

Recognizing Diversity

Transgender Day of Remembrance



Background

Learning the history and developing an understanding of the different cultures and diversity in our community helps us become aware, rethink any assumptions, creates allyship and fosters a sense of connection with each other.

To help us get to know each other better, the Municipality of Kincardine will be highlighting different cultures, days of significance / remembrance and celebrations of our diverse community throughout the year.



Transgender Day of Remembrance

The Transgender Day of Remembrance raises public awareness of hate crimes against transgender people and publicly mourns and honors the lives of transgender people *whose lives were lost in acts of anti-transgender violence.*

*The Transgender Day of Remembrance is **November 20th** and commemorates the trans,*

two-spirit and non-binary people who have lost their lives to transphobic violence. It also honours those who continue to face violence and discrimination as they work for more just and inclusive communities.

What does transgender mean?

Transgender is a term used to describe people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. **Gender identity** is a person's internal, personal sense of being a man or a woman (or boy or girl.) For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into those two choices. For transgender people, the sex they were assigned at birth and their own internal gender identity do not match.

People in the transgender community may describe themselves using one (or more) of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, transsexual, and non-binary. Always use the term used by the person.



Trying to change a person's gender identity is no more successful than trying to change a person's sexual orientation -- it doesn't work. So most transgender people seek to bring their bodies into alignment with their gender identity. This is called transition.

As part of the transition process, many transgender people are prescribed hormones by their doctors to change their bodies. Some undergo surgeries as well. But not all transgender people can or will take those steps, and it's important to know that being transgender is not dependent upon medical procedures.

Transgender is an adjective and should never be used as a noun. For example, rather than saying "Max is a transgender," say "Max is a transgender person" or "Max is a transgender man." And transgender never needs an "-ed" at the end.

How is sexual orientation different from gender identity?

We use the acronym LGBTQ to describe the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer community. The Q can also sometimes mean questioning.

Sexual orientation describes a person's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person (for example: straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual), while gender identity describes a person's, internal, personal sense of being a man or a woman, or someone outside of the gender binary.

Simply put: sexual orientation is about who you are attracted to and fall in love with; gender identity is about who you are.

Like everyone else, transgender people have a sexual orientation. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer. For example, a person who transitions from male to female and is attracted solely to men would typically identify as a straight woman. A person who transitions from female to male and is attracted solely to men would typically identify as a gay man.

What does non-binary mean, and is it different from being transgender?

Everyone has a gender identity, an internal sense of self and perception of one's own gender. For some people their gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth (cisgender) and for some people their gender identity is different than the sex they were assigned at birth (transgender).

There have always been transgender people who felt that their gender identity didn't fall neatly into the two binary categories of "man" or "woman." In the past, trans people who felt that way used the words genderqueer and genderfluid to describe that experience. While those words are still used today, it's now more common for people to call themselves non-binary if they feel their gender identity is something other than "man" or "woman." People who use the word non-binary to describe their **gender identity** typically also call themselves transgender.



In recent years, the word non-binary has seen a surge in popularity. As more people use the word non-binary to describe themselves, it has become **its own umbrella term**. Non-binary now means many different things to different people.

Many of those people either explicitly say something like, "I'm not transgender, I'm non-binary," implying those are two identities are unrelated, or they will simply never use the word transgender when describing themselves.

Language is evolving in real time. But it's important to understand that there is no one right or wrong way to be non-binary, just like there is no right or wrong way to be transgender.

The bottom line is: listen to how someone uses the word non-binary to describe themselves and try to understand how they are using it. Many of them will be telling you that they are a transgender person who is non-binary, while others will be using non-binary in a different way to describe their experience. Regardless, simply accept that they know best how to describe themselves.

What name and pronoun do I use?

For some transgender people, being associated with their birth name is a tremendous source of anxiety, or it is simply a part of their life they wish to leave behind. Respect the name a transgender person is currently using. If you happen to know a transgender person's birth name (the name given to them when they were born, but which they no longer use), don't share it without that person's explicit permission. Sharing a transgender person's birth name and/or photos of a transgender person before their transition is an invasion of privacy, unless they have given you permission to do so.

If you're unsure which pronoun a person uses, listen first to the pronoun other people use when referring to that person. Someone who knows the person well will probably use the correct pronoun. If you must ask which pronoun the person uses, start with your own. For example, "Hi, I'm Alex and I use the pronouns he and him. What about you?" Then use that person's pronoun and encourage others to do the same. If you accidentally use the wrong pronoun for someone, apologize quickly and sincerely, then move forward with intention. The bigger deal you make out of the situation, the more uncomfortable it is for everyone.

