

SPECIAL ISSUE

**TEACH** LE PROF

# OUT OF THE CLOSET AND INTO THE CLASSROOM



1969-2019

**50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF DECRIMINALIZATION  
OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN CANADA**

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**EDITOR'S NOTE**

Fifty years ago, the Liberal government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau passed legislation that ended the decriminalization of homosexuality. For the first time, the government acknowledged that intimate relations between consenting adults of the same sex was not considered a crime. Further, according to Trudeau senior, the government had no business poking its nose in the bedrooms of the nation.

To a degree, this event lifted a veil that had been cloaking homosexuals for decades if not longer. That is not to say, however, that treatment of gays and lesbians instantly improved or that arms of the law relaxed their tight-fisted grip. As we discovered in our research, the legislation didn't prove a panacea that alleviated the fears and concerns of a marginalized sector of society that faced discrimination on a multitude of levels then and still today in this country, as well as, other regions around the world. This is an important subject for teaching, learning, and discussion. It is all about human rights and inclusion in every aspect of society.

We are so very pleased to present this special issue that is being produced outside of our regular publishing schedule. We wish to acknowledge the generous support of Commemorate Canada, Department of Canadian Heritage, Government of Canada, in providing the means to allow us to publish focusing on one core theme: Ending the Decriminalization of Homosexuality.

Our goal and hope with this special issue is to enlighten, reaffirm, and inform while acting as a key teaching tool and resource for educators who want to broach these topics in their classrooms and may be looking for a way to begin. We understand and acknowledge that we are just scratching the surface as this is a huge topic that is multi-dimensional and ever evolving. Where else but in classrooms should we have open dialogue with a view to increasing awareness and understanding. Broaching LGBTQ+ issues, events, and personalities in the classroom heightens awareness and normalizes those considered to be different for so many years, in so many ways.

I think Shakespeare said it best in the Merchant of Venice through the character of Shylock:

*"I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes?  
Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions,  
senses, affections, passions? Fed with the  
same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to  
the same diseases, healed by the same means,  
warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer  
as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not  
bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you  
poison us, do we not die?"*

Substitute the term, Jew for any other and the message resonates loud and clear; Gay, Lesbian, Queer, Transgendered, Two-spirit, etc.



June 24, 2018 - Toronto, Canada: Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario marches at 2018 Toronto Pride Parade.

We have prepared a thought-provoking series of articles and personal perspectives for your consideration. Ian Duncan is a gay and proud history teacher, husband, and father who speaks honestly and directly about how he uses the 1969 legislation as a touch point in his classroom to explore meaningful historical events and developments, their relevance and importance through the decades and today. For any educator looking for a way to begin, Ian provides sage and useful advice.

Freelance writer, Alex Newman cogently and thoroughly documents the refugee experience exploring the barriers and challenges they face when fleeing danger from another country. She elucidates the heart wrenching and dangerous conditions that compelled them to leave their homelands and settle in Canada.

Terminology in our evolving gendered world is complex and even, confusing. That's why Carolyn Gruske has been tasked with navigating through meanings and definitions so that they are clear and understandable. Knowing how to identify and self-identify is important even if it is an ever-moving target. Carolyn has provided a template for clarity to help teachers find their way.

Sam Long is a transgender teacher of biology who uses science and the natural world to explore gender inclusivity. He lays out a logical methodology for introducing these concepts into his teaching practice that may be adapted by any motivated, interested teacher. He tells us that his

students are actively engaged in the lessons and discussions that result from this enlightened approach.

Associate Professor of Education, Christine Cho, speaks directly and passionately to her teacher-candidates about integrating and accepting inclusivity in the classroom and further, how to deal with awkward situations that may arise as a result of student questions or comments. For new teachers, in particular, this can be a confusing issue. Christine Cho layers in clarity and practical advice into her own teaching practice laying a foundation for teachers of the future.

Simon Fraser University History Professor Elise Chenier is the founder and director of the Archive of Lesbian Oral Testimony among other roles she plays. Elise covers

the passing of the 1969 legislation and its impact on women then and through the decades. We don't hear enough about the female perspective as the gay experience is most commonly framed through the male viewpoint. Elise's article acts as a detailed overview clearly describing how lesbians were treated within society and by the police. Their experiences were often not heard and their journeys were long and arduous keeping many permanently closeted while they felt fearful of revealing their true identities.

Freelance writer Adam Stone talks to three leading figures in the gay movement. He explores through them what life was like for them in the closet as young boys growing into manhood and how they discovered and embraced their sexuality. Now in their 60s and 70s, David Rayside, Tim McCaskell, and Ed Jackson speak candidly about their early years and their views on the gay movement then and now.

Finally, as always, we present a fully-ledged, ready-to-go lesson plan in our CURRICULA section. For teachers who need a tool or resource that will help introduce this topic into their teaching practice, we have provided an easy-to-use template. Coupled with the slate of articles in this special issue, teachers should be well-prepared and have a stable foundation of knowledge as a result of reading through *Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom*.

Until next time.  
*Wili Liberman*



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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Aboriginal:** Refers to the first inhabitants of Canada, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.

**Ally:** A heterosexual or cisgendered person who supports LGBTQ+ people and advocates for their rights.

**Asexuality:** Not feeling sexual attraction to others. Asexuality differs from celibacy, which involves a choice to abstain from sexual activity.

**Bisexual:** Describes someone who loves or is attracted to both male and female individuals.

**Cisgender:** The prefix cis- means "on this side of" or "not across." This term describes individuals whose gender identity matches the sex that they were assigned at birth.

**Gay:** An individual who loves or is attracted to individuals of the same sex.

**Gender:** How society typically classifies people into categories of either male or female.

**Gender Expression:** Describes how an individual presents their gender identity through dress, hairstyle, body language, etc.

**Gender Identity:** Describes an individual's deeply held sense of being male, female, something in-between, or other. Gender identity is self-determined.

**Genderqueer:** An individual whose gender identity and/or gender expression falls outside of the dominant societal norm for their assigned sex, is beyond genders, or is some combination of them.

**Heterosexual:** An individual who identifies as female and who only loves or is attracted to individuals who identify as male. Also, an individual who identifies as male who only loves or is attracted to individuals who identify as female.

**Homosexual:** An individual who loves or is attracted to individuals who identify as the same sex. Also: *gay* or *lesbian*.

**Intersex:** Describes individuals born with any of several variations in sex characteristics that do not fit the typical definitions for male or female bodies.

**Lesbian:** An individual who identifies as female who only loves or is attracted to individuals who identify as female.

**LGBT:** Abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. An umbrella term used to refer to the community as a whole. Other versions include LGBTQQIP2SAA (for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, pansexual, two-spirit, asexual, and allies), LGBTQ+, LGBTQ2S, etc.

**Nonbinary:** An individual whose gender identity doesn't fall neatly into the category of either male or female.

**Pansexual/Omnisexual:** Individuals who love or are attracted to individuals of all genders and sexes.

**Queer:** A term referring to individuals who aren't heterosexual or cisgender. It can include anybody on the LGBTQ+ spectrum. It can also be an umbrella term, as in "the queer community." While the word has been reclaimed and is generally used in a positive light, some may still find it offensive due to its historical usage.

**Sex:** Describes an individual as male, female, or intersex based on their reproductive organs and secondary sex characteristics. Sex is often assigned at birth.

**Sexual Orientation:** Describes an individual's sense of sexual attraction to other individuals, including of the opposite sex, the same sex, or both sexes.

**Transgender:** An individual who does not identify either fully or in part with the gender conventionally associated with the sex assigned to them at birth. Also: *trans*.

**Two-spirit:** A term used by Aboriginal individuals to refer to those who have both the feminine and masculine spirits. It includes sexual or gender identity, sexual orientation, social roles, and a broad range of identities, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender.

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# THE INCLUSIVITY CHALLENGE

## Is Canada a Just Society?

By Ian Duncan

Sure *Will & Grace* is back on TV, but our students are watching several LGBTQ+ characters on Netflix's *Riverdale* and binge-watching RuPaul's *Drag Race*. It seems many of your students are more comfortable with LGBTQ+ topics than you think.

I'm challenging you to include the LGBTQ+ community in your teaching. Commemorative events, like the 50th Anniversary of the Decriminalization of Homosexuality in Canada, help us all to reflect on the changes and progress of the last half-century. It also shows us what has stayed the same. Discrimination and prejudice against members of the LGBTQ+ community persists. Decriminalization, 50 years ago, did not bring equal rights, equitable treatment, inclusion, acceptance, or tolerance. But it did give the LGBTQ+ community an opportunity to work towards those ends.

This is the space for us, as educators, to continue this progress in our classrooms. Fifty years ago, homosexuality was decriminalized. It's interesting to me that even in calling it out as "decriminalization," we are acknowledging that it was (and in some countries still is) criminal. Homosexuality is not a crime, and should never have been one. Yet members of the LGBTQ+ community are often treated, as though it still is.

My passion for this topic and teaching about LGBTQ+ history is well founded. I'm gay. I'm a very proud, out, gay man. I'm a husband, and father too. I'm a history teacher (and have been since 2003). Yes, I am also my true and most genuinely (occasionally outrageously) gay self with my students and colleagues.

I actively teach LGBTQ+ history, and integrate it into the courses I teach. In my Grade 10 Canadian History course, we use inquiry to investigate the past and make our own decisions and interpretations about history. Students explore LGBTQ+ history the same way they explore the stories of many different Canadians in the context of our history.

Have LGBTQ+ Canadians been part of our Just Society? Pierre Trudeau's quote inspires us to consider, and reconsider our identity as a Just Society and this is the question we'll answer together. With each semester, my own ideas evolve, because our students are evolving. Pierre Trudeau said:

"The Just Society will be one in which the rights of minorities will be safe from the whims of intolerant majorities. The Just Society will be one in which those regions and groups which have not fully shared in the country's affluence will be given a better opportunity. ... The Just Society will be a united Canada, united because all of its citizens will be actively involved in the development of a country where equality of opportunity is ensured and individuals are permitted to fulfill themselves in the fashion they judge best."

Inspired by Pierre Trudeau's words, I work with my students to construct their criteria for a Just Society. Students have also explored the experience of Canadian women (The Royal Commission on the Status of Women), Indigenous Peoples (The White Paper & Red Paper, 1969), and the diversity of People of Colour (Immigration Reforms), so tapping into this prior learning and the many different narratives in Canadian history is key. From there, our lesson on the Decriminalization of Homosexuality proceeds based on a single piece of constructed historical evidence (below) given to students. The lessons learned are rarely about the memorization of facts; I'm more interested in the big ideas and students engaging with history.

In 1969, the government of Canada passed a bill that included the decriminalization of homosexuality for consenting adults over the age of 21. Responding to pressure

for change, the changes to our Criminal Code were proposed by Pierre Trudeau, who had been Canada's Justice Minister before becoming Prime Minister in 1968.

Students are challenged to ask questions about this evidence using historical thinking concepts, and question types that are embedded into our course. We ask about cause & consequence, significance, change, and perspective. We also ask questions to compare, speculate, evaluate, and define. Student questions about history are the ones I value most.

We use these questions to springboard into deeper learning about the Decriminalization of Homosexuality and other facets of the Criminal Law Amendment Act (Bill C-150, 1969) and other related legislation passed at the time (including the legalization of the sale of contraceptives).

"There's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation... what's done in private between adults doesn't concern the Criminal Code..." – Pierre Trudeau

Ignite student curiosity and introduce the story of Everett George Klippert, the last man to be charged and convicted with the "gross indecency" of homosexual acts under the previous Criminal Code. He was convicted



in Alberta in 1960 and again in the Northwest Territories in 1967. Klippert was described by a court-ordered psychiatrist as "incurably homosexual," an affront to LGBTQ+ identity, and an inaccurate connection between sexual orientation and mental illness (an incongruence that I feel delayed the progress of the LGBTQ+ rights movement in the decades that followed, and even today). He was released in 1971 having served the duration of his sentence. A posthumous pardon for Mr. Klippert was announced by the government in their apology to LGBTQ+ Canadians in 2017.

