ALLIES & SOLIDARITY

A STARTING PLACE FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING THE VAST, DIVERSE, AND WONDERFUL 2SLGBTQ COMMUNITY.

THANKS FOR STEPPING IN AND ADDRESSING THAT HURTFUL COMMENT. THAT MAKES ME FEEL A LOT MORE WELCOME HERE.

YOU’RE WELCOME. THAT’S WHAT BEING A FRIEND LOOKS LIKE.
Allies support and advocate for Two Spirit, Trans, and Queer rights. They do so by actively challenging homophobic and transphobic behaviour, language, and systems that disadvantage or hurt queer people. In order to do this work, allies acknowledge their privilege, internalized behaviour and biases, and commit to using their power and privilege to leverage better outcomes for Two Spirit, Trans, and Queer people.

Allies can be heterosexual and/or cisgender, or be a part of the 2SLGBTQ community themselves.
Privilege is a set of unearned rights or benefits typically given to a group of people based upon their social status or identity. Acknowledging your privilege means acknowledging inequities and power imbalances within our society that you, often unknowingly, benefit from. Having privilege does not make you a bad person, but acknowledging it and using your privilege to better the lives of those who don’t have it, is a great way to use your privilege for good.

You can specifically help the 2SLGBTQ community by understanding what privileges you have and holding yourself accountable. Taking accountability means elevating the voices of others and knowing when to take a step back; those around you can speak for themselves. Pay attention to where your voice is needed, and when you need to make space for 2SLGBTQ people to speak.

The following are examples of barriers 2SLGBTQ people face. If you haven’t experienced these, it’s due to the privilege you carry.

- “My friends and family know that I’m gay but I don’t bring up my personal life at work. I don’t want to be the gay coworker.”
- “I’m non-binary and terrified to come out to my parents. What if they stop loving me? What if I have nowhere to live?”
- “I’ve had women yell at me in the changeroom at my gym. As a transwoman this make me feel inferior and makes me worry for my safety.”
- “My partner and I never hold hands or kiss in public for fear of harrassment and violence.”
2SLGBTQ INDIVIDUALS HAVE DIVERSE LIVED-EXPERIENCES & FACE DIFFERENT KINDS OF DISCRIMINATION.

Queer and Trans Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (QTBIPOC) face types of discrimination that white Queer and Trans people don’t. For example an Indigenous Transgender Woman may experience racism, transphobia, and sexism whereas her close friend who is a white cisgender woman would only experience sexism. Understanding these layers is part of learning about Intersectionality. To learn more, read: Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color, by Kimberle Crenshaw

Recognizing that people face intersecting oppressions is key to being an informed ally. OUTSaskatoon doesn’t just advocate against homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia, we also advocate against racial injustice, ableism, classism, and more.
HOMOPHOBIA AND HOMONEGATIVITY AFFECT EVERYONE.

They create negative environments where 2SLGBTQ people feel isolated, belittled, ignored, judged, and victimized for being who they are. These experiences often lead to issues with low self-esteem, depression, self-harm, suicide, risky behavior, and health concerns. Allies are a big help in creating safer spaces for 2SLGBTQ people.

A safer space is a supportive, affirming, and accepting environment where all people can feel comfortable to express themselves and share experiences without fear of discrimination or violence. Additionally, a safer space is based on consent and requires ongoing communication. The word ‘safer’ is used to acknowledge that safety is relative to each person; not everyone feels safe under the same conditions.

“URGING PEOPLE TO BE INCLUSIVE IS NOT AN ATTACK. IT IS PROGRESS.”
1. EDUCATE YOURSELF.
The first step is to educate yourself about the foundations of identity, such as gender, sex, sexual and romantic orientation, and gender expression. Next learn about 2SLGBTQ history and actively listen to people who share their experiences of being part of the 2SLGBTQ community. Doing so will help you better understand why being an ally is important and necessary work.

2. DISPLAY YOUR SUPPORT OPENLY AND PROUDLY.
Wear an ally button, display pride flags and symbols. This will let people know that you are a safe person to talk to. It will also show others that you support a healthy and safe workplace for all genders, gender expressions, and sexualities.

3. START ASKING FOR PRONOUNS.
At group introductions, start asking for people's name and pronouns. By doing so, you are normalizing pronouns and in turn helping to ensure other feel comfortable sharing their own.

