



# the **Gender Spectrum**

## What educators need to know

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# Background Information

## In this Section

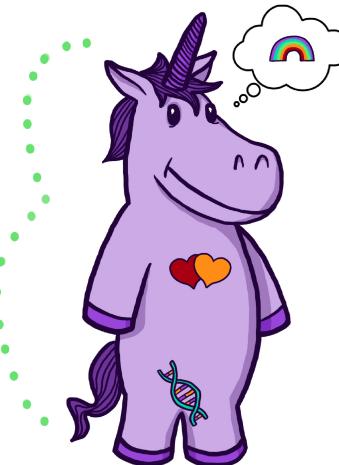
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## Gender and You

A person's identity is made up of many parts, including their gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation. "The Gender Unicorn" can be a helpful tool for exploring each part. (To learn more, go to: [www.transstudent.org/gender](http://www.transstudent.org/gender))

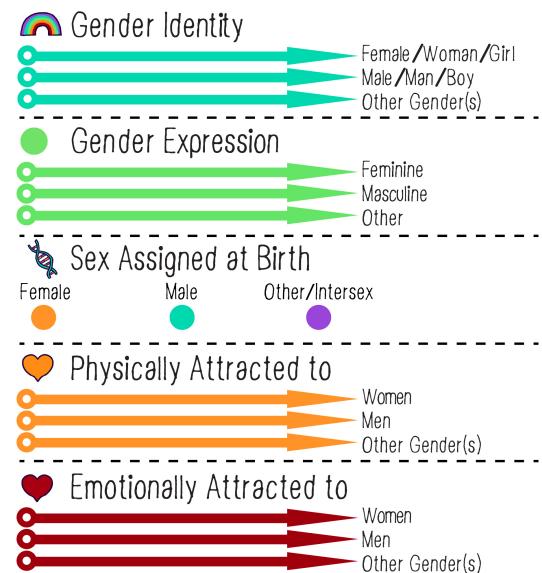
## The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:  
**TSER**  
Trans Student Educational Resources



To learn more, go to:  
[www.transstudent.org/gender](http://www.transstudent.org/gender)

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore



Take a moment to reflect on your gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation.

- What are the traditional expectations in your culture(s) for each aspect of your identity?
- In what ways do you conform to these gender expectations? In what ways are you different?
- When you, or people you've known, look or act in ways that do not conform to gender expectations, what have the consequences been?

# Gender and Society



**We are born into a world with a pre-written script about gender.  
According to this script:**

- 1.** Gender is determined at birth or sooner, based on anatomy. People whose gender identity is the same as their biological sex are normal, natural, moral, and healthy. Trans and two-spirit people are abnormal, unnatural, immoral or ill.
- 2.** Men should have a masculine gender expression. They should be strong, rational, and self-reliant. They are naturally aggressive. Women should have a feminine gender expression. They should be gentle and caring. They are naturally weak and emotional.
- 3.** Femininity is inferior to masculinity. Women (especially trans women) are inferior to men. Feminine men are inferior to masculine men. Since masculinity is superior, masculine voices carry more weight and masculine people are better suited to the most powerful roles in society (leadership roles in government, business, finance, military, etc.).
  - There are only two genders: male and female.
  - Which of these assumptions do you hold to be true?
  - Where did you acquire these assumptions?

This pre-written gender script is played out in explicit and implicit ways (see “How Children Learn About Gender”). It limits everyone, but it’s particularly harmful to women, trans people, two-spirit people, and gender expansive people.

# Trans, Two-Spirit and Gender Expansive Identities

## A trans person is:

Someone who identifies with a gender that is different from the one they were assigned at birth, all or part of the time.

Some of the people who may identify as trans include:

- People who were assigned a male gender at birth but who identify as female all or part of the time (some use the term Male-to-Female or MTF or Trans Woman)
- People who were assigned a female gender at birth but identify as male all or part of the time (some use the term Female-to-Male or FTM or Trans Man)
- People who identify their gender outside the construct of male/female: having no gender, being androgynous, having parts of multiple genders, moving fluidly between genders, etc. (some use the term Non-binary or Genderqueer)

## A two-spirit person is:

- A First Nations, Métis, or Inuit person who has a dual-gender identity, gender expression or gender role.

## Gender expansive refers to:

A person who does not conform to society's expectations of their gender role or gender expression. It is a broad term that includes boys who behave, dress and interact in feminine ways and girls who behave, dress and interact in masculine ways.

Some of the people who may identify as gender expansive include:

- People who identify as women but express themselves in a masculine way (in queer communities some use the term **Butch**)
- People who identify as men but express themselves in a feminine way
- People who explore gender for pleasure or performance (some use the term **Drag King** or **Drag Queen**)
- People who wear clothing traditionally associated with a gender they do not identify with (some use the term **Gender Play**)

A person may identify themselves in one, two or all three of these categories. For example, some butch people may also identify as trans, while others may not. Some trans people may also identify as two-spirit, but not all two-spirit people identify as trans. Some trans people do drag, but not everyone who does drag identifies as trans. For these reasons, we will refer to all three groups throughout this book, in hopes that anyone who breaks away from "the gender script" will see themselves reflected in the language we use, as well as to call for positive social change for all of these groups.

We ask readers to resist the urge to understand these groups as being homogenous. The challenges faced within each of these groups are unique, and further shaped by factors unique to each individual such as their race, class, sexual orientation, ability and religion.



## How can we “rewrite the gender script” in ways that are more inclusive of trans, two-spirit and gender expansive people?

Here are some proposed alternative beliefs:

- 1.** People have the right to self-determine their gender identity. We should respect and affirm each person's gender identity. This includes female, trans and two-spirit identities.
- 2.** We should respect and affirm each person's gender expression. This includes gender expansive people, such as men who behave, dress or interact in feminine ways and women who behave, dress or interact in masculine ways. It also includes people who express themselves in androgynous ways and people who explore gender for pleasure and performance.
- 3.** Femininity is just as good as masculinity. Feminine voices should carry as much weight as masculine voices. Feminine people can be excellent leaders.
- 4.** There are more than two gender identities (male and female) and more than two forms of gender expression (masculine and feminine).
  - Which of these assumptions do you hold to be true?
  - Which assumptions do you have difficulty with? Spend some time reflecting on what the root of this difficulty might be.
  - What might you personally stand to lose and gain by holding these assumptions?
  - What might others stand to lose or gain if you held these assumptions?
  - How would you need to act differently if you held these assumptions?

# Two Spirit: Past, Present & Future

By Harlan Pruden, Co-founder and Council Member for the NorthEast Two-Spirit Society

On the land we know as North America, there were approximately 400 distinct indigenous Nations. Of that number, 155 have documented multiple gender traditions. Two-spirit is a contemporary term that refers to those traditions where some individuals' spirits are a blending of male and female spirit.

The existence of two-spirit people challenges the rigid binary worldview of the North American colonizers and missionaries, not just of the binary gender system, but a generalized system where binaries are the norm. The two-spirits' mere existence threatened the colonizers' core beliefs; the backlash was violent. Historical sketches, housed at the New York City public library, depict two-spirit people being attacked by colonizers' dogs. Word of this brutal treatment spread quickly from nation to nation.

Many nations decided to take action to protect their honored and valued two-spirit people. Some nations hid them by asking them to replace their dress, a mixture of men and women's clothing, with the attire of their biological sex. After years of colonization, some of those very same nations denied ever having a tradition that celebrated and honored their two-spirit people.

The two-spirit tradition is primarily a question of gender, not sexual orientation. Sexual orientation describes the relationship a person of one gender has with an other-gendered person. Gen-



**"The two-spirit tradition is primarily a question of gender, not sexual orientation."**

der describes an individual's expected role within a community.

Within traditional Native communities, there was an expectation that women farmed/gathered food and cooked while men hunted big game. Although there was division of labour along gender lines, there was no gender-role hierarchy. Within the Native social construct of gender, a community could not survive without both of the equal halves of a whole. The Native commitment to gender equality opened the door for the possibility of multiple genders, without the idea that a man was taking

on a lesser gender by placing himself in a woman's role or vice versa for women assuming men's roles.

## Gender Roles of Two-Spirit People

People of two-spirit gender functioned as craftspeople, shamans, medicine-givers, mediators, and/or social workers. In many Native communities, men's and women's styles of speech were distinct; sometimes even different dialects were spoken. The two-spirit people knew how to speak both in the men's and women's ways. They were the only ones allowed to go between the men's and the women's camps. They brokered marriages, divorces, settled arguments, and fostered open lines of communication between the sexes.

Their proficiency in mediation often included their work as communicators between the seen (physical) and unseen (spiritual) worlds. Many of the great visionaries, dreamers, shamans, or medicine givers were two-spirit people. In some traditions, a war party could not be dispatched until their two-spirit person consulted the spirits of the unseen world and then gave their blessings.

When a family was not properly raising their children, it has been documented that two-spirit people would intervene and assume responsibility as the primary caretaker. Sometimes,

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families would ask a two-spirit person for assistance in rearing their children. In this respect, two-spirit people were similar to modern day social workers.

It is traditional to present gifts at gatherings to those who exemplify the “spirit” of the community or who have done the most for the community. Two-spirit people were respected and honoured with gifts when they attended gatherings. They did not keep the gifts, but passed them on to spread the wealth.

### **Remembering Our Traditions**

Since the time of colonization many Natives have forgotten the “old” way. Many converted to non-Native religions, which did not accept traditional spirituality and community structures. However, there are groups of elders and activists that have quietly kept the two-spirit tradition alive. In some nations that have revived this tradition, or brought it once again into the light, two-spirit people are again fulfilling some of the roles and regaining the honour and respect of their communities.

The two-spirit tradition is a very rich one that deserves a closer examination. The LGBT activists engaged in achieving equality for all should remember that there was a time when people with a blend of male and female spirits were accepted and honored for their special qualities. Two-spirit people are a part of the fabric of this land and stand here today as a testament of their collective strength and fortitude.

## **Cross-Cultural Perceptions of Gender**



**M**ost babies are labeled as being biologically male or female at birth, but the process of becoming a man or a woman is heavily shaped by our culture and society. As such, the definition of what is appropriate for a man or a woman varies widely among countries, among religious faiths, and among different eras. In addition to differences between men and women's roles, looking back in time and across cultures, one finds that not all societies rely on only two gender categories. No less than seven gender categories existed amongst the

Chukchi people of Siberia in the 1800s. Many First Nation tribes include a third gender category now called “two-spirit.” In Oman, there is a third gender called the xanith. It is apparent from written historical records that there have been differently gendered people in virtually every society in every time period (Blanchard & Steiner, 1990). In schools that are increasingly multicultural, it is important for teachers to prepare students to be global citizens by teaching them to understand cultural influences on gender identity.

# How Children Learn About Gender

Most children are assumed to be male or female at birth (or sooner) based on their physical characteristics. From that moment on, they are surrounded by overt and covert messages about what they should do and who they should be, based on their gender. Just walk down the aisle of a toy or baby clothing store and you'll see a wide variety of products sold in specific colours, designs or styles that are directly marketed with gender stereotypes in mind.

Gender is a fundamental aspect of identity for all kids. Children are typically aware of gender, their own and others', by about age two. As this awareness forms, they learn what personality traits, behaviours, and attitudes are thought to be appropriate for their gender, based on messages from many sources: family, friends, school, and media. For boys, there tends to be pressure to appear strong, be aggressive, suppress emotions, and develop an interest in girls. For girls, there tends to be pressure to be pretty, care for others, and develop an interest in boys. Pressure to conform to these gender expectations affects all aspects of a child's personality, appearance, everyday socializing, interests, and career choices. Children who don't conform to traditional gender expectations are often subject to exclu-



**“On television, gender-non conforming people are the butt of jokes and ridicule.”**

sion, harassment, and violence.

The erasure of trans, two-spirit, and gender-expansive people adds to the pressure to conform. Most children do not learn about these identities at home or school, and there is an absence of representation in the media. Those children who do not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth are often unaware of the existence of others like them and lack language to describe themselves.

When trans, two-spirit, and gender expansive identities are brought up, it often takes place

in ways that contribute to stigmatization. Much of the bullying that takes place between youth makes use of sexist, homophobic, and transphobic name-calling. On television, gender-non conforming people are the butt of jokes and ridicule. Talk shows often put trans lives under interrogation: Why do trans people exist? Did their parents do something wrong? Did they face some sort of trauma that made them this way? Is this the result of a genetic abnormality? Are they mentally ill? These kinds of questions suggest that trans, two-spirit, and gender expansive identities are unnatural, abnormal, and unhealthy. In these ways, children learn that trans, two-spirit, and gender expansive identities are something to be ashamed of.

