people in my school (and ensure they are not being discriminated against)
- To ensure that queerness and transness is infused throughout my teaching and not just treated like a token subject
- To teach my students that if they are discriminatory against people who are 2SLGBTQIA+ they are both being harmful and breaking the law
- To inform my students that respecting pronouns is a human rights issue
- To teach my students about cis-heteronormativity
- To not disclose my students' identities to their parents or others if they have not given me consent to do so (this could put them in danger)
- To advocate for the rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ people



# You don't just have responsibilities, you also have rights!



## Did you know?

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was proposed in 1982 and was officially enforced starting in 1985. This document is part of the Canadian Constitution, which means it supersedes all other existing laws. The original language of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms indicated that:

*Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability. (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982)*

The 1982 iteration did not include sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. It would not be until 1995 that sexual orientation was recognised as a protected class (article 15 of the Charter) and 2016 that gender identity and gender expression would be added (as an amendment of article 15). The decisions to add sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as protected classes came through the Supreme Court of Canada's unanimous decision in regards to the Egan v. Canada case. This means it is illegal to discriminate against someone on the basis of gender identity, gender expression, alongside sexual orientation in Canada.

Overall, this means that it is your legal duty to intervene when you witness homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia in your school community. It also means you have an implied ethical duty to facilitate learning that decreases gender and sexual-based discrimination. If you positively acknowledge 2SLGBTQIA+ people within your curriculum, classroom, community, and language choices you are embodying an ethical stance supported by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Ignoring the existence of 2SLGBTQIA+ people in schools creates opportunities for greater discrimination. It is therefore deeply important to become 2SLGBTQIA+ literate, so you can interrupt discrimination.

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Meyer, E. (2010). Teachers, sexual orientation, and the law in Canada: A human rights perspective. *The Cleaning House*, 83(3), 89-95.

Walker, J. (2016). *Bill C-16: An act to amend the Canadian Human Rights and the Criminal Code*. 42-1-C16-E. Legislative Summaries. <https://lop.parl.ca/staticfiles/PublicWebsite/Home/ResearchPublications/LegislativeSummaries/PDF/42-1/c16-e.pdf>





What's the difference between gender identity, gender expression, sex, and sexual orientation?<sup>23</sup>



# Learn from a colleague:

Teacher, Kelli Kraft, explains the difference between sex assigned at birth, gender identity, sexual orientation, and gender expression.



**Kelli Kraft** (she/they) is an educator on the unceded territory of the Songhees people, commonly known as Victoria. They are the SOGI lead and GSA sponsor at their school, which allows them to provide education to their colleagues and students that is inclusive, diverse, and equitable for LGBTQ2+ population. She is the author of the Bite Size SOGI Series that has been distributed to schools across BC.

## Sex assigned at birth

When you were born, the doctor labelled your sex based on the appearance of your genitals. Intersex people can have a combination of internal and external reproductive organs.

### Terms:

- Male (AM AB: Assigned Male at Birth)
- Female (AFAB: Assigned Female at Birth)
- Intersex

## Gender identity

This is the way you think about yourself—for some people, this is fixed, and for others, it's fluid.

### Terms:

- |                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| • Girl/Woman   | • Two-Spirit  |
| • Boy/Man      | • Genderqueer |
| • Non-binary   | • Butch       |
| • Gender-fluid | • Femme       |
| • Cisgender    | • Stud        |
| • Transgender  |               |

All of us were assigned a **sex**. The problem is often that sex is used to make assumptions about our **gender identity** – how we feel about our gender as we grow up – and **gender expression** – how we express our gender to the world.

EGALE (Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere; Canada's leading organization for 2SLGBTQIA+ people and issues) notes that assigned sex is the biological classification of a person as female, male or intersex. It is usually assigned at birth based on a visual assessment of external anatomy.

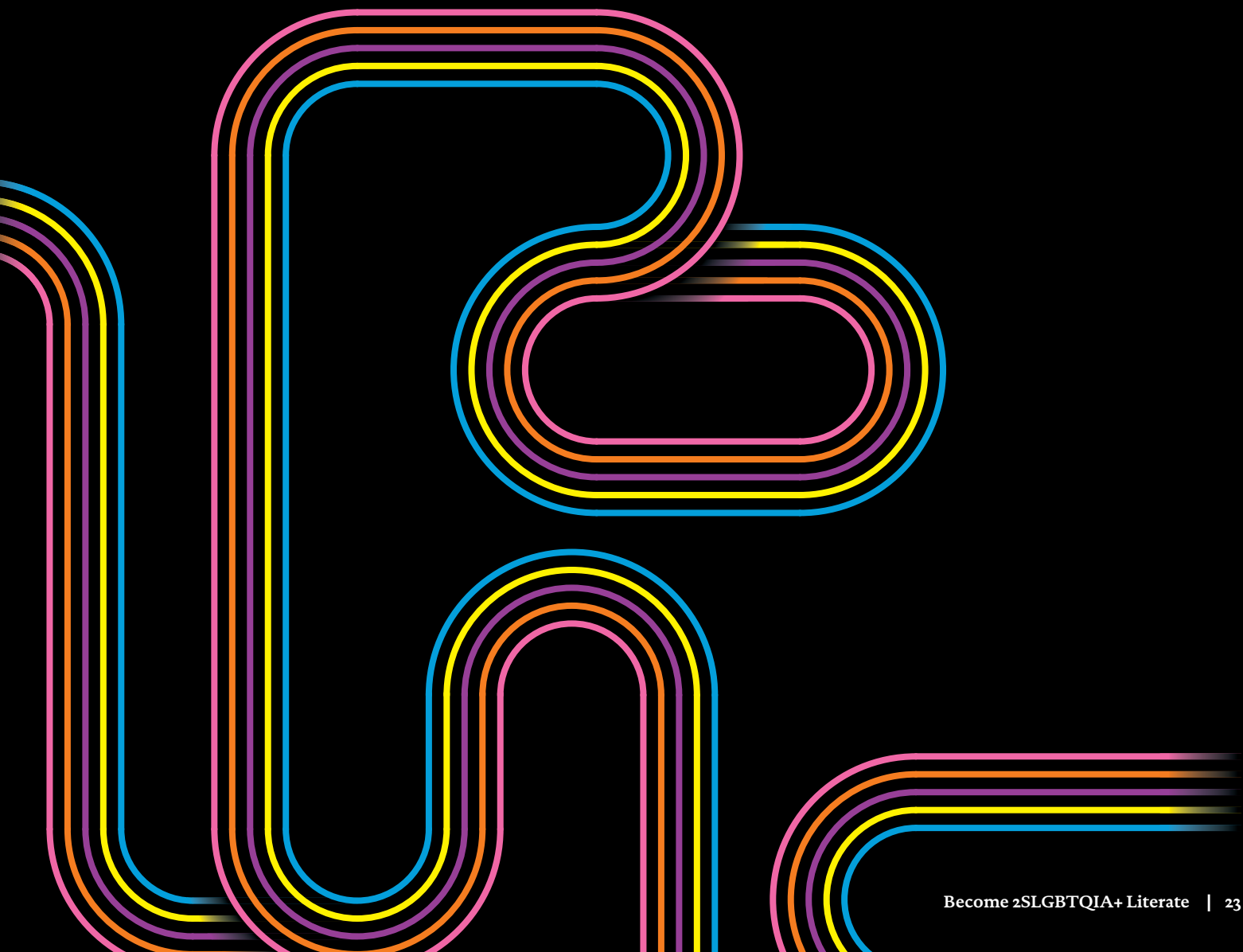
Gender identity, in contrast, is a person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is not necessarily visible to others and it may not align with what society expects based on assigned sex.





# Reflection questions:

- Is the idea of more than 2 sexes a new idea for you? Were you aware of intersex people prior to reading this? If it's a new idea, how is this challenging your understanding of "gender" and "sex"?
- If you did not grow up with an awareness of intersex people, why do you think that is?
- As a child, did you notice being treated in certain ways because of the sex you were assigned at birth? Did people have assumptions about how you should express your gender (gender expression – see next page) based on your sex?



# Outside of sex and gender identity, sexual orientation and gender expression are **two key terms:**

## Sexual Orientation

This is who you're attracted to. This is separate from your sex, gender, and gender identity.

### Terms:

- Gay
- Straight
- Bisexual
- Pansexual
- Queer
- Asexual
- Two-Spirit

## Gender Expression

This is the way you present yourself to the world. How do you dress? Do you wear makeup? What's your hair like? Do you present as masculine, feminine, androgynous, a mix? For some people this is fixed, but for others it's fluid!

### Terms:

- Masculine
- Feminine
- Androgynous
- Two-Spirit
- Butch
- Femme
- Stud

### Attraction

Often referred to as a sexual orientation, attraction describes a person's potential for emotional, spiritual, intellectual, intimate, romantic and/or sexual interest in other people and may form the basis for aspects of one's identity and/or behaviour.

### Gender Expression

The way gender is presented and communicated to the world through clothing, speech, body language, hairstyle, voice, affirming surgeries, and/or the emphasis and/or the emphasis or de-emphasis of body characteristics and behaviours.

**Note:** Not everyone feels **sexual attraction**. People who do not feel sexual attraction or lessened amounts of sexual attraction in comparison to their allosexual (sexual) counterparts can all be considered part of the asexual spectrum.

Nor does everyone feel romantic attraction. People who don't experience romantic attraction are aromantic.



## ASEXUALITY: COMING TO TERMS



AN ACE TORONTO ZINE  
ISSUE 1

**Above:** Check out these zines on asexuality from our serials collection to learn more on asexuality, demisexuality, and aromanticism.<sup>24,25</sup> You can find more zines on ace perspectives at the [Ace Zine Archive](#) (a thank you is extended to Toronto Aces and Aros for directing us to this resource)!

# Reflection questions:

- Do you feel sexual attraction to others? Do you feel romantic attraction to others?
- How would you describe your sexual attraction?
- Do you think sex is a private or taboo subject? What's the first emotion that comes up for you when you think of the word sex or sexual attraction?
- How do you feel when you see two people you assume are men kissing? Two people you assume are women kissing? Two people of ambiguous gender identities kissing?
- How do you feel about polyamory/ethical non-monogamy (people who have more than one romantic and/or sexual relationship)?
- How do you like to express your gender identity?
- Do people make assumptions about your sexual orientation based on your gender expression? Do you make assumptions about other people's sexual orientations based on their expressions?
- How do you want your gender identity to be perceived by the world?
- Have you ever had to "come out" about your sexual orientation to anyone?





What does the 2SLGBTQIA+ initialism stand for?<sup>26</sup>



# Learn from a youth leader:



Youth leader Marie Laing explains a bit about the ‘2S’ (Two-Spirit/two-spirit) in the 2SLGBTQIA+ initialism and offers some suggestions for supporting 2S, Indigiqueer, and Indigenous LGBTQIA+ youth.

**Marie Laing** (he/she/they)<sup>27</sup> is a queer Kanyen’kehá:ka educator of mixed Haudenosaunee and Irish/Scottish/South African settler ancestry. His family comes from Six Nations of the Grand River, and he belongs to the turtle clan. In her role as a youth leader with the Native Youth Sexual Health Network, her work includes two-spirit/LGBTQ+ Indigenous community-building, mentorship, and workshop facilitation.



**Above (left):** 1993 [poster](#) advertising the services of 2-Spirited People of the First Nations, an organization for Indigenous gay men and lesbians. **Above (right):** [Poster](#) for AIDS awareness by the Ontario Provincial HIV/AIDS Strategy.<sup>28,29</sup>

As explained earlier in this guide, we have intentionally put 2S at the front of the initialism to draw attention to Indigenous ways of understanding gender and sexuality. Cree Two-Spirit health researcher Harlen Pruden (2021) has written that “Two-Spirit’ ... predates western frameworks, concepts, or identities of LGBTQIA.”<sup>30</sup>

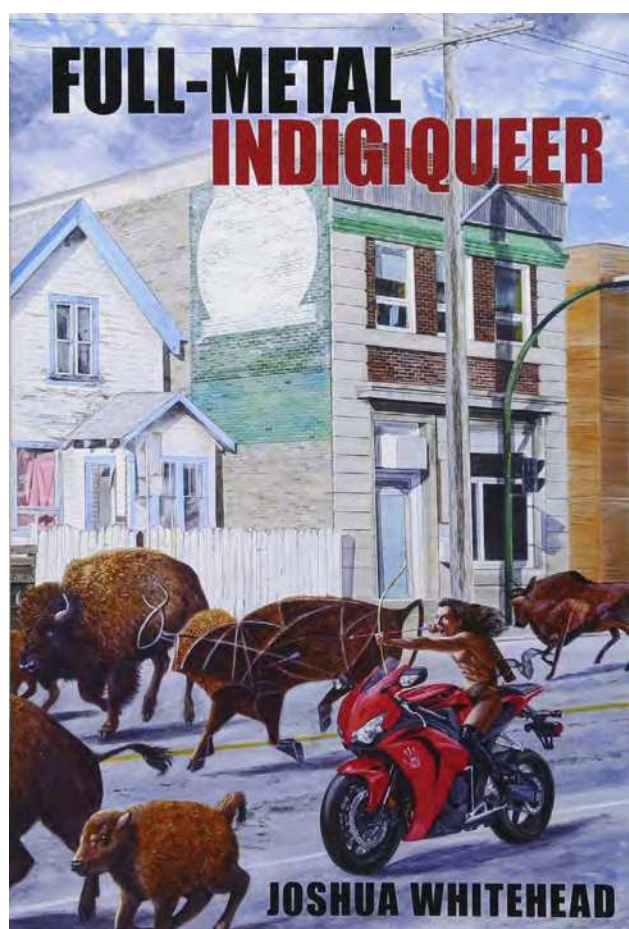
Marie Laing explains below how the term Two-Spirit was coined in Beausejour, Manitoba, and how it is used today by different Indigenous communities.



# Terminology

“Two-spirit is one of many terms that Indigenous folks in the LGBTQ+ rainbow might use to describe themselves. The term two-spirit was coined by Myra Laramee (Fisher River Cree Nation) at the 3rd Annual Gathering of First Nations and American Indian Gays and Lesbians (now in its 35th year and known as the International Two-Spirit Gathering) in 1990. It is a word that is by and for Indigenous people; it speaks to the experiences of resisting colonialism that Indigenous queer and trans people share, while at the same time leaving room for the specific understandings of gender and sexuality in different Indigenous communities across the continent.

Two-spirit means many different things to different people. For some people, two-spirit describes their gender identity and expression. For others, it has more to do with their sexuality. For still others, two-spirit is a term that denotes the specific responsibilities they take up in their communities. For Indigenous queer and trans people, there is not a wrong way to identify as two-spirit.”



“Not all LGBTQ+ Indigenous folks use the term two-spirit to self-identify. Some may use words in their Indigenous languages that describe their ways of being in the world. As always, it is important to mirror the language that people use to describe themselves, and not assume which terms someone uses to describe themself.

**Another term that many Indigenous LGBTQ+ people use to self-identify is Indigiqueer. Indigiqueer is a term coined by Nehiyaw filmmaker TJ Cuthand in 2004. It is also a word that is by and for Indigenous people.”**

The term Indigiqueer has also been popularized by different Indigenous Two-Spirit, queer, and LGBTQ+ artists, including writer Joshua Whitehead, who titled one of his poetry books *Full-Metal Indigiqueer*.<sup>31</sup> The cover page features art by Kent Monkman, another Two-Spirit artist.





## Indigenous Queer & Trans History

“Prior to colonization, most (but not all) Indigenous communities in what is currently known as Canada had ways of understanding gender and sexuality that exceeded the cis-heteronormative binary. Through the processes of colonization (including mass murder, Christianization, residential schools, Land and language theft, and child apprehension) these complex ways of understanding gender and sexuality were replaced with the Western gender binary, compulsory heterosexuality, and the hegemony of the nuclear family. This disruption of our gender systems was a purposeful attempt to destroy our nations.

However, this attempt was not successful. We are still here! In some Indigenous communities, our ways of understanding gender and sexuality survived under the radar, and remain strong today. In other Indigenous communities, 2SLGBTQIA+ community members are working to reclaim and revitalize our cultural understandings of gender, including finding words in our Indigenous languages to describe our genders and our sexualities.

It is important to note that 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous peoples are also constantly creating new traditions, finding new ways to express themselves, and building resilient communities together. Following the path of community organizers in the 1980s and 1990s, two-spirit, Indigiqueer and LGBTQIA+ Indigenous youth today are existing, resisting, and making their communities stronger simply by being themselves!”