Students work in groups to investigate one of the questions that they co-constructed previously. They share their findings with the class in our community circle (a consistent practice in my classroom) and are able to openly debate and deconstruct responses and independently assemble and express their own ideas about the history of the LGBTQ+ community in Canada. Sometimes this flexibility leads us to global comparisons, other times it has us reaching further back or forward into history, and to postulate about the future. Student curiosity into this topic has never failed me. The openness of the inquiry allows students to explore history for themselves without it feeling like I've forced an



agenda or historical interpretation upon them. I'll happily be their compass, but I don't need to be the map too.

Let students decide what they think about history for themselves, and the progress of inclusion will happen. New ideas form, values shift, and minds open to include LGBTQ+ individuals in our past, present, and future. When we compare historical evidence, gathered through inquiry, to the criteria we co-constructed, students become actively engaged in and responsible for their own learning. So, we conclude our investigation by comparing our learning to the criteria of a Just Society we established from Pierre Trudeau's quotation. Students can easily determine with a series

**“The Just Society will be one in which the rights of minorities will be safe from the whims of intolerant majorities. The Just Society will be one in which those regions and groups which have not fully shared in the country's affluence will be given a better opportunity. ... The Just Society will be a united Canada, united because all of its citizens will be actively involved in the development of a country where equality of opportunity is ensured and individuals are permitted to fulfill themselves in the fashion they judge best.”**

of checkmarks and x's the decision for the investigation question, “Have LGBTQ+ Canadians been part of our Just Society?” History is for them to decide. This level of respect of and for student identities, values, perspectives, and lived experiences allows every topic to be approachable, and without taboo.

If you're concerned that the topic of sexuality will disengage students from learning (based on moral grounds, their own discomfort or sexual identities), consider the impact of NOT teaching an inclusive history upon those

who identify (like I do) with the LGBTQ+ community. No one taught me this history. I had to learn (and continue to learn about it) on my own. I didn't always feel connected to the history I loved. I felt outside of it, until I began to learn and see myself in it. If you're feeling awkward talking with students about topics relating to sexuality, I encourage you to jump over that hurdle. How? Start with a lesson (like mine) about the Decriminalization of Homosexuality in 1969.

From there, you'll see there's much more to the story of LGBTQ+ people throughout history in Canada and the world beyond. Integrating LGBTQ+ experiences into taught history is becoming increasingly important to my Canadian history classroom (and to our broader program and curriculum). And this is where my work is continuing to evolve. I'm researching the experience of LGBTQ+ soldiers in Canada's armed forces in World War II. I teach about the Lavender Purge during the Cold War. I teach about “Operation Soap,” the Toronto Bathhouse raids in 1981 (because they are local—similar events occurred across the country in the 1980s and beyond). I show my students images of Pride Parades (from the first Marches in 1970 to today). We explore the impact of excluding sexual orientation from Section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, and we talk about the case of Egan v. Canada in correcting that exclusion. I'm learning about the experience of transgender individuals and communities in history and Bill C-16 (2016) amending the Criminal Code and Human Rights Act to be inclusive of diverse gender expressions and identities.

I watched, from my desk in my department office at school, a live stream of the historic apology made by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on November 28, 2017, to the LGBTQ+ community. He was speaking to me, and to my husband. He was speaking to many of my friends, my family, and to Canada. When Justin Trudeau said, “Over our history, laws and policies enacted by the government led to the legitimization of much more than inequality—they legitimized hatred and violence, and brought shame to those targeted,” I felt it. I learned from this apology and encourage you to explore it with your students. It is, in itself, a great lesson in history.

It is my intention for all students to see themselves in the history I teach. I hope that you will endeavor to include the LGBTQ+ voices of your classrooms and schools in the subjects that you teach as well. Include me, and others like me in your classroom.

—  
Ian Duncan is a husband, father, and a proud member of the LGBTQ+ community. Teaching history since 2003, his classroom focuses on inquiry, critical thinking and community to engage students' curiosity about the world in which we live. He enjoys Instagram, is trying to tweet, and has a complicated relationship with anything chocolate.



# LGBTQ+ Refugees in Canada

**By Alex Newman**

Fifty years ago, Canada passed amendments to a law to decriminalize homosexual activity. Although it was the height of the sexual revolution for women, the law was considered ground-breaking. Back then, only a handful of US states had taken similar steps (and didn't become legal nationwide until 2003). England's 1967 law came with several qualifiers, just as in Canada. France made homosexuality legal by amending the penal code in 1791 during the French Revolution, and Italy followed a century later in 1890.

According to Equaldex, a collaborative LGBTQ+ knowledge base, upwards of 150 countries have legalized homosexual activity—India and Angola in the last eight months—leaving at least 45 that still criminalize homosexual activity. In April of 2019, Brunei changed its punishment for same-sex relations from imprisonment, to death by stoning; bringing the number of countries that automatically exact the death penalty for consensual same-sex relations to eight, with another five countries where death is a possible punishment. Of those countries, punishment can be carried out by government—or non-state actors, like Islamic State, or by the Sharia courts.

The persistence of violence against LGBTQ+ people in countries where homosexuality is legal remains worrisome and creates a refugee situation that is not that easy to prove. For example, renowned Serbian LGBTQ+ and peace activist, Boban Stojanović, escaped to Canada after being publicly attacked in the middle of the day. In February of 2018, homosexuals in Indonesia were publicly flogged. In Chechnya, the situation has become so severe—with gay men rounded up, tortured, and killed—that the Canadian government acted proactively to evacuate several to safety.

is usually as an extreme form of “conversion therapy” to force lesbians into “liking” hetero sex. At Toronto’s 519 Community Centre, where she has worked in various management capacities, Williams-Clarke has come up close to many tragic stories. She recently worked with a Ugandan refugee, a mother of two who had been caught with her partner, then both were beaten and raped by five men. Williams-Clarke shares that the Ugandan woman managed to run away and hide at the home of a wealthy friend before escaping the country. That was over three years ago,

**“As members of a “helping profession,” teachers would agree that the persecution—even to death—suffered by people of different orientations is a human rights abuse and should never be tolerated, regardless of what a teacher personally believes. That’s why progressive countries use education as a frontline of defence against discrimination, and in the dissemination of human rights.**

Some see this backlash as a sign that LGBTQ+ activism has increased its visibility that may lead to change, but for the increasing number of refugees caught in the middle of violence, change can’t happen soon enough. To meet the growing demand, a number of Canadian NGOs have stepped up their efforts by either helping those at risk apply from safe second countries through their networks, or by helping asylum seekers with settlement and applications once they arrive in Canada.

Karlene Williams-Clarke is one of those refugee claimants. A familiar face on the international LGBTQ+ activist scene, as co-chair for J-FLAG (Jamaica Forum for Lesbians All-Sexuals and Gays) and other organizations, Williams-Clarke travelled the world “bringing light to what was going on in Jamaica, and being a voice for lesbian and bisexual women.”

Until 2009 when she came to Canada, she and colleagues regularly rescued people in danger of being attacked; she was a frequent guest on radio shows, using a pseudonym to protect her day job in a financial institution. The public activism put her at risk and her family worried. “If my mom heard about something happening to an LGBT person she would immediately call to see if I was ok,” Williams-Clarke says.

Her mother’s fears were realized when one day, a group of men stormed Williams-Clarke’s home in Kingston, Jamaica, where she lived with her partner, circling it and shouting threats. She wasn’t home, but her partner was and called her at work terrified.

Williams-Clarke’s fears, too, were mounting. “Jamaica is well known to be homophobic,” she says. “I have attended funerals for friends who were murdered. I took a lesbian couple to the hospital after they were taken from their home into the cane fields and raped.”

The raping of lesbians is not uncommon, she says, and

and since then she has not seen her children because their father has ceased communications. She also doesn’t know what happened to her partner.

Violence seems to be expected in countries with draconian laws. It’s when a country is supposed to be safe with laws protecting LGBTQ+ rights, but turns a blind eye to public displays of violent persecution, that the situation is disheartening, as well as challenging to apply for refugee status.

The way the public acts usually depends on who is in power, says Aleks Dughman-Manzur, director of LGBTQ+ Refugee Programs at Metropolitan Community Church Toronto (MCC). “In Brazil, it is legal to change your gender markers, have surgery, but with the election of right-wing president Jair Bolsonaro, violence against the LGBTQ+ community has risen sharply. For example, Brazil has the



JUNE 24, 2018 - Toronto, Canada: Refugee lawyers with banner at 2018 Toronto Pride Parade.

highest [recorded] rate of trans women murdered. An oppressive government takes away rights, not just LGBT but others as well, and you get political persecution, press censorship and so on.”

In three years at MCC, Dughman-Manzur has seen countless examples of persecution. In any given month, the Toronto church that serves the LGBTQ+ community, sees about 100 people seeking help in navigating the refugee process. Each year, the church provides programming to between 600 and 800 LGBTQ+ refugees from around the world. Between 2013 and 2015, over 2200 refugees claimed asylum in Canada for reasons of orientation, with about 70 percent being successful.

As of 2018, Canada accepted more asylum seekers than in nearly the past three decades, according to a CBC news report. And incidents of violence have escalated so much that the United Nations Human Rights Council passed its first resolution recognizing LGBTQ+ rights in 2011. This was after the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a report that documented hate crimes and violations against LGBTQ+ people. The UN then urged all countries to pass laws protecting basic LGBTQ+ rights.

There are two ways LGBTQ+ refugees are “produced,” says Dughman-Manzur. Civil unrest and war results in refugee claimants, a percentage of whom are bound to be LGBTQ+ people. The other is through “targeted aggression.”

It’s impossible to pinpoint why there is a global increase in violent homophobic activity, but activists have their opinions.

Williams-Clarke thinks this comes from a variety of cultural factors. “Jamaica is the most fundamentalist Christian place in the islands, there are a lot of Rastafarians, too, it’s super masculine, and homosexuality is so hated [that] if you’re sitting on a bus as a guy, another man will not come and sit beside you.”

Helen Kennedy, executive director of the LGBTQ+ advocacy group Egale, says fear prevails. “The anti-decriminalization folks worry that if homosexuality is decriminalized, the next battle they’ll have to fight is legalizing of same sex marriage and the attack on family values.”

In strictly Muslim countries especially where the government is a theocracy, homosexuality is often seen as a “disease” imported by the West with its degenerate secular society. Ironically, it was the West that introduced anti-sodomy laws when colonizing Africa.

**“... subjects that are raised by this article that also align with official federal government policy... are issues connected to Human Rights, Civil Liberties, Citizenship, Global Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. It should be possible to view and align these policies and their intent with the situations in which these refugees find themselves and explore what supports are available to them.”**

“The majority of sodomy laws came from the UK and other western countries who colonized,” Dughman-Manzur explains. “Gender ID and homosexual behaviour was part of many African cultures ... trans people were understood as magical beings, spiritual.”

“Hard core” countries, like Nigeria, Uganda, and Jamaica, seem mired in what Kennedy calls “misogyny and toxic masculinity, combined with colonial laws left over by the British, politics, and personal beliefs, and LGBTQ people often



DETROIT, MICHIGAN - JUNE 30, 2018, A man in Detroit holds a protest sign above the crowd that says, "With LGBT Refugees."

become scapegoats for many political fallouts around world.”