Educators of all grade levels and subject areas are uniquely positioned to interrupt the ways children learn homophobia, transphobia, and sexism. We can encourage students to establish their own identities and figure out where their interests and talents lie, whatever pressures they may face to conform. What we say and do every day has a huge impact on the school culture. Individually and collectively, we have the power to shift school cultures to be accepting of every student.

# The Climate in Canadian Schools

EGALE Canada conducted a nation-wide study to see what life at school is like for sexual minority and gender minority youth. This is what they found.

## Negative Comments about Femininity and Masculinity

About half of the sexual minority (gay, lesbian, bisexual and queer) participants and more than half of the trans participants reported hearing comments about girls “not acting feminine enough” every day or every week at school.

More than half of the sexual minority (gay, lesbian, bisexual and queer) participants and 79% of trans students reported hearing comments about boys “not acting masculine enough”

## Negative Comments about Women

Almost two-thirds of students reported hearing negative remarks about girls in general daily or weekly.

## Verbal Harassment

74% of trans students, 55% of sexual minority students, and 26% of non-LGBTQ students reported having been verbally harassed about their gender expression.

90% of trans youth hear transphobic comments daily or weekly from other students and almost a quarter (23%) of trans students reported hearing teachers use transphobic language daily or weekly.

## Physical Harassment

37% of trans students, 21% of sexual minority students, and 10% of non-LGBTQ students reported being physically harassed or assaulted because of their gender expression.

## Sexual Harassment

49% of trans students reported being sexually harassed at school.

## Feeling Unsafe

When all identity-related grounds for feeling unsafe are taken into account, including ethnicity and religion, more than three-quarters (78%) of trans students indicated feeling unsafe in some way at school. 44% of trans students reported being likely to miss school because of feeling unsafe and 15% reported having skipped more than 10 days because of feeling unsafe at school.

*Source: Taylor, C. & Peter, T., with McMinn, T.L., Elliott, T., Beldom, S., Ferry, A., Gross, Z., Paquin, S., & Schachter, K. (2011). Every class in every school: The first national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools. Final report. Toronto, ON: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.*

# Top 5 Reasons to Create Gender Inclusive Schools

1. Messages that expand understandings of gender empower students rather than limit them. Encouraging students to develop the interests and skills that matter to them is self-affirming and motivating.
2. It is important to dispel harmful stereotypes and prejudices. This helps students understand the impacts of stereotyping and discrimination, enables them to celebrate differences, and encourages them to work towards creating a peaceful pluralistic society.
3. All children, including trans, two-spirit and gender expansive students, need to see themselves and their lived realities reflected in the curriculum in order to affirm their identities and to enable them to imagine a bright future.
4. School should be a place where all students feel safe and secure. Students who are bullied, excluded, or assaulted because they do not conform to others' beliefs about gender do not have an equal opportunity to succeed academically or fully participate in school life.
5. Schools are required by the BC Ministry of Education to be inclusive. The Ministry Policy entitled "Diversity in BC Schools" states, "The school system strives to create and maintain conditions that foster success for all students and that promote fair and equitable treatment for all." These conditions include:
  - (a) school cultures that value diversity;
  - (b) school cultures that promote understanding of others and respect for all;
  - (c) learning and working environments that are safe and welcoming, free from discrimination, harassment and violence; and
  - (d) policies and practices that promote fair and equitable treatment.



# Educational Leadership

## In this Section

- The Legal Obligations of Educational Administrators
- School Climate Assessment
- Creating a Gender Inclusive School Culture
- Model School Policy Regarding Trans, Two-Spirit and Gender Expansive Students
- Responding to Concerns about Gender Inclusive Schools

## The Legal Obligations of Educational Administrators



The bullying and harassment that trans, two-spirit and gender expansive youth face in schools is usually accompanied by homophobic harassment. This is even the case when the youth identify as straight. Educational leaders in British Columbia (i.e. school boards, superintendents, and principals) have a legal obligation to provide students with an educational environment that does not expose them to discriminatory harassment. This was the finding of a significant court case in the history of educational law: *Jubran v. North Vancouver School District No. 44*.

During the five years that Azmi Jubran attended Handsworth Secondary School in North Vancouver, he was repeatedly harassed by other students who perceived him to be gay. Jubran, who identifies as heterosexual, took the North Vancouver School District to court for failing to stop the homophobic harassment – and ultimately in 2005 he won.



BC's LGBT students will now see themselves reflected in anti-bullying policies in public and independent schools throughout the province, education minister Mike Bernier tells a Sept 8, 2016 news conference. Credit: Province of British Columbia/Flickr

The school board was held liable because it failed to intervene and actively work to prevent homophobic harassment on many levels:

- **Policy:** The district and school failed to write, communicate to students, and enforce a clear Code of Conduct Policy that prohibits discrimination based upon “one’s real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.” Irrespective of one’s real or perceived sexual orientation, all students deserve the right to a learning environment that is homophobia free in which they can reach their full learning potential.
- **Professional Development:** The school board lacked specific policies and protocols for changing the school culture to make it less homophobic. They had no in-service training for administrators or teachers in the area of anti-homophobia education.
- **Curricular Content:** The board and school made no attempts to infuse existing curriculum with integrated lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) friendly resources or units for students on the positive contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people in society. There was no effort made to combat harmful myths and stereotypes perpetuated against LGBT people. The effect was that a homophobic environment was allowed to thrive.

July 2016: Bill 27, Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2016, was passed to include “gender identity or expression” among the protected grounds covered by the code. Prior to the change, transgender individuals were protected under the code’s protected grounds of “sex,” as interpreted by B.C.’s Human Rights Tribunal and the courts. By adding the grounds for protection explicitly, the amendments bring greater clarity and consistency across Canada.

Then in September 2016, The Minister of Education announced on September 8, 2016 that all British Columbian boards of education and independent school authorities were required to reference sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in district and school codes of conduct by December 31, 2016.

# School Climate Assessment

**Is your school culture gender inclusive? Answer the following questions and find out. Indicate “yes” with a checkmark and “no” with an X.**

- Does our school have a core values or mission statement that includes respect for diversity?
- Does our school have a written policy protecting students from bullying, harassment, violence and discrimination with regard to actual or perceived sexual orientation and actual or perceived gender identity?
- In the last three years, has our school held workshops for educators on gender identity, gender roles and stereotypes, or families with same-gender parents?
- In the last two weeks, have I heard students engage in name-calling related to gender non-conformity (sissy, wimp, wuss, pansy, fairy, he-she etc.) or sexual orientation (gay, fag, dyke, queer, etc.)?
- Does our school staff always intervene in name-calling related to gender non-conformity or sexual orientation?
- Do our school and classroom libraries have books that depict a range of gender identities and expressions, including diverse families?
- Does our school staff feel comfortable teaching and answering questions about gender identity and sexual orientation?
- Does our school organize events, assemblies, and guest speakers that celebrate gender diversity and/or prevent gender-based bullying (e.g. Do you celebrate the Day of Pink)?
- Does the curriculum include lessons and resources that reflect a range of gender identities and expressions?
- Do students have equal opportunities to participate (and feel welcomed) in extra-curricular activities and sports, regardless of gender identity?

What are our school's strengths? What are our school's weaknesses?

(This tool is only as effective as the follow-up strategies it generates. Its purpose is to lead to action. Read on for strategies to build on your strengths and address your weaknesses!)

# Creating a Gender Inclusive School Culture

These strategies will help educational administrators successfully meet their ethical and legal responsibility to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students, regardless of gender identity and expression.

## School Policies

- Ensure your school's equity statements, anti-violence policies, and code of conduct prohibit discrimination based on "one's real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression." Communicate these policies to students and staff and enforce them.
- Create a flexible or gender-neutral dress code to enable a student's right to dress in accordance with their gender identity. The same rules for clothing, hair, and make up should apply to all genders.
- Adopt a school policy that protects trans, two-spirit and gender expansive students' rights. These include the right to be addressed by one's preferred name and pronoun, to participate in gender segregated activities and sports in accordance with one's gender identity, and to have access to safe restroom and locker room facilities that correspond to one's gender identity. (See the Model School Policy Regarding Trans, Two Spirit and Gender Expansive Students on pages 16-18).

## School Grounds

- Challenge and counteract binary and stereotypical messages about gender (both implicit and explicit) found on school grounds, including murals, posters, bulletin board displays, trophy cases, the school website, etc.
- Ensure that harmful (i.e. sexist, homophobic, transphobic) graffiti on walls, desks, and washroom stalls etc. are removed and dealt with seriously.
- Provide the option of a gender-neutral washroom and change room. (Bear in mind that trans and two-spirit people are, just like everyone else, entitled to use the facilities that match their gender identity.)

## School Staff

- Hire staff with diverse gender identities and expressions, as well as positive attitudes toward gender non-conformity.
- Allow staff to be open about their gender identity. This models a valuing of diversity and provides exposure to adult role models.
- Provide staff training about creating safety and support for all gender identities and expressions. This should include an explanation of pertinent vocabulary, an identification of the unique issues and challenges faced by trans, two-spirit and gender expansive students, and strategies for supporting these students. It should also emphasize age-appropriate ways to make the curriculum inclusive of gender diversity. Contact the BC Teachers' Federation or the Pride Education Network for information on such professional development opportunities.
- Designate a staff person within the school, or school district, who can act in an extended advocacy role for all students who may be targeted or harassed due to their real or perceived gender identity or expression.

## School Curriculum and Resources

- Create a preventative anti-bullying strategy that specifically strives to eliminate gender-based bullying.
- Observe and celebrate events that raise awareness about gender-related oppression (sexism, homophobia, heterosexism, transphobia). Examples include: the Day of Pink and the Trans Day of Remembrance.
- Support the creation of a Gender Sexuality Alliance (previously Gay-Straight Alliance) in your school that includes trans, two-spirit and gender expansive students.
- Provide funding for fiction and non-fiction library resources that contain positive messages about gender diversity (see pg. 57 for a list of recommended titles).
- Evaluate school curriculum for LGBTQ inclusive units and language. Integrate content about trans, two-spirit and gender expansive people into the school curriculum, including family life and sexual health education programs.

## Events that raise awareness about gender-related oppression

- Day of Pink (February or April – date varies)
- International Women's Day (March 8)
- Day of Silence (April, date varies)
- International Day Against Homophobia & Transphobia (May 17)
- Trans Day of Remembrance (November 20)
- Human Rights Day (December 10)

# Model School Policy Regarding Trans, Two-Spirit and Gender Expansive Students

This policy is intended to advise school administration and staff regarding issues related to trans, two-spirit, and gender expansive students in order to provide equal educational opportunities to all students and ensure that schools maintain environments free from unlawful discrimination or discriminatory harassment.

## Definitions for the purposes of this policy:

**Gender Expansive** refers to a person who does not conform to society's expectations of their gender role or gender expression. It is a broad term that includes boys who behave, dress and interact in feminine ways; girls who behave, dress and interact in masculine ways; in addition to trans students.

**Gender Expression** refers to the way a person expresses one's gender, through dress, grooming habits, choice of name and pronoun, mannerisms, activities, etc.

**Gender Identity** refers to one's understanding of oneself as a girl (or woman), boy (or man), or both, or neither, regardless of one's sex assigned at birth.

**Trans Students** refers to students whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. This includes students who were assigned male at birth but identify as female, students who were assigned female at birth but identify as male, and students who identify as both or neither male nor female.

**Two-Spirit Students** refers to First Nations, Metis and Inuit students who identify as having a dual gender identity, gender expression, or gender role.

## Student Self-Identification

Students, including trans, two-spirit, and gender expansive students, may use a variety of terms to describe their gender, gender expression and gender identity. Not all students who fall within the broad definitions of "trans", "two-spirit" and "gender-expansive" set forth above will use these terms to self-identify. School personnel should not label students unnecessarily, and should respect the terms students adopt to identify themselves. Whenever possible, school forms to be filled out by students should allow students to fill in their gender (or to decline to answer) rather than require them to choose between male and female.

## Privacy and Confidentiality

All persons, including students, have a right to privacy; this includes the right to keep one's trans status private. Without consent from the student, school personnel should not disclose a student's trans status to others, such as students, parents or other school personnel, unless there is a specific "need to know" (for example, a health emergency). A student's trans status may also be disclosed to others to the limited extent necessary to investigate and/or resolve a claim of discrimination or harassment brought by that student.

## **Names and Pronouns**

Students may request to be addressed by a name and pronoun that corresponds to their gender identity without changing the legal name designated in their official records and school-wide informational systems. All school staff need to honour such requests. If the student consents, such requests need to be noted in any materials that are shared with or accessible to staff, in order to inform staff of the name and pronoun to use when addressing the student. Teachers should privately ask all students at the beginning of the school year how they prefer to be addressed at school and how they prefer to be addressed in correspondence to the home or at conferences with their parents. In cases where students and parents disagree about the name and pronoun to be used at school, school officials may refer families to appropriate internal and/or external counseling or support services.