### Here are some tips that Marie recommends for supporting Indigenous 2SLGBTQIA+ students:

- Check yourself before making assumptions about who is or is not Indigenous based on how they look
- Avoid making assumptions about Indigenous people’s access or connection to their communities, cultures, territories, and languages — not everyone has access to traditional knowledges or the lands and waters of their territories
- Be aware that all two-spirit, Indigiqueer, and LGBTQIA+ Indigenous students will have different ways they want to be supported — so it’s a good idea to directly ask students what would be helpful for them
- Educate yourself about the Indigenous peoples of the place where you live, and about Canada’s ongoing colonial violence against Indigenous people. [Native Land Digital](#) can be a good starting place!
- Integrate works by queer and trans Indigenous authors and artists into your classes

# Some 2S, Indigiqueer, Indigenous LGBTQIA+ Poetry and Stories

Author, poet, and artist nations and backgrounds were written based on how they have been shared by the individuals themselves.

## Poetry

- Aedan Corey (Inuk and European, Two Spirit writer and artist, raised in Iqaluktuuttiaq/ Cambridge Bay), *INUUJUNG*
- Arielle Twist (nêhiyaw from George Gordon First Nation), *Disintegrate/dissociate* (2019)
- Beth Brant or Degonwadonti or Kaieneke'hak (Irish-Scottish and Kanyen'kehá:ka descent, from Bay of Quinte First Nation and Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory), *A Generous Spirit: Selected Work by Beth Brant* (2019)
- Billy-Ray Belcourt (nêhiyaw, from Driftpile Cree Nation), *This Wound is A World* (2017)
- jaye simpson (Two-Spirit Oji-Cree of the Buffalo Clan with roots in Sapotaweyak and Skownan Cree Nation), *It Was Never Going to Be Okay* (2020)
- Kaitlyn Purcell (Denesuline from Smith's Landing First Nation), *?bedayine* (2019) [poem/novella]
- Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg, Alderville First Nation), *This Accident of Being Lost* (2017)
- Marilyn Dumont (Cree/Métis), *A Really Good Brown Girl* (1996)
- Michelle Sylliboy (Mi'kmaq), *Kiskajeyi – I Am Ready* (2019)
- Norma Dunning (Inuk), *Eskimo Pie: A Poetics of Inuit Identity* (2020)
- Ozhaawashkozi Anung Kwe / Laura Kooji (Anishinaabe, Ojibway from Nipissing First Nation) *No Rainbow and Other Poems* (2018)
- Rebecca Thomas (Mi'kmaq) *I Place You in the Fire* (2020)
- Red Rising Magazine: Issue 7 TWO-SPIRIT (various authors; 2017) [contains poetry, art & articles]
- Rosanna Deerchild (nêhiyaw, O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation), *This is a Small Northern Town* (2008)
- Shannon Webb-Campbell (Mi'kmaq, Qalipu First Nation), *Lunar Tides* (2022)
- Shayne Michael (Wolastoqiyik) *Fif et sauvage* (2020)
- Sky Dancer Louise Bernice Halfe (nêhiyaw, from Saddle Lake Reserve), *Awâsis–kinky and dishevelled* (2021)
- Smokii Sumac (Ktunaxa), *you are enough: love poems for the end of the world* (2018)

## Stories (Written)

- Aedan Corey (Inuk and European, Two Spirit writer and artist, raised in Iqaluktuuttiaq/Cambridge Bay), short story *Anaanatiaq* (Nipiit Magazine, 2020)
- Alec Butler (Mi'kmaq), *Rough Paradise* (2014)
- Cherie Dimaline (Georgian Bay Métis Community), *The Marrow Thieves* (2017)
- Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee Nation), *Kinship* (2005)
- Darrel J McLeod (Cree, Treaty 8), *Mamaskatch: A Cree Coming of Age* (2018)
- Joshua Whitehead (Two-Spirit, Oji-nêhiyaw member of Peguis First Nation), *Love After The End: An Anthology of Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer Speculative Fiction* (2020)
- Jas M Morgan (Cree, Saulteaux, and Métis heritage), *nîtisânak* (2018)
- Lee Maracle (Salish & Cree; Stó:lō nation) *My Conversations with Canadians* (2017)
- Norma Dunning (Inuk), *Annie Muktuk and Other Stories* (2017)

## Audio

- *Media Indigena* [podcast]
- *Unreserved with Rosanna Deerchild* [podcast]
- Edzi'u (Tahltan & Tlingit), *Kime Ani* (2018) [album]
- G.R. Gritt (Anishinaabe/Métis) *Ancestors* (2020) [album]
- Jayli Wolf (Anishinaabe/Cree) *Wild Whisper* (2021) [album]
- Jeremy Dutcher (Wolastoqiyik, of the Tobique First Nation) *Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa* (2018) [album]
- Faith Nolan (African, Mi'kmaq & Irish) *Africville* (1986) [album]
- Iskwē (Cree Métis from the Red River Valley) *The Fight Within* (2017) [album]

## Video

- Bretten Hallam (Mi'kmaq), *Elmiteskuatl* (2018) or *Wildhood* (2021) or *North Mountain* (2015)
- Diane Obomsawin (Abenaki), *I Like Girls* (2016)
- Karmella Cen Benedito De Barros (Nêhiyaw and Afro-Brazilian Cafuzo) & Lexi Mellish-Mingo (Afro-Guyanese, English & Scottish) *Where We Meet* (2020)
- Kiley May (Kanien'kehá:ka), *Disclosure* (2021)
- Marjorie Beaucage (Métis), *Coming In Stories: Two Spirit in Saskatchewan* (2017)
- TJ Cuthand (Plains Cree, Scottish & Irish), *Kwêskosîw* (She Whistles) (2021)
- *Two Soft Things, Two Hard Things* (Mark Kenneth Woods & Michael Yerxa, 2016)<sup>32</sup>

Now that you have learned about the **2S** in the **2SLGBTQIA+** spectrum, check out this interactive resource to have a step-by-step breakdown of other identities, as well as learn more about Two-Spirit identities.

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE PRESENTATION](#)

## Presentation preview:

### Important terms: 2slgbtqia+ literacy

All of us have been **systematically-denied** education about sexual orientation and gender identity and expression in schools

**Understanding sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression is a literacy**, meaning it takes time and practice to become more knowledgeable and confident

**Now is a chance for you to learn more** about 2SLGBTQIA+ identities

1



# Reflection questions:

- Do you identify with any of these terms? Do you know anyone who identifies with any of these terms?
- Which terms did you know already? Which were new to you?
- Were you surprised by any of the definitions?
- How comfortable did you feel saying '2SLGBTQIA+' before looking at the resource? How comfortable do you feel now?
- How comfortable did you feel saying 'queer' before looking at the resource? How comfortable do you feel now?
- Would you feel comfortable explaining these terms to someone else?
- Are there any terms you still feel confused about?
- What are some other ways you can continue to learn about these different identities and experiences?

**Now that you've learned about the 2SLGBTQIA+ initialism and the differences between gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation, you'll learn more about one cause of gender and sexual policing: cis-heteronormativity.**







What is cis-heteronormativity?<sup>33</sup>

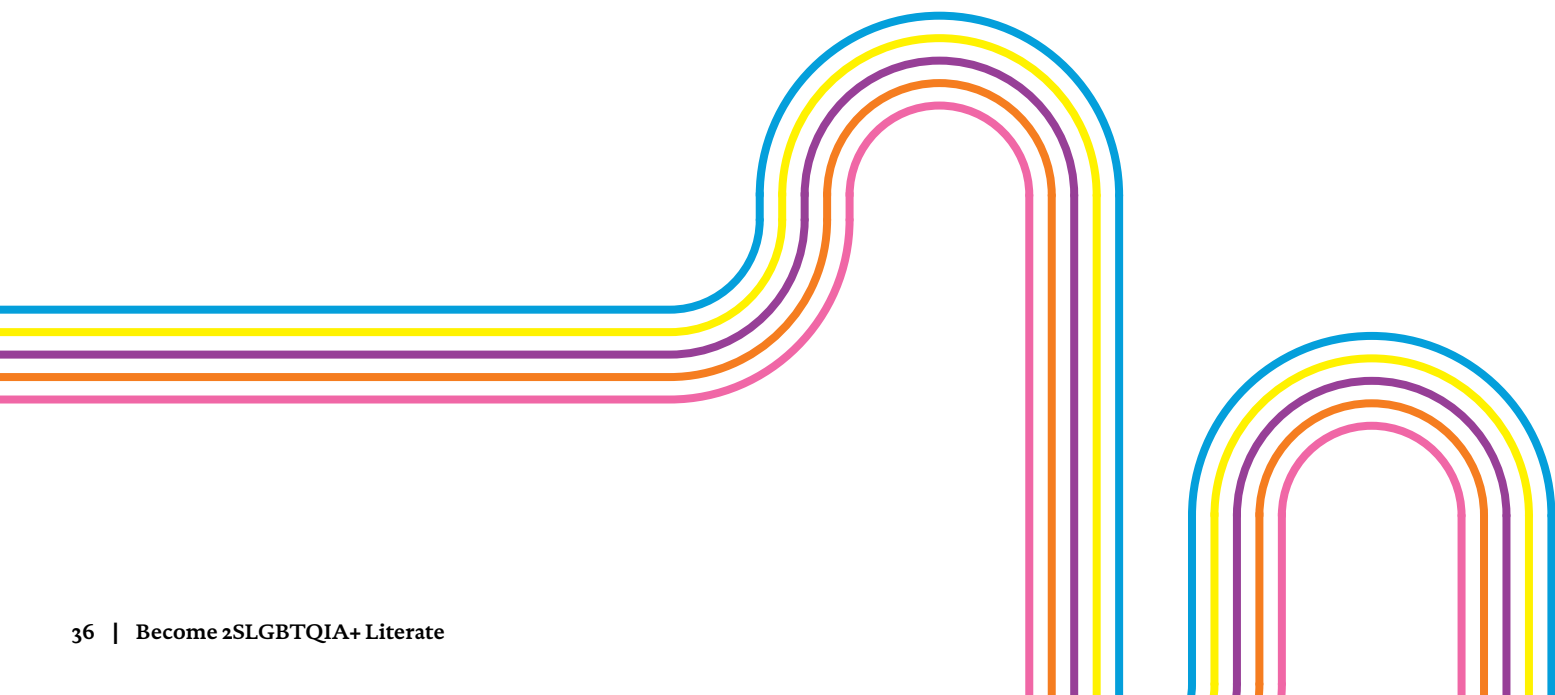


**Cis-heteronormativity** is the oppressive belief that cisgender people (people who identify with the sex they were assigned at birth) and heterosexual people (people who feel attraction to a gender different from their own) are “**natural**” and “**normal**.” Within this system is the implicit belief 2SLGBTQIA+ people are unnatural and abnormal.

[Listen to a clip](#)<sup>34</sup> of an interview conducted by John Grube and Lionel Collier for the Foolscap Oral History Project. The interviewee, who is identified only as ‘DM,’ talks about pretending to be straight as a young adult. The interview was digitized and presented online by The ArQuives in collaboration with the [LGBTQ Oral History Digital Collaboratory](#). For further information on cisheteronormativity, this [short video](#) provides further explanation.



You might be thinking, *I don't think that being 2SLGBTQIA+ is unnatural or abnormal, so I don't uphold cis-heteronormativity.* **It's important to address some of the unconscious ways in which people reinforce the idea that 2SLGBTQIA+ people are the “Other.”**





# Reflection questions:

- When you meet someone for the first time, do you assume you know their gender?
- Do you assume they are cis? Do you assume you would be able to tell if they were trans?
- When you meet someone for the first time, do you assume they are straight?
- When someone dresses in a particular way, do you make assumptions about their sexual orientation?
- How comfortable would you feel if someone assumed you were queer or trans?
- If a person says they have a partner, do you assume they are part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community?
- If a woman says she has a boyfriend, do you assume she is straight (or do you consider that she might be bisexual, pansexual, or queer)? Do you consider that her boyfriend might be bisexual, pansexual, or queer?
- If someone uses multiple pronouns, do you typically use the pronouns that correspond with the sex you think they were assigned at birth? For example, if someone is non-binary and says they use 'she/they' pronouns, do you mostly use 'she' for them?
- When you are talking to people about dating, do you assume that everyone who is dating wants to have sex or feels sexual attraction?
- If you are someone who feels sexual attraction, do you find it hard to imagine that someone might not feel sexual attraction? Do you feel bad for people who do not feel sexual attraction?

# Learn from the research:

Gender and sexual policing, which is a direct result of cis-heteronormativity, happens frequently in schools.

## Cis-heteronormativity is at the root of subtle and overt forms of gender and sexual policing.

- Subtle forms of gender and sexual policing are microaggressions: exclusionary language, absence of perspectives, and tokenism.
- Overt forms of gender and sexual policing are queerphobia and transphobia (homophobia, biphobia, lesbophobia, transphobia, intersexphobia etc.): physical, emotional, and sexual harassment and discrimination.

## Being deemed “abnormal” and “unnatural” (aka living in a cis-heteronormative society) can have a negative impact on your physical and mental health.

Ilan H. Meyer came up with a framework and theory called minority stress theory to explain the detrimental health affects of oppression on marginalized people. His research can be applied to 2SLGBTQIA+ people, as well as BIPOC, disabled people, people living in poverty, and people affected by misogyny.

Meyer, I.H. (2003, September). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychol Bull.* 129(5): 674–697.

## Did you know that...

- Trans youth are a higher risk of reporting psychological distress, major depression, self-harm, and suicidal ideation and attempts than cis youth
- Gay, lesbian, and bisexual people are more likely than heterosexual people to rate their mental health as fair or poor, to have mood and anxiety disorders, and to report having suicidal thoughts
- Bisexual people are even more likely than gay and lesbian people to report poor mental health<sup>35</sup>

In 2011, a national survey on homophobia and transphobia in Canadian high schools found that **64% of all LGBTQ+ youth felt unsafe in schools.** In 2021, ten years after that initial survey, the majority of 2SLGBTQ+ youth (62%) still felt unsafe in schools, meaning that gender and sexual policy has not gone away in the past decade.

Peter, T. Campbell, C.P., & Taylor, C. (2021). Still in every class in every school: *Final report on the second climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools.* Toronto, ON: Eagle Canada Human Rights Trust. <https://egale.ca/awareness/still-in-every-class/>

# Learn from a colleague:



Teacher and school counsellor, Sarah Wilson, explains what minority stress theory is and why it matters.

Sarah M. Wilson (she/they), is a Registered Clinical Counsellor working at the Neurodiversity Family Centre in Victoria BC. She has been educating classrooms and running workshops on safe spaces for trans youth for close to a decade. With a background in teaching and school counselling, Sarah specializes in ADHD, ASD, OCD, PTSD, cPTSD, and supporting queer youth.

## What is minority stress theory?

Minority stress theory is an extension of social stress theory.

It identifies the higher levels of stress experienced by marginalized groups or demographics.

## What is the minority stress model?

The minority stress model was developed by Ilan H. Meyer in 2003 as a way to assess and identify unique strengths and vulnerabilities experienced by marginalized groups and how they influence and impact mental health outcomes for said groups.

## Minority stress is:

**Unique:** The experience of members within the marginalized group in question are distinct and unique to that group alone.


**Chronic:** The status/identity of members of the group are unchangeable; e.g. gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity.

**Socially based:** The cause of the experienced stress lies not with the group members but with the conflict stemming from existing in a dominant and oppressive culture. So too is coloniality, whiteness, ableism and sanism – more on that later!”

**Cis-heteronormativity** contributes to minority stress because it creates conditions where people are socially, physically, and spiritually punished for being “unnatural” and “abnormal.” Queerphobia is the most obvious symptom of cis-heteronormativity; however, gender and sexual norms show up in many other ways, including in everyday language, behaviours, and education practices.

Take for example, that many teachers refer to their students as “girls and boys” when doing class activities. Or the fact that there are “girls” and “boys” change rooms. Within the belief system that there is a need for separate washrooms and change rooms are underlying assumptions about attraction and danger. There is the assumption that men and women will always be attracted to one another and that girls need to be protected from predators (who are usually “boys and men”).

There is a lot to unpack there! Spoiler: patriarchy (the denigration of women to dominate them) and femmephobia (the hatred of femininity) are linked to normative gender roles. So is coloniality and whiteness – more on that later!



