

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

The following definitions are intended to provide common language, answer questions and provide clarification to educators on concepts, terminology and themes related to trans, gender diverse and LGBTQ identities and experiences. This is not an exhaustive list but instead provides some basic terminology to support an introduction to topics related to the lesson plans.

### **GENERAL TERMS**

#### **GENDER**

Gender is a system that operates in a social context to classify people, often based on their assigned sex. In many contexts this takes the form of a binary classification of either ‘man’ or ‘woman’; in other contexts, this includes a broader spectrum.

#### **SEX/GENDER BINARY**

The notion that there are only two possible sexes (male/female) and genders (man/woman), and that they are opposite, distinct and uniform categories. This view also asserts that gender is determined by sex.

#### **LGBTQ**

An acronym for “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Two Spirit, Queer and Questioning” people. This acronym is often used as an umbrella term to encompass a broad spectrum of identities related to gender and attraction. This acronym takes many forms and can include: LGBPTTIQQ2sAAS+.

#### **ALLY**

An ally is someone who believes in the dignity and respect of all people and takes action by supporting and/or advocating with groups experiencing social injustice. An ally does not identify as a member of the group they are supporting (e.g., a heterosexual person can act as an ally for gay people and communities; a cisgender lesbian can act as an ally for trans people and communities).

As described in this definition, the responsibilities of trans allyship are reserved for those who do not themselves identify as trans, most commonly cisgender people. The specifics of trans allyship vary depending on the circumstance, but can be summed up through acts of supporting and including trans identities within all aspects of community. Equally important is the recognition that allyship is an ongoing process of support, as opposed to a singular goal or achievement which can be attained and then forgotten. Acting as an ally to trans communities means constant re-assessment of one’s surroundings in terms of their inclusion of, and accessibility to, trans community

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members. Acknowledging and incorporating the voices of trans community members, as well as their needs and wishes, is an essential part of allyship. Otherwise, allies risk alienating and further sidelining the communities they intend to support. Allyship is a never-ending process of education, as allies learn more about the social systems and institutions that continue to isolate, stigmatize and discriminate against trans and gender variant people. Only through education can allies gain the skills and language to recognize and help to disrupt, the workings of these systems, which are otherwise invisible to many cisgender individuals.

## **INTERSECTIONALITY**

A lens of analysis of social relations and structures within a given society. The concept of intersectionality recognizes how each person simultaneously exists within multiple and overlapping identity categories (including but not limited to: ability, attraction, body size, citizenship, class, creed, ethnicity, gender expression, gender identity, race, religion). The ways in which an individual experiences systemic privilege and oppression are impacted by the interplay of these identity categories, depending on how they are valued by social institutions.

## **SPECTRUM**

This is a terms that is often paired with sex or gender to recognize that people may have a range of experiences (and realities) in both of these aspects of identity.

## **COMPONENTS OF HUMAN IDENTITY**

### **SEX/ASSIGNED SEX**

Sex / assigned sex is the classification of a person as male, female or intersex based on biological characteristics, including chromosomes, hormones, external genitalia and reproductive organs. The reason we say assigned sex versus biological sex is to acknowledge that sex is often a value determined by medical professionals and is commonly assigned to newborns based on visual assessment of external genitalia. Inclusion here of the recognized category of “intersex,” frequently overlooked in discussions of sex, serves as a reminder that even at the level of biology, sex is not a binary system.

### **GENDER IDENTITY**

Gender Identity is a person’s internal and individual experience of gender. This could include an internal sense of being a man, woman, both, neither or another gender entirely. A person’s gender identity may or may not correspond with social expectations associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. Since gender identity is internal, it

is not necessarily visible to others. It is important to remember that gender identity is not the same as sex / assigned sex.

## **GENDER EXPRESSION**

The way a person presents and communicates gender within a social context. Gender can be expressed through clothing, speech, body language, hairstyle, voice, and/or the emphasis or de-emphasis of bodily characteristics or behaviours, which are often associated with masculinity and femininity. The ways in which gender is expressed are culturally specific and may change over time. May also be referred to as gender presentation or gender performance.

## **ATTRACTION**

Often referred to as sexual orientation, this classifies a person's potential for emotional, intellectual, spiritual, intimate, romantic, and/or sexual interest in other people, often based on their sex and/or gender. Attraction may form the basis for aspects of one's identity and/or behaviour.

## **TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH SEX/ASSIGNED SEX**

### **INTERSEX**

Refers to a person whose chromosomal, hormonal or anatomical sex characteristics fall outside the conventional classifications of male or female. The designation of "intersex" can be experienced as stigmatizing given the history of medical practitioners imposing it as a diagnosis requiring correction, often through non-consensual surgical or pharmaceutical intervention on infants, children and young adults (some people may not be identified as "intersex" until puberty or even later in life).