## **Official Records**

Whenever possible and permitted by law, requests made by a student, or the parent/guardian, to change the student's official record to reflect their preferred name and/or gender identity will be accommodated. Whenever possible, at the request of a student or of a students' parent(s)/guardian, the student's preferred name and/or gender identity will be included on class lists, timetables, student files, identification cards, etc.

## **Dress Codes**

Students have the right to dress in accordance with their gender identity. A student's clothing shall not be deemed to violate any applicable dress code on the ground that it does not conform in whole or in part to stereotypes or gender norms associated with the sex assigned to that student at birth.

## **Restroom Accessibility**

Students shall have access to restroom facilities that correspond to their gender identity. Where available, a single-stall restroom or other alternate restroom, such as one in a health or nurse's office, shall be used by any student with a need for increased privacy (for example, because of his or her gender identity, a permanent or temporary disability, etc.) regardless of the underlying reason. The use of such a single-stall bathroom shall be a matter of the student's choice; no student should be compelled to use such a bathroom. If it is kept locked, it is appropriate to issue a key to the single-stall to a student who needs to use it. Forcing a student to ask for the key to the bathroom (particularly if they need to ask in a public setting such as an office, or ask someone who may question why this is necessary) can present a significant barrier.

## **Locker Room Accessibility**

Students shall have access to locker room facilities that correspond to their gender identity. In locker rooms that require undressing in front of others, students who desire increased privacy for any reason (for example, because of their gender identity, a permanent or temporary disability, faith, etc.), shall be provided with accommodations that best meet their needs and privacy concerns. Based on availability and the nature of the privacy concerns, such accommodations could include, but are not limited to: Use of a private area in or near the locker room (e.g., an area separated by a curtain, the physical education instructor's office, a nearby restroom or medical room, etc.), or a separate changing schedule (using the locker room before or after other students).

## Physical Education Classes and Sports

Trans and two-spirit students are to be provided the same opportunities to participate in physical education as all other students, shall not be forced to have physical education outside of the assigned class time, and shall be permitted to participate in any gender-segregated activities in accordance with their gender identity. Generally, students shall also be permitted to participate in any gender-segregated recreational and competitive athletic activities, including extracurricular activities, in accordance with their gender identity. If a dispute arises with regard to a trans or two-spirit student's participation in competitive athletics or contact sports, such disputes shall be resolved on a case-by-case basis. Please refer to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport materials on Gender Inclusivity for more information.

## Other Instances of Gender Segregation

Generally, in any circumstance where students are separated by gender in the course of a school activity, students shall be permitted to participate in accordance with their gender identity. If such an activity raises privacy concerns for any trans, two-spirit or gender expansive student, for any reason, staff shall make a reasonable effort to provide an accommodation to address such concerns. If no such accommodation is available, concerns shall be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

## Access to Information

Schools should endeavor to include in their libraries or counselor offices (or other appropriate locations) books, pamphlets and/or other materials that provide accurate information about gender identity issues and related matters. Students should be permitted to access these materials confidentially and, if possible, anonymously.

## Discrimination/Harassment

Schools must take effective steps to provide trans, two-spirit and gender expansive students with a safe school environment. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring that any incident of discrimination, harassment or violence is promptly investigated and all appropriate corrective actions are taken. Complaints alleging discrimination or harassment based on someone's actual or perceived sex, gender identity and/or gender expression are to be handled in the same manner as other discrimination or harassment complaints. School authorities may not discipline students or pressure them to alter their gender expression because other students react to that expression in a disruptive manner.

## Safety Transfers

Generally, schools should endeavor to keep trans, two-spirit and gender expansive students at their school site. Incidents of harassment or discrimination against a trans, two-spirit or gender expansive student should not result in an automatic transfer to another school. However, transfers should be considered and/or granted when it would be in the student's best interest to be in a different social environment or when a transfer is necessary for the protection or personal welfare of the student. In such cases, the decision to transfer a student should be made in close consultation with the student and the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) in order to determine whether a transfer is in the best interest of the student.

# Responding to Concerns about Gender Inclusive Schools

This section contains ideas about how to address questions or concerns about gender inclusivity that may arise from parents, guardians, administrators, or school boards.

## Strategies:

- Communicate regularly with families of students to build trust between school and home. Let families know what is being discussed at school and how it is being discussed. Provide information about how parents and guardians can approach gender-related topics with their children.
- Move the conversation away from myths, fears, and stereotypes about trans people and focus on the purpose of this work – supporting all students.
- Listen carefully to the concerns that are expressed, as this will help you find points of agreement. For instance, most people share the value of respect.

## Main Points:

- Emphasize that you are teaching respect. Respect is built by acknowledging the diversity in the community, promoting opportunities for community dialogue, and allowing the diversity of students and families to be visible within the school.
- Schools strive to increase understanding and connections across diversity or difference. With our communities becoming increasingly diverse, students benefit from developing the skills to live and work with many different people and populations.
- Schools are a place for informed and open discussions. Information and discussion about gender diversity will not make anyone trans. But learning about gender diversity may very well reduce bullying against trans children.
- Messages that expand understandings of gender empower every child to be themselves and pursue the goals and interests that inspire them.
- All children are entitled to a safe and supportive school environment.
- When talking to administrators and school boards, discuss schools' legal responsibility to provide students with an educational environment that does not expose them to discriminatory harassment. School boards and principals in BC can be (and have been) held liable for not preventing gender and sexual orientation-based harassment through policy, professional development, and curricular content (see pg. 11).



# Classroom Strategies

## In this Section

- The Role of the Classroom Teacher
- Ideas for Thinking Outside the Gender Binary
- Gender Roles and Play in the Primary Classroom
- Language Dos and Don'ts
- Use of Story to Challenge Gender Stereotypes
- Discussions about Gender with Primary Students
- Discussions about Gender with Intermediate Students
- Discussions about Gender with Secondary Students

## The Role of the Classroom Teacher



## Professionalism

- **Model respect for gender diversity.**  
Treat trans, two-spirit and gender expansive students, staff, parents, and community members with dignity and respect. Be wary of the assumptions you make about another person's gender
- **Parent communication.**  
Build trust with parents by informing them of your educational philosophy and curriculum plans. Listen to and respectfully address their concerns in a manner that does not compromise the safety and inclusion of trans, two-spirit, and gender expansive students (see pg. 19).
- **Professional development.**  
Reflect on your practice. Be aware of your strengths and areas for improvement as a gender-inclusive teacher. Continue to educate yourself about gender issues. Request workshops on the issue.

- **Be a sponsor teacher for the Gender Sexuality Alliance.**

Make sure the GSA explicitly welcomes trans, two-spirit and gender expansive students.

- **Advocate for trans, two-spirit and gender expansive students.**

Work to have your school board or school adopt the model policy on pg. 16-18.

## Curriculum

- Use resources that reflect gender diversity on a regular basis. Select textbooks, storybooks, novels, worksheets, videos, music and websites that show people with non-stereotypical appearances, behaviours and/or interests.
- Celebrate national and international days and events that raise awareness about gender issues (see pg. 15)
- Teach students how to be allies to trans, two-spirit and gender expansive students.
- Teach students how to protect themselves from gender-based bullying and harassment. Ensure students know how to identify and respond to sexism, homophobia, and heterosexism. Teach students the skills of resiliency.
- Don't make assumptions about the gender of students' parents or the gender that students will be romantically attracted to, particularly in family life education classes.

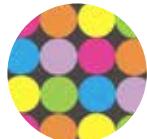
## Classroom Management/Environment

- At the beginning of the year, share your commitment to creating a safe, bullying-free environment for all students. Show students they can count on you to follow through on your commitment to them.
- Address the class in non-gendered ways (i.e. avoid "boys and girls"). For inclusive language ideas, see pg. 24.
- Seat students in non-gendered ways. Question students who seat themselves with only same-gendered people.
- Line students up randomly, not by gender.
- Create mixed-gender groups and teams
- Encourage girls to be vocal and active participants in the classroom. Track how often you take comments and answers from boys. Make sure girls get equal airtime.
- Display signs, posters, safe space stickers, class books, and library books that depict a range of gender presentations.
- With any new group of older students, start with a round of introductions including the name and pronouns that each person uses and model how to do this yourself: ie. "I'm Mr. Jones and I use he/him/his pronouns." This prevents assumptions about gender identity and allows everyone to indicate their name and pronouns and therefore does not force trans or gender expansive students to make a special statement about their pronouns.

# Ideas for Thinking Outside the Gender Binary

## 1. Check your baggage.

Reflect on your preconceived attitudes and fears regarding gender norms, gender conformity and trans people.



## 2. Educate yourself.

Stay on top of current social, political and cultural events related to gender issues – are gender roles being reinforced or deconstructed?

## 3. Challenge yourself.

Challenge your own stereotypes, beliefs and expectations around gender. Challenge your judgments about people who don't conform to rigid gender stereotypes either by their clothes, hair, mannerisms, interests or sexual attractions/ sexual orientation.

## 4. Challenge others.

Confront sexist/ homophobic attitudes and actions of others. Share what you have learned and encourage others to take a stand.

## 5. Make no assumptions.

Don't assume that all boys or all girls will have the same interests or learn the same way, or that there is only one right way to be male or female or trans. Consider the idea that gender is not a binary but rather exists along a continuum.

## 6. Practice, practice, practice!

Seize opportunities to use non-gender specific language (i.e. Not "boys and girls"), and practice challenging the gender stereotypes that children are taught.

## 7. Show your support.

Continue to attend events, workshops and training related to gender and sexual diversity.

## 8. Don't worry about making mistakes.

We all make mistakes sometimes! Don't draw unnecessary attention to a mistake about a name or pronoun, just apologize, move on and practice privately so the mistake is less likely. Learn from them and keep on growing.

## 9. Be brave.

It takes courage to create change, but we owe it to our students.

# Gender Roles and Play in the Primary Classroom

Students sometimes have rigid ideas about gender roles and what it means to be a boy or girl. As primary teachers, we have often found that we need to have conversations that encourage acceptance of everyone. This includes the way in which students express themselves, particularly during play-based activities. During these times, students may impose rigid gender roles on one another. It is important not to make assumptions about gender or how a particular student should act. As long as they are being imaginative, enjoying themselves and being respectful of one another....let them play!

## Here are some quick tips on how to model an environment of acceptance:

1. Let all children play in any centre. Don't limit the number of boys or girls in a centre, rather limit the number of children based on space and safety issues.
2. Encourage students to play in all centres over time. They will initially have their favourites, but make sure they get opportunities to dig, build, bake, explore, etc.
3. Encourage students to mix up their play groups and get to know one another. Allow them to pretend to be male, female or an animal or inanimate object when they play. Don't allow other students to "box students in" based upon their gender.
4. Avoid putting girls and boys in separate lines or asking girls to stand up or boys to stand up at different times during activities in circle time. This puts students who do not conform to rigid gender roles in an awkward situation. Gender variant children may not see themselves the way we see them.
5. Students may believe themselves to be different from the gender they physically present. If a girl is referring to herself as a boy, let it go. Don't say "No, you are a girl!"
6. Model respect and acceptance for every child. Have courageous conversations to help students and parents accept others' differences. Let students be whoever they want to be.
7. There can be more than one Mom or Dad in the house centre...just like there can be more than one sister or brother. Sometimes, students argue over this and want to impose rigid rules on others. Challenge these rules.
8. In the Dress Up Centre, encourage students to pretend to be whomever they want to, irrespective of gender. Talk with your students about the importance of being imaginative, having fun, and trying new activities.

# Language Dos and Don'ts

## Recognize that not everyone identifies as either male or female.

- **Don't** refer to students as “boys and girls” or “ladies and gentlemen,” as not everyone fits into this binary view of gender.
- **Do** address your class in gender-neutral ways. You might say Division 6, folks, gang, friends, class, everyone, people, etc. Do say ‘person who is intersex’ and model respect and sensitivity.
- **Don't** force people to declare their gender on forms, except if it is necessary...
- **Do** provide a blank line for people to fill in - and make the question optional.

## Use sex and gender-related terminology accurately.

- **Don't** reinforce the wall of silence that hides the reality of gender diversity.
- **Do** use “gender identity” to refer to one’s internal sense of themselves as female, male, both, neither, two spirit, or possibly some other terms.
- **Don't** say ‘transvestite’ or ‘tranny.’ These are offensive terms.
- **Do** use the same language the person you are speaking about uses to describe themselves. (Some people who are trans have reclaimed the word ‘tranny.’ Because of the sensitive nature of this term, it is still advisable for non-trans people to use ‘trans’ instead).
- **Don't** use the word ‘hermaphrodite’ for a person born with genitals that do not seem to fit typical definitions of male or female. This is an offensive term.
- **Do** say ‘person who is intersex’ and model respect and sensitivity.