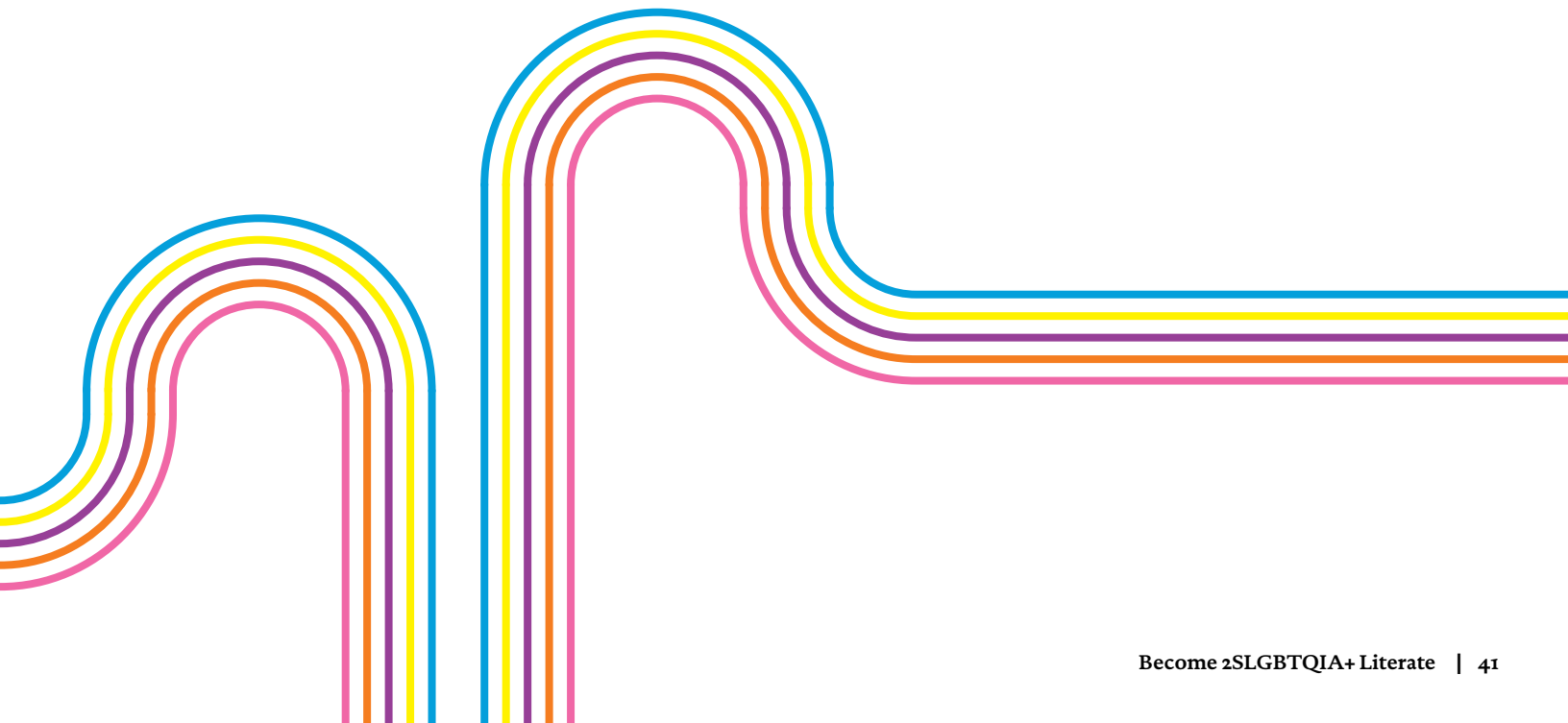
As a kid, I seem to have had the opinion that it was a matter of personal preference which of the sex roles you chose to live. It wasn't until the day that I found a new patch of pubic hair starting to sprout that I really realized that I was stuck with what I had, and that I really, *really* didn't want it or the role playing that went with it. This is when the monster first emerged. My parents tell me that I was a saintly little kid, and that the onset of puberty replaced their little saint with a big monster. They didn't know the half of it. The monster was between my legs, and it was hard all the time. The monster was the hormones coursing through my blood, making almost every inch of me feel wrong, and which made physical contact almost hurt. The monster was what all of this did to me. I couldn't think straight for even five or ten minutes. All of a sudden I realized why all the other dick-bearers were chasing after the girls, because something very ugly inside of me was telling me to do the same, and I hated it. I hated myself, and I hated what I was becoming even more. People started using the term "man" to describe me, which made my stomach churn.

**Above:** [Selections](#) from "Reading Ourselves: Transsexual Women Tell Their Stories." Contributors are listed in alphabetical order (as Anne, Cailin, Dallas, Dawn, Davina, Filisa, Margaret, Margo, Merissa, Michelle, Nancy, Rachel, Rena, Riki Anne, and Wendi) but their pieces are semi-anonymous (page 1 of 2).



In my preschool years and early grade school, I was just as comfortable with playing house and dolls with the other girls as I was with hanging around with the boys. I confess that I never did get the hang of or interest for most boys' games, such as playing war or getting into fights or playing sports. For that matter, I also have to confess that I was quite confused over the strict delineation of the two roles. I really couldn't understand why I wasn't supposed to play with dolls unless it had an overt killing theme, such as GI Joe, and I did feel somewhat alienated by the fact that all the approved "boy" activities seemed to involve inflicting pain, or at least pretending to inflict pain.

**Above:** [Selections](#) from "Reading Ourselves: Transsexual Women Tell Their Stories." Contributors are listed in alphabetical order (as Anne, Cailin, Dallas, Dawn, Davina, Filisa, Margaret, Margo, Merissa, Michelle, Nancy, Rachel, Rena, Riki Anne, and Wendi) but their pieces are semi-anonymous (page 2 of 2).<sup>36</sup>







How have colonization and white supremacy shaped cis-heteronormativity?<sup>37</sup>





# To make sense of cis-heteronormativity, let's go back a little bit in time!

**Colonization is the act of settling in a new place and imposing control over those who already live there.** In Canada, this was done by the French and the British. Settlers arrived with assumptions based on the societies they had left behind, and they also brought their churches and associated ideologies with them. After crossing the ocean, and learning how rich the Land was, settlers developed policies that would enshrine them as the “rightful” owners of the Land; they did so because they wanted the natural resources and the power that ownership over these resources would bring. In order to gain control, the settlers aimed to remove Indigenous peoples from the Land.

Settlers did this in a variety of ways.

Were you taught that French and British colonizers took Land from Indigenous peoples?

Were you taught about the forced relocations of the Inuit? Or the dispossession of Métis Lands?

Were you taught that colonial leaders carried out a genocide that took Indigenous children away from their families, forbade Indigenous peoples from speaking their own languages, and tried to assimilate Indigenous people into European societies? Were you taught that Indigenous children are still being apprehended at alarmingly high rates?

Were you taught about the disc system imposed on the Inuit?

Were you taught about the Unorganized Territories Game Preservation Act and other legislation that impacted Indigenous peoples' rights to hunt for food?

Did you learn about how the agricultural and industrial development of Canada was facilitated through slavery and forced labour? Prior to the passage of the *Slavery Abolition Act* in 1883, thousands of African and Indigenous people had been enslaved in Canada.

Have you reflected on how the commodification of the Land leads to Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people going missing and being murdered?

**Through colonization, the British and French imparted their own values and ideas of what was and was not acceptable; this included imparting their ideas about gender and sexuality. White male colonizers brought with them ideas such as:**

- There are only two genders: male and female
- White women of an upper class are less than white men of the same class, but are still in need of protection and belong to their husbands
- Black women and men are property
- Indigenous women and men are ‘uncivilized’
- Queer and gender-nonconforming Indigenous people are evidence that they are less ‘civilized’
- Sex is only acceptable for reproductive purposes
- Women do not have sex (or sexuality) without men



These ideas have material effects. Until 1951, for example, the Indian Act made it so that an Indigenous woman would lose her status if she married a man who did not have status; a white woman who married an Indigenous man, however, would *gain* status rights, as would their children. This aligned with the Eurocentric idea that women's social and legal identities were dependent on men. Indigenous peoples continue to be considered minors under the domain of the federal government, in that, through the Indian Act remaining in place, they are still treated as though they are unable to make their own decisions.

Many (among them Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Teddy Syrette, Joshua Whitehead, Lee Maracle, Riley Yesno, Billy-Ray Belcourt and Qwo-Li Driskill) have spoken and written about the damage colonization brought to the ways peoples of Indigenous nations express and perceive gender (roles) and/or sexuality. Tomson Highway, and many others, have discussed gendering in language and its impacts on how we engage with one another. Highway has pointed out: "Aboriginal languages divide their universe not into genders but into that which is animate and that which is inanimate—things, that is, that have a soul and things that do not."<sup>38</sup>

It's important to add here that, although "two-spirit" is considered by many as a pan-Indigenous term, each nation may have different representations, perspectives, and terminology surrounding gender and sexuality. For example, for the Inuit, sipiniq or kipijuituq are considered to be a third gender, whose sex changed either immediately before, or during birth<sup>39</sup>. Someone who is Ojibwe may use terms such as egwakwe or ayekwe (which could refer to someone who is intersex, or trans, or two-spirit)<sup>40</sup>; someone who is Lakota may use winkte to refer to a third gender or to one who is gay or a lesbian<sup>41</sup>; someone who is Cree may use iskwêhkân (one who acts as a woman) or âyahkwêw (which may relate to being trans or a third gender).<sup>42,43</sup>

It's important to look at the territory you are in, and learn what the nations around you believe. As was mentioned by Marie, there are resources to help you learn what territory you are in!



To read more on how colonization/colonialism has impacted how we perceive gender and sexuality, check out author & poet Alok Vaid-Menon's book reports [here](#).





# Unsettling Colonial Mindsets Around Gender & Sexuality

Now that you've taken some time to learn about how cis-heteronormativity is shaped by whiteness and colonization, take some time to reflect on your own socialization. Think about how your beliefs about gender and sexuality were shaped by your relationship to place, culture, language and religion. Consider how you found yourself on the Land you currently live on (e.g., as a second-generation immigrant from the Philippines, a refugee from Somalia, an Irish settler whose family has been here for generations, a person of Senegalese descent whose ancestors were enslaved and brought to this Land, a Haida migrant who now lives on Anishinabeg territory, a person who is Kanien'kehá:ka who is living in their ancestral territory, an Afro-Latino person who came from the Caribbean, etc.).

Where are you from? Where is your family from? What is their religion, and what is their caste? How has religion and society treated people who don't necessarily fit within their ideas around what is normal? Whose opinions and beliefs have you been surrounded by or influenced by? Consider how you learned about gender and sexuality both through what was said and what was not said (by your family, friends, teachers, religious leaders, and others in your communities).

**Intersectionality** is the understanding and acknowledgement that there are overlapping lenses and identities through which people may be understood and discriminated against.

Segment 1 (00:00-05:01) of [this clip](#) has May El-Abdullah & Melissa Leveaux (the latter, of CHUO 89.FM) interviewing Deep Dickcollective (primarily Juba Kalamka) about the intersection of race and sexuality both in hip hop and beyond it. Segment 2 (05:02-07:08) of [the same clip](#) has El-Abdallah & Laveaux interviewing Deadlee about masculinity and homosexuality in Black and Latino/a/x communities, and being a queer Black rapper.<sup>44</sup> *Note that while interviewee(s) use the word "fag" to refer to themselves, this word is considered offensive by many.*

Watch [this interview with Frank Folino](#), queer Deaf leader and advocate, as part of the Queer Liberation Theory Project (in particular, watch 2:32-4:32 to hear Frank discuss the dual identity of being queer and Deaf.)<sup>45</sup>

**When you close your eyes and imagine people from 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, who do you picture first?**

Even though people who are not straight and cisgender exist across all cultures, **there is a tendency for some folks to associate (2S)LGBTQ+ people with whiteness and to associate Western cultures with being "more accepting" of queerness and transness.**

This is ironic! It was the white European colonizers who criminalized and pathologized gender and sexual nonconformity, yet it's the settler-colonial state of Canada that is named an international leader for 2SLGBTQIA+ people. Homophobia and transphobia, then, can be understood as products of colonization and white supremacy.

# Respectability politics may play a role in (internalized) homophobia and transphobia.

**Respectability politics** is a civil rights strategy that is sometimes used by marginalized people to counter the stigmatization that they experience.

Earlier, you learned about colonial ideals of (wealthy) white women being in need of protection. This did not apply to Black or Indigenous women. The term ‘respectability politics’ comes from [Evelyn Higginbotham](#),<sup>46</sup> who studied how some early 20th century Black women would present themselves as polite, chaste, and “pure” as a means of counteracting racist stereotypes. This was a survival strategy, meant to secure their safety (and, maybe, acceptance) in white institutions.

Queerness and transness were also seen as incompatible with colonial values, although in a different way from race. This has meant that some 2SLGBTQIA+ people have historically tried to assimilate into dominant society.



**Above:** Demonstrators at Parliament Hill, Ottawa in 1971, in support of the Toronto Gay Action brief, “We Demand”. [Photo](#) by Jearld Moldenhauer.<sup>47</sup>

## Learn more about respectability politics ...

While some queer and trans people thought liberation would come from protest, others believed acceptance would come through assimilation. Read excerpts about the We Demand protest below, and read the article in full [on The ArQuives’ website here](#).

“On August 28th, 1971, approximately one hundred individuals from Toronto Gay Action, the Montreal front de libération homosexuel, the Homophile Association at the University of Toronto, and the Gays of Ottawa gathered on Parliament Hill to protest the ongoing discrimination [against] homosexuals in Canada. A similar demonstration was held on the same day in Vancouver for those who could not travel to Ottawa.

This, on the two-year anniversary of the (partial) decriminalization of homosexuality in 1969, was a reminder of the limitations of this amendment to the Criminal Code. As Charlie Hill, an organiser and speaker at the event, explained in a recent interview, “[a] lot of people, either gay or non-gay, thought there were no legal issues for gays. That was nonsense. There were still a lot of laws discriminating against gays. We did it in Ottawa because it was directed where federal laws were made.”



## The activists made ten demands ...

### WE DEMAND

1. The removal of the terms “gross indecency” and “indecent acts” from the Criminal Code and their replacement with specific offences applied equally to homosexual and heterosexual acts;
2. Removal of “gross indecency” and “buggery” as grounds for indictment as a “dangerous sexual offender”;
3. Mandating a uniform age of consent for “homosexual”<sup>48</sup> and heterosexual acts;
4. Amendments to the *Immigration Act*, 1952, which barred “homosexuals” from entering Canada or applying as immigrants or permanent residents. People with a “constitutional psychopathic personality” were also denied entry, a category that included “homosexuals”;
5. The right to equal employment and promotion at all government levels;
6. Amendments to the *Divorce Act*, 1968, which placed sodomy and homosexual acts in the same category as physical or mental cruelty, bestiality, and rape as grounds for divorce;
7. Deciding child custody based on the merits of individual parents, irrespective of the sexuality of the parent. In practice, courts often denied gays and lesbians custody of their children;
8. To know whether it was the RCMP’s practice to spy on and identify gays and lesbians in the federal government in order to purge them and if so, to end this practice and destroy all records;
9. The right of gays, lesbians and bisexuals to serve in the armed forces;
10. Amendments to human rights laws so that they extended the same privileges and freedoms enjoyed by the rest of society to gays, lesbians, and bisexuals.<sup>49</sup>

“Despite being recognised as a milestone in Canadian queer history today (albeit limited to cis-queer individuals), at the time [the letter] received little support both inside and outside of the queer community. **This would remain a problem in the decades to come, highlighting a tension between those who believe acceptance of difference is won by explicit struggle, such as was waged by the members of We Demand, and those who believe it is won by silent assimilation.**

But given the level of state-sanctioned discrimination the We Demand list highlighted, it is not hard to understand why certain individuals have felt this way about queer activist politics at times. This only further signals the need for community outreach and support. Today, it is a very different scene where Pride draws thousands of individuals into the streets, but there still remains many individuals and groups for whom visibility is a privilege they cannot access without a degree of fear of physical, economic and social violence.”<sup>50</sup>

### Canadian trustee wins settlement in lawsuit

WINNIPEG, Canada -- A lesbian school trustee accused of promoting a gay agenda has received an apology from a radio station as part of a settlement in a defamation suit, the Canadian Press reported. **Kristine Barr** sued a radio station after two DJs criticized her on air in 1999, accusing her of promoting a gay agenda and attempting to recruit children. Barr supported an effort for a school division to address homophobia in the schools, her lawyer told the Canadian Press. Barr released a document she received from the radio station saying the station apologizes "without reservation for several incorrect allegations or imputations that were made about her" by radio hosts Gerald Fast and John Collison. "This apology sends a strong message to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community," Barr said. "We deserve to be treated with dignity and respect at all times and can counter the myths and stereotypes that are perpetuated about us."