That’s why Egale’s main focus is lobbying and effecting change at the law-making level. Kennedy says other organizations are very good on the ground supporting refugees who arrive here seeking asylum, or for helping LGBTQ+ people make a refugee claim from another country.

Rainbow Railroad is one of the most effective, she says. “The organization operates both here and through its global network of LGBTQ+ community leaders. It is primarily focused on helping people get to safety, by putting them in touch with local resources who can identify safe escape routes. Once in Canada, they connect refugees with locals who help with settlement.”

Frequently, those who work with refugees have been refugees themselves. They’ve experienced persecution in their native country, but also here in their adopted home. Although Canada is considered a very welcoming country with progressive laws, discrimination still exists.

“Fighting violence at home is bad, but fighting perceptions here [in Canada] is almost harder,” Dughman-Manzur says. “There are some improvements, for sure, but trans women face stereotypes, like [if] you’re trans, you must be a sex worker. There’s trans phobia, people stare, you get sexualized, and it’s hard to find regular work in an office. Meanwhile, you’re just trying to pay your bills.”

Racism is another roadblock, Dughman-Manzur says. “Many in MCC Toronto’s LGBTQ+ Refugee Programs are black, and come from a country that are a black majority, and then they come here, [and] are suddenly faced with racism, on top of everything else. The micro-aggressions that they experience on a daily basis [have] a profound impact on their mental health and their ability to settle successfully, but they are also incredibly resilient and, in many occasions, rise above oppression.”

This is where teachers can come in. Many refugee accounts, including those of LGBTQ+ people, include the kindness of a sympathetic teacher along the way in their journey toward safety. As members of a “helping profession,” teachers would agree that the persecution—even death—suffered by people of different orientations is a human rights abuse and should never be tolerated, regardless of what a teacher personally believes. That’s why progressive countries use education as a frontline of defence against discrimination, and in the dissemination of human rights.

Nonetheless, these are important topics for discussion and study. Teachers may wish to explore a number of subjects that are raised by this article that also align with official federal government policy. Clearly, there are issues connected to Human Rights, Civil Liberties, Citizenship, Global Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. It

## RESOURCES

Rainbow Railroad

[www.rainbowrailroad.org](http://www.rainbowrailroad.org)

J-FLAG

[www.jflag.org](http://www.jflag.org)

The 519

[www.the519.org](http://www.the519.org)

Metropolitan Community Church,  
Toronto

[www.mcctoronto.com/who-we-are](http://www.mcctoronto.com/who-we-are)

Egale - Canada Human Rights Trust

[www.egale.ca](http://www.egale.ca)

should be possible to view and align these policies and their intent with the situations in which these refugees find themselves and explore what supports are available to them.

As the recent acceptance of Syrian refugees indicates, there is a history and a will for Canada to officially accept and even embrace those who have fled areas of conflict, hatred and discrimination. This article documents the experiences of those who have escaped sexual violence to settle here. Some, as noted, have become community activists and spoken out publicly about their experiences. There have been articles, blogs, postings, etc. in the media and online. For those teachers wishing to introduce these topics into their classroom, there are resources and materials available and experts too, with a little bit of digging. This article, we hope, forms part of that canon.

—

Alex Newman is a Toronto freelance writer and editor. Visit her website, [alexnewmanwriter.com](http://alexnewmanwriter.com).



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# SOGI

## Getting the Terminology Right

By Carolyn Gruske

Gender fluid. Two-spirit. Trans. Cisgender. These are some of the terms students can use to describe themselves and where they are on the spectrum of sexual orientation and gender identity. Although the language may be new or unfamiliar, experts say that teachers need to be open to using and hearing it so they can acknowledge their students' identities.

"There's no room for discrimination in our schools and teachers know that," says Chanelle Tye who works for the LGBTQ+ education program, SOGI 1 2 3, as a British Columbia education lead. "I think an important thing for educators to remember is that sitting in front of you are students who are different from you, and who need to feel that they belong. And we know that when kids feel belonging and connectedness at school, they succeed not only at school, but outside of school. So I think regardless of what your personal beliefs or understandings are, as an educator you're mandated to create safe spaces for students, and I don't think anybody is against that."

SO stands for sexual orientation and GI stands for gender identity. SOGI 1 2 3 is a program created by: ARC (Awareness. Respect. Capacity), a private foundation based in Vancouver; in collaboration with the BC Ministry of Education; the British Columbia Teachers' Federation; school districts across the province; the University of British Columbia (UBC) Faculty of Education; other





The Intersex Pride Flag as seen at the Belgian Pride Festival, Brussels, May 3, 2019.

The Intersex Pride Flag was created in July 2013 by OII Australia. The flag utilizes yellow and purple, which are considered “hermaphrodite” colors, according to the organization. The purple central circle is “unbroken and unornamented, symbolising wholeness and completeness, and our potentialities.” (Source: [www.outrightinternational.org/content/flags-lgbtqi-community](http://www.outrightinternational.org/content/flags-lgbtqi-community))

education partners; and LGBTQ+ community organizations. The program also operates in Alberta and has plans to expand across the rest of Canada.

SOGI 1 2 3 has three main goals: 1) develop policies and procedures that explicitly mention SOGI and implement them in schools in order to reduce discrimination, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts by all students; 2) establish inclusive learning environments and create a positive and welcoming space for all students; 3) create free resources for teachers so they have the tools to incorporate SOGI topics into their classrooms.

As somebody who works with educators, Tye explains that although the idea of using inclusive language may seem intimidating, especially to those who are unfamiliar with the terminology, it’s a perfectly natural starting point.

“The first step is to let the curiosity grow in you, and not be ashamed to not know. That’s the first thing I would encourage educators to do,” she says.

“The trick is that the language evolves. I’ve been doing this work for a while and honestly, every day that I’m with students, I’m learning something new.”

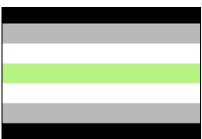
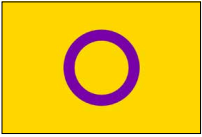
Catherine Taylor, associate dean of arts and director of the RISE (Respect, Inclusion, Safety, Equity) Research Program on LGBTQ-inclusive education at the University of Winnipeg, believes that simply being open to speaking about sexual orientation and gender identity topics is the

key to communicating with students.

“No one knows all the terms because [they’re] shifting sands. We’re in a time of tremendous social change on this topic. I’m sure I don’t know all the identity labels people use to describe their sexual or gender minority positions. It is important to know the basics. Students won’t be angry with a teacher for not being up on all the latest terminology. What they want to know is that you’re on their side and you’re not treating their human dignity like some kind of moral issue that’s open for debate,” she says.

Taylor suggests that basic terms a teacher needs to know are gay, lesbian, trans, queer, and two-spirit. “Historically, two-spirit people had a very, very honoured place in most Indigenous communities. They were regarded as spiritually gifted people who were capable of living outside of conventional gender roles in order to be true to their own natures,” she says. Historical reverence for two-spirit people hasn’t extended into the modern world and those who identify as two-spirit are often subjected to “homophobia and transphobia in their own home communities, and if they’re in urban settings—they experience racism. They probably experience poverty in both settings.”

Taylor is the lead author of two key studies on the topic of inclusivity in Canadian schools: *Every Class in Every School* (that surveyed students across the country about homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia) and *The Every*



*Teacher Project* (that asked teachers about LGBTQ-inclusive education).

According to those studies, teachers using inclusive language or referencing sexual orientation and gender identity, could positively affect how students feel in the classroom. “The problem of homophobia was found to be widespread, but not very deep. That is, we saw statistically that smaller interventions by teachers could make a big difference. They made a difference to how much harassment there was and how resilient queer students were in the face of that harassment,” Taylor explains.

For example, Taylor says that even hearing one or two positive references to LGBTQ+ topics over the course of a year could improve students’ experiences at school and make them feel less alienated or othered or harassed. “It might just be the teacher was talking about the development of the Charter of Rights and mentioned that same-sex rights were read into the Charter at a particular point in time. Or it might be that a teacher says, ‘Happy Pride Day’ one June. It makes a difference between something and nothing for a queer student to have that one mention from one supportive teacher, although of course that’s not all we want to see.”

Even with younger students, teachers can be conscious of using inclusive language—or at least not using language that enforces binary or heteronormative stereotypes where, for example, a family only includes a mother, a father and children, or where boys and girls are very different from one another with very different preferences.

“For many years, teachers started the day by saying, ‘Good morning boys and girls,’ but that’s one of the most basic things we can do—we can change our language,” says Steve Mulligan, a SOGI co-ordinator at the UBC Faculty of Education. Mulligan is also a seconded teacher from the Vancouver school board who is currently working with students in Grades 6 and 7.

“You know, we would never start a class by saying, ‘Good morning Caucasians and other

ethnicities,” because we understand that ethnicity and race is complex, and that students identify differently and have mixes, and gender is not that different. Certainly, most people do identify as cisgender, meaning that their sex assigned at birth matches their gender identity, but many don’t. And gender can be complex. So why are we going through the world reiterating and teaching kids from a very early age that boys and girls are so different that I’m going to start every day by saying ‘you and you’ and not leaving any room for anybody who is in the middle?”

Mulligan explains that even splitting students into boys sports teams and girls sports teams can send a message that skills and interest in sports are dictated by gender. The same thing can be said about colour-coding toys pink and blue for girls and boys, or even referring to toys as “boys toys” and “girls toys.”

According to Mulligan, it is especially helpful if teachers understand the differences between sexual orientation and gender identity. He explains the easy way to think about them is that sexual orientation is in the heart—it is who a person loves romantically and is attracted to—whereas gender identity is who a person is in their head and how they define themselves internally.

Alex Abramovich, an independent scientist with the Institute for Mental Health Policy Research (IMHPR) at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and an assistant professor at the University of Toronto’s Dalla Lana School of Public Health, explains that getting people’s pronouns right is important. He suggests that teachers should understand the concept of gender expression as well. This has to do with externals—the way a person presents their gender through things like the clothes they wear, the way they style their hair, or even their body language. It could also be evident through the choice of their name or the pronouns they use to refer to themselves. “Everybody wants to be respected. Everybody wants to be called by the name that they go by, the name that they identify with. You want to be referred to in the way that you identify.”

This is especially a concern when dealing with students who identify as non-binary, which means feeling neither male nor female. Or for students who identify as gender fluid/

**Flags of the LGBTQ+ community**

(Source: [www.outrightinternational.org/content/flags-lgbtiq-community](http://www.outrightinternational.org/content/flags-lgbtiq-community))

gender queer, which are interchangeable terms that mean alternating between identifying as masculine and feminine.

Students may also identify as both, as trans, or as transgender (not transgendered), which Abramovich explains is “an umbrella term to describe people whose gender identity does not match with the sex they were assigned at birth.”

Assigning a sex at birth essentially means classifying a baby as male or female based on its genitalia. In written language, these terms are commonly rendered as AMAB (assigned male at birth) or AFAM (assigned female at birth).

**“... an important thing for educators to remember is that sitting in front of you are students who are different from you, and who need to feel that they belong. And we know that when kids feel belonging and connectedness at school, they succeed not only at school but outside of school. So I think regardless of what your personal beliefs or understandings are, as an educator you’re mandated to create safe spaces for students, and I don’t think anybody is against that.”**

If a person has male genitalia but identifies as female and considers themselves trans, that person is a trans woman. A trans man is somebody who identifies as male but was born with female genitalia.

To prevent any “misgendering,” Abramovich suggests always asking what pronoun the person prefers. Actions

like these—being respectful of students’ identities and the language they use to define themselves—is necessary to ensure that schools are creating safe spaces for their students.