## Honour the expressed gender identity of others.

- **Don't** put quotation marks on another person’s name or gender identity, as doing so implies that it lacks validity.
- **Do** recognize that a trans person’s name and gender identity is just as real as anyone else’s.
- **Don't** guess which pronoun to use for another person when you aren’t sure.
- **Do** ask them (in a manner that is respectful of their privacy).

## Use gender-neutral language when gender is irrelevant.

- **Don't** use terms such as businessman, housewife, male nurse, woman pilot, woman doctor, postman, fireman, etc. Gender is irrelevant when discussing careers.
- **Do** use terms like businessperson, homemaker, nurse, pilot, doctor, mail carrier, firefighter.

## Do not harass or discriminate against others based on gender.

- **Don't** tolerate or make sexist, homophobic, or transphobic remarks.
- **Do** label the form of harassment: “You just made a sexist/homophobic/ transphobic remark;” point out the impact of the behaviour on others: “This is offensive to me and others in the classroom;” and insist on a change in future behaviour: “At this school, we do not harass people. How do you plan to make amends?”

## Avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes.

- **Don't** say phrases like “boys will be boys” or he's “all boy.”
- **Do** question what these phrases assume about what it means to be male or female. Ask how they marginalize students who don't fit traditional ideas about masculinity and femininity.
- **Don't** shame boys by questioning their gender (i.e. sports coaches should not tell a boys' team that they are “running like a bunch of girls”).
- **Do** motivate students by affirming their identities and capabilities.

## Respect People's Privacy

- **Don't** ask trans or two-spirit people about whether they take hormones or have had surgeries.
- **Don't** disclose people's trans or two-spirit identities without their permission.

## Avoid making heterosexist statements.

- **Don't** assume that all families contain a mom and a dad.
- **Do** acknowledge that families come in many forms: a family might have same gender parents, a single parent, step parents, adoptive or foster parents, and inter-racial parents.
- **Don't** say, during sexual health education, that it is normal to develop romantic feelings for the opposite sex.
- **Do** say that it is common to develop romantic feelings for other people.
- **Don't** say that all sexually active women need to use birth control to prevent pregnancy.
- **Do** say that all people who are sexually active and do not want to get pregnant or cause pregnancy need to learn about their birth control options.

## Pay attention to your body language.

- **Don't** model discomfort or a disapproving attitude when discussing gender and sexuality.
- **Do** consider what your tone of voice, talking speed, volume, eye contact, gestures and stance communicate about your attitude and comfort level when you discuss gender and sexuality.

# Use of Story to Challenge Gender Stereotypes

Stories are powerful tools for both building and challenging dominant cultural beliefs, including beliefs about gender. The books available to your students carry a variety of explicit and implicit messages through content, language and illustrations about what it means to be male or female.

Research shows, for instance, that books for children and young adults frequently portray girls and boys in stereotypical ways:

## Male characters are often portrayed as...

Strong • Capable • Adventurous • Independent • Active • Fighters • Adventurers • Rescuers  
• Successful because they demonstrate ingenuity and perseverance

## Female characters are often portrayed as...

Sweet • Naïve • Conforming • Dependent • Caretakers • Mothers • Princesses  
• In need of rescuing • Characters that support the male figure • Successful because others help them

These stereotypes are harmful because they offer very limited views of a student's potential. These messages are so pervasive that it would be unrealistic and ineffective to remove books that reinforce stereotypes from school bookshelves. Instead, students need to be taught critical thinking skills to question the hidden assumptions in what they read.

Teachers can model these critical thinking skills during read-alouds with the class by asking questions about the kinds of characteristics and activities associated with males versus females in the stories they read. For example, when reading the story, *The Hockey Sweater* by Roch Carrier, you might ask why the illustrations only show boys playing hockey, and no girls. You can write your question on a sticky note, place it on the page, and come back to it for discus-

sion when the story is over. In the discussion, invite students to make connections to their own lives that challenge the implicit message in the book that playing hockey is only for boys. This modeling exercise can easily be done anytime you read a story that contains harmful messages about gender, even if this is not the primary focus of your lesson.

Another effective technique is to ask students to rewrite fairytales by changing the gender of the main character. For example, "What if Sleeping Beauty was a boy?" Re-imagining the story in this way will raise consciousness of their own limited views of gender, views which are deserving of critical thought. If students cling to traditional beliefs about gender, follow-up questions could include: "Where does your belief come from?" and "What are the real-life con-

sequences of your opinion for people who cannot conform to your beliefs about gender?" Ultimately, students are entitled to their opinions as long as they have subjected their beliefs to rigorous critique.

While it is crucial to help students question the messages they receive about gender, it is just as important to read and provide access to stories that challenge dominant assumptions about what it means to be a boy or a girl. These stories help students to expand their understanding of acceptable expressions of gender and affirm the identities of those students who do not conform to gender stereotypes. Lessons plans designed to achieve these goals are included at the end of this book, along with a list of recommended resources.

# Discussions about Gender with Primary Students



## Hair

Do you know a girl or a woman with short hair? Do you know a boy or a man with long hair? Is that okay? (Yes!) Also show pictures of different people with different lengths of hair - people from our school community, people in books, or other photos/ posters. Can people decide what kind of hairstyle they want to have? (Yes!) Would they want to be teased for their hair? (No.) Why not? (It might make them feel sad.) Let's not tease people about their hair. Okay?

## Free Play

Appeal to young children's sense of fairness: "Would it be fair if certain toys or games were only for some kids, like only the girls, and certain toys or games were only for the boys?" How would the other kids feel if they couldn't play with those things and they wanted to? (Sad, left out, excluded). That would not be fair! In this class, every toy, every game, and every dress up costume is for every child!

## Groupings

Boy table/ girl table: some students will feel left out if there is a table just for girls or boys when they want to sit there too, and join in - so let's not have those kinds of groups here - any table or group is for anyone!

## Colours

Ask your students, "Would it be fair to let kids only use certain colours for their artwork?" No! All the coloured pens and pencils in this class are for all the students – they can choose which colours they want to use. Focus on making beautiful pictures!

# Discussions about Gender with Intermediate Students



## Sports

Ask the students who should get to play sports on the big field at recess. Ask them for reasons behind their ideas. Would it be fair if only girls could play soccer on the field? Why not? What about only boys? Why? (Often students will refer to boys having the skill to play and say that girls don't). What can we do to teach those who want to play but aren't as skilled as us? How can we ensure the teams are fair? Focus on having fun, not winning.

## Art

Who should get to do art in our class? Would it be fair to say only the expert artists get to attend art club? Would there be more boys or girls in art club? Why? How can we ensure any kid who likes art gets to go to art club and use a variety of art materials? If there is a limited number that can attend, what system can we devise to include everyone? What part of the brain do we develop doing art? Why is that important?

## Personal Planning

Who should get to do jobs around the classroom or take attendance? Is that the job of boys or girls? Is it given to students who are always finished their work first? Should it be random? Should boys get the A/V equipment and girls do attendance? Should the boys set up the stage in the gym, while the girls plan the song to sing? Why or why not?

# Discussions about Gender with Secondary Students



## English

Provide students with materials that depict characters in non-gender stereotypical ways. When studying classical literature that may contain gender stereotypes, discuss this with students, including the connection to social norms and change.

## Social Studies

Discuss how gender roles differ through time and by region. Provide students with a context for how changes come about through shifts in attitude, understanding, laws, scientific discovery, etc.

## Science

Have students consider the biological and genetic differences between genders and the scientific definition of male and female. Introduce the notion of intersexuality (see lesson on this topic). Discuss varieties in gender roles through the animal kingdom in terms of reproduction, mating rituals, care giving, and nurturing roles.

## Math

Have a class discussion on famous mathematicians of the past and present. Discuss the dominance of men in the field and possible reasons for that. Have students consider the long-held notion that girls aren't good at math and challenge this belief (e.g. Is it true? Can we find evidence to the contrary? If it's not true, where did the belief come from?)

## Languages

How does gender connect to language? For example, how are we limited by the lack of a singular, gender-neutral pronoun in English? Do other languages have such a pronoun? What is happening to gender-laden words in every language such as policeman? In a language like French, objects have gender. Does that make sense? How was each gender decided? Do they follow stereotypical lines or are there unusual examples?

## Physical Education

Ask students what they think of the fact that their school either does or does not separate PE classes by gender for grades 8-10. Is there a good reason for separation? Is there a good reason not to separate? How might a trans or two-spirit student cope with the current system?

# Lesson Plans

## In this Section

- What is a Family?
- Expanding Gender Ideas in Early Primary
- Fairy Tales and Gender Roles
- “The Boy Who Wanted to be a Dancer”
- Gender Self Portrait
- Reader Response Reflection Journals
- Examining Novels for Gender Bias
- “No Bikini”
- School Climate Map
- Vocabulary for Thinking Critically about Gender
- “When I Was a Boy”
- The Gender Pyramid
- First Nations’ Perspectives of Gender
- Further K-12 lesson plans can be found online in the SOGI teacher resources section here: <https://bc.sogieducation.org/sogi3/>

## What is a Family? Kindergarten and Grade One



### Learning Outcomes:

- To teach students that a variety of family models exist
- To teach students that all families are equally important
- To encourage students to be proud of their families

## Preparation & Context:

Work with your Teacher-Librarian to collect a variety of pictures and picture books about all kinds of families. Have these displayed within your room or easily accessible for students to look at during your “book time”. Make sure that you have a variety of resources that you can use to read aloud to students about families. Be well aware of the socio-economic status of families in your classroom. Be careful not to stigmatize families living in poverty or different family models in your comments and actions. Celebrate all forms of family!

## Lesson Plan:

1. Begin by asking students “Who’s in a family?” Record their ideas on chart paper along with key words and picture symbols (i.e. people’s heads) so that non-readers can tell who is who. Be careful not to draw girls and boys in gender stereotypical ways (i.e. stick figures with skirts or pants) or using gendered colours (i.e. pink and blue)
2. Prior to reading stories about families, ask students to listen and watch for the different kinds of families they see within the books. Read the story “Who’s in A Family?” by Robert Skutch or “All Families are Special” by Norma Simon.
3. After reading, show students a chart with different kinds of families on it. Write the name of each form of family in a different colour so that non-readers can tell them apart. You will need to design this in advance using the following words and picture symbols of people’s heads:

Adoptive or Foster Parents  
Blended Families  
Couples without Children  
Extended Families  
Inter-Racial Families  
Opposite Gender Parents  
Same Gender Parents  
Single Parent

4. All of these forms of family are shown in the book by Robert Skutch.
5. Ask students to take turns using a pointer and being “the teacher” to point out their own family. Help those who might be confused to identify their own family. (Make sure you know the families of all students well before you teach this lesson).
6. Read stories about all kinds of families throughout your unit on families. Make sure students see positive representations of all forms of family. Be explicit in your teaching in that all families are equal and important. Gently debunk the myth that all families must have a Mom and a Dad. For some titles that show same gender families in a positive light, check out the various resources listed at the back of this book.
7. Return to your chart throughout the unit to re-teach the names of the different kinds of families.

## Assessment:

Use the final page of “Who’s in a Family?” which depicts all the families (without words) and ask students individually to point to different kinds of families as you verbally prompt them with questions.

i.e. Can you find the single parent family?

Can you point to the same gender family?

Where is the opposite gender family?

If students can correctly identify most forms of family then you can mark that they meet the Prescribed Learning Outcome in the Kindergarten/Grade One IRP which pertains to student awareness of a variety of family models.

## Extension:

If you would like to teach acceptance of same gender families use the following book: “ABC-A Family Alphabet Book” by Bobbie Combs.

Prior to reading, brainstorm all the activities your students do with their own parents and guardians on a T-chart. Add picture symbols to the words you scribe on the chart.

Read the story and ask students to watch for other activites that families do together.

After reading, add additional ideas to the chart from the story based upon student responses.

Ask students to imagine/pretend they had two moms or two dads. If that were so, what would they get double of? (positive/fun things).

Create a class book modelled after “The Mommy Book” or “The Daddy Book” by Todd Parr. Each student makes one page using the following frame:

“Two Moms means double the \_\_\_\_\_.”

“Two Dads means double the \_\_\_\_\_.”

They may pick their ideas from the chart you created together. You may need to scribe words in the blanks for Kindergarten students. Grade Ones can scribe from your ideas on the chart. All students can draw the picture themselves. Ask them to have two moms or dads in their picture. Reinforce that we are using our imaginations to pretend what it would be like to have two Moms or Dads. Keep these books in your classroom library for students to enjoy throughout the year.