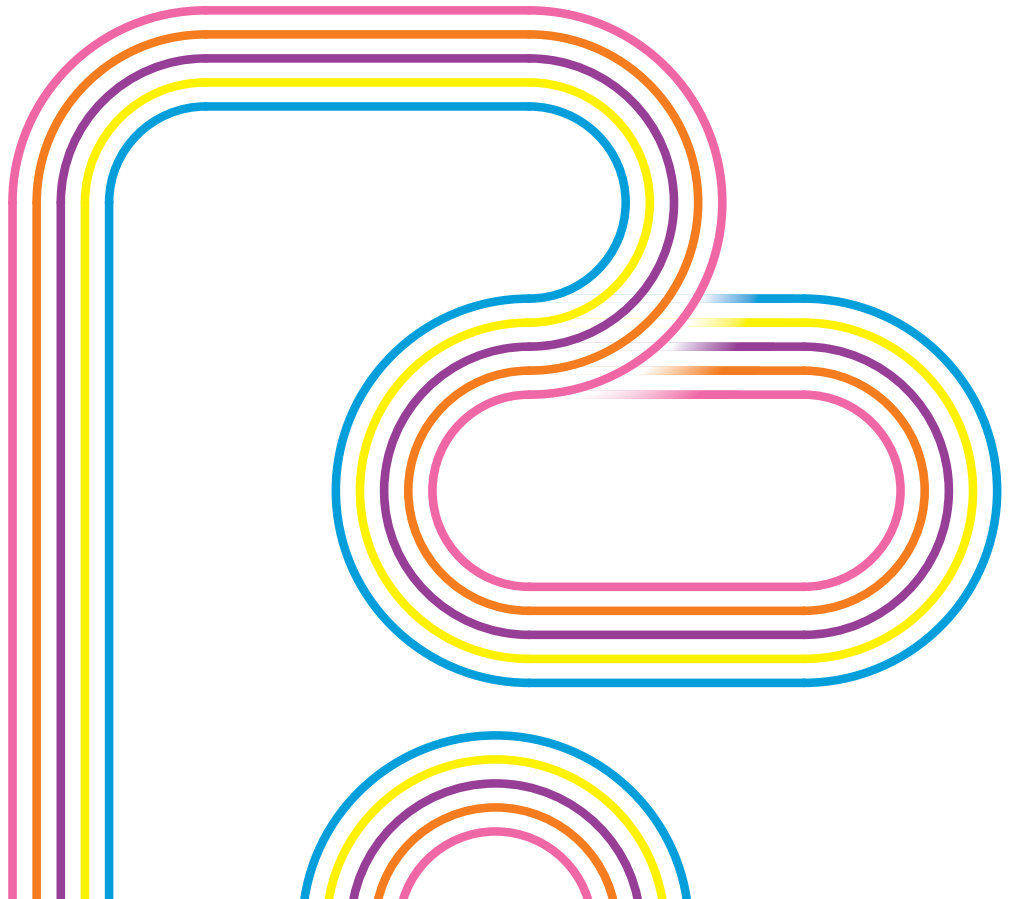
-- From staff and wire reports

This article appeared in the issue of:  
**October 19, 2001**

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**Above:** In 1999, Winnipeg teacher Kristine Barr was accused by two radio DJs of promoting a “gay agenda” because of her sexual orientation and her support for anti-homophobia education. She won a defamation suit against the radio station two years later.<sup>51</sup> Read the PDF [here](#).





# Reflection questions:

- Have you ever heard people say that there is a gay or trans “agenda” in schools?
- How do you think respectability politics figures into that rhetoric?
- How do you think discussions about a “gay agenda” or “trans agenda” affect 2SLGBTQIA+ people who are trying to exist in school spaces (including students, teachers, and parents/caregivers)?



# Activity

Reflect on someone in your life who is queerphobic or transphobic (if you cannot think of anyone specific in your life, think of a media figure). Do they say hateful things about queer or trans people, or do they try not to talk about queerness or transness at all? Why do you think they have these beliefs? Could it be a form of respectability politics?

Later in this guide, we'll offer some practical strategies for addressing queerphobia and transphobia in your school.

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## How have ableism and sanism shaped cis-heteronormativity?



I'm a person 1st, 2nd label liberation.(198-)  
Button. Catalogue number CB876. The ArQuives: Canada's LGBTQ2+ Archives. Toronto, ON.  
<https://collections.arquives.ca/en/permalink/artifacts5968>.



## Ableism is ...

A viewpoint towards disability that frames nondisabled people as “normal” and disabled people as “abnormal.” It is a form of systemic oppression that affects disabled people as well as people who are perceived as disabled.

## Sanism is ...

A viewpoint towards mental illness and neurodiversity that privileges people who think in neurotypical ways and pathologizes those who think differently. The term sanism was coined by legal and medical scholar Morton Birnbaum in the 1960s and focused on those with mental illness. Today, sanism has been expanded to include autistic and other neurodiverse people. Like ableism, it is a form of systemic oppression that affects neurodiverse people and those perceived as such.

**There is often silence and invisibility around 2SLGBTQIA+ people with disabilities and mental illnesses.**



**Above:** I Support Disabled Lesbians and Gays button, date unknown.<sup>52</sup>

Although they make up one of the largest marginalized groups worldwide, disabled people (especially those with intellectual or physical disabilities) are often de-sexualized.

[Listen to this 1987 interview](#)<sup>53</sup> from Gaywire CIUT FM wherein Ellen Ager interviews Scott MacArthur about what issues were brought up at the Coalition for Gay Rights in Ontario Conference workshop on the concerns of disabled people in the gay community. MacArthur discusses barriers and acceptance problems in both the gay community and the disabled community and argues, “disabled people have the right to a sexual life.”

You may also wish to read Alan Santinele Martino’s chapter, titled “Also Here, Also Queer: The Work of LGBT+ Disabled Activists/Scholars in “Crippling” Sexualities,” in *Young, Disabled and LGBT+: Voices, Identities and Intersections* (2020), which also looks, in part, at the desexualization of people with disabilities.

[Listen to this conversation](#) between Tom Warner and Jean B., where Jean describes setting up an early (1980s) queer physical disability group called New Horizons in Alberta. This interview was among many that Tom Warner conducted for his book *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada*.<sup>54</sup>

**The language of mental illness has been used to pathologize queer and trans people.**

As you learned earlier, queerness and transness have historically been classified as mental illnesses; ‘homosexuality’ was listed in the DSM until 1974, and ‘gender dysphoria’ is still listed as of 2022. In response to this, some queer and trans people have objected to these classifications as a form of **respectability politics**. Others, including the activists who worked for the removal of homosexuality from the DSM, came from the anti-psychiatry movement. For these activists, their objection was to the institution of psychiatry itself and to the emotional, mental, and physical harm that doctors have caused in an effort to “cure” people of their queerness or transness.





## Background

In 1987, the British Columbia Coalition of People with Disabilities (BCCPD) began to examine AIDS as a disability.

Following from the historical over-protection of people with disabilities and denial of their sexuality, there was little or no accessible, appropriate sexual health information available to them. Convinced of the lack of knowledge about HIV transmission within our communities and of the potential for coalition-building with the HIV/AIDS community, the BCCPD opened the AIDS & Disability Action Program (ADAP) in 1988.

Creating HIV/AIDS education materials was a priority for the ADAP team. Working committees were formed for different disability sectors – mental health consumers, people with physical disabilities, those who are deaf, people with visual impairment or blindness, and those with developmental disabilities.

Consumers and service providers were represented on the committees, which developed content and formats for education materials. These included high and low literacy pamphlets and booklets, Braille books and audio tapes. They have

## Resource Centre

ADAP continues to help people with disabilities realize that they may be at risk and that they can take steps to prevent HIV infection. Our educational and workshop materials, appropriate for people with various disabilities, are available to individuals and groups.

Along with its own materials, the ADAP has developed a clearinghouse of related materials from other sources. The Program offers information and resource packages about:

- basic HIV/AIDS education for consumers, self-advocates and service providers
- policy development for directors and management of service-providing agencies.

## Workshops

The ADAP team would be pleased to develop a workshop tailored to meet the needs of your group, whatever your level of knowledge. To address the concerns of members, clients, staff or directors, they may include any of the following topics:

- sexuality & diversity
- basic HIV/AIDS prevention
- condom use
- homophobia & heterosexism
- community resources
- psycho-social issues
- coalition-building
- ethical & legal issues



since been distributed widely across Canada and elsewhere.

In February of 1994, the AIDS & Disability Action Program hosted a "National AIDS and Disability Stakeholders Workshop". Workshop participants included representatives of national cross-disability and AIDS organizations. They developed the following consensus statement:

*"Acknowledging that HIV infection and AIDS are disabilities and that our diverse communities share issues and concerns; therefore, we agree that a partnership is in our respective best interests. This partnership will be built on an equality rights framework, be consumer-driven, and will implement mutual support and collective action."*

**Above:** Pamphlet produced by the British Columbia Coalition of People with Disabilities (BCCPD) for its AIDS and Disability Action Project (ADAP) listing educational resources and workshops on HIV/AIDS for disabled communities.<sup>55</sup> The BCCPD is now the Disability Alliance BC. To read the PDF, click [here](#).

It's important to note that AIDS has also been understood as a disability. Like those with other disabilities, people with HIV/AIDS are made to interact with systems that do not effectively address their social, medical, and economic needs. The recognition of these commonalities led to the formation of partnerships between disability activists and AIDS activists, as in the case of ADAP. Additionally, the de-sexualization of disabled people has meant that information on HIV/AIDS was not made available in their communities; ADAP was, in part, also a response to this.



# Reflection questions:

- Do you think 'disabled' is a negative word? Do you think 'mentally ill' is a negative phrase?
- Do you have a disability? Is it a visible disability or an invisible one? How do people interact with you when they are aware of your disability?
- Have you been diagnosed with a mental illness? Do you feel comfortable sharing that with others? If you have, how have people reacted?
- Do you always assume you can tell when someone has a disability? Do you always assume you can tell when someone is mentally ill?
- What traits do you believe people with disabilities commonly have? What traits do you believe mentally ill people commonly have?
- Do you interact with people with disabilities and mental illnesses differently than you do with individuals without disabilities or mental illnesses? Do you speak to them in a tone that is more childlike? If they have a caretaker or aide, do you speak directly to that person instead of to them?
- When you see an individual with a disability, do you try to assist them? Do you ask someone if they want help or proceed to help them in a way you think they need?
- When you think about people with disabilities, do you often consider them asexual?
- Do you view people with disabilities and mental illnesses as "at risk" of being coerced or abused?
- Do you think people are disabled by their impairment or by society's treatment of their impairment?

# Learn from colleagues:

Listen to Teukie Martin, and Ky Kawolics talk about how ablesanism (ableism and sanism) shows up in schools for trans students and what you can do to better support trans youth.



**Teukie Martin** (they/them; pictured above on the left)<sup>56</sup> is an inclusive educator and doctoral student/researcher working in the fields of Inclusive Education, Disability Studies and Gender Studies. **Ky Kawolics** (ze/hir; pictured above on the right)<sup>57</sup> is a marriage and family therapist with a focus on working with trans youth, their families, and their schools. Both live and work on the unceded lands of the Cayuga and Onondaga peoples.

## Ablesanism and trans students

“Historically, being queer and/or trans has been constructed as a form of physical and mental pathology, and this legacy still impacts how trans people are forced to navigate the world. For example, ‘gender dysphoria’ is still listed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-V)*, with diagnostic criteria that focus on binary gender categories, emotional distress, and static desires. Yet trans people seeking to access certain gender affirming medical interventions, change the gender marker on their government documents, or receive certain gender-related accommodations are often required to have some form of medical ‘proof’ of their transness. Although being trans is no longer regarded as a psychiatric disorder, this history has greatly impacted how schools approach trans students and their needs.”

## How do ableism and sanism show up in the lives of trans students?

- Conceptualizations of trans experience that center pathology and suffering may lead teachers and administrators to see trans students as potential liabilities, resulting in increased surveillance and segregation of trans students
- Medical gatekeeping, such as requiring formal gender dysphoria diagnoses in order to receive support and accommodations in school
- Trans students may be objectified by cisgender people as symbols of acceptance, as educational tools, or as “inspiration porn”
- Gender inclusive practice is seen as an individual accommodation rather than a universal good that benefits all students
- Students are expected to disclose highly personal information in order to receive gender-related accommodations; accommodations often have to be negotiated for and are expected to be “reasonable”

- Locating the distress of trans students in individual pathology allows structural issues to go unchallenged and unquestioned, such as when students experiencing emotional distress as a result of bullying/microaggressions from students and teachers may be labeled as “anxious” or as having “behavioural problems” rather than the problem being located in transmisia [the suffix ‘-mistic’ means ‘hatred’; some people use the word ‘transmisia’ (‘hatred of trans people’) instead of ‘transphobia’ (‘fear of trans people’)]
- This struggle is compounded for students who also have psychiatric diagnoses
- Students, particularly those who also have disability labels, may be pushed out because their schools insist they cannot meet their needs
- Students with disability labels, students with psychiatric diagnoses, and students with experiences that are seen as mental illness also face additional barriers in accessing gender affirming treatment

**“When we expect trans students to live lives defined only by tragedy and suffering, we (unintentionally) end up centering the voices of trans people and not our students.**

We foreclose the possibility of trans resistance, joy, and pride. Furthermore, the individual accommodation model neglects students who are not ‘out’ or who do not meet diagnostic criteria, and does not address schoolwide structures of cisheteronormativity that harm all students.”

## Here are suggestions from Teukie and Ky about what you can do ...

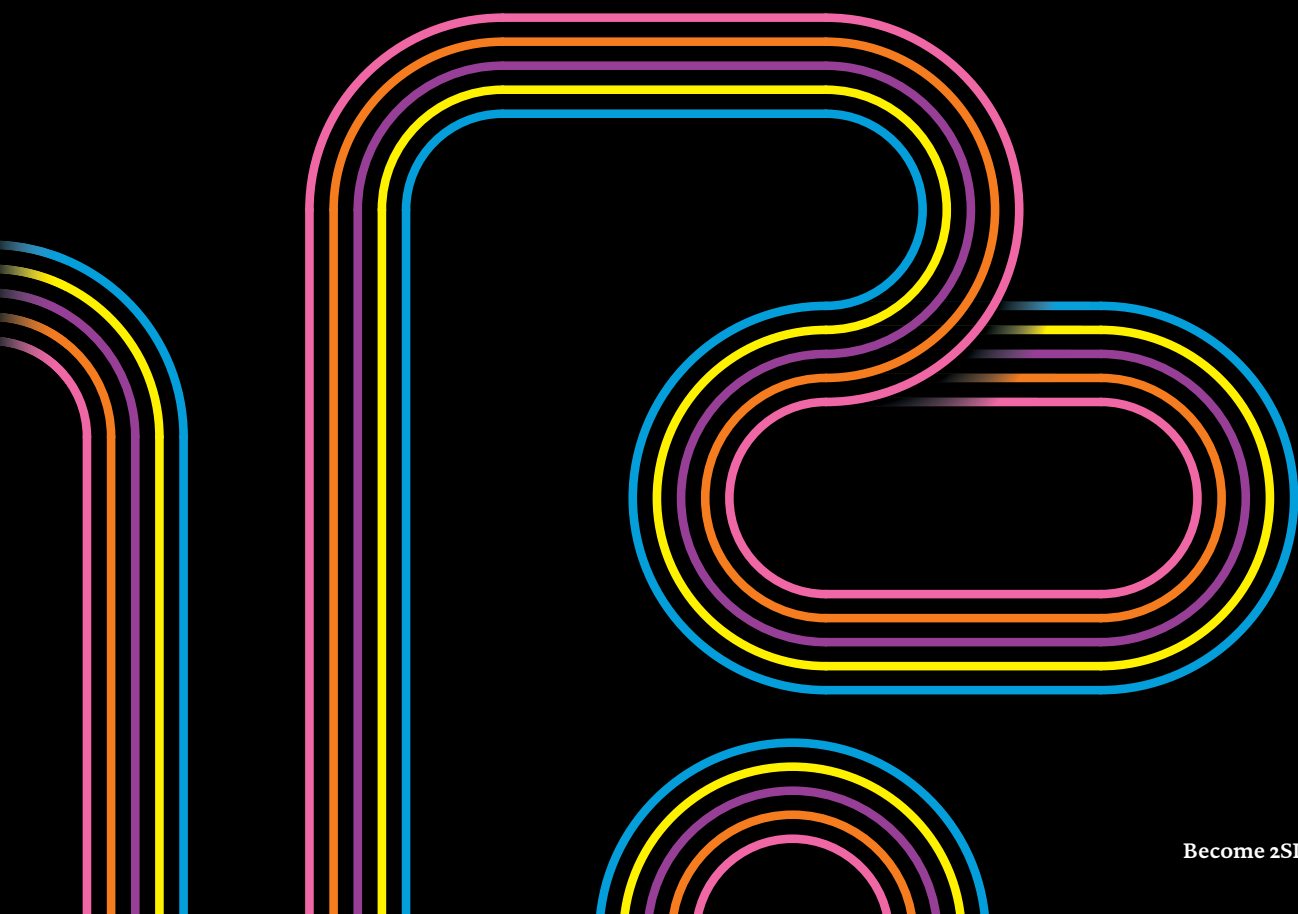
- Listen to your students when they tell you who they are and what they need. Follow their lead and validate their experience even if it doesn’t align with an expected narrative
- Make your classroom welcoming to trans students before you even know that you have a trans student
- Have trans voices, experiences, and representations freely available
- Move away from language/thinking that focuses on individual narratives of pathology and negative outcomes
- Move towards language/thinking that focuses on broader structural issues, building community, celebrating transness and imagining joyful trans futures
- Consider how the changes that an individual student needs could benefit all students/school community and use this to advocate for and implement these changes
- Recognize the potential for learning, growth, and transformation within our educational spaces: trans inclusivity is an opportunity to do better, not an obligation or an act of saviourism
- Move beyond slogans of “protection” that construct trans students as passive and tragic
- Validate the many varied feelings that trans students may have about their experiences and the many ways they may internally and externally respond to these experiences; support their ways of resisting unfair structures and policies
- Build a school community that seeks to create trans joy, rather than only focusing on avoiding trans pain

The schools of our dreams are welcoming, affirming, and joyful spaces where all students are able to freely access what they need to thrive.