Source: GLAAD - <https://www.glaad.org/transgender/transfaq>



Discrimination and isolation

National data isn't available but in Ontario **we know that:**

- Two-thirds of trans people have avoided public spaces or situations because they feared harassment
- 43% have attempted suicide
- 13% of trans workers have been fired for being trans, and another 15% were fired and believe it might be because they were trans
- 18% have been turned down for a job because they were trans, and another 32% suspect that this is why they were turned down
- 17% have declined a job they applied for and were offered, because of the lack of trans-positive and safe work environment
- 28% of trans workers could not get employment references with their current name or pronoun and 58% could not get academic transcripts with the correct name or sex designation

Source: Public Service Alliance of Canada: <http://psacunion.ca/trans-day-remembrance>)

Tips for Allies of Transgender People

Trans, two-spirit and non-binary people are our co-workers, friends, family members and neighbors. On the Trans Day of Remembrance we mourn and grieve together – and recommit to end all violence against trans people.

The following are tips that can be used as you move toward becoming a better ally to transgender people. When you become an ally of transgender people, your actions will help change the culture, making society a better, safer place for transgender people and for all people (trans or not) who do not conform to conventional gender expectations.

You can't tell if someone is transgender just by looking.

Transgender people don't look any certain way or come from any one background. Many transgender people do not appear "visibly trans," meaning they are not perceived to be transgender by others. It is not possible to look around a room and "see" if there are any transgender people. (It would be like a person looking around the room to "see" if there are any gay people.) You should assume that there may be transgender people at any gathering or in any space.

Don't make assumptions about a transgender person's sexual orientation.

Gender identity is different than sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is about who we're attracted to. Gender identity is about our own personal sense of being a man or a woman, or neither of those binary genders. Transgender people can be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or straight.



If you don't know what pronouns to use, listen first.

If you're unsure which pronoun a person uses, listen first to the pronoun other people use when referring to them. Someone who knows the person well will probably use the correct pronoun. If you must ask which pronoun the person uses, start with your own. For example, "Hi, I'm Alex and I use the pronouns he and him. What about you?" Then use that person's pronoun and encourage others to do so. If you accidentally use the wrong pronoun, apologize quickly and sincerely, then move on. The bigger deal you make out of the situation, the more uncomfortable it is for everyone.

Don't ask a transgender person what their "real name" is.

For some transgender people, being associated with their birth name is a tremendous source of anxiety, or it is simply a part of their life they wish to leave behind. Respect the name a transgender person is currently using. If you happen to know the name someone was given at birth but no longer uses, don't share it without the person's explicit permission. Similarly, don't share photos of someone from before their transition, unless you have their permission.

Understand the differences between "coming out" as lesbian, gay, or bisexual and "coming out" as transgender.

"Coming out" to other people as lesbian, gay, or bisexual is typically seen as revealing a truth that allows other people to know your authentic self. The LGB community places great importance and value on the idea of being "out" in order to be happy and whole. When a transgender person has transitioned and is living their life as their authentic self--that **is** their truth. The world now sees them as who they truly are. Unfortunately, it can often feel disempowering for a transgender person to disclose to other people that they are transgender. Sometimes when other people learn a person is trans, they no longer see the person as "real." Some people may choose to publicly discuss their gender history in an effort to raise awareness and make cultural change, but please don't assume that it's necessary for a transgender person to disclose that they are transgender in order to feel happy and whole.

Be careful about confidentiality, disclosure, and "outing."

Some transgender people feel comfortable disclosing their gender history, and some do not. A transgender person's gender history is personal information and it is up to them to share it with others. Do not casually share this information, speculate, or gossip about a person you know or think is transgender. Not only is this an invasion of privacy, it also can have negative consequences in a world that is very intolerant of gender diversity. Transgender people can lose jobs, housing, friends, or even their lives when other people find out about their gender history.

Respect the terminology a transgender person uses to describe their identity.

Transgender people use many different terms to describe their experiences. Respect the term (transgender, transsexual, non-binary, genderqueer etc.) a person uses to describe themselves. If a person is not sure of which identity label fits them best, give them the time to figure it out for themselves and don't tell them which term you think they should use. You wouldn't like your identity to be defined by others, so please allow others to define themselves.



Be patient with a person who is questioning or exploring their gender identity.