### **FAAB**

An acronym that refers to someone who was assigned female sex at birth. It stands for Female-Assigned at Birth. This may also be expressed as Coercively Assigned Female at Birth (CAFAB).

### **MAAB**

An acronym that refers to someone who was assigned male sex at birth. It stands for Male-Assigned at Birth. This may also be expressed as Coercively Assigned Male at Birth (CAMAB).

## **TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH ATTRACTION**

## **HETEROSEXUAL**

A person who experiences attraction to people of a different sex and/or gender. Also referred to as “straight”.

## **GAY**

A person who experiences attraction to people of the same sex and/or gender—gay can include both male-identified individuals and female-identified individuals, or refer to male-identified individuals only.

## **LESBIAN**

A female-identified person who experiences attraction to people of the same sex and/or gender.

## **BISEXUAL**

A person who experiences attraction to both men and women. Some bisexual people use this term to express attraction to both their own sex and/or gender, as well as to people of a different sex and/or gender.

## **ASEXUAL**

A person who may not experience sexual attraction or who has little or no interest in sexual activity.

## **PANSEXUAL**

A person who experiences attraction to people of diverse sexes and/or genders. The term pansexual reflects a desire to recognize the potential for attraction to sexes and/or genders that exist across a spectrum and to challenge the sex/gender binary.

## **TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH GENDER IDENTITY**

### **CISGENDER**

A person whose gender identity corresponds with the social expectations associated with the sex assigned to them at birth. E.g., imagine a newborn baby. The midwife who just delivered this child takes a look at the external genitalia, recognizes a vulva, and declares “she’s a girl,” thus assigning the child’s sex as ‘female.’ Based on this information, it’s generally assumed that this child would then grow up to identify themselves as a girl or woman. If that was the case, they could be described by the term cisgender. Cisgender, or cis for short, is a particularly important term in that it describes an extremely common, and in fact socially dominant, experience of gender identity in relation to assigned sex at birth. At first reading, it is often difficult for many

people to distinguish the difference between sex / assigned sex and gender identity. This is quite common due to the fact that the two are frequently portrayed as essentially the same thing. One reason for this is that many individuals experience the sex they were assigned by medical professional at birth as very similar to their conception of their own gender identity. The term cisgender describes this particular relationship. Without access to the word cisgender, people have often resorted to language like ‘real/normal men and women.’ Referring to cisgender individuals as ‘real’ or ‘normal’ when compared to trans individuals is particularly violent language in that it implies that trans men and woman are not in fact real or normal. This is inaccurate and it excludes and alienates trans individuals from community, and propagates transphobic attitudes. Cisgender is the appropriate term whenever describing individuals whose gender identity aligns with the social expectations of them based on their sex assigned at birth.

## **THE TRANS UMBRELLA**

The term trans is frequently used as an umbrella term for a variety of other terms, including transgender, transsexual and can also refer to terms like genderqueer, agender, bigender, Two Spirit, etc. Some people may identify with these or other specific terms, but not with the term trans. Similarly, some people may identify as trans, but not with other terms under the trans umbrella. At their simplest, each of these terms has commonalities with the term trans, and yet they are all unique in their specific reference to the context of, and specific relationships between, conceptions of gender identity and assigned sex.

The existence of a diversity of terms is important when discussing trans identities simply because there is quite a lot of variation in the lived experience and identities of individuals who may identify, or be described, as trans. The example above regarding a newborn baby represents only a fraction of the possibilities, and specifically those that remain within a binary (i.e. male, female) gender system. The reality is that for many people their experience of their own gender identity may not align with social expectations based on the sex assigned to them at birth, nor with any gender options available within a binary system. Acknowledging this means moving from a binary gender system to something better described through metaphor, like a spectrum with unlimited combinations of light, or a universe with the potential for unlimited constellations of gender.

## **TRANSGENDER**

A person who does not identify either fully or in part with the gender associated with the sex assigned to them at birth—often used as an umbrella term to represent a wide range of gender identities and expressions.

## **TRANS MAN**

A person whose sex assigned at birth is female or intersex, and who identifies as a man, may identify as a trans man. May also be referred to as FtM/F2M (Female-to-Male) or ItM/I2M (Intersex-to-Male).

## **TRANS WOMAN**

A person whose sex assigned at birth is male or intersex, and who identifies as a woman, may identify as a trans woman. May also be referred to as MtF/M2F (Male-to-Female) or ItF/I2F (Intersex-to-Female).

## **GENDER DIVERSE**

An umbrella term for gender identities and/or gender expressions that differ from cultural or societal expectations based on assigned sex. Other common terms associated with gender diversity are gender variance and gender non-conformity. Gender variance, diversity or non-conformity is different from transgender, which refers to a specific identity. (for example, a child saying “I prefer girls’ clothing” is different from a child saying “I am a girl”).