**Gender euphoria:** the feeling of joy that trans and gender nonconforming people feel when they are validated.

**Queer pride:** the feeling of joy that queer people feel when they are celebrated.

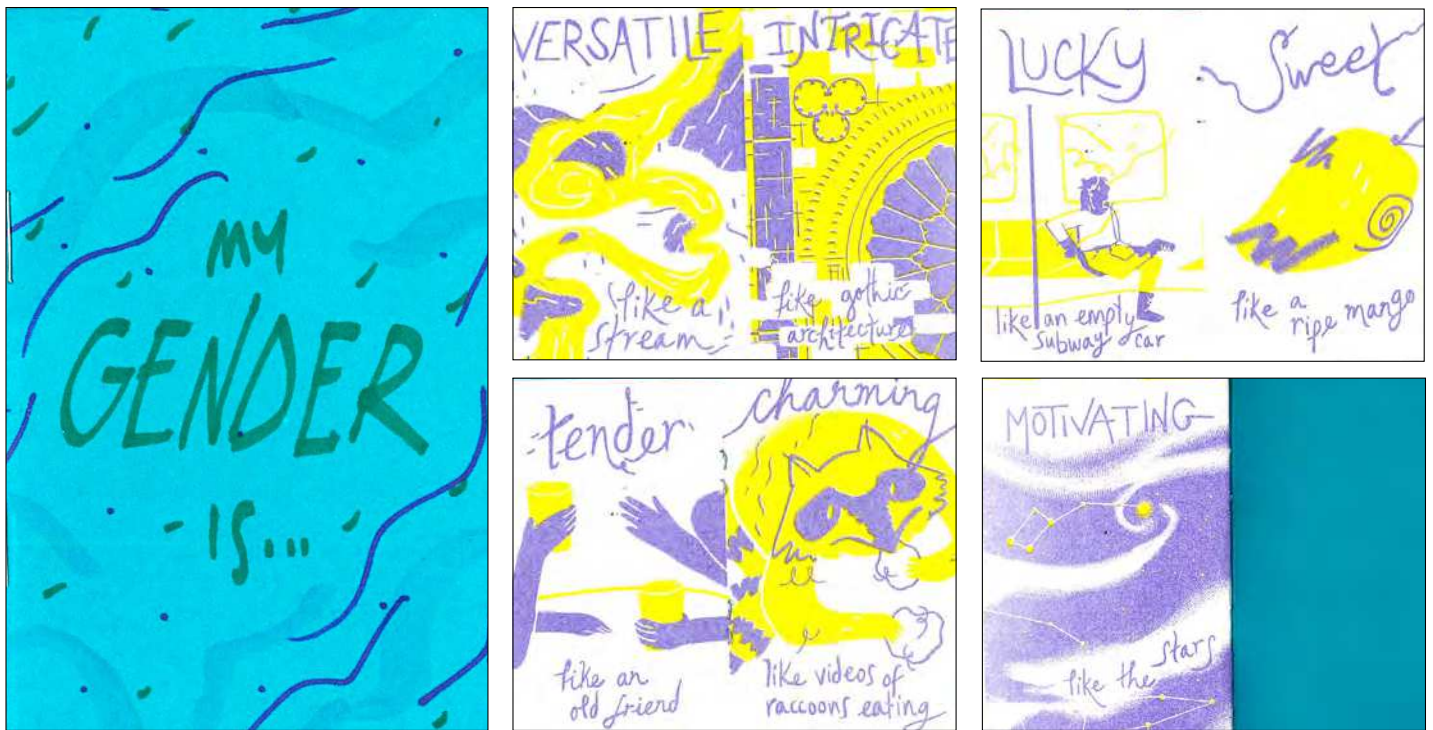




How can you foster gender euphoria and queer pride in your classroom and school?<sup>58</sup>





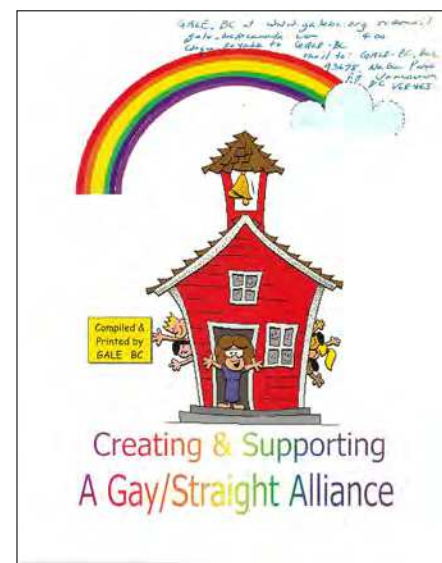


**Above:** Excerpts from Beena Mistry's 2017 work *My Gender Is: A Gender Euphoria Zine*.<sup>59</sup>

# There are many ways to foster gender euphoria and queer pride in your classroom, school, and greater community.

**Tip 1:** Create spaces for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and educators to lead, especially those who are multiply-marginalized (e.g., BIPOC, disabled, low-income, etc.)

Support 2SLGBTQIA+ spaces! Find out if your school has a Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) or similar group. If it doesn't, consider starting one.



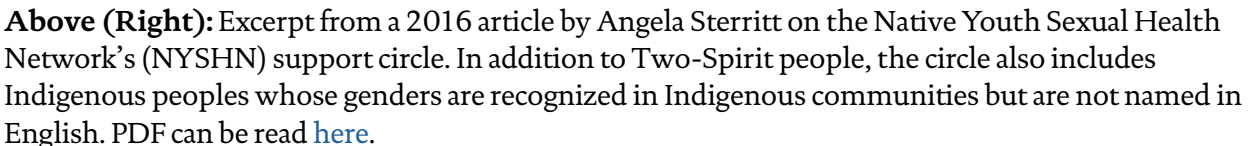
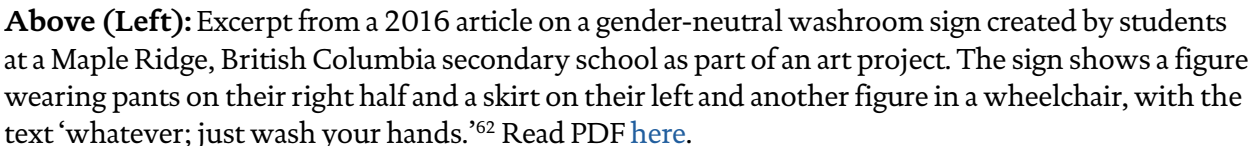
**Above (Left):** Advertisement for the Hispanic Gay-Straight Alliance Parent Support Group, organized by the Toronto-based Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples (CSSP).<sup>60</sup> Read PDF [here](#).

**Above (Right):** Cover of *Creating & Supporting a Gay/Straight Alliance*, a [guide](#) published by GALE BC in 2001.<sup>61</sup>

## Additional Resources

- [TDSB's Frequently Asked Questions About GSAs](#)
- [So you wanna start a GSA?](#)
- [Ten steps to creating a GSA](#)

**Tip 2:** Affirm queerness and transness through language





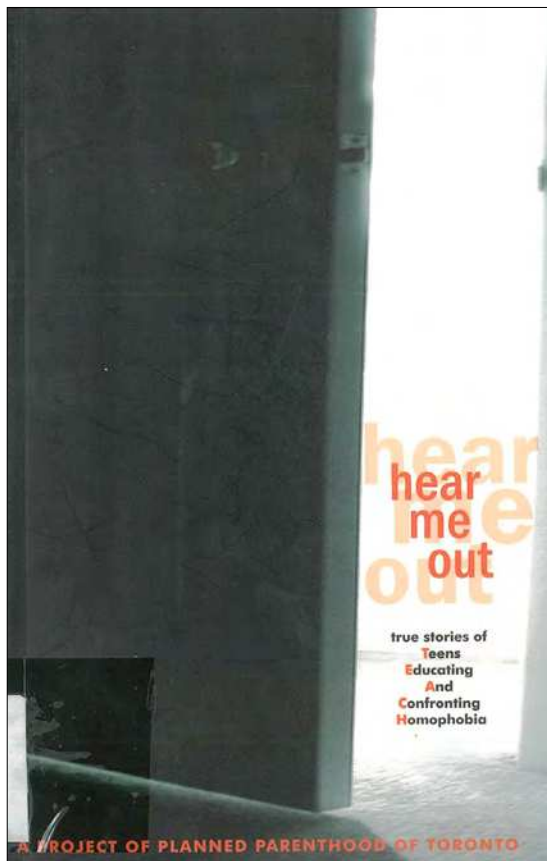
## Replace language that reinforces a gender binary

Very often teachers, students, and admin use language that erases the existence of non-binary and gender non-conforming people and spotlights people who may be transitioning or exploring their gender identity.

Gender neutral terms are a great way to avoid assumptions so as to not categorize students according to how you may perceive their gender.

## Gender neutral ways to address a group of people

- You all
- Students
- Team
- Scholars
- Movers and shakers
- Young humans
- Y'all
- Folks
- Party people
- Team
- Friends
- Happy people
- Pals
- Peeps



Respect people's names; don't deadname trans people (i.e., don't refer to them by the name[s] they had before transitioning) when speaking to or about them.

### “What's your birthname?”

**Translation number 1:** I'm trying to picture your original self; I need to in order to be able to judge how well you are doing according to my personal requirements for passing.

**Translation number 2:** If I can't picture the real you, I will be distressed. I mean you were born as a girl and I must see you that way.”<sup>63</sup>

From: Francino, M. (2004). What's your birthname? In Hear me out : true stories of teens educating and confronting homophobia. Eds Rodriguez, R., Bello, N., and Rooney, F. Second Story Press.



## Familiarize yourself with the Mx. honorific

Many people are aware of these honorifics: Ms., Mrs., or Mr.

### What is Mx?

People might be less familiar with the honorific Mx. This is a gender-neutral title for people who do not feel comfortable using Ms., Mrs. or Mr. This could be a very affirming honorific for non-binary, genderqueer, Two-Spirit and gender variant people.

### History of Mx.

It was added to the Merriam-Webster dictionary in 2017.


“Pronounced to sound like mix or mux, the title Mx. (which, like other honorifics, is styled without the period in British English) is used increasingly on various official forms in the UK, including driver’s licenses and banking documents.

Although the earliest print evidence of Mx. is from a 1977 issue of an American magazine called *Single Parent*, the title has not seen much official or published use in the US. It did, however, appear twice recently in *The New York Times*: a June 4th article noted Mx. as someone’s preferred honorific, and a June 5th article all about Mx. made it clear that the June 4th use was an exception. The title simply isn’t familiar enough to the newspaper’s readers to be fully adopted.

It’s not clear whether or when Mx. will catch on in the US. The timeline for such developments can be long, as the title Ms. taught us not all that long ago. Coined in 1901, the now-commonplace Ms. wasn’t fully adopted by *The New York Times* until 1986. Mx. seems to be moving more rapidly—it was added to Merriam-Webster Unabridged in April 2016.”

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Mx. gender-neutral honorific.(n.d.) Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/mx-gender-neutral-title#:~:text=Mx.,or%20mux%2C%20the%20title%20Mx.>



Beyond using gender neutral terms to address a whole group, avoid using binary pronouns unless you know those are the pronouns people use. For example, when talking about students or colleagues or parents, use they instead of she/her or he/him.

Instead of:

I saw **her** walking from Mx. Taylor's class to Mr. Johnson's class.

Try:

I saw **them** walking from Mx. Taylor's class to Mr. Johnson's class. I saw **[insert name]** walking from Mx. Taylor's class to Mr. Johnson's class.

If people are using multiple pronouns (e.g. she/they, he/she/them, they/he), try switching between the different pronouns. Do not just use the pronoun you are most comfortable with, which is often "she" or "he."

Instead of:

I saw **him** complete the test. He did great.

Try:

I saw **them** complete the test. **He** did great.

Another tip for people who are pronoun-fluid, is to check in with them personally (not in front of the class) to ask them more about what feels affirming to them. Everyone is different.

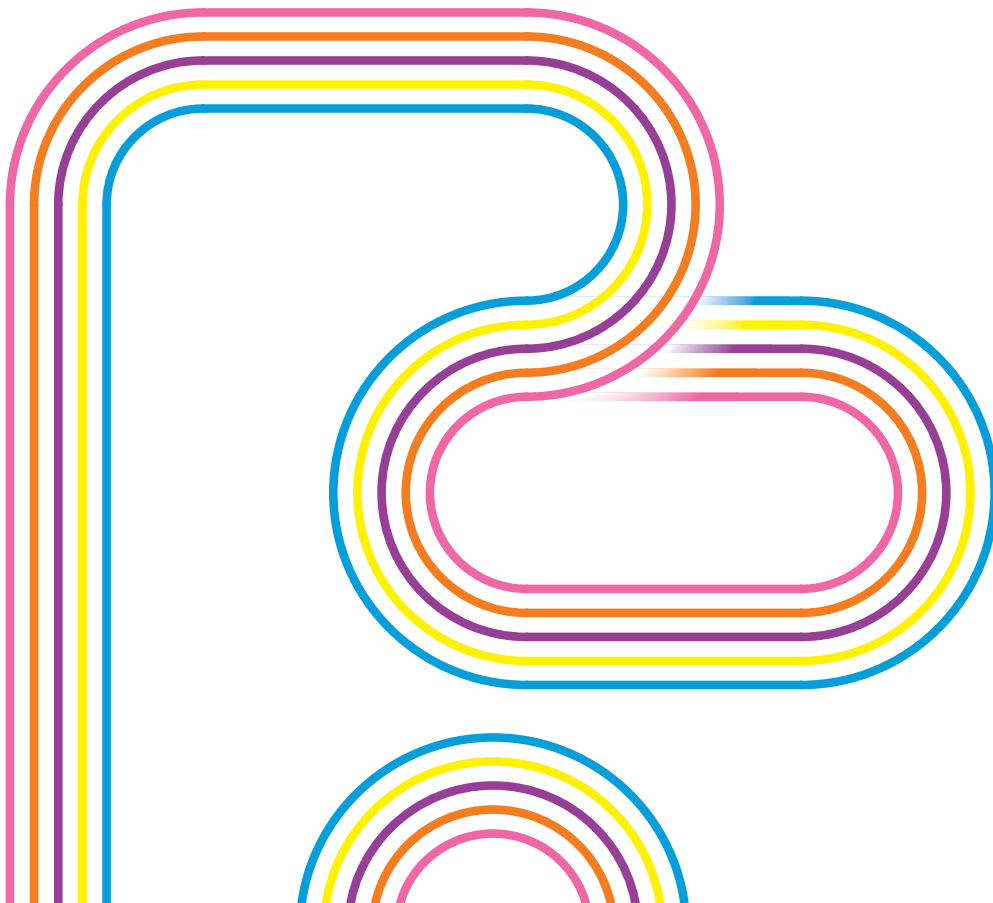
## Remove 'Male' & 'Female' From Attendance Lists

### The problem with sex designations

Remember learning about sex earlier in this guide? Sex refers to a person's biology: their sex organs and chromosomes.

Having sex designations on attendance lists is problematic for a few reasons.

1. It can create opportunities for misgendering students. Misgendering means referring to students by the wrong pronouns and invalidating their gender identity and/or expression. This is because not everyone is cisgender (identifies with the sex they were assigned at birth) and may not have changed their sex markers on official documents or are not male or female. This is true for people who are intersex, trans, non-binary, gender non-conforming, genderqueer and/or Two-Spirit.
2. Only having 'male' and 'female' on attendance lists reinforces the idea that there are the only two sexes; this erases people who are intersex.
3. Often 'male' and 'female,' which refers to a person's sex (their biology) is conflated with their gender identity; gender and sex are not the same thing. In some medical circumstances it is necessary to know a person's sex, but in a school environment it is not really important to know a person's sex organs or chromosomes. It is more important to know their gender identity to be able to affirm who they are.