# Expanding Gender Ideas in Early Primary

## Kindergarten to Grade 5

### Curriculum Connections:

ELA K/1, ELA 2/3, ELA 4/5, PHE K/1, PHE 2/3, PHE 4/5

This lesson will explore identity, including societal stereotypes often held about gender, how these affect us, and how we can encourage everyone to be authentic to their passions and interests. You can vary terminology and depth by grade level. The lesson notes use the term biological sex (which is assigned at birth based on external characteristics) and is sometimes different from gender identity (which is someone's personal sense of being a girl/woman, a boy/man, or somewhere in between along the gender spectrum).

A more advanced lesson on gender identity, entitled "Gender Identity, Media, and Stereotypes" is also available on the TEACH BC website.

### Lesson:

Introduce the lesson by telling students that you will be talking about identity, in other words, what makes a person who they are. Part of a person's identity is defined by their interests, what they're good at, and often the things they like to do.

Ask students to talk in small groups about things they are good at or like to do. These can be things they like to do at school, after-school or at home. Now ask for their help to place these activities (with words and picture icons) in a three-column chart under the headings of "Only for Girls", "For Anyone" or "Only for Boys". What about colours? Are some only for boys, or only for girls? Engage students in discussion about the items. Hopefully they should all eventually land under, "For Anyone".

Next ask if there are activities that are more popular among boys or girls. Sometimes when something is popular for many boys, people begin to think that it's ONLY for boys, or if it's popular with many girls they think it's ONLY for girls. Is this true? These ideas are called gender stereotypes.

- Who gets to decide what a person should like?
- Are there certain jobs that are only for men or only for women?
- What if someone likes something that people don't think is right for them based on their gender? How might they be treated by other kids and sometimes even adults?
- How might this make them feel? Could this feeling affect their choices and even their job in the future?

Next read two stories about kids who felt like this.

- Boy stereotypes: Henry Holton Takes the Ice by Sandra Bradley, The Only Boy in Ballet Class by Denise Gruska, or The Sissy Duckling by Harvey Fierstein.
- Girl stereotypes: A Fire Engine for Ruthie by Leslea Newman, Allie's Basketball Dream by Barbara E. Barber or The Worst Princess by Anna Kemp.

Ask students to talk about how the main characters challenged or handled the pressure to follow gender stereotypes. Have they ever felt this pressure? How did they handle it? How do they think people feel when they follow their true passions, abilities and strengths?

## Assessment:

- How can we as friends support and encourage each other to do the things we really enjoy, regardless of gender?
- Ask students to imagine a world where there are no expectations of what they should like based on their gender. Is there anything that they would like to do or try? Do they have an idea of what they'd like to be when they grow up? Draw a picture and possibly write about themselves doing something they really like doing, would like to try or would like to be when they grow up. It doesn't matter if this idea challenges gender expectations or not, just that it reflects their true passions and interests.
- Class Letter – As a class, write a letter to one of the characters from the stories to tell the character what they think about their decision to be true to themselves. Have them include what they will do if they see this happening to a friend in future and whom they could seek help from if they were teased because of what they like or who they are.

Use their contributions to assess their knowledge of self, identity, respect for differences, gender stereotypes, understanding of the harm caused by teasing, and ways to care for each other.

## Possible Extensions:

- Ask students if they think it's harder for boys who like things that are more popular among girls or for girls who like things that are more popular among boys? Why do they think one is harder?
- To follow through on this topic, encourage students to choose different centers and activities than they might ordinarily choose. Teach all students how to dance, how to bake and to try all sports. When you go skating, remind students that they can ask for hockey skates or figure skates based on what they'd like to do or try out that day.
- This lesson can easily be a part of a unit on diversity and respect and could include lessons on family diversity (see [SOGleducation.org/sogi3](http://SOGleducation.org/sogi3)), ethnic and cultural diversity, levels of ability, etc. By understanding and rejecting stereotypes, students can help to create a world where everyone feels respected and able to be authentic and proud of themselves. By knowing about diversity and the importance of equality, they are better able to speak up, keep themselves safe and to seek help when required.
- A natural progression from this lesson could be a lesson on Gender Identity where students learn that everyone has their own idea of their own gender and this may not be the same as others, and that's OK and needs to be respected. A suggested lesson is Gender Identity and Pronouns found on TEACH BC.

### For older students (Grades 3 - 5):

- Introduce the concept of sexism to the class. For example, boys are often harshly teased for engaging in activities perceived to be part of girl culture (ie. dance, figure skating) because these pursuits are seen as lesser. Similarly, girls are sometimes excluded from activities perceived to be the domain of boy culture (i.e. hockey, football, etc.). Also, boys and girls are sometimes teased and targeted with sexist language.... "You throw like a girl!" What effect does this have on these kids? What effect does it have on other kids?
- Homophobia - What about the ways people dress? Are there certain colours that are more acceptable for boys/girls? Are there certain names that people might be called for dressing or acting in a more boyish way or girlish way? Depending on the responses of the students, this might be a good segue into the topic of homophobia. Talk with students about how people are sometimes targeted by homophobic names since they are perceived to be gay/lesbian because of their appearance or types of activities they participate in.

# Fairy Tales and Gender Roles

## Grades Two and Three

Fairy Tales are a wonderful genre to explore how gender has been portrayed historically and in current times. Traditional fairy tales and fractured ones (modern day ones with a twist) allow primary students to think critically about how men and women are portrayed and compare these portrayals to their own families and communities.

### Teaching Strategies and Questions:

A familiar starting point for students is to read common fairy tales and identify the elements that make it different from a non-fiction story. Once you have identified the elements of a fairy tale, you can begin to ask students what they notice about how the princesses and princes are being portrayed in the story. You might ask some open-ended questions like the following:

1. How are princesses usually portrayed at the start of a story? (i.e. Cinderella, Rapunzel)
2. Is she waiting around for something or someone to come to her rescue or make her happy? If so, whom?
3. Towards the end of a story what makes Cinderella and Snow White happy? Why do you think that might be?

After reading a variety of traditional and fractured fairy tales and analyzing the components of each style of fairy tale ask students:

4. In your world (i.e. modern times), who is a more realistic character? (Princess Smartypants or Rapunzel) Why do you think that? Who does each princess remind you of in real life?
5. Can a prince or princess be single and live happily ever after? Why or why not? Do you know anyone who is single and happy?

You might hold a secret ballot on a particular question to have students record their thoughts without being influenced by peer pressure or gender bias. You can then discuss the results of the ballot and why someone might believe that one fairy tale character may be more representative of girls in today's times. Here are some stories you might want to compare and contrast with students.

### Traditional Fairy Tales (Gendered)

- Cinderella
- Capable
- Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
- The Ugly Duckling
- Rapunzel
- The Princess and the Pea

### Fractured Fairy Tales (Role Reversal)

- Prince Cinders
- Snow White in New York
- The Sissy Duckling
- Princess Smarty Pants
- The Paper Bag Princess

## Possible Extensions:

If you have already done some direct teaching about sexism with students and they have familiarity with the term and its meaning, you might read stories together and use any of the following strategies with students:

1. Pick a traditional fairy tale and read it aloud. Ask students to stop you when they see or hear a sexist incident in the story. Students call out “Stop!” when they want you to cease reading. They must then identify the sexist incident before you can proceed with the story.
2. Have students take a traditional fairy tale and work together in small groups to write a new ending for it. Ask them to create one where the princess and prince live in a more realistic, independent manner.
3. Use the Social Responsibility Performance Standards (SRPS for Kindergarten to Grade 3) and ask students to work in small groups to analyze a character’s behaviour within the story. Use the “defending human rights” strand of the SRPS. Ask groups of students to rate a specific character in terms of how they treat the female characters in the story. Does the character meet expectations of the SRPS? Why or why not? Have students orally report out their observations to the class.
4. Use the book, King and King, to prompt student thinking about marriage equality. Ask students if two princes or princesses can get married or not. Read the story and then debrief student reactions to the book.
5. Ask students: What did you notice in this fairy tale that was unexpected? How did you react to the part of the story where the two princes got married? Why? What messages have you heard about who can or cannot marry?
6. Ask students to write their own fractured/non-traditional fairy tale where the prince or princess is portrayed in a non gender specific role. Tell them you are looking for non-sexist behaviour in at least one character.

## Assessment:

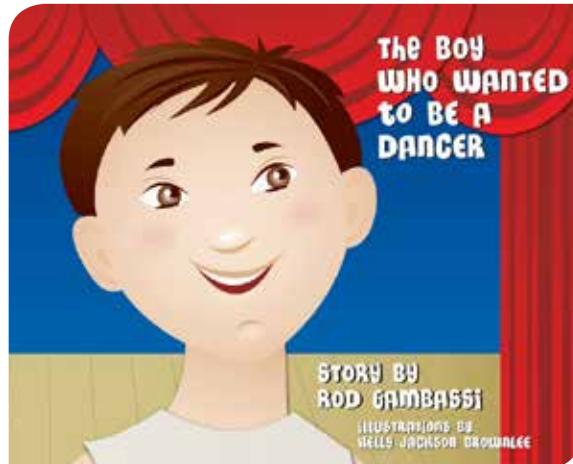
- Can students define sexism in their own words?
- Can students describe some simple negative effects of sexism? (Social Responsibility IRP p. 22)
- Are students able to identify one way in which sexism is portrayed in traditional fairy tales?

# “The Boy Who Wanted To Be A Dancer”

Grades Three and Four - Story by Rod Gambassi

## Learning Outcomes:

- To gain awareness of how rigid gender role expectations limit children’s ability to express themselves
- To understand how and why boys are teased if they want to be dancers, singers, artists, etc.
- To become more aware of how “boy culture” limits the artistic expression of boys



## Context:

The intent of this lesson is to teach students that boys can be whoever they want to be and can choose to be involved in whatever interests they wish to be involved in. This lesson provides an excellent opportunity to segue into the topics of sexism and homophobia and how these forms of oppression negatively impact boy’s lives. Students will gain an understanding of how boys are sometimes pressured by their peers not to be involved in school based or extra-curricular activities which may typically be the domain of “girl culture”.

## Lesson:

Read part of the story, The Boy Who Wanted to be a Dancer to your class. At an appropriate place, stop reading and ask students to work in small groups. Have them brainstorm some of the ways that a boy who is artistic might be treated by his peers if he wanted to be a dancer, singer or performer. Encourage students to talk about this with each other as part of a class discussion.

Ask students to talk about their experiences when they do activities that others perceive as “girl activities” or “boy activities.” How are they similar to the main character in the story?

Ask students to work in small groups to make a list of the kinds of hobbies or extra-curricular activities they participate in. Once they have created a list, ask them to make a T-chart and begin to divide the activities into categories which would fall under the headings of “Boy Culture” or “Girl Culture.” Encourage discussion and respectful debate. Have each group report their decisions to the whole class.

Ask students if all of the activities they listed always fall into these two distinct categories. “Is every hobby or activity unique to boy culture or girl culture?” Introduce the concept of sexism to the class. For example, girls are sometimes excluded from activities perceived to be the domain of boy culture (i.e. hockey, soccer, etc.). Also, boys are sometimes teased and girls sometimes are targeted with sexist language.... “You throw like a girl!”

## Possible Extensions:

Ask students “What would be some of the names a boy would be called if he was passionate about dancing and wanted to be a dancer?” Depending on the responses of the students, this might be a good segue into discussion of the topic of homophobia. Talk with students about how boys are sometimes targeted by homophobic slurs since they are perceived to be gay because of the types of activities they participate in. Ask students a) if they can tell who might be gay simply by the activities they enjoy; and b) how someone who calls himself gay might be treated by his classmates.

Discuss with students how homophobia and sexism sometimes limit girls and boys’ choices because of the pressure their family and friends sometimes place upon them. Ask if this is fair or not.

Talk about equality with your students and have them discuss how boys and girls should be treated fairly, irrespective of the activities they enjoy and want to be involved in.

Show a short You Tube clip to your class from the TV series “Glee.” Ask students to comment on the young men’s ability to dance.

Teach your students how to dance.

Go on a fieldtrip to a local dance or ballet performance.

## Assessment:

Have students write paragraphs on sexism, homophobia and/ fairness or equality. Ask them to include a definition of the term in their own words as well as an example of what it looks or sounds like. Have them include what they would do to protect themselves from this harm and whom they would seek help from if they were targeted or teased because of their hobbies.

Ask students to write a letter to the main character of the story. Tell him what they think about his decision to be a dancer and his bravery in ignoring the negative comments of other students at school.

Assess their knowledge of different forms of oppression, based upon their writing and discussions in class.