“If you’re forcing them to identify in a way they don’t identify, that’s actually dangerous. It’s dangerous for their mental health—especially for a child who does not identify as a boy or girl. It puts them in a place where they are automatically “othered” and they feel that they don’t belong. It affects their mental health. It affects anxiety, depression, suicidality,” says Abramovich.

Trans youth, he explains are especially vulnerable to suicide, but that vulnerability can be lessened through supportive networks, including supportive teachers in the classroom.

Even if a teacher is uncomfortable using inclusive language or talking about concepts that revolve around sexual orientation or gender identity, or using a student’s preferred pronouns, it is important to make the effort to do so, if only to match the efforts made by students.

“Realize that if somebody asks you to call them by a certain pronoun, it’s kind of like them asking you to call them by a certain name. It’s the respectful thing to do, to honour that request,” says Chanelle Tye.

“Remember that it takes a lot of gumption and a lot of guts for a student to ask for something different, to be brave enough to say, ‘actually, here’s what I’d like.’ So keeping in mind that human being, that beating heart, in front of you is kind of paramount to the whole pronoun question. And I promise you, you will get used to it. It gets easier.”

Teachers have the opportunity to become the tour guides on this mutual journey with their students. With a sense of humour, understanding, and sensitivity, the path need not be rocky although challenges will crop up from time to time. Plenty of resources and tools are available as markers to ease the way.

—  
Carolyn Gruske is an award-winning reporter and former magazine editor. She often writes about the intersection of business, technology and the law, but she also has a deep interest in educational topics.

## RESOURCES

Useful links and websites for teachers looking to increase their knowledge of inclusive language and sexual orientation and gender identity issues.

### Safe@School

A project by the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) and the Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (COPA) and funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education designed to prevent violence and create safe, strong and free schools and communities

[www.safeatschool.ca/resources/resources-on-equity-and-inclusion/homophobia/tool-kits-and-activities](http://www.safeatschool.ca/resources/resources-on-equity-and-inclusion/homophobia/tool-kits-and-activities)

### Canadian Teachers' Federation

CTF has resources for teachers, school administrators, and counselors understand the educational, health and safety needs of bisexual, gay, lesbian, trans-identified and two-spirit (BGLTT) students:

[www.ctf-fce.ca/en/Pages/Issues/Diversity-and-Human-Rights.aspx](http://www.ctf-fce.ca/en/Pages/Issues/Diversity-and-Human-Rights.aspx)

### SOGI 1 2 3

[www.sogieducation.org](http://www.sogieducation.org)

### RISE: Respect, Inclusion, Safety, Equity

RISE is a University of Winnipeg website for research on inclusive education in the area of lesbian, 2SLGBTQ+ youth

[www.uwinnipeg.ca/rise/index.html](http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/rise/index.html)

The First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools [www.uwinnipeg.ca/rise/research/the-first-national-climate-survey-on-homophobia-biphobia-and-transphobia-in-canadian-schools.html](http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/rise/research/the-first-national-climate-survey-on-homophobia-biphobia-and-transphobia-in-canadian-schools.html)

### The Every Teacher Project

[www.uwinnipeg.ca/rise/research/the-every-teacher-project.html](http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/rise/research/the-every-teacher-project.html)

### MyGSA.ca

Run by the Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, MyGSA promotes safer and inclusive schools for the LGBTQ community.

<https://egale.ca/portfolio/mygsa>

### Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre

The University of Calgary's ACLRC site includes resources for teachers who want more information on SOGI topics.

[www.aclrc.com/lgbt](http://www.aclrc.com/lgbt)

### QMUNITY

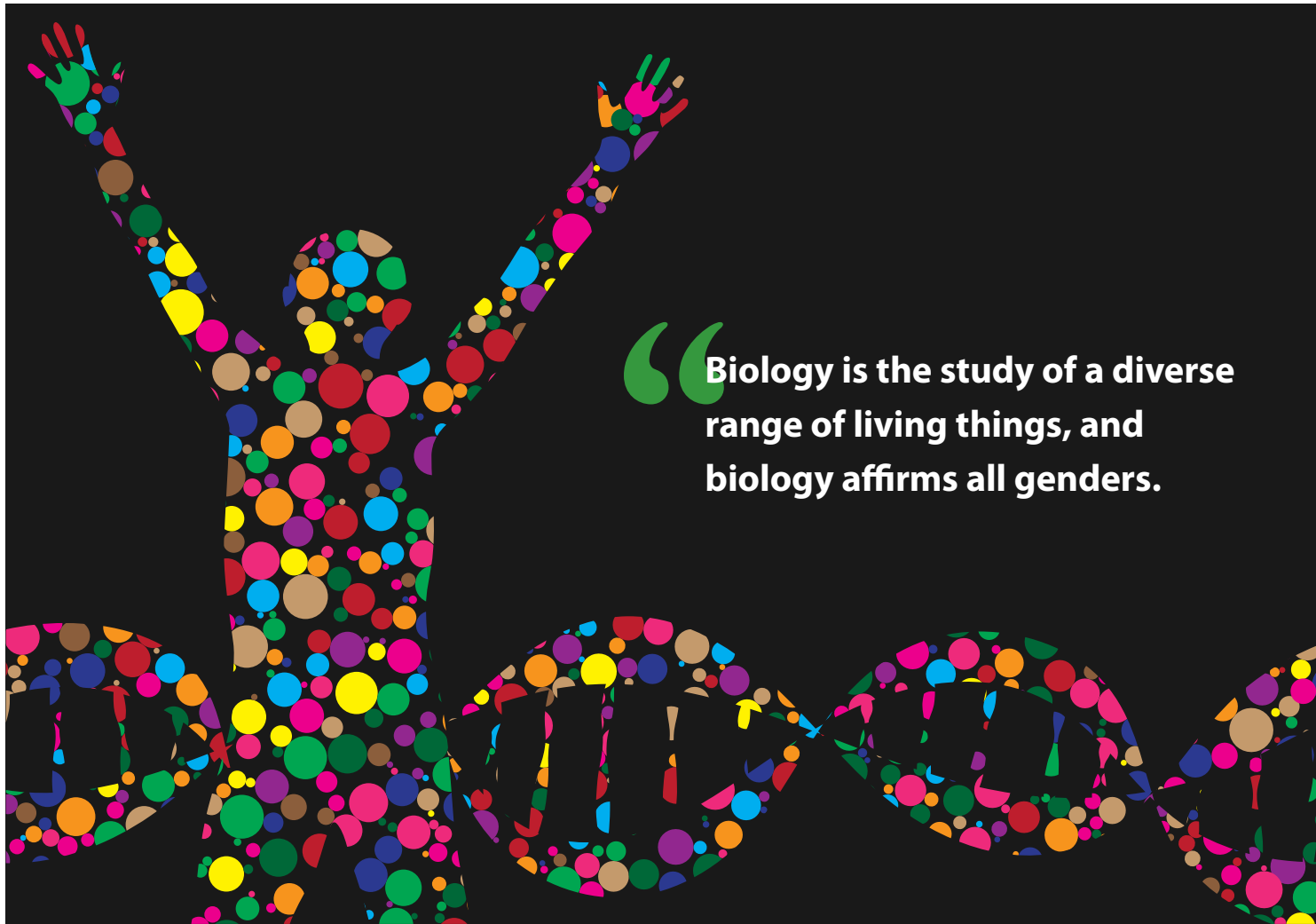
Non-profit organization in B.C. devoted to improving queer, trans, and two-spirit lives: [qmunity.ca](http://qmunity.ca)

### Central Toronto Youth Services (CTYS)

The community-based, accredited Children's Mental Health Centre, has published a guide for parents and families of transgender youth, which can also be helpful for teachers:

[ctys.org/wp-content/uploads/CTYS-FIT-Families-in-Transition-Guide-2nd-edition.pdf](http://ctys.org/wp-content/uploads/CTYS-FIT-Families-in-Transition-Guide-2nd-edition.pdf)





“Biology is the study of a diverse range of living things, and biology affirms all genders.”

# GROWING A GENDER-INCLUSIVE BIOLOGY CURRICULUM

By Sam Long

As a transgender man, one of the greatest joys of being a high school teacher has been watching my queer and trans students come out and embrace their identities. A growing number of students are now finding the courage to speak openly about gender identity in their school communities. Often, the response is positive. However, there are also those who deny or disparage trans identities by saying, “You don’t understand basic biology,” or “You’re going against nature.” As a biology teacher, I take great issue with these comments. Biology is the study of a diverse range of living things, and biology affirms all genders.

I am lucky to have the opportunity to teach gender-diversity as it applies to genetics, evolution, anatomy, and physiology. To me, this is not just an opportunity, but an obligation that has made my lesson planning both more difficult and more important. I could easily just copy the old lessons from the previous teacher, but old lessons foster old misunderstandings. Here are my reflections on how to teach biology topics in a gender-inclusive way.

**“A unit on evolution is a great time to drive home this celebration of diversity. Variation is an essential part of the modern theory of natural selection.”**

### MAKE IT AUTHENTIC

Students can read their teachers’ feelings. Whatever you teach, do it in a way that feels authentic and manageable for you. If you’re new to discussing gender-diversity, it’s okay to start small. Authenticity should be also reflected in content—if you teach content that is not well-represented in the canonical biology curriculum or textbook, make sure the content is based on empirical research.

### USE PRECISE LANGUAGE

To start discussions about the complexities of gender, both students and teachers will need some foundational vocabulary:

- Gender identity is a person’s deeply held sense of being male, female, or something in-between or other. Gender identity is self-determined.
- Sex describes an individual as male, female, or intersex based on their reproductive organs and secondary sex characteristics. Sex is often assigned at birth.
- Transgender describes people whose gender identity does not completely match their sex assigned at birth.
- Intersex people are individuals born with any of several variations in sex characteristics that do not fit the typical definitions for male or female bodies.

An online resource called The Gender Unicorn can help students to visualize these concepts and to practice using the vocabulary precisely.

On the first day of my genetics unit, I wrote two sentences on the board:

*I got half my DNA from my mom and half from my dad.  
Men produce sperm cells and women produce egg cells.*

For most of my ninth-graders, these were familiar ideas from middle school science class. Then I asked, “Are these statements inclusive? Do they apply to every person, or are some people excluded?” Manuel was quick to point out that the first statement is not true for children who are adopted.

Jose added that for some people, the ones they call “mom” or “dad” are actually step-parents. There are also same-gender parents. Regarding the second statement, the class already knew that I was transgender and that it did not apply to transgender people. I asked whether we could rewrite the statement as, “People of a male sex produce sperm,” and students realized that even this is not inclusive—what about those who are infertile or past reproductive age?

This discussion made the class aware of how our language can include or exclude. I told students that all families are valid whether related by DNA or not, and all men, women, and people are valid, whatever gametes they may produce. This primed students to use language precisely, and to say what we mean rather than making unnecessary generalizations. We say that eggs are created through meiosis in people with ovaries, not in women or mothers. Similarly, we say that a typical child gets 23 chromosomes from their biological mother, and 23 from their biological father.

### TEACH IT CONTINUALLY

Gender-diversity needs to be a recurring part of the curriculum—not a one-time “very special lesson,” an aside, or an extension for students who complete their assignments early. Whether you discuss it daily or once a semester, frame it as a full-fledged part of the lesson. Consistency is also important—themes of gender-diversity in each lesson should match or build upon the previous lesson.

A genetics unit is ripe with little opportunities to revisit gender-diversity. While we were talking about egg and sperm fusing to form a zygote, Ahmed’s hand shot up with some questions: “How are twins made?” and “How come some twins don’t look alike?” After I diagrammed the formation of identical twins versus fraternal twins, I asked, “Can twins be of different genders? What about different



**M. Lamar as Marcus Burset and Laverne Cox as Sophia Burset in *Orange Is The New Black*. M. Lamar and Laverne Cox are identical twins. Source: Yahoo.com**

sexes?” This was a captivating puzzle. Although identical twins share 100% of their DNA and are almost always the same sex, they can certainly be two different genders if one is transgender. For example, trans actress Laverne Cox has a cis male identical twin who once guest-starred as Laverne’s character, pre-transition. Students were fascinated by this example. It might have been the most exciting and thought-provoking lesson that they learned that day, and it was about gender-diversity.