# So how do I create inclusive attendance lists?

## A solution:

It's easy! You can remove F and M on attendance lists to create a more inclusive environment for students.

### Approach an administrator

Simply talk to your Office Administrator, VP, or Principal and have them printed without. Here is a script for approaching your administrator:

*I recently learned that it is problematic to list 'male' and 'female' on attendance lists because it can cause harm for intersex, trans, non-binary, Two-Spirit and gender variant people. I am still learning about this but want to do my best to be a respectful advocate for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. I would like to request we please print attendance lists without these sex markers. If you would like more information about this, I recommend you read this guide where I learned about this.*



## Scripts for talking with administrators:

### **Removing sex markers from attendance lists and adding pronouns:**

Dear [insert name of administrator],

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to discuss the presence of sex markers and absence of pronouns on attendance lists.

I recently learned that it is problematic to list 'male' and 'female' on attendance lists because it can cause harm for intersex, trans, non-binary, Two-Spirit and gender variant people. I am still learning about this but want to do my best to be a respectful advocate for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

I would like to request we please print attendance lists without these sex markers and instead add students' pronouns. Sex markers are not important for teachers because they do not always correspond to a person's gender identity. Listing pronouns is a more helpful strategy for supporting students. This could be especially helpful for substitute teachers coming into classrooms to mitigate the chance of trans, intersex, non-binary, genderqueer, and Two-Spirit students being misgendered. I know that it is your priority to ensure youth are being respected as it one of our ethical duties to ensure care for our students. As I am sure you are aware, misgendering students can cause great harm and 2SLGBTQIA+ students are at higher risk of mental health challenges and harassment than their cisgender and heterosexual peers. If you would like more information about this, I recommend you read this guide where I learned about this information.

[Attach guide].

Thanks so much,

[Insert your name & pronouns]

**Tip 3:** Learn and respect people's pronouns

You can even make buttons with your students on the first day of class! What could a student's "they / them" "ze / zir" "he / him" and "she/her/they/them" button look like?



**Above:** YES, I am a girl button, date unknown.<sup>64</sup>

# Signal your pronouns

## What are pronouns?

Many languages are gendered. In English, we use gendered pronouns (he/him, she/her) to describe ourselves and others. In French, nouns are also gendered (e.g. la chaise, le chat). English and French are Canada's two official languages and most Canadian schools are taught in one (or both) of these two languages.

Gender assumptions therefore seep into our language everyday. This can cause a lot of gender dysphoria (invalidation and harm) for trans, non-binary, genderqueer, Two-Spirit and intersex people. This is because we cannot always tell someone's gender identity according to their appearance and when we make assumptions about people's gender, this can lead to misgendering.

## How can I be supportive of pronouns?

- Model to others that you understand why pronouns matter by putting your own pronouns in your email signature, Zoom handle and other communications/documents
- Introduce yourself with your pronouns
- Ask students about their pronouns

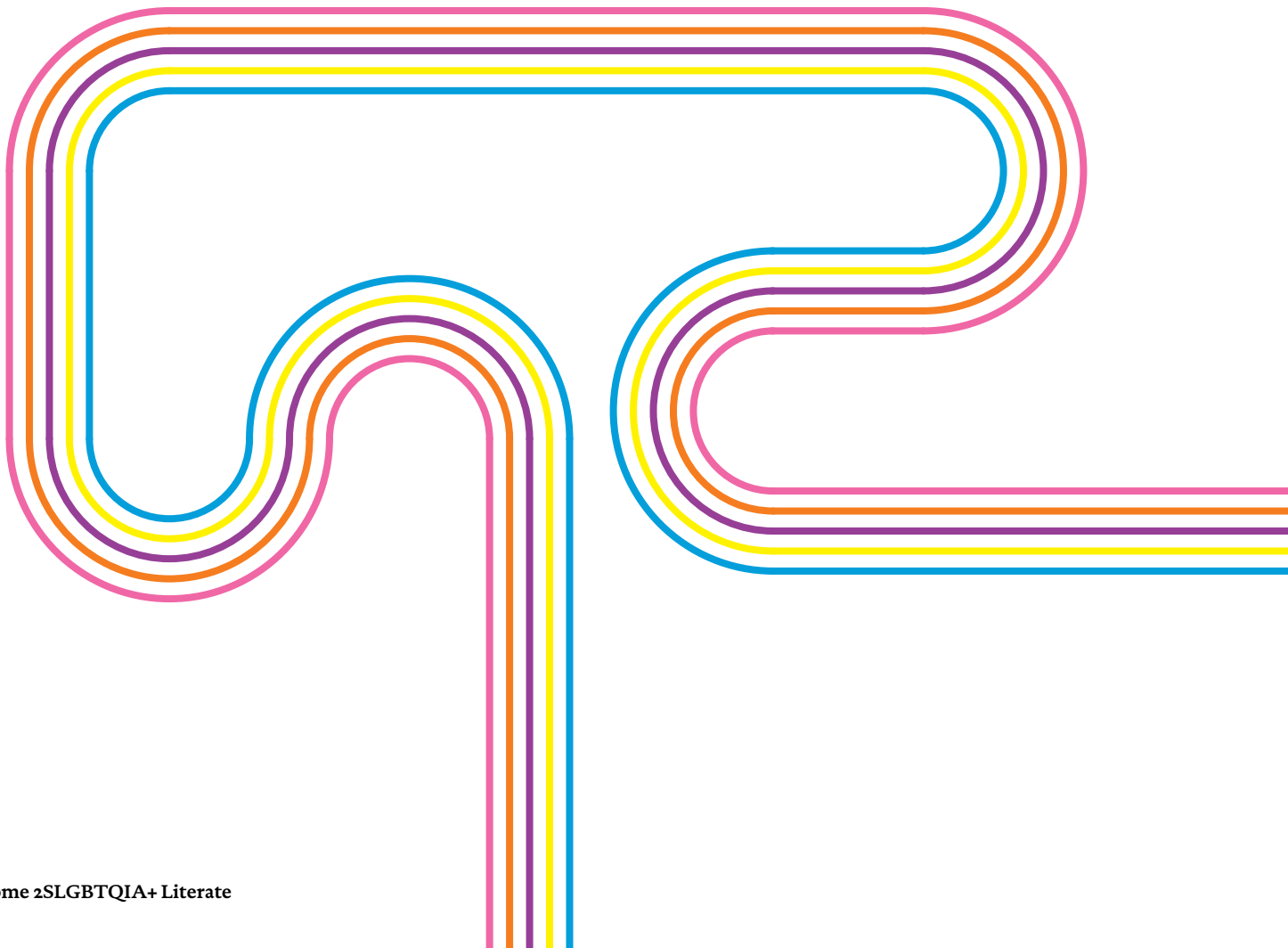




# Ask students about their name and pronouns (don't make assumptions)

A great strategy for supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ students is to ask them proactively about their name and pronouns. As teachers, we often do community building and “getting to know you” activities at the beginning of the year. Doing a survey is one fantastic way to get to know students.

See a template for a “getting to know you” survey on the following page.



# Welcome to my class!

1. My name is [Mr., Ms. Mx \_\_\_\_\_]. My pronouns are [them/them/their, she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/she, he/she/they etc]. I will be your teacher for [insert name of course]. I'm really excited to get to know you. Thanks for being here :)
2. First things first, what name do you like to go by: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Please spell out how to pronounce your name by how it sounds (even if you think it's obvious - thanks!):
4. Are you okay with me referring to you by this name when talking ...  
☐ with the class      ☐ with other teachers      ☐ with your parents/caregivers
5. If you would like me to use different names with different people, please clarify: \_\_\_\_\_
6. What pronouns do you like to go by (check all that apply):  
☐ she/her      ☐ he/him      ☐ they/them      ☐ pronoun fluid      ☐ neopronoun  
☐ I'd prefer to be referred to: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Are you okay with me referring to you by these pronouns when talking ...  
☐ with the class      ☐ with other teachers      ☐ with your parents/caregivers
8. Is there anything more you need or want me to know about your pronouns?
9. How are you feeling starting this class (check all that apply):  
☐ excited      ☐ meh      ☐ neutral      ☐ anxious
10. Is there anything going on for you that you want me to know about?
11. What access needs do you have?

Here are examples of access needs:

- I need to be seated near the front because I have sight loss and am hard of hearing.
  - I need to be near the door because I have digestive issues and have to use the washroom frequently.
  - I would like to be able to move my body a lot because I have ADHD and have a hard time sitting.
  - I need to be able to stim because I am autistic.
  - I would feel better not being called on because I have a lot of social anxiety.
12. Have you had mostly positive or negative experiences with learning [insert subject]? Is there anything you would want me to know about these past experiences?  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. What are you most passionate about (doesn't have to be related to this subject at all)?  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. What are your three biggest strengths?  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Do's:

- Keep trying
- Practice using someone's pronouns when you are alone
- Use gender-neutral pronouns when you don't know the pronouns someone uses
- If someone corrects you when you misgender them (use an incorrect pronoun), don't say "sorry"—that forces the trans person to say "that's okay" when it really may not be. Instead, say something like, 'thanks for sharing that with me,' or 'thanks for the reminder.'

## Practice reading the following out loud:

### **Sarah (they)**

Sarah was an engaged student. They were eager to participate in activities. They listened respectfully to other students during group activities and would be the first one to raise their hand.

### **Rain (he/they)**

Rain was in my Gr. 9 English class. They loved creative writing, especially poetry. His favourite poet was Billy-Ray Belcourt.

For people who are gender fluid, you can switch between using different pronouns. The general rule of respect is just to not use one only (especially she or he). People often fall back on 'she' and 'he' because they are more confident with them. It can be very affirming for people to hear different pronouns used, so make sure to switch it up!

### **Mx. Nguyen (they/she)**

Mx. Nguyen is an excellent math teacher. They teach Gr. 11 Biology. Her class would be a great fit for your student!

# Activity

Take a moment to think about your students and colleagues. Write down a description of everything you have done today: What students and colleagues you interacted with, what activities you did etc. Then rewrite the story using only they/them pronouns. Replace all gendered pronouns. Read that story aloud! This is an activity to get you more familiar with they/them pronouns.

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# Activity

Do you have a student or colleague who uses pronouns you are not familiar with? Write down a description about them. Read it aloud a few times. See if you keep tripping up! Read it until you don't trip up.

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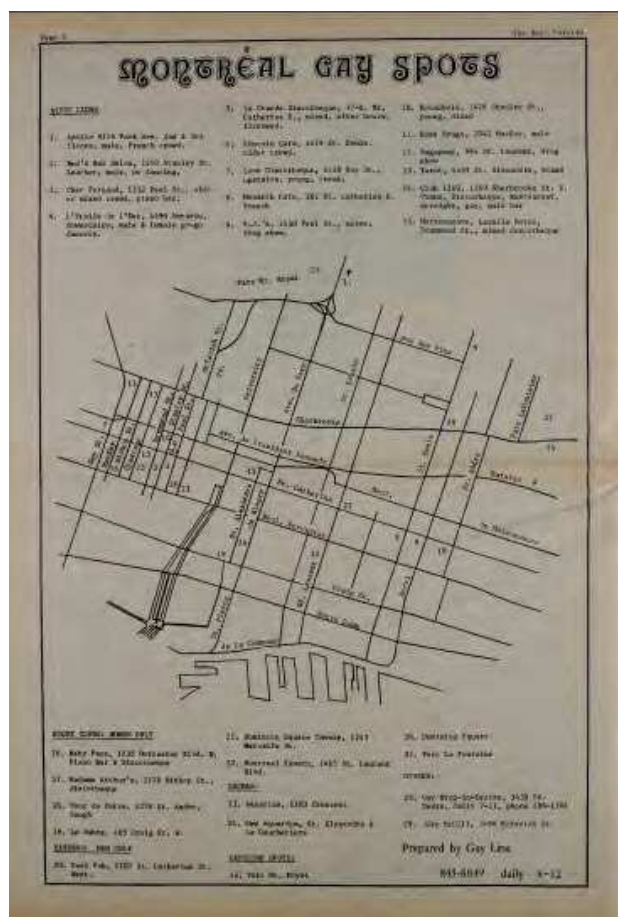
## Tip 4: Incorporate queerness and transness into your curriculum

Make a curriculum plan with your colleagues. Decide how you can incorporate queerness and transness into all of the subjects you teach.

## Here are some starting ideas for high school students ...

### Geography

- Read about how Land was gendered through the eyes of early colonizers (read historical texts of colonizers versus Indigenous creation stories) and learn about the differences between Eurocentric and Indigenous worldviews toward Land. Learn in particular what Land you are on, whose territory you are in, and how those specific nations viewed Land.
- Discuss how commodification of Land leads to Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people going missing and being murdered at higher rates than any other demographic in Canada
- Recognize that nations in what is currently called Canada were largely nomadic prior to colonization (with exceptions in the East and West), though they may have had broad general territories which overlapped. Make a map of your region that shows the nations who are stewards of that territory, and learn about how gender is understood by these nations (including what we might now call Two-Spirit identities)
- Make a map showing the years that each province and territory added sexual orientation to its human rights code
- Make a map showing the years that each province and territory added gender identity to its human rights code



Above: Map titled “Montreal Gay Spots” from 1973, highlighting gay bars, saunas, cruising spots, and gay service centres around the city centre.<sup>65</sup>

## Math

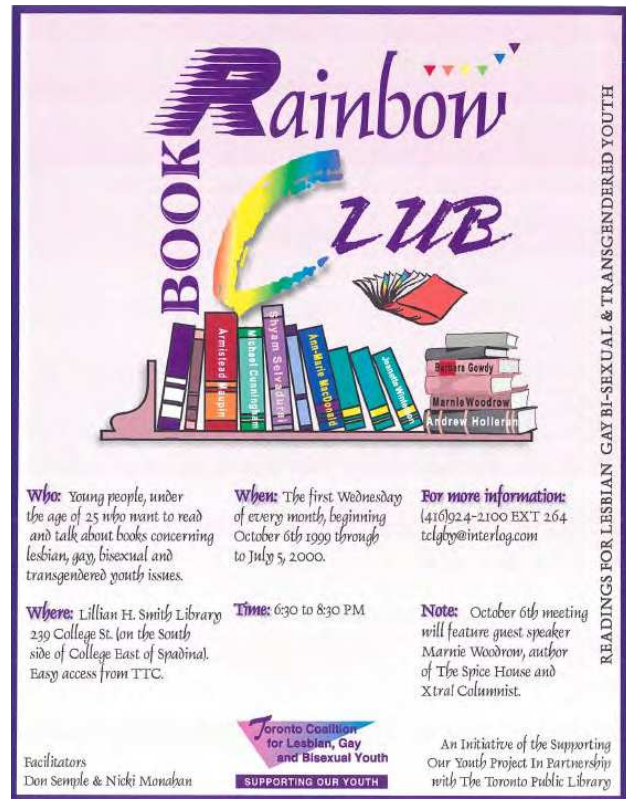
- Analyze [Canadian census documents](#), calculating the approximate number of people who identify as members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities

## Science

- Teach students about the existence of different chromosome combinations
- Get students to research other animal species with documented cases of same-gender attraction and same-gender coupling

## English

- Ensure that each unit you teach includes at least one author who is 2SLGBTQIA+; talk to your students about the author's identities (refer to the reading lists at [\[link\]](#) for ideas)
- Discuss common tropes involving queer and trans characters and invite students to create alternative stories for them
- Teach your students about how colonial gender and sexual norms can be reproduced and subverted through children's literature; have them create their own picture books with queer and trans themes
- Have a discussion with your students about [censorship and banned books](#). The American Library Association's Office of Intellectual Freedom tracks annual challenged books based on reports from libraries, schools, and the media, and their data shows that in 2015, 9 out of the 10 most challenged books included "diverse" content (books by or about people of colour, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, and/or people with disabilities). In 2019, [8 out of the top 10 most challenged books were challenged based on 2SLGBTQIA+ content](#). While these discussions appear to be louder in the United States, it is very much a problem in Canada as well.