4. REFUSE TO PARTICIPATE IN HOMO/BI/TRANSPHOBIC JOKES OR DISCUSSIONS.
Phrases such as “that's so gay” or referring to someone as an “it” are very offensive. If you hear inappropriate statements or jokes, say something. Remember that silence communicates acceptance and taking a stand against negative behavior goes a long way in creating a safer space. You can also try approaching harmful jokes or comments with curiosity by saying "I don't get it. Why is that funny?" It puts the responsibility on the person speaking to explain themselves and provides you an opportunity to start a conversation.
5. DO NOT MAKE ASSUMPTIONS.
Not everyone is heterosexual or cisgender and presuming that everyone is, creates an environment of isolation and alienation. Likewise, when encountering people, do not rely on stereotypes of femininity and masculinity to “guess” someone's sexuality or pronouns.

6. BE CAREFUL NOT TO “OUT” OTHERS.
If someone confides in you about their sexual orientation or gender, keep it private unless they say otherwise. It's their story to tell, not yours to share. Outing someone may impact their safety and put them in harm's way.

7. PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY EVENTS.
Go to Pride events, initiatives, and discussions related to gender and sexual diversity. Your voice and presence as an ally is a very powerful statement—keep it loud and proud!

8. BE AN ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE.
Stay up-to-date on 2SLGBTQ causes and issues. Volunteer at your local 2SLGBTQ organization, go to public discussions, donate your money, and attend protests.

9. ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO BECOME ACTIVE ALLIES.
People may ask questions like: “If it doesn't affect you then why bother?” or “Aren't we all already equal?” Practice your answers and bravely engage in difficult conversations.

10. KNOW YOUR LIMITS.
It is better to admit you do not know something than to make assumptions or say something that may be incorrect or hurtful. Remember that the experts on 2SLGBTQ issues are 2SLGBTQ people and it is their voices that you should be amplifying as an ally. Know when it is appropriate for allies to speak, and when it is time to take a step back and listen.
TERMINOLOGY.

Educate yourself on current and appropriate terminology. A common mistake is when people use the term “Transgendered” rather than “Transgender”. The term transgender is an adjective, meaning it is an attribute or a part of a person. Adding the “ed” makes the word a verb, and makes it sound as though a person is being acted upon, rather than self-determined.

RESPECT PRONOUNS AND NAMES.

Some Trans people change their name and pronouns when they come out. Regardless of whether or not you understand it, always honour the name and pronouns a person uses.

DON’T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS.

Making an assumption about someone and then being wrong can be embarrassing and make people uncomfortable. A sure way to avoid that is by not making assumptions at all. If you don’t know someone’s name or pronouns, use gender neutral pronouns (they/them) or just ask! Everyone makes mistakes; simply apologize, learn, and move forward.
SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER ARE DIFFERENT.

It is very important to note that a transgender person’s gender does not dictate who they are attracted to. The term *transgender* refers only to a person’s gender and has no bearing on their sexual orientation.

FOLLOW THEIR LEAD.

Coming out as Transgender, or gender diverse, often includes more steps then coming out as gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, or asexual. These steps are referred to as transitioning. There are countless ways to transition and each Trans person will choose what makes sense for them. As an ally you can ask “What support do you need from me?”. If they need help correcting people when the wrong pronouns are used, step in and speak up. If they want help shopping for new clothes, volunteer to go with them. Give them time to figure out what their needs are, and follow their lead.

JUST DON’T!

Do not ask a Trans person for their “real” name, information about their sex life, transition, or medical history. You may be curious, but that does not give you the right to ask sensitive and invasive questions. If you wouldn’t ask a cisgender person about their sex life or medical history then don’t ask a transgender person.
As a guardian of a 2SLGBTQ child, you have the opportunity to learn and become their biggest supporter and advocate. There are several ways to learn new information in order to best support your child. Start by doing research online, reaching out to online groups to meet other parents of queer children, or seeking out in-person support groups for parents.

Explore the internet. The internet is full of high quality resources and support groups, which is especially beneficial for those who live in rural areas. Additionally, our resources are a great place to start.

Remember that not everything will change. Your child is taking a huge step by coming out and although being 2SLGBTQ is a large part of who they are, it is not their entirely who they are. They are still the same child you know and love, and little has changed other than the fact that they are exploring who they are, just like most people do.

Don’t be afraid to ask. If you need more information or clarity on their identity, or want to know who else they are planning on coming out to - ask. They may need time to figure out their answers, but starting a dialogue ensures you stay connected. Most importantly, let them lead the way. This is their journey, and your role is to be their supporter and wing man.

TIP: The first Wednesday of every month, the OUTSaskatoon Parent and Families group meet and provide a supportive and social space. Check them out on Facebook!
Everyone experiences language differently and language changes over time. Older 2SLGBTQ adults might not be comfortable with the language used by 2SLGBTQ youth and vice versa.