### AFFIRM AND CELEBRATE DIVERSITY

Discuss gender-diversity as a naturally-occurring phenomenon that is worth celebrating. Consider your language—Do you describe a genetic mutation as a “mistake” in the DNA, or just a “change” in the DNA? Do you call intersex a “disorder”? Many intersex people understand it as a natural variation in human bodies, no different or rarer than red hair, and the preferred term is “intersex traits.”

A unit on evolution is a great time to drive home this celebration of diversity. Variation is an essential part of the modern theory of natural selection. So, I tell my students, being different is not a bad thing; it’s necessary in order for humans and other species to evolve. Look at the vibrant birds of paradise, the stealthy mimic octopus, or the alarmingly clever crow—without variation, none of these traits would exist!

Instead of teaching only about sexual selection in which males compete aggressively for female mates, I include diverse reproductive strategies. With phalarope birds and topi antelopes, females are the ones to initiate courtship. There are three distinct male types in side-blotched lizards, each finding reproductive success with its own body size, hormone levels, and mating behaviour. In a species of tamarin monkey, most families consist of one mother and two fathers to share the child-rearing duties. Students are shocked to realize that all of these reproductive strategies exist and are successful because they increase the chance of individuals passing on their genes to the next generation.

### ACKNOWLEDGE OPPRESSIVE SCIENCE PRACTICES

Don’t give your students the illusion that science is a neutral, objective practice. Be sure to mention to your students how Rosalind Franklin’s contributions to understanding DNA structure have been erased from many accounts of history. Assign a reading about the Tuskegee syphilis experiment, or the ongoing practice of performing nonconsensual surgeries on intersex infants. Use your position as a science teacher to highlight and challenge oppression in science practices.

When diverse identities come up in the classroom, always ask about what voices are present and what voices are absent in the conversation. Be aware of your own identity and your privileges. Don’t speak for transgender people, intersex people, or any other group when you have the option of inviting guest speakers, viewing documentaries, or reading their books.

**“When diverse identities come up in the classroom, always ask about what voices are present and what voices are absent in the conversation. Be aware of your own identity and your privileges. Don’t speak for transgender people, intersex people, or any other group when you have the option of inviting guest speakers, viewing documentaries, or reading their books.”**

### LET STUDENTS DRIVE THE LEARNING

When you give your students agency, they become more invested in learning about gender-diversity. Ask your students to give input on what they want to learn and how they want to learn it. Collect their feedback about how a lesson went. If students are to research genetic-inherited traits, offer many choices of traits with social significance such as dwarfism, BRCA-associated breast cancer, and intersex traits such as Klinefelter syndrome and androgen insensitivity syndrome.

Students can also take the lead in setting the language of the biology classroom. My colleague and friend Lewis Maday-Travis opts to have his class decide collectively on a word, such as “gene-giver” or “egg contributor/sperm

contributor” to describe the people who produce the egg and sperm that fuse to create a person.

## THE IMPACT ON STUDENTS

I was an apprentice teacher the first time I worked up the courage to talk about gender-diversity in the classroom. In a lesson about nondisjunction during meiosis, we studied a few chromosomal intersex traits. I briefly said to the class that your gender identity is self-determined and independent from physical sex. I was so nervous that a student would challenge me, or that an administrator would burst in the door. Then I looked left and I looked right, and all I saw were keen smiles and nods. Jack broke the silence with a question, and he stayed after the bell to chat about the evolution of homosexuality. As a bisexual student, Jack longed to see himself represented, even just once, in the science he was learning.

From that day forward, I have taken every chance to teach about gender diversity. I was initially worried about making the content too complicated. Looking back, that

wasn't an issue. Teaching the complete science upfront, for a topic like reproduction, is much easier than teaching an oversimplification and then tacking on exceptions.

My gender-inclusive lessons see high student engagement and go on longer than planned because of students' endless curiosity. Sometimes, it's the quiet students who don't normally shine in science class who have the most ideas to share about these topics. LGBTQ+ students tend to smile, nod, and sometimes sigh with relief when they realize that we'll be celebrating rather than erasing diversity. Each year, I see more LGBTQ+ students make the courageous decision to come out, with the trust that their identities will be affirmed in my classroom.

—  
**Sam Long (he/him) teaches biology at an urban high school in Denver, Colorado. You can learn more about Sam's work at [sam-long.weebly.com](http://sam-long.weebly.com).**

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# CURRICULA

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## The 50th Anniversary of Decriminalization of Homosexuality in Canada (1969)

Inspired by the 50th anniversary of the ending of the decriminalization of homosexuality in Canada, the articles in this issue of TEACH provide a rich survey of this subject, including how some teachers are approaching this topic and the broader themes of tolerance and gender equality, in elementary and secondary school classrooms.

It is important for students to try to imagine a time when gay men and women in Canada were vulnerable to legal punishment if they physically expressed their sexuality. Students should also reflect upon the impact of this socially accepted discrimination on all Canadians, of all genders, and sexual orientation. They should also try to understand that it was the actions of Canadians in specific communities that brought about legal and societal change.

Studying these aspects of history while comparing and contrasting them to the situation in today's Canada, will help all students feel included in the study of history. Doing their own analysis, making their own observations, and arriving at their own conclusions will help students more fully understand how and why social change happens.

### SUBJECTS

Canadian History since World War I (Grade 10)  
Canada, History, Identity, and Culture (Grade 12)  
Civics (and Citizenship) (Grade 10)  
Gender Studies (Grade 11)  
English Language Arts (Grade 6 and up)  
Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice (Grade 11)  
Equity and Social Justice (Grade 12)  
Social Studies (Grade 5 and up)

### GRADE LEVEL

Grades 6 to 12

### DURATION

4 to 5 classes

## KEY CONCEPTS AND ISSUES

Students will learn about the social and legal history of the decriminalization of homosexuality in Canada. Their newfound insight and knowledge will be enriched as classroom guests representing a range of ages and sexual orientations share their experiences and perspectives, and engage in a dialogue with the students. In a final project, students will investigate evidence of, and communicate reasons for, changing views of social mores and rights by surveying the inclusion of characters of different sexual orientations and gender identities in a selection of published children’s books (or media programming).

Students will explore many elements of the Citizenship Education Framework (Ontario curriculum), such as inclusiveness, equity, respect, rights and responsibilities, justice, fairness, and citizenship.

## MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Computers or devices with Internet access
- Video from the Human Rights Campaign called “What Do You Know? 6 to 12-Year-Olds Talk About Gays and Lesbians” ([youtube.com/watch?v=tjYTAGZgl7o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tjYTAGZgl7o))
- *Avocado Baby* a children’s book by John Burningham
- Canadian Heritage Minutes’ video about an LGBTQ+ couple’s celebrated fight for legal recognition – optional ([youtube.com/watch?v=rac4WiTDQHg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rac4WiTDQHg))
- Video clip of PM Pierre Trudeau’s famous comment – recommended for older students ([cbc.ca/player/play/1811727781](https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1811727781))
- Statement of PM Justin Trudeau’s apology to the LGBTQ+ community: ([pm.gc.ca/en/news/speeches/2017/11/28/remarks-prime-minister-justin-trudeau-apologize-lgbtq2-canadians](https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/speeches/2017/11/28/remarks-prime-minister-justin-trudeau-apologize-lgbtq2-canadians))
- Full video of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s apology – recommended for older students ([youtube.com/watch?v=xi23IL3b6cs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xi23IL3b6cs))
- A CBC journalist’s analysis of apologies ([cbc.ca/news/politics/komagata-maru-official-apologies-1.3587870](https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/komagata-maru-official-apologies-1.3587870))
- *X: A Fabulous Child’s Story* a children’s book by Lois Gould or the animated short film adaptation of the book called “Baby X” ([youtu.be/oyYn9izT9gc](https://youtu.be/oyYn9izT9gc))

- Variety of children’s books that feature or include characters with various sexual orientations (see list in resources below)
- Writing tools or devices
- Blank paper and coloured markers

## BIG IDEAS

There are differences among individuals and groups, and it is important to value and respect these differences. Throughout Canadian history, people of various sexual orientations and gender identities have faced challenges and struggled to improve their lives. Our rights and responsibilities as Canadian citizens have changed over time. It is important to understand policies and laws that support human rights, and to be personally engaged and socially active as Canadians continue to be challenged by equity and social justice issues in this country.

## FRAMING QUESTIONS

In what ways are Canadian rights and freedoms a result of the struggles of people in the past? What are some ways in which different people have responded to challenges and created change? What are the major rights of a citizen in Canada? Why might some Canadians have the same rights on paper but not in practice? What role did sexual orientation play in this denial of rights?

## TERMINOLOGY

**Aboriginal:** Refers to the first inhabitants of Canada, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.

**Ally:** A heterosexual or cisgendered individual who supports LGBTQ+ people and advocates for their rights.

**Asexuality:** Not feeling sexual attraction to others. Asexuality differs from celibacy, which involves a choice to abstain from sexual activity.

**Bisexual:** An individual who loves or is attracted to both male and female individuals.

**Cisgender:** The prefix cis- means “on this side of” or “not across.” This term describes individuals whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth.



## DECRIMINALIZATION OF HOMOSEXUALITY 1969-2019

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**Diversity:** The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

**Gay:** An individual who loves or is attracted to individuals of the same sex.

**Gender Expression:** Describes how an individual presents their gender identity through dress, hairstyle, body language, etc.

**Gender identity:** Describes an individual's deeply held sense of being male, female, something in-between, or other. Gender identity is self-determined.

**Genderqueer:** An individual whose gender identity and/or gender expression falls outside of the dominant societal norm for their assigned sex, is beyond genders, or is some combination of them.

**Heterosexual:** An individual who identifies as female and who only loves or is attracted to individuals who identify as male. Also, an individual who identifies as male who only loves or is attracted to individuals who identify as female.

**Homosexual:** An individual who loves or is attracted to individuals who identify as the same sex. Also: gay or lesbian.

**Intersex:** Describes individuals born with any of several variations in sex characteristics that do not fit the typical definitions for male or female bodies.

**Lesbian:** An individual who identifies as female who only loves or is attracted to individuals who identify as female.

**LGBT:** Abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. An umbrella term used to refer to the community as a whole. Other versions include LGBTQIP2SAA (for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, pansexual, two-spirit, asexual, and allies), LGBTQ+, LGBTQ2S, etc.

**Nonbinary:** Describes an individual whose gender identity doesn't fall neatly into the category of either male or female.

**Pansexual/Omnisexual:** Individuals who love or are attracted to individuals of all genders and sexes.

**Queer:** A term referring to individuals who aren't heterosexual or cisgender. It can include anybody on the LGBTQ+ spectrum. It can also be an umbrella term, as in "the queer community." While the word has been reclaimed and is generally used in a positive light, some may still find it offensive due to its historical usage.

**Sex:** Describes an individual as male, female, or intersex based on their reproductive organs and secondary sex characteristics. Sex is often assigned at birth.

**Sexual orientation:** Describes an individual's sense of sexual attraction to other individuals, including of the opposite sex, the same sex, or both sexes.

**Transgender:** An individual who does not identify either fully or in part with the gender conventionally associated with the sex assigned to them at birth. Also: *trans*.

**Two-spirit:** A term used by Aboriginal individuals to refer to those who have both the feminine and masculine spirits. It includes sexual or gender identity, sexual orientation, social roles, and a broad range of identities, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender.