**Above:** [Reading list](#) for The 1999-2000 session of the Rainbow Book Club, a partnership between Supporting Our Youth (SOY) and The Toronto Public Library.<sup>66</sup>

## Health and Sexual Education

- Teach your students about trans athletes (e.g., Quinn, a professional soccer player from Toronto whose team won gold at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics)
- Discuss the ways in which contemporary and historical sport policies harm trans people (e.g., the International Olympic Committee's framework, in place from 2015-2021, only allowed trans athletes with testosterone levels below a defined limit to compete; this framework was also adopted by other athletic organizations)
- Advocate for mixed-gender physical education classes

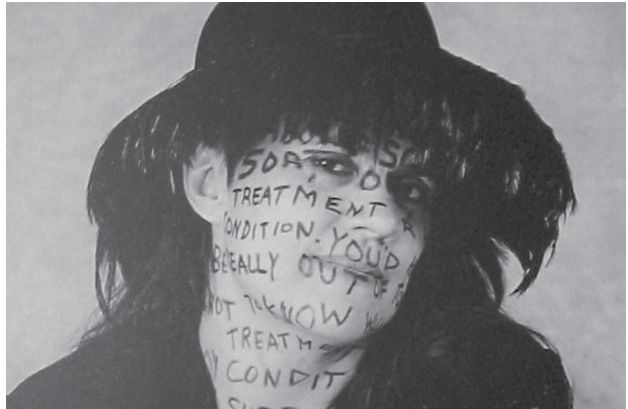
- When talking to your students about sex, don't assume you know what genitals they have or what genitals their partner(s) might have
- Talk to your students about gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation
- Talk about different options for trans people while noting that not all trans people want gender affirming surgeries or hormones



**Above:** [Photograph](#) from 2-Spirit Softball Team in the 1990s, part of the Cabbagetown Group Softball League.<sup>67</sup>

### History

- Teach your students about 2SLGBTQIA+ events in Canada from the pre-colonial period to the present
- Teach your students about important 2SLGBTQIA+ historical figures in Canada
- Teach your students about 2SLGBTQIA+ activism in Canada, including youth activism
- Refer to this mini-unit plan, also developed by The ArQuives, for more ideas for teaching 2SLGBTQIA+ histories



**Above:** [Image](#) of Persimmon Blackbridge, inducted into the National Portrait Collection in 1998.<sup>68</sup>

### French

- Teach your students about gender neutral pronouns in French and whether they are accepted by Académie Française
- Teach your students about historical 2SLGBTQIA+ people from Québec (e.g., artist Mirha-Soleil Ross [1969- ], AIDS activist Joe Rose [1965-1989], founder of l'Association des transsexuels(les) du Québec Marie-Marcelle Godbout [1943-2017], etc.)—peruse the holdings at the [Archives Gaies du Québec](#) to learn more
- Teach your students about how French colonization has affected ideas about gender and sexuality

### Psychology

- Teach your students about how queerness and transness have been framed as mental illnesses
- Teach your students about minority stress theory and how mental illness can be related to trauma and oppression



# Learn from a colleague:

Listen to sex education researcher Dr. Jessica Wright talk about trauma-informed approaches including 2SLGBTQIA+ students into sex education.



**Dr. Jessica Wright**<sup>69</sup> (she/they) is a scholar-activist who is an Assistant Professor at MacEwan University teaching Sociology and Gender Studies. Her research, teaching, and volunteer work is informed by a commitment to community-building and creating cultures that are less violent and more just, caring, and connected.<sup>69</sup>


## Counting 2SLGBTQIA+ Students into Sex Education

“Sex education is crucial for teaching young people about reproductive and sexual health, anatomical functions, and consent and healthy relationships, but much sex education uses a cis-heteronormative framework that excludes 2SLGBTQIA+ students. For example, anatomy may be discussed in binary terms that erases intersex bodies, or gender could be explained as a biological fact, which makes trans and non-binary students invisible. Being erased in sex education contributes to 2SLGBTQIA+ youth feeling like they don’t fit in or belong, which can have terrible impacts on their mental and emotional well-being.

In recent years there have been efforts to create inclusive sex education programs that reflect the experiences and needs of marginalized groups such as queer and trans students or disabled students (categories which are not mutually exclusive). **Some curricula, like Ontario’s Health and Physical Education curriculum, ask educators to engage with the idea that differences across gender, sexuality, ability, religion, geographic location, etc. impact how one navigates sexual health.** This is important since, for example, an Indigenous youth living on a reserve might face a scarcity of health clinics where they can get STI testing, free condoms or dental dams. The lack of access to resources and thus information to support sexual health is linked to ongoing settler colonialism vis-a-vis inadequate funding from government.

Ontario’s sex education curriculum also mentions that those with gender identities and expressions such as those who are transgender, Two Spirit, and gender non-conforming have specific challenges in navigating sexual health, which has been considered a step in the right direction for including 2SLGBTQIA+ students. However, the way curricula translates into classroom teachings is often ambiguous or troubling. The Ontario curriculum, for instance, places crucial information about differences in optional teaching prompts, meaning it’s not mandatory for teachers to take up the topics if they aren’t comfortable with the material. **With homophobia and transphobia so prevalent in our society, educators must engage with this material, and they deserve comprehensive training to do so, which this resource aims to support.** Without truly inclusive lessons (and adequate teacher training to facilitate them),





2SLGBTQIA+ students tend to be left to gather information they may need through web searches or social media. These networks can be wonderfully informative and supportive, but sex education still needs to offer 2SLGBTQIA+ students comprehensive information about sexual health so they are best equipped to navigate their sexual context.”

## **Making Sex Education Both Inclusive and Safe**

“It’s critical for 2SLGBTQIA+ students to be represented and informed through sex education, but it’s also important for them to feel safe in these conversations. Because cis-heteronormativity creates intolerance, hatred, and stigma around 2SLGBTQIA+ people, these folks’ unique experiences and needs in sex education can be erased. For example, conversations about gender-based violence and consent tend to focus on how men and boys are ‘naturally’ sexually aggressive and how women and girls have to protect themselves from sexual advances. These ideas end up naturalizing oppressive, binary gender roles and erasing non-binary youth from the conversation. One way to make sure sex education doesn’t reproduce oppressive ideas is to make it trauma-informed.”

## **Trauma-Informed Sex Education**

“‘Trauma-informed’ refers to a framework that recognizes that trauma is prevalent in schools and our society more broadly. A trauma-informed framework also recognizes that violence is systemic and perpetuated by systems of oppression such as settler colonialism, cis-heteropatriarchy, and ableism and sanism.

Statistics Canada reports that one third of Canadians have experienced maltreatment before age 15, which includes emotional, physical, and sexual abuse (Burczycka 2017).<sup>70</sup> In other words, a third of the Canadian population has experienced some form of trauma by the time they are 15. 2SLGBTQIA+ youth face disproportionately high rates of gendered violence (which is intertwined for some youth with ableism, racism, and classism), including bullying, harassment, and sexual violence. By acknowledging that trauma is present in the classroom, sex education can work to accommodate survivors’ needs as well as avoid further traumatization.

For those without trauma histories, it may be difficult to imagine that there are youth sitting in sex education lessons who have been victimized by gendered violence, and many more who will be. But unfortunately, even the school itself is a site of gendered violence (e.g., boys snapping girls’ bra straps, or trans students facing violence for using the bathroom of their choice).

It’s essential for trauma-informed sex education to acknowledge both the presence of survivors in classrooms and the fact that 2SLGBTQIA+ students are disproportionately at risk of experiencing violence. When we talk about healthy relationships, for example, there are certain kinds of gendered violence, such as threatening to ‘out’ a partner to keep them from disclosing abuse, that are important to raise and discuss specifically for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth.

## Using an Anti-Oppressive Approach

“Part of being trauma-informed also involves taking an anti-oppressive approach. This means recognizing that we live in a society where there are deep social inequities related to race, gender, sexuality, ability, class, religion, and citizenship. These inequities effect sexual health, and so when teaching sex education it’s important to become educated about some of the ways that various intersecting oppressions necessarily complicate conversations about sexuality and gender.

Using an anti-oppressive approach also means taking a ‘strengths-based’ approach to addressing social inequity. 2SLGBTQIA+ students are not simply victims of cis-heteropatriarchy but are linked to broader 2SLGBTQIA+ communities that are thriving and joyful.”

### Here are some of Dr. Jessica Wright’s prompts for facilitating trauma-informed sex education:

- Is the presence of survivors in the learning environment acknowledged, along with the fact that trauma is prevalent in our society (e.g., via misogyny, homophobia, and racism)?
- Is there an intersectional lens being applied to the understanding of trauma so there’s space to think about combined oppressions and intergenerational trauma?
- How can you translate your lessons to address the unique needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ youth when discussing gendered violence and sexual health?
- How are survivors accounted for? For example, discussing consent when one has been sexually assaulted may be triggering. Are there efforts to promote feelings of safety, such as by creating space for students to self-reflect on how they’re feeling before, during, and after lessons? Are there supports in place, like school counsellors or therapeutic community resources, should students need to talk to someone?
- Do your own research, but also ask your employer for workshops and training in areas you aren’t familiar with. Know that the right to good, comprehensive sex education “is firmly grounded in numerous international human rights conventions that stress the right of every individual to education and to the highest attainable standard of health and well-being”.<sup>71</sup>
- Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, are you sharing material that represents 2SLGBTQIA+ youth as full human beings and not simply victims of an oppressive society? How can you bring stories or material about queer and trans joy into your lessons to highlight the vibrancy woven throughout the lives of those in 2SLGBTQIA+ communities?

**Tip 5:** Intervene when you witness queerphobia or transphobia



**Above:** Flyer on homophobic violence intervention, 1990s.<sup>72</sup>

# Intervene, intervene, intervene.

It can be scary to intervene in situations when you don't know the best thing to say or do.

## Intervening with students:

**If students say things like 'that's so gay' and 'fag' in class or the hallways ...**

- Call them on it and say that is not acceptable language (if it continues, bring in admin to come up with a plan for dealing with language)
- Use it as a discussion for the class ("teachable moment")
- Emphasize you aren't picking out one person (because if one student uses it, chances are they are not the only one)
- Convey emotion about the situation and avoid shaming the person (distance behaviour, do not make it an individual problem)
- This is a good video for thinking critically about the expression 'that's so gay'

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

- You can use it as an opportunity to discuss how our language conveys our values, and whether you intend something or not, our words can deeply impact others

**If students are making fun of other 2SLGBTQIA+ students or saying disparaging things about the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in the class ...**

- Address it immediately
- Emphasize it's not acceptable to put down other groups
- Use it as a learning moment
- Try to understand why they are doing it
- Demonstrate how it's hurtful



## Have courageous conversations with your students and colleagues

### What are courageous conversations?

Courageous conversations are about challenging the status quo to improve schooling as a system. Having these conversations can hopefully lead to meaningful challenges. Courageous conversations are about creating brave spaces, not just safe spaces.

- **A safe space** is an environment where people are not judged based on their identity or experience. Learning can occur in these spaces but the ultimate goal is to provide support. Think for example of a GSA or a support group. These places are about providing safety and affirmation.
- **A brave space**, in comparison, is an environment centred around shifting oppressive mindsets. Brave spaces require dialogue, discomfort, and a lot of self-reflection. It is beneficial to have elements of safety (a trauma-informed stance) for brave spaces to occur — people need to feel like they can be vulnerable to grow and change and considerations for marginalized people within those spaces — but the main goal is learning, not comfort. A key component of a brave space is working through difficult emotions that come up while doing anti-oppressive education: fear, guilt, shame, and sadness. Brave spaces often occur in classrooms during lessons and require thoughtful implementation. They can also occur in staff meetings and between colleagues when talking about current practices.





## What are some examples of topics that might require courageous conversations?

### With students ...

- “I’ve been noticing that people are using the ‘fag’ slur in the hallways and classroom . . .”
- “I’ve been noticing that people are shaming others for what they are wearing because they think it is ‘girly’”
- “I heard someone say they think there should be a straight pride”

### With colleagues ...

- “I notice that lots of teachers are using ‘boys and girls’ when talking about students”
- “I noticed that you are using the wrong pronouns for one of your students”
- “I noticed that you want to talk to your students’ parents about their pronoun change but that could be very unsafe for them if they are not out”

## How do I have courageous conversations?

Here are some tips for having these courageous conversations with a group of students (e.g. your class).

### Proactively ...

- Set up classroom guidelines for the conversation
- Do something to calm yourself (breathing exercise, walk, have a snack)
- Write down some talking points for yourself and practice them in front of a loved one
- Make sure you are connected with your wise adult self and not so triggered that you will respond with anger (yelling or speaking in ways that will cause harm to others)
- Practice using a calm voice and take a breath if you feel yourself getting angry or overwhelmed

## In the moment of the conversation

- Possibility: invite students to come sit in a circle
- Possibility: ask them to do a mindful exercise
- State your observation (tip: try to not make it targeted to one student in the moment because this will likely elicit shame)
  - e.g., “I’ve been noticing that people are using the fag slur in the hallways and class...”
- State its impact on you
  - e.g., “When I hear people use that word, it makes me feel sad and hurt because there are queer people in my life and that word has been used to shame and discriminate against them”
- Ask the students about their impact
  - e.g., “How does it make you feel when you use that word? Why do you think people use that word? Is it meant as an insult? Did you know it is a slur? Do you know what it means?”
- Listen to their intentions and then talk to them about the difference between intention and impact
  - e.g., Student’s answer: “We were using that word as a joke. We didn’t mean to hurt anyone”
  - e.g., Teacher’s answer: “I can understand that was your intention. The reality is that sometimes our intentions don’t match up with the impact of our actions. We can cause harm even when we do not intend to. 2SLGBTQIA+ people have been oppressed and discriminated against through the law and society and if we use words like that, we are part of the problem.”
- Ask students how they are feeling
  - e.g., Teacher’s question: “Now that you know that, how are you feeling in your body?”
- Invite students to come up with a solution to the problem
  - e.g., Teacher’s question: “Now that you understand the impact of this word, what do you think we should do?”
  - e.g., Student brainstorming: “Not use the word. If we hear it, teach other people about it.”

# Intervene when you see people experiencing discrimination.

## Get the information you need.

School districts often have their own policies regarding supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ people. Some districts have generic policies and others have specific ones. Some school districts have policies supporting both students and staff.

Refer to *2SLGBTQIA+ School Advocacy: A Policy Resource* for more information.

## Intervening with adults (colleagues or parents/care-givers)

If students say ‘that’s so gay’ or ‘fag’ in class or the hallways ...

- If it’s possible, try to address this one-on-one
- Make sure you are in a grounded place and have someone you can talk to afterward
- Communicate the situation with admin or colleagues that you trust (in confidence)
- Say something that is strength-based and calm

*e.g. “You are your own person, and at the end of the day, you are the one who decides what you believe. I will tell you that this belief you hold hurts a large number of people (myself included). When 2SLGBTQIA+ people are told again and again that there is something wrong with them, that there is no place for them in the world, they start to believe it. A lot of 2SLGBTQIA+ people deal with mental health challenges in their lives. This is largely due to the lack of acceptance they feel at various times in their lives. You have a chance to have a belief that could positively impact people, or negatively impact people. I hope you reconsider your stance. I think you care, and perhaps that is why you have your belief in the first place ... you think that having that belief is saving people, but 2SLGBTQIA+ folks don’t need to be saved in that way. 2SLGBTQIA+ people don’t choose their identities. They do choose to be themselves in a world that can be very cruel. I hope you change your perspective so that the world can be just a little bit kinder today.”*



# Activity

Think about a situation where you heard a student use a slur or say something offensive against 2SLGBTQIA+ people. How did you respond in that moment? If you could go back, what would you say? Write down how you would respond to it now. Practice saying it aloud.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Now that you have learned about key terms, the 2SLGBTQIA+ initialism, how gender and sexuality are related to whiteness, coloniality, ableism, and sanism, and how you can start fostering gender pride and queer euphoria in your classrooms, we invite you to go deeper in this final section.

**Reflect on your teacher ethics:** your values and beliefs towards education, teaching, and learning and how those understandings show up in your day-to-day as an educator.

- What do you think the purpose of education is?
- What do you think is important for students to learn?
- What markers of privilege and oppression do you have? How do those experiences affect who you are as a teacher and how you are perceived in the school?
- Do you believe learning is linear or circular? What role should a teacher play in another person's learning (e.g., to direct, passively guide, critique, etc.)?
- How do you typically assess and evaluate your students?
- Do you make assumptions about students and their families?
- How do you deal with situations where harm has occurred?





# Learn from a colleague:



Listen to Dr. Bishop Owis talk about a queer/trans ethic of care that emerges from the leadership of Black, Indigenous, and racialized queer and trans of colour educators.

**Dr. Bishop Owis**<sup>73</sup> is a teacher, community activist and recent PhD graduate from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). They are currently a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of British Columbia in the Faculty of Education.

## According to Dr. Bishop Owis, a queer/trans ethic of care (QTEC) is ...

“...a way of thinking about and practicing care in K-12 schools that is disruptive to the white, colonial ways in which care is often practiced in schools. It is a disruptive, nuanced version of care that transgresses and expands the normative idea about how teachers and students care for each other in schooling contexts. This relationship building often happens within a network of caring teachers and students, called a care web (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, L. (2021). *Care work dreaming disability justice*. Arsenal Pulp Press. ).