A person who is questioning or exploring their gender identity may take some time to figure out what's true for them. They might, for example, use a name or pronoun, and then decide at a later time to change the name or pronoun again. Do your best to be respectful and use the name and pronoun requested.

Understand there is no "right" or "wrong" way to transition, and that it is different for every person.

Some transgender people access medical care like hormones and surgeries as part of their transition to align their bodies with their gender identity. Some transgender people want their authentic gender identity to be recognized without hormones or surgery. Some transgender people cannot access medical care, hormones, and/or surgeries due to a lack of financial resources or access to healthcare. A transgender person's identity is not dependent on medical procedures or their physicality. Accept that if someone tells you they are transgender, they are.

Don't ask about a transgender person's genitals, surgical status, or sex life.

It would be inappropriate to ask a non-transgender, or cisgender, person about the appearance or status of their genitals. It is equally inappropriate to ask a transgender person those questions. Don't ask if a transgender person has had "the surgery" or if they are "pre-op" or "post-op." If a transgender person wants to talk to you about such matters, they will bring it up. Similarly, it wouldn't be appropriate to ask a non-transgender person about how they have sex, so the same courtesy should be extended to transgender people.

Avoid backhanded compliments and "helpful" tips.

While you may intend to be supportive, comments like the following can be hurtful or even insulting:

"I would have never known you were transgender. You look so pretty."

"You look just like a real woman."

"She's so gorgeous, I would have never guessed she was transgender."

"You're so brave."

"Have you considered a voice coach?"

Challenge anti-transgender remarks or jokes in public spaces, including LGB spaces.

You may hear anti-transgender comments from anti-LGBTQ activists, but you may also hear them from LGB people. Someone may think that because they're gay, it's ok for them to use certain words or tell jokes about transgender people. It's important to challenge anti-transgender remarks or jokes whenever they're said and no matter who says them.

Support all-gender public restrooms.

Some transgender and gender non-conforming people may not feel like they match the signs on the restroom door. Encourage schools, businesses, and agencies to have single user, unisex and/or all-gender restroom options. Make it clear that transgender and gender non-conforming people are welcome to use whichever restroom they feel comfortable using.



Help make your company or group truly trans-inclusive.

"LGBTQ" is now a commonplace term that joins lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and transgender people under the same acronym. If you are part of a company or group that says it's LGBTQ-inclusive, remember that transgender people face unique challenges, and that being LGBTQ-inclusive means truly understanding the needs of the trans community and implementing policies address that them.

At meetings and events, set an inclusive tone.

In a group setting, identify people by articles of clothing instead of using gendered language. For example, the "person in the blue shirt," instead of the "woman in the front." Similarly, "Sir" and "Madam" are best avoided. If bathrooms in the space are not already all-gender, ask if it's possible to put an all-gender sign on them. In some circumstances, where not everyone is known, consider asking people to introduce themselves with their names and pronouns. For example, "Hi, I'm Nick and I use he/him pronouns." Start with yourself and use a serious tone that will discourage others from dismissing the activity with a joke. However, if you feel this practice will have the effect of singling out the trans people in the room or putting them on the spot, avoid it. Remember, it costs cisgender people nothing to share their pronouns, but for trans people it can be a very serious decision.

Listen to transgender people.

The best way to be an ally is to listen with an open mind to transgender people speaking for themselves. Follow thought leaders in the transgender community. Check out books, films, YouTube channels, and trans blogs to find out more about transgender people and the issues people within the community face.

Learn that transgender people are not new.

Transgender people have existed across cultures and throughout time and history. What is new is the heightened awareness of gender diversity and the transgender community because of increased media attention in the last few decades. However, much of these media stories have speculated and projected about the experiences of transgender people rather than aggregating from first-hand accounts.

Know your own limits as an ally.

Don't be afraid to admit when you don't know something. It is better to admit you don't know something than to make assumptions or say something that may be incorrect or hurtful. Seek out the appropriate resources that will help you learn more. Remember being an ally is a sustained and persistent pattern of action; not an idle or stable noun.

Sources: <https://www.glaad.org/transgender/allies>

Straight for Equality - <https://straightforequality.org/>

A guide to being a trans ally:

- o <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/viewer.html?pdfurl=https%3A%2F%2Fstraightforequality.org%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fs4e%2Fstraight%2520for%2520equality%2520Publications%2Fdecember-2020-trans-ally-guide.pdf&clen=2943503&chunk=true>