## OVERVIEW

The goal is for students to learn that the social and legal attitudes towards homosexuality in Canada have changed over the past 100 years, and to reflect on the impact on Canadian rights and freedoms. They will begin with a general discussion of terms, including sexual orientation and gender, and varying historical perspectives of homosexuality. They will create a timeline to show key events of the legal treatment of homosexuality. Students will discuss Canada's apology to the LGBTQ+ community, and learn about contemporary and historical perspectives by speaking with guest speakers from the LGBTQ+ community. In a final project, they will investigate evidence and communicate reasons for changing views of social mores and rights by surveying a selection of published children's books (or media programming).

Teachers can use the content provided below as a guideline, choosing the content and activities as they determine is appropriate for the grade level of their students.

## EXPECTATIONS/OUTCOMES

The overall expectations listed below serve as an entry point for teachers, who are encouraged to make connections to specific expectations in their region and grade.

Students will:

- Explain how various groups and communities have contributed to the goal of inclusiveness in Canada;
- Learn that the efforts of individuals and organizations can be successful in addressing and eradicating gender-based discrimination and oppression;
- Gain insight into Canadian history and events;
- Learn that our rights and responsibilities as Canadian citizens have changed over time;
- Explore the history and reasons for laws that support human rights;
- Communicate their ideas, arguments and conclusions using various formats and styles as appropriate.

## BACKGROUND

After Confederation and up until only 50 years ago, laws in Canada reflected attitudes discriminating against homosexuality. In 1965, the Supreme Court of Canada upheld a ruling labelling Everett Klippert a “dangerous sexual offender” for simply being gay.

Gay activism and shifting changes in social attitudes led to the federal government, in 1968, taking the position that the state has no place in the bedrooms of the nation. This effectively legalized homosexuality—however this did not end all discrimination by any means nor did it result in an overnight change in social mores. Gays and lesbians started to “come out” and gay pride movements began. In the 1980s, along with greater gay liberation, came the HIV/AIDS pandemic. But throughout, gays faced continued prejudice and pressure to conform to a heterosexual norm. Students may be surprised—shocked even—to learn that people still living, people they know and respect, were once scorned and considered aberrant. Although in some countries they still do not have equal rights, equitable treatment, and are struggling for inclusion, acceptance, and tolerance, there has been significant change.

## STEP ONE TEACHER-DIRECTED DISCUSSION

Introduce an inclusive conversation about sexual orientation and gender by reading *Avocado Baby* by John Burningham or by watching the short video, “Welcoming Schools: What Do You Know? 6 to 12-Year-Olds Talk About Gays and Lesbians” ([youtu.be/tjYTAGZgl7o](https://youtu.be/tjYTAGZgl7o)).

Discuss students’ reactions to the content in the story or film, such as one girl’s remark on the video: “When you think of someone as gay or lesbian, you think they’re going to be different ... but they really aren’t. They’re the same as everyone.” Discuss whether there are examples of individuals changing the attitudes of others.

Tell students that people can be gay or lesbian, or have a variety of sexual orientations. Explain the term “homosexuality” and, if you wish, LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, binary, transsexual, queer). Discuss the meaning of the phrase “sexual orientation” and explain the difference between sexual orientation and gender.

Discuss the meaning of the rainbow flag in general and invite students to create/illustrate symbols for important concepts in society (diversity, tolerance, equity). Point out to all students that teachers who display the rainbow flag are allies who students can seek out for guidance and support.

## STEP TWO RIGHTS AND LAWS

Discuss the concept of “social standards” with students. Social standards are the types of behaviour that a society finds acceptable. Give some examples of these unwritten rules and ask students to provide some (e.g., line up to buy movie tickets; look people in the eye when you speak to them; shake hands after a sports match; if you bump into someone, apologize; and so on).

Explain that social standards can change from society to society, from situation to situation, and over time. Explain how attitudes to sexuality have been shaped by various forces in different societies, including religious beliefs. Mention that many Aboriginal communities include “two-spirit” people.



## DECriminalIZATION OF HOMOSEXUALITY 1969-2019



Pierre Trudeau speaking circa 1969. On Dec. 21, 1967, as Justice Minister, Pierre Trudeau gave his famous speech "...There's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation. What's done in private between adults doesn't concern the Criminal Code." (Photo: Graham Bezzant / Canadian Press)

Discuss historical perspective and remind students of the importance of trying to understand ideas and influences of a particular time within the context of that time. Be sensitive but clear during this discussion as many students and their families may still have prejudicial and discriminatory beliefs.

Remind students that their rights as Canadian citizens include:

- Democratic rights (e.g., the right to vote)
- Language rights
- Equality rights
- Legal rights
- Mobility rights
- Freedom of religion
- Freedom of expression
- Freedom of assembly and association

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms grants Canadians these rights. Laws must adhere to the Charter; however, it was only created in 1982 and the equality rights of the section did not become part of the Charter until 1985 because laws needed to be updated to meet the equality requirements.

Tell students that homosexuality was treated as a crime in every province and territory in Canada until 1969. Previously, however, on December 21, 1967, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, had made a comment suggesting the government should not concern itself with making laws to restrict people's private sexual activities. Show older

students the video clip of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau making the famous statement: "There's no place in the state in the bedrooms of the nation" ([cbc.ca/player/play/1811727781](http://cbc.ca/player/play/1811727781)).

Pierre Trudeau's remark, as well as other factors, of course, helped to shift standards in Canada in regard to perspectives on homosexuality. The Criminal Code was revised in 1968, and the following year homosexuality was decriminalized. This didn't mean, however, that sexual discrimination ended completely. Even then, sexual orientation was not considered a human right. As an example, have students watch and discuss the Heritage Minutes' video about an LGBTQ couple's celebrated fight for legal recognition ([youtube.com/watch?v=rac4WiTDQHg](https://youtube.com/watch?v=rac4WiTDQHg)).

Share with the class the experience of Marc Hall, a grade 12 student in Ontario, who, in 2002, was forbidden by his Catholic school to bring his boyfriend to prom. The Catholic school, which did not accept homosexuality, argued on the basis of its religious freedom rights.

Point out to students that Marc's case went to court and he won because Ontario no longer permitted discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The laws had changed to reflect changing attitudes. In 2004, Marc Hall's experience was turned into a Canadian musical called *Prom Queen: The Marc Hall Story*, which was produced on the stage and television.

Guide younger and older students in researching and discussing the key events and changes over the decades of discrimination against sexual orientation. You may wish to make available infographics, articles, and video links with key dates, such as:

- Canada's Timeline of LGBTQ+ and Same-Sex Marriage Rights ([prweb.com/prfiles/2014/04/22/11770896/Canada-Timeline-LGBT-Rights-PRWeb.jpg](http://prweb.com/prfiles/2014/04/22/11770896/Canada-Timeline-LGBT-Rights-PRWeb.jpg))
- LGBTQ+ Education Timeline ([etfo.ca/BuildingAJustSociety/LGBTQ/Documents/EducationTimelineBooklet.pdf](http://etfo.ca/BuildingAJustSociety/LGBTQ/Documents/EducationTimelineBooklet.pdf))
- Gay Rights in Canada 101: Michael Rizzi delivers a seven minute, rapid fire history of gay rights in Canada ([youtu.be/dPoZynpGwx4](http://youtu.be/dPoZynpGwx4))

Guide students in understanding and assessing the key events and changes over the decades of discrimination against sexual orientation. Together, create a timeline showing these key events.

Afterwards, discuss with younger students, and ask pairs of older students to write responses to questions, such as: How does the timeline show a change in laws both across Canada and in individual provinces? What were the major rights of a citizen in Canada in the early 1900s and what are they now? Do you think there are other rights which we may gain or lose some day, and why?

### STEP THREE HISTORIC APOLOGY

In their timeline research, students may have learned that on November 28, 2017, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau issued a historic apology to the LGBTQ+ community.

Explain that the Canadian government has made several apologies to a variety of communities to address historic wrongs, including those made to the Sikh community; the Japanese community; and Indigenous Canadians. Have them think about why and when this occurs. For example, is this an example of rights movements on behalf of specific groups raising awareness about historical and contemporary concerns? Is this related to gender?

Read aloud the whole apology or selections from the November 28, 2017 apology to the LGBTQ+ community to younger students ([pm.gc.ca/en/news/speeches/2017/11/28/remarks-prime-minister-justin-trudeau-apologize-lgbtq2-canadians](http://pm.gc.ca/en/news/speeches/2017/11/28/remarks-prime-minister-justin-trudeau-apologize-lgbtq2-canadians)), for example: "Imagine having to fight for the basic rights that your peers enjoy, over and over again. And imagine being criminalized for being who you are." Have older students watch a video of the apology ([youtube.com/watch?v=xi23IL3b6cs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xi23IL3b6cs)) or provide them with a print-out of the speech to read.

Explain the difference between a personal apology and a historic apology.

Tell students they will form pairs and prepare for a debate about historic apologies. Read them Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's statement: "An apology made in the House of Commons will not erase the pain and suffering of those who lived through that shameful experience. But an apology is not only the appropriate action to take, it's the right action to take, and the House is the appropriate place for it to happen."



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau wipes his eye while he is applauded as he delivers a formal apology to LGBT people in Canada in the House of Commons in Ottawa, Tuesday, Nov.28, 2017. (photo: Adrian Wyld/The Canadian Press)



Divide the pairs into two sides: one will agree with the statement and the other will disagree. As they prepare, encourage them to think about whether apologies have an effect on rights, tolerance, and diversity within Canada. If you wish, encourage **older students** to research analyses of historic apologies, for example, this criticism of the Komagata Maru apology (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/komagata-maru-official-apologies-1.3587870>).

Have the pairs debate. Volunteers can debate in front of the class.

After, ask questions to the class, such as: Do you think the apology came about as a result of the gay rights movement? Do apologies connect us with events of the past in a meaningful way? What can we learn from this about historical significance? Historical context? Historical perspective?

### STEP FOUR CLASSROOM GUESTS

As you continue your exploration of the social attitudes about homosexuality that have changed in Canada over time, assist students to gain a better understanding of the past through the lens of historical perspective. One excellent way is to expose them to several contemporary firsthand accounts.

Reach out to the school community and Gay-Straight Alliances and beyond, and invite individuals of various ages (for example, from 70 to 20) and sexual orientations to tell their stories about social norms and influences in regard to sexual orientation. Many community-based organizations will have experts on hand who may provide outreach to schools.

Assist students in preparing ahead of time by making notes and formulating queries that will prompt discussions with the guest on topics such as: Why did some people in Canada not have full rights in the past? What role did sexual orientation play in this denial of rights? Why might some Canadians have the same rights on paper but not in practice? What are some ways in which different people have responded to challenges and created change? What do you think about the federal government's apology to the LGBTQ+ community? You may wish to send relevant questions to the guests ahead of their visit.

Encourage students to participate during the guests' visits, for example, making introductions, saying a thank you, asking questions, and offering comments.

After their encounters with the guests in the classroom, have students write summaries of what they learned. If you wish, provide them with a list of topics on which to comment.

### STEP FIVE BABY X

Tell students that in 1972 Lois Gould's short story about a child raised without a gender, *X: A Fabulous Child's Story*, was published in the feminist newspaper Ms. It was republished as a picture book in 1978, and in 2016, it was made into an animated short film.

If possible, as a class, read the book or watch the short animated film *Baby X* ([youtu.be/oyYn9izT9gc](https://youtu.be/oyYn9izT9gc)). Ask students to jot down any sentences that strike them as significant. For example, "This baby was named X because no one could tell whether it was a boy or a girl" and "The relatives felt embarrassed to have an X in the family."