**Note:** The possible conversations arising from this lesson may be extended over a number of days or weeks. You can easily use this book (and others – see the Recommended Resources section) as a springboard into topics of sexism and homophobia. If students or parents question why you are talking about these topics, explain the importance of treating everyone fairly (equality) and how it is important that students know the terms racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. By knowing about different forms of oppression, they are better able to keep themselves safe and to seek help from adults when it is required.

# Gender Self-Portrait

Grades Five to Seven

## Curriculum Connections:

This lesson fits well with the Healthy Relationships strand of Health and Career Education, including recognizing and responding to stereotyping, discrimination, and bullying.

## Context:

The goal of this lesson is to develop students' ability to think critically about the ways that traditional gender expectations limit self-expression and undermine self-respect.

## Lesson:

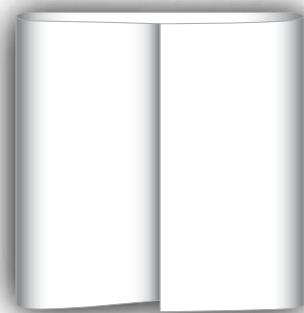
Facilitate a discussion with students about how they are expected to look and act based on their gender. Encourage them to reflect on expectations held by their friends, family, and school.

Tell the students they will be creating a collage that illustrates what gender expectations they have encountered in their life, and how their own identity may fit with and/or challenge these expectations.

Provide an assortment of magazines and newspapers, as well as a legal-sized piece of paper for each student. Ask students to fold their paper so that two front flaps of equal size cover the middle of the sheet.



**Figure 1. Flaps open.**



**Figure 2. Flaps closed.**

On the inside (Figure 1), ask the students to create a collage representing who they really are.

On the front flaps (Figure 2) ask the students to create a collage of who they are supposed to be, based on their gender.

Afterwards, ask students to form a circle with their chairs and invite volunteers to share their collage, to the extent that they feel comfortable. Elicit ways that traditional gender expectations are enforced (through the erasure of gender diversity and the stigmatization and bullying of people who are different). Draw attention to how this affects people who do not conform to gender expectations. Invite students to think critically about whether traditional gender expectations do harm. (This activity was adapted from an activity in the Straightlaced curriculum guide by GroundSpark, 2009.)

# Reader Response Reflection Journals

## Grades Five to Seven

### Learning Outcomes:

- To analyze and compare the representation of males and females in novels.
- To read novels with strong, intelligent and active female characters and that portray boys as sensitive and caring.
- To make students aware of how novels can portray boys and girls equally and non-stereotypically.

### Context:

There are many novels with strong active female protagonists involved in exciting adventurous stories. Likewise there are novels which show boys displaying emotions other than anger. Novels that show girls and boys equally and non-stereotypically need to be used in novel studies. Teachers can pick a wide range of literature to share with their students that provide powerful role models. When reading novels assigned to grades by the Ministry of Education prescribed learning outcomes (PLO's), challenge the status quo in the novels and challenge students to do a gender analysis of the characters.

### Lesson:

During novel study, assign some journal novel responses that address gender as a part of regular discussion and/or reader response. Have students observe the number of male and female characters in the novel and their position in the story. Have the students identify the qualities of both female and male characters, looking for characters that are portrayed as intelligent, independent, active, adventurous, resourceful, compassionate, empathetic, courageous, caring, and nurturing. Is there a difference in how male and female characters are depicted? When teaching historical fiction, have the students compare current roles and expectations with historical roles shown in the novel.

In the teacher's guide, *Bringing It All Together* (p.231-234), Terry Johnson includes an evaluation of the author's attitude towards gender in the fantasy novel, *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*. The questions can be adapted to evaluate any novel for bias, including the intersection of gender, race, class, etc.

## Sample Reader Response Questions:

1. What role does each of the characters play? How are these characters portrayed?
2. Who is the lead character in the novel? Why do you think the author picked that character?
3. How are the lead characters treated by other characters in the story? How are the other characters treated?
4. Whose point of view is reflected in the story? If the story was being written by another gender character in the story, what would the story be like?
5. Which novels have they read which depict strong, female historical characters? What role did they play in the story?
6. Which novels have they read in which a male character was in a non-traditional role? What role did he play and was it effective?
7. When there is a division of labour between genders in a novel, how does either gender overcome these expectations and step outside the gender expectations?

# Examining Novels for Gender Bias

## Grades Eight to Twelve

This is a checklist that can be used by students during novel studies or literature circles. It will help students examine the novel for gender bias and stereotyping. Note: This checklist is written at a high school level, but it can be easily adapted for intermediate students by modifying a few of the items and simplifying the language.

1. If there are illustrations either on the cover or throughout the book, are the illustrations of the characters stereotypical or over-generalized for either traditional male or female characteristics and activities? In other words, is the female shown as demure, domesticated, or social? Is a male shown as adventurous, rugged, or athletic?
2. Within the novel, how are characters described? Is everyone white, slim, middle class and able-bodied or is there diversity with respect to race, body type, class, and ability?
3. In the novel, is it mostly the males who are participating in the action of the novel while the females are observers or supports? Who solves the main conflict and how? Is it solved by a female through social maneuvering? Or is it solved by a male through courage and action?
4. How important are the gender roles of the characters in the development of the novel? What would happen to the novel if the gender of each character was changed?
5. Examine the relationships among the characters in the story. Who is dominant? Who is subservient?
6. Are all the romantic relationships in the novel heterosexual?
7. Examining all the characters and considering the variety of people who make up a community, city, country, etc., what groups of people are not represented in this novel?
8. What kind of role models are the characters in this story? Is there a variety of role models with whom students of either gender could identify? Are there characters with both traditional and non-traditional gender roles?
9. Stories and novels can be a way for society to reinforce societal norms. What societal norms are being reinforced by this novel? Examples of societal norms might include ideas such as: work hard at school, be loyal to your friends, or men should not cry. To what extent do you agree with the social norms reinforced by your novel?
10. Check the author's background and perspective. Most authors write from their perspective or cultural background. Is the perspective patriarchal or feminist? What can you conclude about the author's perspective in terms of race, class, age, ability, sexuality, religion, etc.

# No Bikini: A Short Story

Grades Eight to Ten

## Curriculum Connections:

This lesson fits well in English 8 -10 or Planning 10.

## Learning Outcomes:

Students will consider how gender identity and expression is influenced by societal expectations. They will also explain and support personal responses to a text.

## Context:

The goal of this lesson is to provide students with an opportunity to consider how gender roles and identity can be shaped by culture.

## Preparation:

Photocopy short story, “No Bikini” by Ivan Coyote (pg 43-44)

## Lesson:

Have students discuss the following pre-reading questions:

- How important is gender to children?
- Does it become more or less important as children grow up?
- What comes to mind when you hear the words “sex change”?
- Are some kinds of spaces more gendered than others? For example, a swimming pool compared to a grocery store?

Hand out the story and have the class read it out loud.

## Discussion Questions:

- 1.** In what ways is this story funny? In what ways is it serious?
- 2.** How did the main character feel when she was thought to be a boy during the swimming lessons?
- 3.** How difficult was it for the main character to be thought of as a boy by the swimming teacher? What does this imply about gender?

## Assessment:

In the story, the main character had more confidence while being thought of as a boy. This comes from societal stereotypes that expect boys to be brave and strong and girls to be timid and in need of protection.

Have students work with a partner to create two columns on a sheet of paper. On one column, they will make point form notes on how this hinders girls from reaching their potential. On the other column, they will make point-form notes on how this is also limiting to boys.

Assess students' discussions and work for understanding of how gender identity and expression is influenced by societal expectations. Also assess students' ability to explain and support personal responses to the text by: making connections with prior knowledge and experiences, describing reactions and emotions, and developing opinions using evidence.

# No Bikini: A Short Story

By Ivan E. Coyote

I had a sex change once, when I was six years old.

The Lions pool where I grew up smelled like every other swimming pool everywhere. That's the thing about pools. Same smell. Doesn't matter where you are.

It was summer swimming lessons, it was a little red badge with white trim we were all after: beginners, age five to seven. My mom had bought me a bikini.

It was one of those little girl bikinis, a two-piece, I guess you would call it. The top part fit like a tight cut-off t-shirt, red with blue squares on it, the bottoms were longer than panties but shorter than shorts, blue with red squares. I had tried it on the night before when my mom got home from work and found that if I raised both my arms completely above my head too quickly, the top would slide over my flat chest and people could see my . . . you-know-whats.

You'll have to watch out for that, my mother had stated, her concern making lines in her forehead, maybe I should have got the one-piece, but all they had was yellow and pink left. You don't like yellow either, do you?

Pink was out of the question. We had already established this.



Ivan E. Coyote. Photo by Nathaniel Christopher

So the blue and red two-piece it was going to have to be. I was an accomplished tomboy by this time, so I was used to hating my clothes.

**This story is reprinted with permission from “Close to Spider Man,” published by Arsenal Pulp Press in 2005.**

It was so easy, the first time, that it didn't even feel like a crime. I just didn't wear the top part. There were lots of little boys still getting changed with their mothers, and nobody noticed me slipping out of my brown cords and striped t-shirt, and padding, bare-chested, out to the poolside alone.

Our swimming instructor was broad-shouldered and walked with her toes pointing out. She was a human bullhorn, bellowing instructions to us and punctuating each sentence with sharp blasts on a silver whistle which hung about her bulging neck on a leather bootlace.

“Alright, beginners, everyone line up at the shallow end, boys here, girls here, come on come on come on, boys on the left, girls on the right.”

It was that simple, and it only got easier after that.

*Continued on next page. ▶*

► *Continued from previous page.*

I wore my trunks under my pants and changed in the boys' room after the first day. The short form of the birth name my parents' bestowed me with was androgynous enough to allow my charade to proceed through the entire six weeks of swimming lessons, six weeks of boyhood, six weeks of bliss.

It was easier not to be afraid of things, like diving boards and cannonballs and backstrokes, when nobody expected you to be afraid.

It was easier to jump into the deep end when you didn't have to worry about your top sliding up over your ears. I didn't have to be ashamed of my naked nipples, because I had not covered them up in the first place.

The water running over my shoulders and back felt simple, and natural, and good.

Six weeks lasts a long time when you are six years old, so in the beginning I guess I thought

the summer would never really end, that grade two was still an age away. I guess I thought that swimming lessons would continue far enough into the future that I didn't need to worry about report card day.

Or maybe I didn't think at all.

**A short film version of this story can be found at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyQP\\_nuh-Q1Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyQP_nuh-Q1Q)**

"He is not afraid of water over his head?" my mom read aloud in the car on the way home. My dad was driving, eyes straight ahead on the road. "He can tread water without a flotation device?" Her eyes were narrow, and hard, and kept trying to catch mine in the rearview mirror. "Your son has successfully completed his beginner's and intermediate badges and is ready for his level one?"

I stared at the toes of my sneakers and said nothing.

"Now excuse me, young lady,

but would you like to explain to me just exactly what you have done here? How many people you have lied to? Have you been parading about all summer half naked?

How could I explain to her that it wasn't what I had done, but what I didn't do? That I hadn't lied, because no one had asked? And that I had never, not once, felt naked.

"I can't believe you. You can't be trusted with a two-piece."

I said nothing all the way home. There was nothing to say. She was right. I couldn't be trusted with a two-piece. Not then, and not now.

# School Climate Map

## Grades Eight to Twelve

### Curriculum Connections:

This lesson fits well within the Healthy Relationships strand of Health and Career Planning, Physical & Health Education 8 & 9, and the Skills and Processes Strand of Social Studies.

### Learning Outcomes:

Students will consider how gender identity and expression is influenced by societal expectations. They will also explain and support personal responses to a text.

### Context:

In this activity, students will create a map of their high school that evaluates how safe and welcoming its spaces are for trans, two-spirit and gender expansive students. Students will consider how gender identity and expression is influenced by societal expectations and develop strategies to improve their school climate so that it can be more inclusive and welcoming.

### Lesson:

Start by asking students to work in small groups to make a T-chart of list of spaces or situations where they feel the safest/most comfortable being themselves, and those they feel the least safe/comfortable. Remind them to consider all places they may spend time, including home, school, in the community, at clubs/sports, etc. Have them share out and discuss common themes. What makes somewhere feel safe and comfortable? Remind them that school is a place where they have a right to be safe, and that if they have a safety concern, they should talk to an adult about it. Being uncomfortable or nervous in certain situations is natural (giving a speech, taking a test), but becomes a safety concern when it is based on the teasing, bullying, or actions of someone else.

Next, they will consider what it's like for transgender, two-spirit and gender diverse students to be at school. If you haven't yet discussed these words, you may need to explore them first. How is gender expression influenced by others? Is it difficult when you don't fit societal expectations of gender? Invite students to work in small groups to create a map of their school (if you have a photocopy of a school map, you could also just provide one to each group). It is not important for the map to be architecturally accurate—ask them to choose which spaces will be important to represent, such as the library, hallways, cafeteria, washrooms, guidance office, gym, locker rooms, and sports fields. Perhaps they could label one classroom to represent all classrooms in the school.

