

10 Ask.

Check in with the trans folks in your life about what information you're allowed to share and what kind of advocacy they would appreciate. Every person's needs are unique. Make a point of asking the trans people in your life what support looks like to them as individuals.

11 Don't make trans and Two-Spirit folks apologize for being themselves.

Exploring gender expression and gender identity can be a tricky process with many ups and downs. Make sure that the trans and Two-Spirit folks in your life know that you support them, regardless of how they choose to live out their identity. Giving a trans or Two-Spirit person the space to be themselves without judgment can make a world of difference.

It is important to note that, for some cultures, more than two gender identities are recognized and that there may be a more appropriate identity that an individual prefers to use in conjunction with or instead of "trans."

The term "Two-Spirit" is used by Indigenous peoples, but holds a variety of meanings depending on the community. The term "Two-Spirit" was included in this resource to respect that people may wish to claim a gender identity outside of norms defined through colonialism.

This handout is an excerpt from Celebrating Gender Diversity: A Toolkit on Gender Identity and Trans Experiences for Communities of Faith, 2019 edition. For more information on this topic, search www.united-church.ca for "gender diversity." The terms "trans," "Two-Spirit," "cisgender," and so on are further explored in this resource.

To format this handout for photocopying and distribution, print or photocopy the pages double-sided and fold down the middle.



The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada



RADICAL WELCOMING AND GENDER IDENTITY: IDEAS FOR ENGAGING IN TRANS AND TWO-SPIRIT JUSTICE

A HANDOUT ON GENDER IDENTITY AND TRANS EXPERIENCES FOR COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

1 Read, learn, listen.

There are so many different experiences in trans and Two-Spirit communities that you can always learn more by listening to people's lived experiences. The more trans and Two-Spirit stories you are exposed to, the better you are able to understand the complex realities of many different members of trans and Two-Spirit communities.



2 Teach yourself not to make assumptions about other people's experience with gender.

When you stop making assumptions about others, you are creating space for them to truly be themselves. These are some common assumptions that people often make:

- you can tell who is cisgender and who is trans or Two-Spirit
- all trans and Two-Spirit people want to medically transition
- all trans and Two-Spirit people want to talk about gender and their experiences of being trans

3 Ask for pronouns and offer your own when you are meeting someone.

Learning someone's pronouns is like learning a new person's name. You can't tell someone's name or pronouns by looking at them, so it's important to ask. And if you forget, it's best to simply ask for a reminder. The practice of asking people what pronouns they prefer is a reminder that you cannot tell someone's gender by looking at them. It is best to ask all people, not just those you perceive as non-binary and/or trans.

6 Challenge people when you hear them say things that are transphobic, cissexist, or transmisogynist.¹

If you notice someone expressing ideas that are not inclusive or welcoming to trans and Two-Spirit folks or using slurs that hurt members of trans and Two-Spirit communities, it is important that it does not go unchallenged. Education can happen in many ways—so don't be afraid to be creative!

5 Share and support the stories and ideas of trans and Two-Spirit people in your everyday conversations and social media.

Help make sure that trans and Two-Spirit folks are not only treated as footnotes in conversations about gender. Being an ally also means trying to find ways to bring trans and Two-Spirit stories into your everyday life.

¹ **transphobic:** hating, fearing, and (conscious or unconsciously) discriminating against individuals who do not conform in appearance and/or identity to cisnormative or "traditional" conceptions of gender.

cissexist: assuming that everyone is cisgender and adheres to the gender binary, and seeing this as the only normal or healthy way to express gender. Cissexism oppresses people with trans identities.

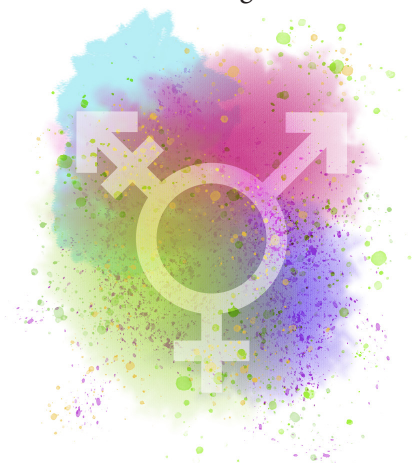
transmisogynist: the use of language and behaviour that is sexist, misogynist, and regularly demonizes and ridicules trans women.

6 Challenge the institutions you are a part of to be safer spaces for trans and Two-Spirit folks.

Demand all-gender bathrooms at schools, campuses, and workplaces. Encourage teachers to use trans and Two-Spirit authors and artists in their class materials. Ensure policies and communications use language that is inclusive of all genders.

7 Support the work of trans and Two-Spirit artists.

Go see trans and Two-Spirit art shows, poetry readings, plays, and more! Also, there are always crowd-funding initiatives looking for money to support the work of trans and Two-Spirit artists.



8 Learn how to talk about bodies, gender, and sexuality in ways that are trans-inclusive.

Language is important. Take time to learn and practise new ways of talking that are inclusive of all bodies. These are some common language mistakes:

- language that only recognizes men and women (the gender binary) such as "ladies and gentlemen," "brothers and sisters," "the opposite gender"
- associating genitalia and/or reproductive organs with someone's gender

9 Learn how to make mistakes.

Even people with the best intentions will likely still make mistakes. As an ally, one of the most important things you can do is be willing to always listen. It is easy to feel guilty or ashamed if you make a mistake, but in these situations the best thing to do is engage in learning and apologizing.