Then discuss the book or video as a class. Ask the students what they think is the main message of the story. Discuss the quotes they noted. Ask: What were the "problems" the parents encountered and why? Would a genderless child face the same "problems" today? Does culture reflect social mores, and if so, how? Does culture affect social mores and lead to change in society, and if so, how? Does this also lead to changes in laws?

Have students discuss why they think the story has been revived recently. Explain to students that they will explore this question by examining the range of sexual orientations portrayed in children's books in the past and now. Discuss whether the content in children's books might be a good arbiter of social mores.

Tell students, they will research the topic, arrive at a conclusion, and prepare a stand-alone exhibit to reflect their conclusions.

Groups of younger students will read 8 to 10 picture books featuring a variety of sexual orientations. (Include picture books, chapter books, MG, and YA books, graphic novels, etc. For older or interested students, they can also read fiction and non-fiction.)



Ask: What sexual orientations are represented by the characters in this story? What evidence leads you to make these conclusions? What are the creators' purposes in including these specific characters? Do you think there were books like this 100 years ago? Why, or why not? What significance might there be in a change like this?

Encourage students to be creative and innovative in displaying their conclusions as an exhibit. For example, they may produce a poster, a video, a storyboard, or a PowerPoint. When the exhibits are complete, have students circulate among the exhibits, discussing their opinions with one another, or they could present it to the class.

Discuss with the class whether changes in what we read might be reflected in changes in society and in the laws in Canada, and if so, why.

Have pairs of older students survey children's books in their local and school library, and online, to find examples of sexual orientations including heterosexual, gay, bisexual, and other sexual orientations. You may wish to prepare by compiling a representative selection of books, or lists of books, so students can access these in the classroom.

Discuss how they can determine whether the number of diverse titles have increased, decreased, or remained constant, and have them explore whether there has been a change in representation over a specific time period (for example, over the last three or four decades). Discuss possible explanations for their findings, for example, ask: Why might North American publishers choose to offer

more children's stories that reflect a greater diversity in gender and sexual orientation? How might this be an example of changing social norms? Have they found evidence that this type of shift in social norms ends up being reflected in laws changing over time, or is the reverse true? Or do both occur in tandem? Can they explain the significance of this?

Alternatively, older students could do a similar survey and explore the same questions by examining any change in

gender roles for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTQ+) characters on television or in the movies over the last 50 years.

Encourage students to be creative and innovative in displaying their conclusions as an exhibit. For example, they may produce a video, a storyboard, a PowerPoint, a podcast, or a website. When the exhibits are complete, have students circulate among the exhibits discussing their opinions with one another, or they could present it to the class.

## OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Have students make posters explaining the 50th anniversary of the decriminalization of homosexuality, pointing out its significance to fellow students and what they can do to commemorate the legislation.
- Ask students to research and report on two or three groups dedicated to supporting the rights of various communities in Canada, including the LGBTQ+ community. They can comment on how and why they originated, how they are funded, and their goals and purposes, and making note of their biases or perspectives.
- Students can write and illustrate their own children's picture book story that includes characters of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities. Prompt them to think about how they will express or show aspects of their characters' identities in a respectful way.



## RESOURCES

### Discussions of Sexual Identity

- *Welcoming Schools: What Do You Know? 6 to 12-Year Olds Talk About Gays and Lesbians* video ([youtu.be/tjYTAGZgl7o](https://youtu.be/tjYTAGZgl7o))

### Historical Timelines

- Brief LGBTQ+ Canadian History Timeline ([northreach.ca/education-2/lgbtq/a-brief-lgbtq-canadian-history](http://northreach.ca/education-2/lgbtq/a-brief-lgbtq-canadian-history))
- March to Equality: A Timeline of Sexual Equality Rights in North America and around the World (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/positivespace/node/49>)
- CBC Timeline of Same-Sex Rights in Canada ([cbc.ca/news/canada/timeline-same-sex-rights-in-canada-1.1147516](http://cbc.ca/news/canada/timeline-same-sex-rights-in-canada-1.1147516))
- Canada's Timeline of LGBT & Same-Sex Marriage Rights ([prweb.com/prfiles/2014/04/22/11770896/Canada-Timeline-LGBT-Rights-PRWeb.jpg](http://prweb.com/prfiles/2014/04/22/11770896/Canada-Timeline-LGBT-Rights-PRWeb.jpg))
- Extensive LGBTQ Education Timeline ([etfo.ca/BuildingAJustSociety/LGBTQ/Documents/EducationTimelineBooklet.pdf](http://etfo.ca/BuildingAJustSociety/LGBTQ/Documents/EducationTimelineBooklet.pdf))
- Vlogger Michael Rizzi explains Gay Rights in Canada 101 video ([youtu.be/dPoZynpGwx4](https://youtu.be/dPoZynpGwx4))

### Challenges to the Law

- Heritage Minute: Jim Egan's Supreme Court Fight ([youtu.be/rac4WiTDQHg](https://youtu.be/rac4WiTDQHg)) (French: [youtube.com/watch?v=wEZQTmr2Csk](https://youtube.com/watch?v=wEZQTmr2Csk))
- Trailer for musical film Prom Queen: The Marc Hall Story ([youtu.be/NDVJTT6Erqs](https://youtu.be/NDVJTT6Erqs))

### Change

- LGBTQ+ Canadians share their stories for the It Gets Better Project (Note: recommended for Grades 11-12 only due to language; [youtu.be/5p-AT18d9IU](https://youtu.be/5p-AT18d9IU))
- Article about Sexual Orientation and Human Rights ([historyofrights.ca/encyclopaedia/main-events/sexual-orientation](http://historyofrights.ca/encyclopaedia/main-events/sexual-orientation))
- PM Justin Trudeau delivers the federal government's apology to LGBTQ+ Canadians: ([youtu.be/aSxutMbZyWw](https://youtu.be/aSxutMbZyWw); also includes data for timeline)

### Social Justice

- It's Pronounced Metrosexual – Articles, fun graphics, and other resources designed to be

shared in an effort to advance social equity ([itspronouncedmetrosexual.com](http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com))

### Children's Literature and Sexual Orientation

- Common Sense Media's LGBTQ Book Recommendations ([www.commonsensemedia.org/lists/lgbtq-books](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/lists/lgbtq-books))
- Article about story-animated film Baby X ([news.avclub.com/baby-x-relates-the-animated-adventures-of-a-gender-neut-1798246388](http://news.avclub.com/baby-x-relates-the-animated-adventures-of-a-gender-neut-1798246388))

### Examples of picture books with non-gender-conforming or LGBTQ+ characters or subject matter

- *Avocado Baby* by John Burningham (1978)
- *Heather Has Two Mommies* by Lesléa Newman (1989)
- *Mom and Mum are Getting Married* by Ken Setterington (2004)
- *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* by Christine Baldacchino (2014)
- *The Boy and the Bindi* by Vivek Shraya (2016)
- *Who are You? The Kids Guide to Gender Identity* by Brook Pessin-Whedbee (2016)
- *Are You a Boy or Are You a Girl?* by Sarah Savage (2016)
- *From the Stars in the Sky to the Fish in the Sea* by Kai Cheng Thom (2017)
- *Julián is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love (2018)

### General Sources

- <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/norms-and-reform-legalizing-homosexuality-improves-attitudes.pdf>
  - <https://settlement.org/ontario/immigration-citizenship/citizenship/rights-and-responsibilities-of-citizenship/what-are-my-rights-and-responsibilities-as-a-canadian-citizen/>
- 1 Ont Curriculum, soc studies-history
  - 2 gr 6, Ont social studies curriculum
  - 3 <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/everett-klippert-lgbt-apology-1.4422190>
  - 4 <https://settlement.org/ontario/immigration-citizenship/citizenship/rights-and-responsibilities-of-citizenship/what-are-my-rights-and-responsibilities-as-a-canadian-citizen/>
  - 5 <https://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/04/11/prime-minister-canada-announces-komagata-maru-apology>

## **STUDENT EVALUATION QUESTIONS SPECIFIC TO THE LESSON PLAN**

### **Before (Pre-Implementation)**

- Do students have a general understanding of the meaning of sexual orientation and gender?
- Do students have a clear understanding of the key events and changes during the decades of discrimination against sexual orientation that led to the decriminalization of homosexuality and beyond?
- Do students have any prior understanding of historic apologies in general and, specifically, the apology given by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to the LGBTQ+ community in 2017?
- Do students have experience listening and responding to first-hand accounts of how social attitudes about homosexuality have changed in Canada over time?
- Have students considered how the content in books (children's books) or other media might reflect or encourage changes in social mores and laws in Canada?

### **After (Post-Implementation)**

- Students will describe the meaning of sexual orientation and gender.
- Students will share an understanding of the key events and changes during the decades of discrimination against sexual orientation that led to the decriminalization of homosexuality and beyond.
- Students will reflect on, and explain their ideas about, the value of historic apologies in general and, specifically, the apology given by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to the LGBTQ+ community in 2017.
- Students will engage with guest visitors as they provide first-hand accounts of how social attitudes about homosexuality have changed in Canada over time.
- Students will consider and reflect on the implications of changes in content in books (children's books) or other media, specifically whether, and how, they represent or encourage changes in social mores and laws in Canada.

## **TEACHER EVALUATION QUESTIONS**

### **Before (Pre-Implementation)**

- Do you have a general understanding of the meaning of sexual orientation and gender?
- Do you have a clear understanding of the key events and changes during the decades of discrimination against sexual orientation that led to the decriminalization of homosexuality and beyond?
- Do you have any prior understanding of the value of historic apologies in general and, specifically, the apology given by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to the LGBTQ+ community in 2017?
- Have you had any experience listening and responding to first-hand accounts of how social attitudes about homosexuality have changed in Canada over time?
- Have you considered how the content in books (children's books) or other media might reflect or encourage changes in social mores and laws in Canada?

### **After (Post-Implementation)**

- Explain and give examples of sexual orientation and gender.
- Share an understanding of the key events and changes during the decades of discrimination against sexual orientation that led to the decriminalization of homosexuality and beyond.
- Reflect on, and explain your opinion about, the value of historic apologies in general and, specifically, the apology given by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to the LGBTQ+ community in 2017.
- Share what you experienced and learned after listening and responding to first-hand accounts of how social attitudes about homosexuality have changed in Canada over time.
- Reflect on, and explain your ideas about, the implications of changes in content in books (children's books) or other media, specifically whether, and how, they represent or encourage changes in social mores and laws in Canada.