Be flexible with your language and never push anyone into coming out to you or giving out personal information.

Do not be afraid to ask someone what terms they prefer, so they know you are accepting and open to being educated.

Language is personal, political, and not necessarily understood or used universally. For example, the term *queer* is used by many as an umbrella term to include everyone in the 2SLGBTQ community, but some people might not use the word queer or it may be triggering for them. Alternate words you can use instead of *queer* include: gender and sexually diverse, or 2SLGBTQ. It is perfectly acceptable to ask people which terms they prefer, but be sure to use discretion so that you are not outing someone while doing so.

If ever you do not understand a term or are unsure what term a person prefers, kindly ask them one-on-one.
ALLY • A person who supports and advocates for queer identities and the queer community. They do so by actively challenging homophobic and/or transphobic behaviour, language, and systems that disadvantage or hurt queer people. Allies also work on their own learned behaviour and biases. Any person who actively supports Two Spirit, Trans, and Queer people, whether inside or outside of the 2SLGBTQ community, can be an ally.

CISGENDER • A person whose gender is the same as the gender they were assigned at birth. For example, a woman who was assigned female at birth and grew up always identifying as a woman is a cisgender woman.

HETEROSEXUAL • A person who is attracted to people of the “opposite gender.”

HOMOPHOBIA • Discrimination that is targeted at 2SLGBTQ people, or those perceived to be part of the community. Homophobia relies on beliefs that being part of the 2SLGBTQ community is unnatural and abnormal and that this justifies discrimination, acts of hate, and violence.

HETERO-NORMATIVITY • The assumption that everyone is heterosexual, based upon the belief that heterosexuality, based upon the gender binary, is the norm. Heteronormativity includes norms, practices, and institutions that promote heterosexual relationships, binary gender roles, and promotes reproductive sex above all other sexual practices.
**GENDER** • The way a person identifies themselves and experiences gender internally. Gender is inherently different from the sex one is assigned at birth. It is the sense of being a woman, man, non-binary or any other gender.

**PRONOUNS** • Words that are used to refer to someone in place of their name. Some examples of pronouns include she/her, he/him, the singular they/them, and more recent neutral pronouns like xe/xem and ze/zir.

**QUEER** • A term that has recently been reclaimed by many within the 2SLGBTQ community. Historically, the term was used to degrade and insult people who were part of, or thought to be part of the community. Today, many people have reclaimed the term and use it as an umbrella term in order to refer to the entire 2SLGBTQ community or to broadly state that they are part of the 2SLGBTQ community.

If you hear this term being used in a derogatory manner and you consider yourself to act as an ally of the Queer community, please acknowledge how this word is being used and educate the person using it.
**SAFER SPACE** • A safer space is a supportive, non-threatening environment where all people can feel comfortable to express themselves and share experiences without fear of discrimination or violence. Additionally, a safer space is based on consent and requires ongoing communication. The word ‘safer’ is used to acknowledge that safety is relative to each person; not everyone feels safe under the same conditions.

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION** • A person’s natural attraction to other people, or to no one. People become aware of their sexual orientation at different ages and stages of life. Orientations are defined by feelings of attraction rather than behaviour. Some people may experience fluidity within their attraction, while other people may experience their attraction as concrete and consistent throughout their lifetime.

**TRANSGENDER** • A person whose gender is different from the gender they were assigned at birth. For example, a person who was assigned female at birth but grew up knowing they were a boy and man is a transgender man.

**TRANSPHOBIA** • Hatred that is directed towards transgender people based on the expression of their gender identity. Transphobia is based on ignorance surrounding Trans identities and the belief that these identities are abnormal, inferior, or not real. Transphobia is extremely harmful.
ABOUT QUEER TERMINOLOGY

We know that there are many terms related to the 2SLGBTQ (Two Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) community and that the evolution of our community’s language is one of our greatest assets.

Sometimes this means that words are abandoned because of the stigma attached to them, or they are reclaimed as a form of empowerment, or new words are created that affirm and resonate with people’s experiences.

OUTSaskatoon strives to be current with our language in order to be responsive and relevant to our community. We know that language is power and as our community and society evolves, so will the way we define ourselves.
OUTSaskatoon works to uplift 2SLGBTQ people by leading, serving, and supporting in a dynamic community. OUTSaskatoon fosters physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health through community support groups, counselling, drop-in services, queer-specific education and training, sexual health services, community events, and a long-term group home for Two Spirit, queer and trans youth ages 16-21.

FIND MORE RESOURCES AT:

www.outsaskatoon.ca

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