Ask the students to mark the spaces in the school with the following colour code:

- **Green:** This is a safe and welcoming space trans, two-spirit and gender diverse students
- **Yellow:** Trans, two-spirit and gender diverse students should use caution in this space
- **Red:** This space is unsafe and hostile to trans, two-spirit and gender diverse students

## Lesson (continued):

The group should come to a consensus about how to categorize each space. Encourage them to be thoughtful about how they categorize each space by giving reasons and examples for their decisions. Have students present their maps to the class, explaining their logic for their decisions.

Once all of the groups have presented, ask students to identify patterns across all of the maps. What do they notice? Does anything stand out or surprise them? Are all classrooms the same? What does a truly safe and comfortable classroom look and sound like?

**NOTE:** During this discussion, students may say that some people don't feel comfortable with a trans person in the washroom. Take this opportunity to ask whether their discomfort is because of inappropriate actions/behaviour by the trans person or simply their presence. What would we say to someone who feels uncomfortable sharing a washroom based on another person's ethnicity?

### Action Plans:

Ask the groups to create an action plan for improving the school climate for trans, two-spirit and gender diverse students. What concrete steps can they take to make a difference? What can they as students do to make spaces more comfortable for everyone? Do they have ideas or suggestions for teachers, administrators and even their school board?

Facilitate a class discussion based on the groups' ideas.

# Vocabulary for Thinking Critically About Gender

Grades Eleven to Twelve

## Curriculum Connections:

Fits well with the Skills and Processes Strand of Social Studies, as well as Social Justice 12.

## Context:

The goal of this lesson is to familiarize students with language for understanding and analyzing the relationships between gender and inequality.

## Preparation:

Photocopy one memory game (pg. 48) for every two students. Have a good supply of scissors on hand.

## Lesson:

Suggest that one of the main ways society is organized is through gender. We often don't question the common beliefs we have about gender and this leads to inequality for many people. Today students will learn some concepts for thinking critically about gender and imagining a more equitable world.

Distribute one memory game to each pair of students. Have students match the words and definitions, then elicit the correct answers.

Ask students to follow the instructions at the top of the page to play the memory game. While they do this, write these questions for discussion on the board:

- 1.** What are some examples of gender expansive characteristics or interests for men? What are some examples of gender expansive characteristics or interests for women?
- 2.** What is the difference between 'trans' and 'gender expansive'?
- 3.** What is the difference between heterosexism and homophobia?
- 4.** Can you be oppressed in some ways and privileged in others? Why or why not?
- 5.** Did you have a strong reaction to any of these words? If so,
  - (a)** Which ones?
  - (b)** Why do you think you reacted that way?
  - (c)** How might your reaction help or harm other people?

What questions do you have about any of these concepts?

After students have a chance to play a couple of rounds, have them talk about the above "questions for discussion" with their partner. Then elicit responses for each question from the class. Record students' questions and use them as the basis for a lesson or future research assignment.

Wrap up the lesson by encouraging students to identify forms of sexism, heterosexism, homophobia, transphobia, privilege and oppression in their everyday lives. (You might even make this a homework assignment.)

## Assessment:

- Are students able to correctly match the words and definitions during the memory game?
- Are students able to use the words in a meaningful way during the class discussion?
- Do students exhibit a respectful attitude towards difference during the lesson?

## Memory Game:

First, cut out the cards with a partner. Then try to match the words with the correct definitions. After your teacher elicits the correct answers, mix up the cards and flip them over. Take turns flipping over two cards at a time and try to get a match. The player with the most matches wins.

<b>Sexism</b>	The belief that male gender identities and masculine gender expressions are superior to female and/or feminine ones.
<b>Heterosexism</b>	The assumption that everyone is heterosexual, or that heterosexuality is preferable.
<b>Homophobia</b>	Discomfort or disapproval of people who are perceived to be lesbian, gay, or bisexual.
<b>Transphobia</b>	Discomfort or disapproval of people who are perceived to be trans.
<b>Trans</b>	Refers to a person who has a gender identity that is different from the sex they were assigned at birth.
<b>Gender Expansive</b>	Refers to a person who does not conform to society's expectations of how they should look, act or interact based on their gender.
<b>Gender Identity</b>	Refers to a person's internal, deeply-felt sense of being either male, female, both or neither.
<b>Oppression</b>	Unfair use or distribution of power based on gender, race, social class, sexual orientation, ability, etc. (examples include racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, etc.)
<b>Privilege</b>	Refers to the advantages or rights held by people from dominant groups on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, ability, social class, etc. For example, men often experience privilege that people of other genders do not have.

# When I Was A Boy

Grades Ten to Twelve

## Curriculum Connections:

This lesson fits well in English 10-12, Planning 10, or Social Justice 12. It can also be linked to the short story, “Boys and Girls” by Alice Munro for Jr. English classes.

## Learning Outcomes:

- Students will consider how gender is influenced by both biological and social influences
- Students will respond to ideas on gender presented in song lyric format
- Students will analyze content for explicit and implicit meaning

## Context:

The goal of this lesson is to provide students with an opportunity to consider how gender roles and identity can be shaped by culture.

## Preparation:

Photocopy lyrics “When I Was a Boy”

Obtain a copy of the song, “When I Was a Boy” by Dar Williams (or play from YouTube)

Have CD and CD player for class

## Lesson:

1. Discuss the difference between sex and gender. Brainstorm personal characteristics, behaviours, occupations, physical appearances, etc. that are generally expected of each gender in students’ cultures.
2. Handout the lyrics; play the song, “When I Was a Boy.”
3. Discuss student reactions to the song. Sample prompts might include:
  - What did the singer mean when she talks about having been a boy?
  - What changed for her? Why?
  - What are the dominant emotions in the early part of the song when she’s describing herself as a “boy”? What is the dominant emotion at the end of the song? What message does this send?
  - What does the line that starts, “They got pills to sell” combined with the line about the clothing store imply about what helps drive the construction of gender roles in society?

## Extensions:

- This lesson fits well in English 10-12, Planning 10, or Social Justice 12. It can also be linked to the short story, “Boys and Girls” by Alice Munro for Jr. English classes.
- Students create a split half gender collage of what society believes is acceptable for men and women
- Students compose a fictional story about someone with a non-traditional gender role (e.g. a male daycare teacher or a female truck driver).
- Students write a persuasive speech on a gender-related topic such as whether high school sports teams should be divided by ability rather than gender or whether clothing stores should end the practice of dividing clothes into sections by gender.

# When I Was a Boy

By Dar Williams

I won't forget when Peter Pan came to my house, took my hand  
I said I was a boy; I'm glad he didn't check.  
I learned to fly, I learned to fight  
I lived a whole life in one night  
We saved each other's lives out on the pirate's deck.  
And I remember that night  
When I'm leaving a late night with some friends  
And I hear somebody tell me it's not safe, someone should help me  
I need to find a nice man to walk me home.  
When I was a boy, I scared the pants off of my mom,  
Climbed what I could climb upon  
And I don't know how I survived,  
I guess I knew the tricks that all boys knew.  
And you can walk me home, but I was a boy, too.  
I was a kid that you would like, just a small boy on her bike  
Riding topless, yeah, I never cared who saw.  
My neighbour come outside to say, "Get your shirt,"  
I said "No way, it's the last time I'm not breaking any law."  
And now I'm in a clothing store, and the sign says less is more  
More that's tight means more to see, more for them, not more for me  
That can't help me climb a tree in ten seconds flat  
When I was a boy, see that picture? That was me  
Grass-stained shirt and dusty knees  
And I know things have gotta change,  
They got pills to sell, they've got implants to put in, they've got implants to remove  
But I am not forgetting  
That I was a boy too  
And like the woods where I would creep, it's a secret I can keep  
Except when I'm tired, except when I'm being caught off guard  
I've had a lonesome awful day, the conversation finds its way  
To catching fire-flies out in the backyard.  
And I tell the man I'm with about the other life I lived  
And I say now you're top gun, I have lost and you have won  
And he says, "Oh no, no, can't you see  
When I was a girl, my mom and I we always talked  
And I picked flowers everywhere that I walked.  
And I could always cry, now even when I'm alone I seldom do  
And I have lost some kindness  
But I was a girl too.  
And you were just like me, and I was just like you.

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# The Gender Pyramid

Grades Six to Ten

## Curriculum Connections:

This lesson fits well with the Social Responsibility Performance Standards, especially 'Valuing Diversity and Defending Human Rights'.

## Context:

The goal of this lesson is to engage students in group discussions about what interests, activities, jobs, habits, and aspirations are seen as appropriate for males and females, and to understand how these beliefs are connected to sexism, homophobia, and transphobia.

## Lesson:

**Step 1:** Hand out a set of cards (on pg. 53) to each group and ask the students to cut them out. Provide outlines of a male and female body (like on washroom doors).

**Step 2:** Students collaborate to give each card a "gender rating" from 1 to 5. Number 5 means it is very strongly associated with a particular gender, and number 1 means it's very loosely associated with a gender. If students think the sentence is completely neutral, they can give it a "0." A sentence such as "This person likes vanilla ice cream" might elicit such a response.

**Step 3:** Students put the cards in the outline of the corresponding male or female body, or outside if the card was given a "0."

**Step 4:** When most table groups are almost finished placing cards, bring everyone's attention to the board. Ask the class what kinds of statements garnered a "0." Then what kind of statements got a 1, 2, 3, 4 and finally, 5.

**Step 5:** Ask students to consider the cards associated with a gender as "Gender Laws." Ask what might happen to a person who breaks a number 1 gender law versus a 2, 3, 4, or 5. Draw attention to how the consequences get increasingly severe for any "gender offender" (for example, being bullied, excluded, or a target for violence and discrimination).

**Step 6:** Ask students to look for patterns in the results: What kind of laws received a 4 or 5 (and thus have the most severe punishment when broken)? Sentences around items of clothing like dresses, skirts, tuxedoes or suits are often given a number 5. Also, sentences around romantic desire are usually given a 5 (for example, "This person wants to kiss a woman romantically").

**Step 7:** Elicit the following terms and write them on the board: What is it called when a girl is told she cannot do the same jobs or activities that boys get to do? (Sexism.) What is it called when a boy is told he cannot wear girls' clothing? (Transphobia.) What is it called when a man is disliked because he has romantic feelings for another man? (Homophobia.) Ask the students to discuss in their groups how the "gender laws" they identified earlier are sexist, homophobic or transphobic.

## Assessment:

If we lived in a society without homophobia, sexism, and transphobia the “Gender Laws” would fall away and those who “break” them would not face negative consequences. Ask students to journal about what the world would look like if the “Gender Laws” did not exist. Do students’ responses demonstrate critical thinking (i.e. an understanding of sexism, homophobia and transphobia)? Do students demonstrate a respectful attitude toward diversity?

<b>This person likes vanilla ice cream</b>	<b>This person has long hair.</b>	<b>This person wears dresses.</b>	<b>This person has a tattoo.</b>	<b>This person likes horror movies.</b>
<b>This person plays the harp.</b>	<b>This person plays drums.</b>	<b>This person loves hockey.</b>	<b>This person wants to kiss a man romantically.</b>	<b>This person plays the piano.</b>
<b>This person wears make up.</b>	<b>This person has short hair.</b>	<b>This person jogs.</b>	<b>This person wants to be an engineer.</b>	<b>This person wants to kiss a woman romantically.</b>
<b>This person stays home and raises the children.</b>	<b>This person cries when upset.</b>	<b>This person has a violent streak.</b>	<b>This person enjoys listening to music.</b>	<b>This person is a mechanic.</b>
<b>This person enjoys shopping.</b>	<b>This person exercises regularly.</b>	<b>This person wants children.</b>	<b>This person wears a tuxedo on formal occasions.</b>	<b>This person enjoys watching sports.</b>
<b>This person likes painting.</b>	<b>This person is easily scared.</b>	<b>This person believes in God.</b>	<b>This person enjoys physics.</b>	<b>This person enjoys gossiping.</b>
<b>This person is a leader.</b>	<b>This person likes red.</b>	<b>This person likes pink.</b>	<b>This person enjoys physical activity.</b>	<b>This person is kind.</b>

# First Nations' Perspectives of Gender

Grades Ten to Twelve

## Curriculum Connections:

This lesson fits well with the curriculum for Social Studies 10, Social Justice 12, English 12: First Peoples, BC First Peoples 11, and Contemporary Indigenous Studies 12.