A QTEC works from an understanding of care work that centers disability justice, community, joy and thriving. It recognizes and celebrates that queer and trans people of colour, specifically queer and trans women of colour, 2-spirit people and Indigenous women have always practice care in radical, beautiful ways that have been overlooked for white versions of care (hierarchical, caring for others in ways that you understand care rather than how they want to be cared for, not hugging children in classrooms, not sharing personal information with students, etc).

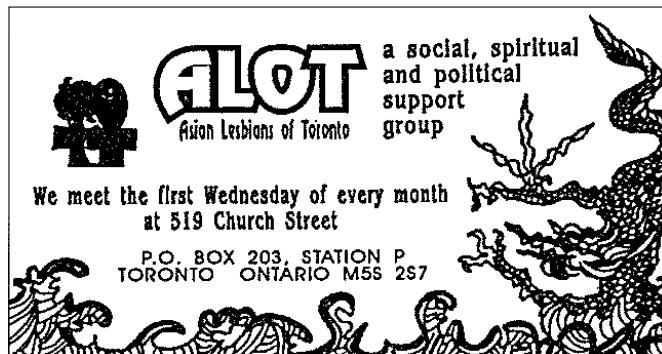
The need for a QTEC comes from a recognition that the way queer and trans youth and teachers of colour practice and understand care in ways that differ from the white, colonial concept of care.”



**Above:** Photograph of the Blackness Yes! Coordinating Committee. Pictured: Douglas Stewart, Angela Robertson, Jamea Zuberi, and Junior Harrison.<sup>74</sup>

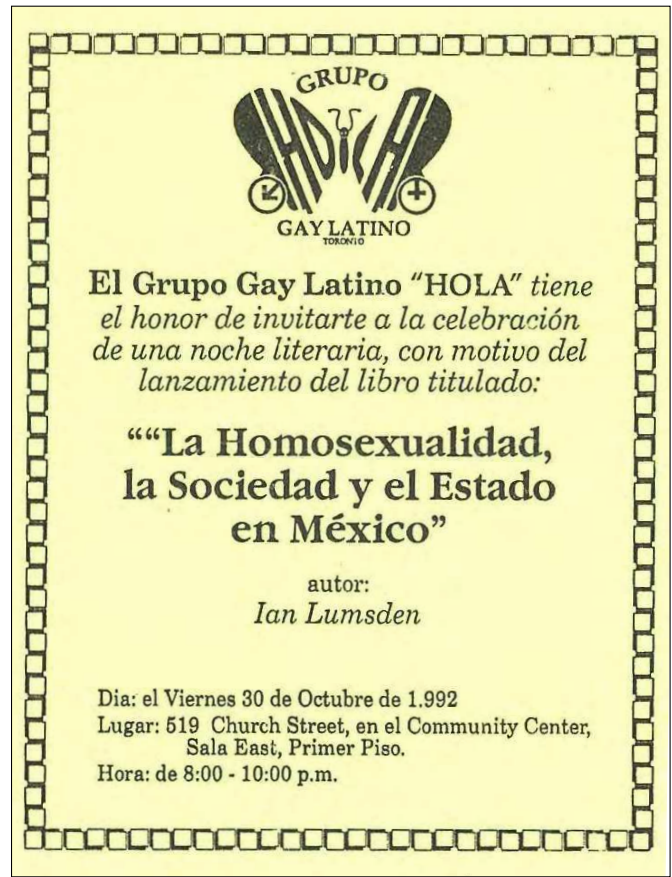


QTBI2SPOC (queer, trans, Black, Indigenous, Two-Spirit, and people of colour) have always created activist and care spaces for themselves and have often been leaders within queer and trans movements.



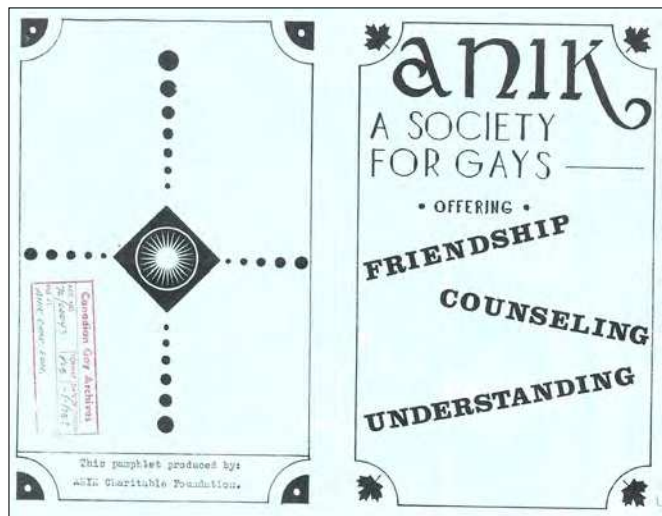
Above: [Business card](#) for Asian Lesbians of Toronto (ALOT) listing contact information and meeting schedule.<sup>75</sup>

Right: [Flyer](#) for a book launch organized by Grupo Gay Latino Toronto/HOLA, 1992.<sup>77</sup>



“This is because schools are products of institutionalized colonialism and white supremacy, and therefore QTBIPOC teachers and students do not feel cared for by an institution that holds and perpetuates this history and treatment.

Because of this reality, QTBIPOC teachers have imagined new forms of care practices that support an approach to a QTEC.”



Above: [Pamphlet](#) for ANIK, a Toronto-based organization for gay Inuit, ca. 1973.<sup>76</sup>

### According to Dr. Bishop Owis, these caring practices include:

1. Creating authentic, fluid, mutually vulnerable relationships with students
2. Engaging in explicitly anti-colonial, anti-racist moments with students (through curriculum, conversations, etc.)
3. Affirming and recognizing their students and whole, complex people in their identities, locations, and histories

# Reflection questions:

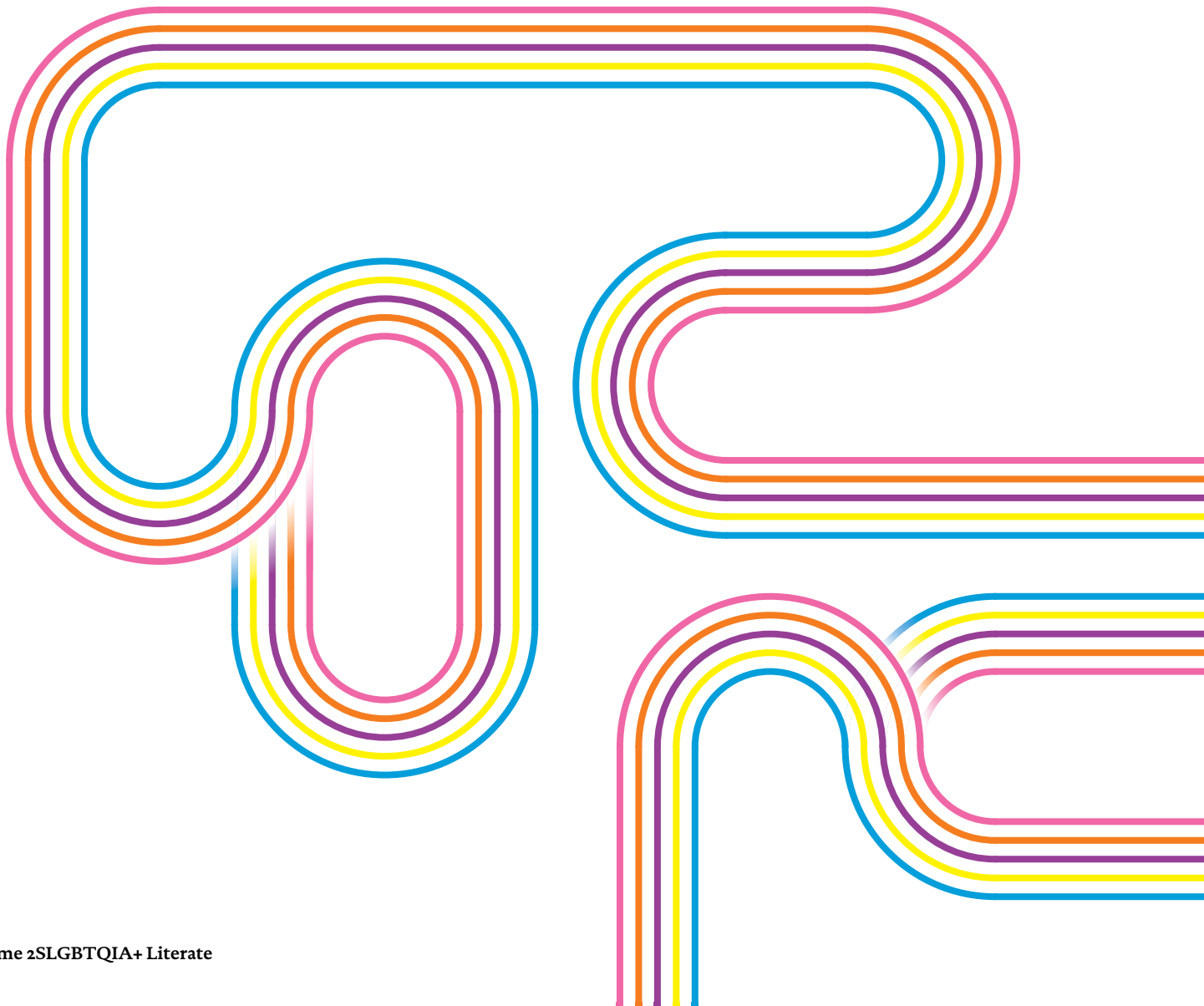
- What does a caring classroom or school like and feel like to you?
- How can you disrupt hierarchies of 'teacher' and 'learner' in your classroom?
- How can you recognize yourself and your students as complex beings?



# How can I Indigiqueer Land-based education?

**Indigiqueer:** As Marie Laing taught us earlier in this guide, Indigiqueer is a term coined by Nehiyaw filmmaker TJ Cuthand in 2004. It is a word, like 2S (Two-Spirit/two-spirit) that was made by and for Indigenous people.

**Land-based Education:** Land-based education is an Indigenous way of teaching and learning that positions Land as the first teacher. In this case, it is about understanding gender and sexuality as existing on and in relation to Land.



# Learn from a Land-based educator:

Listen to what Mike Izzo, a Land-based educator, has to say about teaching about gender and sexuality in relation to learning about the land:

“Everything related to Indigenous culture, identity and knowledge comes from the Land. As such, our attitudes towards those 2 Spirit comes from our observations from our environments and what is natural. While each nation lives in unique environments, **nature proves there are a variety of identities related to gender and sexuality and therefore these identities are natural to humans and to be celebrated.**”

## Here are some examples from Mike's Lands:

**Jack in the Pulpit (plant):** These plants are hermaphroditic and begin as male. As young plants, if they gain enough energy through light as well as through moisture and soil conditions, they transition to female to produce seeds and berries. If not, they remain in male form. They are often called “Indian turnip” by Iroquoian peoples for food; but must be harvested with great caution as they can be poisonous if not used properly. They are also known to have many health properties, especially related to eye issues. It is an example of a plant that is gender non-conformist and offers a variety of benefits depending on its seasonal gender.

**Maple (tree):** These celebrated trees that decorate Canada's flag refuse to follow gender norms! While a maple tree is most likely to produce all male or all female seeds, they are well known for being polygamous, with some trees producing both. Some of these trees can also switch genders but science hasn't been able to explain why or how. Many Indigenous cultures revere the maple as it provides sap, which is a key dietary and health staple in early spring. Yes, Canada's flag reflects a gender non-conforming species!

**Duck (animal):** They often express various forms of sexuality. For males, once reproduction is complete, they often take same sex partners. It is not uncommon for females to also take same-sex partners to raise ducklings. Often a bunch of ducks, called a raft, include many same sex couples all working together to make the bigger community healthy. Ducks have always been a major source of food for Indigenous peoples and the young are always left to thrive with their adult leaders, who have no discriminatory issues regarding sexuality. A raft works as a bigger team and no duck fights another based on identity.

“Nature taught my peoples that 2 Spirit identities were natural and therefore good for us as humans, just as they are for the environment. You can teach your students to have this sense of pride regardless if they are Indigenous or not.”

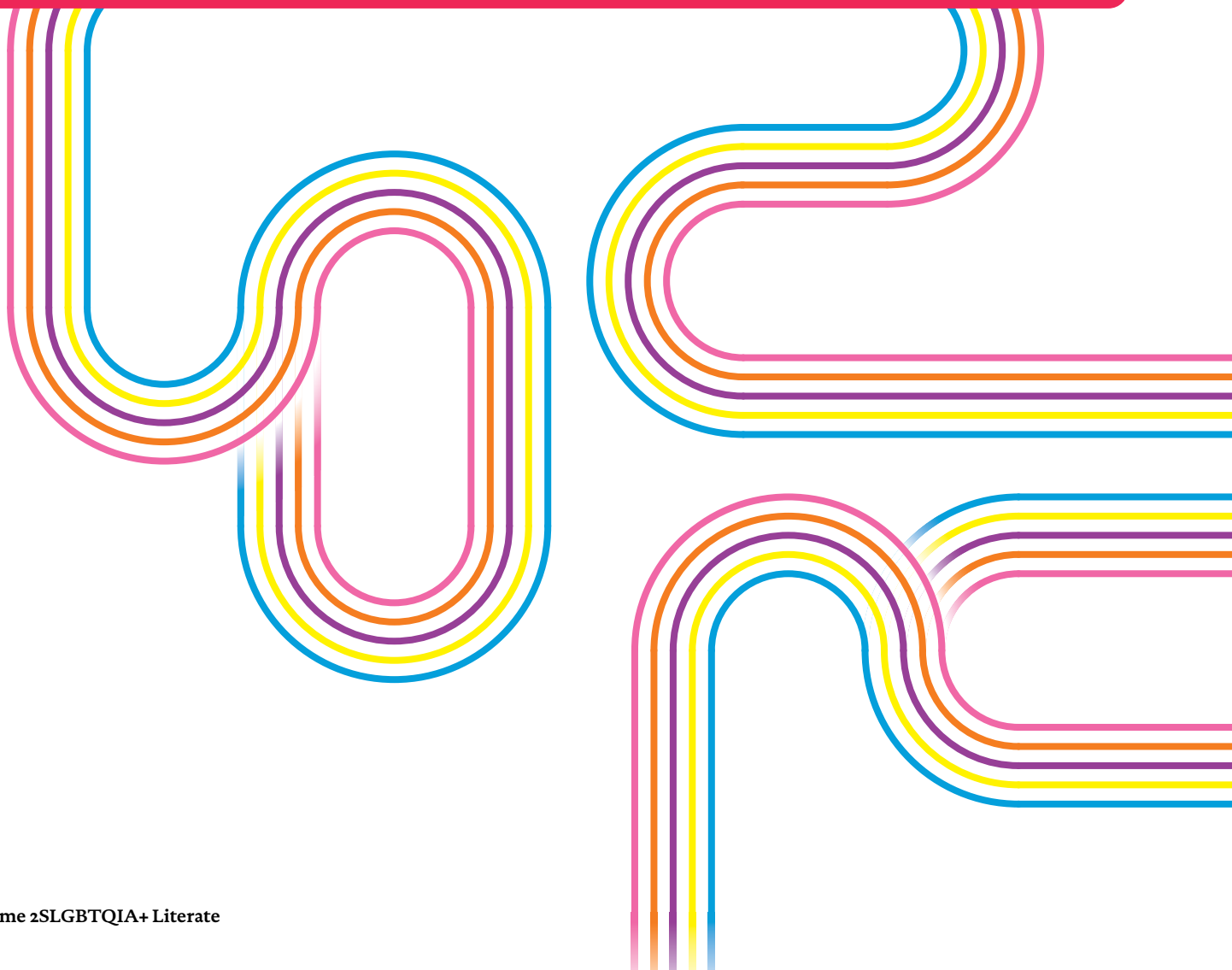


## Here are some of Mike's best practices ...

**Inform Yourself:** It doesn't take an Indigenous Elder to learn about 2 Spirit identities in nature. Start to investigate your own local ecosystem to find examples. But don't just learn of the many identities of these plants, trees and animals; go further by learning how they contribute towards making your local ecosystem healthy and vibrant. It's important to be able to highlight contributions to influence self-esteem.

**Engage Students:** Take them on a nature hike to interact with these local natural examples you discover. Show the students how they contribute to the larger health of the ecosystem. Share their gifts as you would do with all other plants, trees and animals. Normalizing these identities for all is an Indigenous approach.

**Minds On:** Be aware that 2 Spirit peoples strive for integration within their community. They are not looking to be segregated or taught separately as they know they are natural and culturally normal already. Their identities extend far beyond gender and sexuality: They are more largely influenced by their roles and responsibilities in a community."



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This project was generously supported with funding from Martha LA McCain.

Version: January 2023