## **GENDER FLUIDITY**

Gender fluidity refers to the potential for change in ideas, experiences, and expressions of gender at an individual and/or societal level. This concept recognizes the potential for individual movement within a gender spectrum when it comes to self-presentation or expression. For some people this concept is embodied by self-identifying as ‘gender fluid.’ The following definitions are intended to provide a common language, answer questions and provide clarifications regarding a variety of terms related to LGBTQ identities. This is not an exhaustive list of language, but instead provides some basic terminology to support an introduction to the topics presented as part of

## **GENDERQUEER**

A person whose gender identity and/or expression may not correspond with social and cultural gender expectations. Individuals who identify as genderqueer may move between genders, identify with multiple genders, or reject the gender binary or gender altogether.

## **TRANSITION**

Frequently discussions around trans identities are focused on the ways in which individuals may align elements of their identity and bodies with their gender identity. While many voices in popular culture may use the expression “sex change” to describe these processes, the term transition is much more appropriate, being preferred and used by members of trans communities. Refers to a variety of social, medical and/or legal changes that some trans people may pursue to affirm their gender identity. For many trans individuals, pursuing some form of transition is essential to their overall

health and wellbeing. This is evident in research data related to the impacts of transition on suicidal behaviour within trans communities. For instance, Ontario's Trans Pulse study found that 27% of respondents who were planning, but had not yet begun, transition had attempted suicide within the last year, compared to only 1% of those who had transitioned medically (Bauer, Hammond, and Travers 2010). The potential elements of transition can be broken down into three categories. It's important to note that none of these three categories are required steps as part of a process of transition. The transition process is a very personal one. Each individual trans person will decide the ways in which they may choose to transition, or not, depending on what is comfortable and accessible to them.

## **SOCIAL TRANSITION**

This expression is used to describe the common ways in which individuals may choose to publically affirm their gender identity in social environments. This may include changes to:

- name(s)
- pronouns
- gender expression (e.g., clothing, accessories, mannerisms, way of speaking, etc.);
- access to gendered spaces (e.g., washrooms, change rooms, religious/community spaces)

Social transition is often the most common form within elementary or secondary school contexts. Educators can create safer and more inclusive spaces for trans persons who socially transition by structuring opportunities for students to share their preferred names and pronouns, and respecting these requests throughout the year. Equally important is creation of a class culture of respect and understanding, including clear guidelines regarding the ways in which everyone, including trans and gender variant students, can show respect for diverse expressions of gender. This could include lesson plans, media, books, movies, television, theater, music and web content that are trans-inclusive and that reflect gender diversity.

## **MEDICAL TRANSITION**

Medical transition is often at the focus of discussion of trans identities, despite the fact that the term represents only one potential part of the transition process. As with social transition, medical transition can involve a variety of procedures and treatments. Potential elements of medical transition can include:

- Counselling/support (from psychologists, vocal/ behavioural coaches, social workers, etc.)
- Hormone therapy (e.g., administering testosterone, estrogen, hormone blockers)
- Gender affirming surgical procedures (e.g., hysterectomies, orchiectomies, oophorectomies, vaginoplasty, phalloplasty, mastectomy, tracheal shaving, facial feminization, etc.)

Within an Ontario context, some of these transition stages are covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP). This means that residents of the province will not be required to pay out of pocket for these support services. However, given the limited number of medical professionals and facilities equipped to offer these services, there are often challenges in access due to prolonged wait times and prohibitive travel costs for those living outside of major urban centres. Many trans people and their families are unable to access inclusive healthcare, and community advocacy for improvements to the healthcare system is ongoing. As with any medical procedure, the details of medical transition are part of the private relationship between an individual and their health care providers. On a personal level, each individual interested in transitioning has the right to decide what processes they will undertake. There is no universal model for what medical transition looks like, and an individual's gender identity or sex cannot be assumed simply by knowing which procedures someone has or hasn't undergone. An important element of a trans-inclusive classroom is an understanding of appropriate discussions around bodies and transition. Boundaries around discussions of bodies in transition can be part of broader discussions around respecting one another's privacy (including recognizing inappropriate questions, such as whether a trans person has undergone gender-affirming 'bottom' surgery or not). Educators can create safer spaces for medical transition by doing their own research into the subject so as not to feel compelled to ask for details from individual students, or their family members, who may have undergone transition or who may be at the beginning stages of transition.