## Learning Outcomes:

- to develop an understanding of and respect for two spirit identities.
- to compare indigenous and 'Western' beliefs about gender.
- to assess the impact of contact with Europeans on First Nations' beliefs about gender

## Context:

In this lesson, students will explore Indigenous perspectives of gender, and contrast these to European beliefs. Students will also consider the impact of these Non-Indigenous ideas about gender on Indigenous people and communities both at the time of colonization and today.

Further resources can be found at <http://guides.vpl.ca/c.php?g=698666&p=4959846>

## Lesson:

1. Have students read the article, Two Spirit: Past, Present & Future by Harlan Pruden (page 6)
2. Have students complete the First Nations' Perspectives of Gender worksheet (page 59)
3. Discuss the student's responses as a class.
4. (Optional) Depending on the previous learning that has occurred, have a conversation about colonization and the effect that residential schools has had on the First People's culture / identity. (This assumes that students have already had a chance to learn about colonization and residential schools in depth.)
5. Through the National Film Board, watch the movie - Second Stories: Deb-we-win ge-ken-am-aan
  - It can be found online here: [https://www.nfb.ca/film/second\\_stories\\_-our\\_place\\_in\\_the\\_circle/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/second_stories_-our_place_in_the_circle/)
6. Discuss the film with some optional guiding questions:
  - What was the message of the film?
  - What were some challenges that the individuals experienced?
    - Can you relate these to challenges that many LGBTQ people face?
  - What challenges were specific to 2-Spirit people?
  - How can we help to change the narrative into the positive? (This can be connected to the Truth and Reconciliation Report).

Indicate to the students that every nation has a different word for 2-Spirit in their own language, if the term survived past residential schools. Some nations have created new terms, if it did not. Further to that, no two nations will have the same definition of what it means to be 2-Spirit and will attribute different roles depending on the context that they place within that nation.

Some stories are considered sacred and used only for ceremony, or in certain situations and sometimes only with certain families or people. It is important that you have permission from an elder or knowledge keeper when sharing stories.

## Assessment:

Collect students' scripts for evaluation. Does the student apply critical thinking skills (questioning, comparing, summarizing, making judgments)? Does the student demonstrate an understanding of two spirit identities, both pre-contact and post-contact? Does the student demonstrate open-mindedness and respect for diversity?

# First Nations' Perspectives of Gender

1. After reading the article about two-spirit identities, compare and contrast the beliefs about gender traditionally held by some First Nations groups with those traditionally held in 'Western' cultures.

## First Nations perspectives

## ‘Western’ perspectives

**2.** Summarize the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation as it's presented in the article.

3. The author writes, “The existence of two-spirit people challenges the rigid binary worldview of the North American colonizers and missionaries, not just of the binary gender system, but a generalized system where binaries are the norm.” What do you think this means?

# Appendices

## In this Section

- Recommended Resources
- Glossary
- Please note that this is by no means an exhaustive list of resources as they will often change and/or be updated.

## Recommended Resources

### Professional Resources Websites



SOGI 123: <https://bc.sogieducation.org/> For an updated list of books, videos and films, go to the bottom of the SOGI Education teacher resources section here: <https://bc.sogieducation.org/sogi3/>

The Rainbow Owl <http://www.the-rainbow-owl.com/> is an excellent website that documents the growing international body of literature and resources that focus on trans and gender diverse young people, their families, and those who support them.



Gender Spectrum: <https://www.genderspectrum.org/> Gender Spectrum offers resources to empower your relationships, work, and interactions with youth and children. From how-to guides, to respected research, to sample training materials, we provide you with the tools necessary to create gender inclusive environments in your homes, offices, and communities.



It's Pronounced Metrosexual: <http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/> is a website created by Sam Killermann where millions of people learn about gender, sexuality, and social justice by reading and sharing articles, edugraphics, and other online resources. It's free, uncopied, and meant for advocates of social justice who are looking to do some good in their world via education and equity.



Welcoming Schools. (2010) Human Rights Campaign Foundation. Welcoming Schools is an LGBT-inclusive approach to addressing family diversity, gender stereotyping and name-calling in K-5 learning environments. <http://www.welcomingschools.org/>

## Resources for Trans\* Students and Allies

Bending the Mold: An Action Kit for Transgender Students. (2008). By Lambda Legal and the National Youth Advocacy Committee. Contains ideas and information to create change, and numerous resources to connect with the broader trans community. Download at [http://www.lambdalegal.org/sites/default/files/publications/downloads/btm\\_bending-the-mold\\_0.pdf](http://www.lambdalegal.org/sites/default/files/publications/downloads/btm_bending-the-mold_0.pdf)

Beyond the Binary: A Toolkit for Gender Identity Activism in Schools. (2004). By the Gay Straight Alliance Network. This resource provides trans students, gender non-conforming students and their allies with the guidance to change school policies and climate to be more inclusive. <http://www.gsa-network.org/files/getinvolved/BeyondtheBinary-Manual.pdf>

For information on Trans Support Groups in British Columbia, refer to <http://transhealth.vch.ca/resources/transgroups.html>.

## Resources for Parents

Transparent is a Canadian group, started by a woman in St. Catherine's who's child came out as trans, and aims to provide peer support to and connect other parents of trans youth. They can be found online at <http://www.transparentcanada.ca>.

PFLAG USA's brochure Our Trans Children and book, Trans Forming Families, Real Stories About Transgendered Loved Ones are supportive, and answer questions. Focuses on teens and older. The brochure can be downloaded for free and copies of the brochure or the book can be ordered from their site <http://community.pflag.org/Page.aspx?pid=413>.

TransActive Gender Center. A Portland Oregon resource for the parents of trans children and youth has some useful resources and simple clear language, <https://www.transactivegendercenter.org/>.

Public Health Agency of Canada Q&A Booklet on Gender Identity in Schools  
[http://www.sieccan.org/pdf/phac\\_genderidentity\\_qa-eng.pdf](http://www.sieccan.org/pdf/phac_genderidentity_qa-eng.pdf)

Supporting Transgender and Transsexual Students in K-12 Schools: A Guide for Educators. (2012) By Gayle Roberts, Carol Allan and Kris Wells. Published by the Canadian Teachers' Federation

The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals (2008) By Stephanie Brill and Rachel Pepper.

# Glossary

## **Ally:**

refers to a person who supports and celebrates diversity, interrupts oppressive remarks and actions, and willingly explores these biases within themselves.

## **Cisgender:**

refers to someone who identifies with the same gender they were assigned at birth and is used to call attention to the privilege of people who are not trans.

## **Coming out:**

is the process of becoming aware of one's queer sexual orientation or trans gender identity, accepting it, and telling others about it.

## **Gender binary:**

The view that there are only two, distinct, opposite genders.

## **Gender expression:**

refers to how someone outwardly manifests gender, for example, through clothing, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions.

## **Gender identity:**

refers to a person's internal, deeply felt sense of being either male, female, something other, or in between. Everyone has a gender identity.

## **Gender diverse:**

refers to a person who does not conform to society's expectations of their gender role or gender expression.

## **Genderqueer:**

Is an umbrella term to describe someone who doesn't identify with conventional gender identities, roles, expression, and/or expectations. For some, genderqueer is a non-binary identification, and for others it is not..

## **Gender roles:**

The socially constructed and culturally specific behaviours such as communication styles, careers, family roles, and more, imposed on people based on their biological sex assigned at birth. It is important to note that gender interpretations and expectations vary widely among cultures and often change over time.

## **Heteronormative:**

Refers to social roles and social structures that reinforce the idea that heterosexuality is the presumed norm and is superior to other sexual orientations.

## **Heterosexism:**

A system of attitudes, bias, and discrimination in favour of opposite-sex sexuality and relationships. This includes the assumption that everyone is, or should be, heterosexual and that heterosexuality is inherently superior to homosexuality and bisexuality.

## **Homophobia:**

Fear or hatred of, aversion to, and discrimination against homosexuals or homosexual behaviour. There are many levels and forms of homophobia, including cultural/institutional homophobia, interpersonal homophobia, and internalized homophobia.

## **Homosexual:**

A person who is mostly attracted to people of their own gender. Because this term has been widely used negatively and/or in a cold and clinical way, most homosexuals prefer the terms “lesbian,” “gay” or “queer.”

## **Inclusive language:**

The use of gender non-specific language (e.g. “partner” instead of “husband,” or “they” instead of “she”) to avoid assumptions around gender identity and sexual orientation, and to enhance the accessibility of information and services. Educational, social service, and health professionals are especially encouraged to use inclusive language until advised otherwise by the person they are talking to or about.

## **Intersex:**

Intersex people may have: external genitalia which do not closely resemble the medical definition of male or female genitalia, or which have the appearance of both male and female genitalia; the genitalia of one sex and the secondary sex characteristics of another sex; or a chromosomal make-up that is neither XX nor XY but may be a combination of both. “Intersex” has replaced the term “hermaphrodite,” which is widely considered to be outdated, inaccurate and offensive. An intersex person may or may not identify as part of the trans community.

## **LGBT:**

Acronym used to refer to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender people, interchangeable with GLBT, LGTB, etc. Additional letters are sometimes added to this acronym, such as LGBTIQQ2S to refer to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Questioning and 2-Spirit folk.

## **Outing someone:**

Outing someone: Accidentally or intentionally publicly revealing another person’s sexual orientation or gender identity without their permission. This can cause social, physical, emotional, or economic danger for the person being “outed.” Outing someone can sometimes be done as an act of hate.

## **Patriarchy:**

A social system in which the bulk of power, authority, and control in society is held by men. This assigns greater importance to male identities and issues than to people of other gender identities.

## **Privilege:**

Refers to the social, economic, and political advantages or rights held by people from dominant groups on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, social class, etc. For example, men often experience privilege that people of other genders do not have.

## **QPOC:**

An acronym for Queer People of Colour. Another term used is QTIPoC (Queer, Transgender, and Intersex People of Colour). Queer people of colour often experience intersecting oppressions on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation and other factors.

## **Queer:**

A term becoming more widely used among LGBT communities because of its inclusiveness. “Queer” can be used to refer to the range of non-heterosexual and non-cisgender people and provides a convenient shorthand for “LGBT.” It is important to note that this is a reclaimed term that was once and is still used as a hate term, and thus some people feel uncomfortable with it.

## **Questioning:**

A term sometimes used by those in the process of exploring personal issues of sexual orientation and gender identity as well as choosing not to identify with any other label.

## **Rainbow flag/colours:**

A symbol of queer presence, welcome, and pride which represents the diversity of queer communities.

## **Sex:**

Refers to the biological characteristics chosen to assign humans as male, female or intersex. It is determined by characteristics such as sexual and reproductive anatomy and genetic makeup.

## **Sexual orientation:**

Refers to a person’s deep-seated feelings of sexual and romantic attraction. These attractions may be mostly towards people of the same gender (lesbian, gay), another gender (heterosexual), men and women (bisexual), or people of all genders (pansexual).

## **Sexism:**

The belief that male gender identities and masculine gender expressions are superior to female and/or feminine ones.

## **Transgender (trans, trans\*):**

Transgender, frequently abbreviated to ‘trans’ or ‘trans\*’ (the asterisk is intended to actively include non-binary and/or non-static gender identities such as genderqueer and genderfluid) is an umbrella term that describes a range of people whose gender identity differs from conventional expectations based on their assigned biological birth sex. Identifying as transgender or trans is something that can only be decided by an individual for themselves and does not depend on criteria such as surgery or hormone treatment status.

## **Transition:**

Refers to the process during which trans\* people may change their gender expression and/or bodies to reflect their gender identity or sexual identity. Transition may involve a change in physical appearance (hairstyle, clothing), behaviour (mannerisms, voice, gender roles), and/or identification (name, pronoun, legal details). It may be accompanied by changes to the body such as the use of hormones to change secondary sex characteristics (e.g., breasts, facial hair).

## **Trans man:**

This term describes someone who identifies as trans\* and whose gender identity is male.

## **Transphobia:**

The fear and dislike of, and discrimination against, trans people. Transphobia can take the form of disparaging jokes, rejection, exclusion, denial of services, employment discrimination, name-calling and violence.

## **Trans woman:**

This term may describe someone who identifies as trans\* and whose gender identity is female.

## **Two-Spirit (2-Spirit):**

A term used by some North American Aboriginal societies to describe people with diverse gender identities, gender expressions, gender roles, and sexual orientations. Dual-gendered, or “two-spirited,” people have been and are viewed differently in different First Nations communities. Sometimes they have been seen without stigma and have been considered seers, child-carers, warriors, mediators, or emissaries from the creator and treated with deference and respect, or even considered sacred, but at other times this has not been the case. As one of the devastating effects of colonization and profound changes in North American Aboriginal societies, many Two-Spirit folk have lost these community roles, and this has had far-reaching impacts on their well-being.