## LEGAL TRANSITION

For the most part legal transition refers to the process of changing the ways in which official (provincial or federal) documentation refers to an individual's sex designation. This process differs substantially between regions and jurisdictions, but can include updates to documents such as:

- Birth certificate
- Passport
- Citizenship card
- Driver's license

- Health card

The process of accessing gender-affirming identification can be time consuming and complex. Many countries, including Canada, have yet to create sex or gender categories for identification that are reflective of the actual diversity existent within their populations. Countries like Germany, Nepal and Australia have all acknowledged the need for such updates to state identification, and have created further designation options outside of the gender/sex binary which reflect a more diverse spectrum of identity. As an educator you have the responsibility of maintaining privacy and confidentiality in relation to information on any student's official identification, information which may be particularly sensitive for trans students. The sex designation, or name, indicated on official documents is not your information to share. This may be pertinent if you view students' documents as part of a registration process, or for the purposes of school trips. As always, the best practice is to refer to the wishes of a student or community member themselves when determining the pronouns or gender identifiers used in reference to that individual.

## **TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH BOTH GENDER IDENTITY AND ATTRACTION**

### **QUEER**

A term used by some in LGBTQ communities, particularly youth, as a symbol of pride and affirmation of diversity. This term makes space for the expression of a variety of identities outside of rigid categories associated with sex, gender or attraction. It can be used by a community to encompass a broad spectrum of identities related to sex, gender or attraction (as with the acronym LGBTQ), or by an individual to reflect the interrelatedness of these aspects of their identity. Queer was historically a derogatory term for difference, used in particular to insult homosexuality and LGBTQ people. Although sometimes still used as a slur, the term has been reclaimed by some members of LGBTQ communities.

### **QUESTIONING**

An umbrella term that often reflects a process of reconciling three different pieces of information: 1) The feelings you have within yourself about the attraction(s) you experience and/or how you experience gender; 2) The language you have available to you to frame those feelings; and 3) The sense you have of how this will impact your interactions with other people in a social context.

### **TWO SPIRIT (OR 2-SPIRIT)**

An English umbrella term that reflects the many words used in different Aboriginal languages to affirm the interrelatedness of multiple aspects of identity—including

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gender, sexuality, community, culture and spirituality. Prior to the imposition of the sex/gender binary by European colonizers, some Aboriginal cultures recognized Two Spirit people as respected members of their communities. Two Spirit people were often accorded special status based upon their unique abilities to understand and move between masculine and feminine perspectives, acting as visionaries, healers and medicine people. Some Aboriginal people identify as Two Spirit rather than, or in addition to, identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or queer.

## **TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF GENDER IDENTITY AND ATTRACTION**

### **CISNORMATIVITY**

A cultural and societal bias, often unconscious, that privileges cisgender identities and gender norms, and ignores or underrepresents trans identities and/or gender diversity by assuming that all people are cisgender and will express their gender in a way that aligns with perceived gender norms.

### **CISSEXISM**

Prejudice and discrimination against trans or gender diverse identities and/or expressions. This includes the presumption that being cisgender is the superior and more desirable gender identity.

### **TRANSPHOBIA**

Fear and/or hatred of any transgression of perceived gender norms, often exhibited by name-calling, bullying, exclusion, prejudice, discrimination or acts of violence—anyone who is trans and/or gender diverse (or perceived to be) can be the target of transphobia.

### **HETERONORMATIVITY**

A cultural and societal bias, often unconscious, that privileges heterosexuality, and ignores or underrepresents diversity in attraction and behaviour by assuming all people are heterosexual.

### **HETEROSEXISM**

Prejudice and discrimination in favour of heterosexuality. This includes the presumption of heterosexuality as the superior and more desirable form of attraction.

### **HOMOPHOBIA**

Fear and/or hatred of homosexuality, often exhibited by name-calling, bullying, exclusion, prejudice, discrimination or acts of violence—anyone who is LGB (or assumed to be) can be the target of homophobia.

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## **MONONORMATIVITY**

A cultural and societal bias, often unconscious, that privileges attraction to a single sex and/or gender, and ignores or underrepresents diversity in attraction and behaviour by assuming all people are monosexual.

## **MONOSEXISM (BINEGATIVITY)**

Prejudice and discrimination in favour of single sex and/or gender attraction. This includes the presumption of monosexuality as the superior and more desirable form of attraction.

## **BIPHOBIA**

Fear and/or hatred of bisexuality, often exhibited by name-calling, bullying, exclusion, prejudice, discrimination or acts of violence—anyone who is or is assumed to be bisexual or experiences attraction to multiple sexes and/or genders can be the target of biphobia.

## **PERCEIVED GENDER IDENTITY**

The assumption that a person is trans, cisgender or genderqueer without knowing what their gender identity actually is. Perceptions about gender identity are often predicated on stereotypes relating to gender expression (e.g., what a man “should” look like).

## **PERCEIVED ATTRACTION**

The assumption that a person is lesbian, gay, bisexual or heterosexual without knowing how they actually experience attraction. Perceptions about attraction are often predicated on stereotypes relating to gender expression (e.g., what a heterosexual woman “should” look like).