**RUBRICS**

**GENERAL**

	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
DISCUSSION	Student participated limitedly in the teacher-directed discussions	Student participated adequately in teacher-directed discussions	Student participated actively in the teacher-directed discussions	Student participated exemplarily in the teacher-directed discussions
CONTENT	Student demonstrated limited understanding of concepts, facts, and terms	Student demonstrated some understanding of concepts, facts, and terms	Student demonstrated considerable understanding of concepts, facts, and terms	Student demonstrated thorough understanding of concepts, facts, and terms
WRITTEN WORK	Student’s written report was confusing, poorly structured, and had many grammatical errors	Student’s written report was generally clear and had some structure, but numerous grammatical errors	Student’s written report was clear and well-structured, but had a few errors	Student’s written report was very clear, well-organized, and had virtually no errors
PRESENTATION	Student’s presentation was confusing, lacked emphasis and energy, and resulted in no discussion	Student’s presentation was generally clear, but lacked energy and emphasis, and resulted in little discussion	Student’s presentation was clear, vibrantly presented, and resulted in a good discussion	Student’s presentation was very clear, enthusiastically presented, and resulted in engaging discussion
GROUP WORK	Students made a minimal contribution to the group; very little cooperation	Students made some contribution to the group, but cooperation was superficial	Students made a considerable contribution to the group, with a good level of cooperation	Students made a significant contribution to the group, with an excellent level of cooperation

SPECIFIC

	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
STEP 1	Student demonstrated a limited understanding of the meaning of sexual orientation and gender	Student demonstrated a basic understanding of the meaning of sexual orientation and gender	Student demonstrated a good understanding of the meaning of sexual orientation and gender	Student demonstrated a thorough understanding of the meaning of sexual orientation and gender
STEP 2	Student demonstrated a limited understanding of the events that led to the discrimination against sexual orientation and beyond	Student demonstrated a basic understanding of the events that led to the discrimination against sexual orientation and beyond	Student demonstrated a good understanding of the events that led to the discrimination against sexual orientation and beyond	Student demonstrated a thorough understanding of the events that led to the discrimination against sexual orientation and beyond
STEP 3	Student made a minimal contribution to the debate about the value of historic apologies	Student made some contribution to the debate about the value of historic apologies	Student made a considerable contribution to the debate about the value of historic apologies	Student made a significant contribution to the debate about the value of historic apologies
STEP 4	Student's summary of learning experienced during the guest's classroom visit was confusing, poorly structured, and had many grammatical errors	Student's summary of learning experienced during the guest's classroom visit was generally clear and had some structure, but numerous grammatical errors	Student's summary of learning experienced during the guest's classroom visit was clear and well-structured, but had a few errors	Student's summary of learning experienced during the guest's classroom visit was very clear, well-organized, and had virtually no errors
STEP 5	Student's exhibit provided little information and they engaged limitedly in the walk-around discussion	Student's exhibit provided some information and they engaged adequately in the walk-around discussion	Student's exhibit provided good information and they engaged actively in the walk-around discussion	Student's exhibit provided excellent information and they engaged extemporarily in the walk-around discussion





# UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTHS

## What if Santa Claus was Gay?

**By Christine Cho**

Society is not always as accepting as our laws would lead us to believe. Recent revocation of the 2014 Health and Physical Education curriculum in Ontario is a testament to that fact. I currently teach at a Faculty of Education and often engage in serious, and sometimes spirited, conversations with my Bachelor of Education (BEd) students about LGBTQ+ issues in relation to school. Sometimes, the concerns we tackle are about content implications, “What happens if a student [writes, says, draws, paints something] that is gay?” This is a curious trepidation for me, but it’s usually quickly followed up with the real concern, “What if a parent gets upset and thinks we are talking about homosexuality in class?” Homosexuality has been decriminalized for 50 years and yet many teachers still worry about offending the values and beliefs of homophobic people. Fear percolates through teacher candidates. The teaching profession tends to be very conservative, seemingly projecting a “neutral” tone. The perception amongst future teachers is that you maintain the status quo: everyone is heterosexual until proven otherwise.

I press my BEd students to focus on normalizing difference in order to take away the fear. We work to think about relationships, to put aside the stigma of homosexuality and societal “norms” by focusing instead on affirming the complexity of relationships that exists among human beings. My students have said to me, “What if I don’t believe in homosexuality”? I have told them, in no uncertain terms, there is no parallel between Santa Claus and being gay. You don’t get to “believe” or “not believe.” There will be students in your class, parents in your community, members on staff who identify as LGBTQ+. There is a world out there for which we are preparing our children, and that world includes people who identify as LGBTQ+.

Many aspects of our society are still unwelcoming and outright dangerous for those in the LGBTQ+ community. When I first started teaching in a classroom, I consciously chose not to put a picture of my husband on my desk because I knew that any teacher in my school in a same-sex relationship would not have the liberty to do likewise. Many might still refrain from doing so, because ostracization, stigma, and rebuke are still very real weapons with potentially devastating personal and career implications.

I share with my BEd students an experience I had as a school teacher many years ago. I took my grade 8 class to the local high school to see the senior students’ art show. There was a series of tasteful photographs of two men, naked and embracing. As I was looking at the images, one of my students came to look at the photos with me. He said, “This is very wrong, Miss. These pictures are bad and wrong.” I saw this as a very teachable moment and asked what he thought was wrong. I knew the subject matter was troubling him, however. To normalize LGBTQ+ imagery, I chose to keep my questions within the realm of the principles and elements of design, “Do you not like the contrast? Are you concerned with the composition? The way the artist has positioned the figures?”

My student was very blunt, “Two men should not be holding each other that way.” So, I probed further as to what made him uncomfortable and then he turned to biblical teachings. I was not teaching in a faith-based school so I said, “We will have to agree to disagree about that aspect. However, we can examine the work in terms of composition, balance, etc.” He agreed to do so and then we moved on to examine other, less controversial pieces in the exhibition. The next day, the student came to school and gave me a homophobic pamphlet and told me his father wanted me to read it. I repeated to him that, on this topic, it seemed we were going to have to agree to disagree. There was no further discussion with the student or his parents.

I share this story with my BEd students because it is important to understand that ideas and concepts can be



explored and exposed in school, that we shouldn’t shy away from them. I think of how brave the high school art teacher was in displaying his student’s work and for providing the space for artistic expression. For the one child who was personally affronted by the subject matter, another student may have found his, her, or their identity affirmed.

I also remind my BEd students that parents have the right to have conversations about their beliefs; this is how dialogue occurs. Sometimes schools are places where difficult topics are brought up and the conversations can be furthered at home. Just as I try to include stories, images, and the voices of racially and ethnically diverse people, I also consciously work to include the work of those from the LGBTQ+ community. I use gender-neutral names or ensure same-sex families are represented in scenarios I provide. Sometimes it goes unnoticed and sometimes it results in a teachable moment.

During my classes, I also like to show my BEd students the documentary, *It’s Elementary: Talking about Gay Issues in School*. It’s dated (1996), but the messages and the strategies still resonate today, in particular the straight teacher who explains that she needs to be the one to talk about gay issues in school because it’s not seen as “her agenda.” My BEd students typically connect with her stance and find the film gives them in-roads to opening up dialogue and normalizing multiple ways of being in the world. It helps them recognize what is taken for granted, such as gender-specific bathrooms and changerooms. It also opens up the space for conversations around the rainbow flag.

Many teachers are given rainbow stickers from their Equity and Diversity committees and they feel obligated to put



“**Schools are places where, we hope, children are sent to be embraced for who they are so they can grow up to be adults and citizens who live productive, inclusive lives.**”

them up. I caution my BEd students to think carefully about what this means: Putting up a rainbow flag signifies you are an ally. A rainbow flag signals to a student that they can come to you for help and guidance with LGBTQ+ issues. It means, that if you have concerns for a student’s well-being, enough to call their parents, you won’t out your student when you make that phone call. I caution them, that if they can’t be an ally in this way, it’s okay. Don’t put up the flag. It doesn’t mean they are homophobic. There are many ways to be an ally. Some may take different paths to get there.

I talk to my BEd students about the daily disruptions they should be attuned to in the classroom, in the hallways, and at recess. The shouts of “that’s so gay” and all the various, vitriolic expletives that are homophobic and transphobic. This is where the real teaching happens—explaining to a student why their homework, cannot, actually, be gay and challenging students as to why they use gay in a derogatory manner. Language and expressions often go unchecked.

I have brought in members of the Rainbow Coalition as a way of showing future teachers the resources available to them, especially if they are afraid. We play a game in which my BEd students are challenged to list all the negative, derogatory homophobic, and transphobic words/expressions they know. They are often timid at first (they are becoming teachers, after all!), but soon the floodgates open and too many responses are generated to record. I do this exercise to raise awareness of terms and slang they might not recognize. Then, my BEd students are asked to do the same for expressions that are anti-heteronormative. They usually fail after two or three words and expressions (and they have come to the realization that many of the phrases they thought of are actually misogynistic).

We can infuse LGBTQ+ equity work into our teaching through subjects like Language Arts classes by using story books, short stories, newspaper articles, and novels that have LGBTQ+ content, and discussing themes of inclusion and acceptance with students. The history and perspectives of those who identify as LGBTQ+ should be told in the social studies, history, and geography curriculum. We can certainly infuse it through the arts and, despite the current embargo on the health and physical education curriculum in Ontario\*, this is a subject where relationship and healthy self-image should be discussed, which includes affirming perspectives of those who identify as LGBTQ+.

Teachers have to be vigilant in interrupting the covert ways homophobia and transphobia seeps into the classroom by striving to determine what’s excluded and/or what’s not contested. The internet has a plethora of resources and strategies for teachers. Inevitably, my BEd students remark that finding all these strategies and ideas sounds like a lot of work. Teaching IS a lot of work! We have to go beyond the examples in the curriculum to consciously ensure all voices and ways of knowing are affirmed. Schools are places where, we hope, children are sent to be embraced for who they are so they can grow up to be adults and citizens who live productive, inclusive lives.

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**Christine L. Cho, PhD is an Associate Professor at Nipissing University’s Schulich School of Education. A practicing visual artist and a former elementary school teacher, Christine utilizes visual media and critical pedagogy to expand upon diverse ways of knowing. Her research contributes to current educational conversations on racial, ethnic, linguistic and LGBTQ+ representation in schools.**

*\*Editor’s Note:* The Ontario health and physical education curriculum has been revamped since the article was originally written. It remains largely intact, with the exception of some elements of sex education specifically, being taught to older students.



# 'TRY TO LAY LOW'

## Growing-up Gay in Pre-1969 Canada

By Adam Stone

It isn't easy to teach the history of homosexuality in Canada. How do you communicate to modern kids the notion that something so widely accepted today was illegal within living memory? That less than a generation ago, the relationships that today are celebrated on TV and in popular songs were literally classed as criminal?

It was just over 50 years ago, in 1965, that the Supreme Court of Canada upheld a ruling that labelled Everett Klippert a "dangerous sexual offender" for having sex with other men. That's ancient history in the eyes of a child.

To help teachers tell that story, we interviewed three gay men who were there: Guys old enough to remember what it was like growing up in Canada before decriminalization of homosexuality. While their stories paint a picture of a world that will be unfamiliar to many of today's students, much of their core experience—uncertainty, oppression, and shame—still resonates. Just because it is no longer illegal, that doesn't mean it is entirely okay.

In telling these stories we hope to give teachers a new tool for exploring with their students both the history and the present-day experience of gay Canadians coming of age.



## David Rayside, 71

“Gym was the worst. The boy’s locker rooms in the gym were very anxious places for me, as they are for lots of kids. You’re undressed and if you don’t have a body that fits the ideal of the sporting ideal, you feel inadequate. And there was the horrifying fear of being sexually aroused and not being able to hide it.”

A child of Montreal’s English-speaking suburbs, David Rayside grew up with an uncertain awareness of his otherness. By the time he graduated high school in 1964, “I knew I was attracted to men, but I couldn’t have attached a label to it,” he says.

More than simply being illegal, homosexuality was almost universally scorned. “The criminality wasn’t the most significant part of it. The fact that it was so thoroughly disapproved of—that was what hit you between the eyes every day. There was an enforced masculinity, a sense of gender that was even more narrowly enforced than it is now: That there is a right way to be a young man,” he says.

Even if he had a small notion of what it meant to be gay, “I couldn’t conceive of acting on it,” he says. “You would just try to lay low. You’d laugh at jokes that you knew you shouldn’t laugh at. Try not to be noticed.”

Over the years, things changed dramatically for Rayside. He went on to serve as founding director of the Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies at the University of Toronto. He developed a course in the politics of sexual diversity in 1985, and taught courses in social movements, and the role of religion in politics.

Back in the day, though, it took all his creativity just to keep his sexuality under wraps. He even found a sport that would help him to get by unnoticed. “In those days curling was a genteel sport among high school students. It was polite, there were rituals that went back more than 100 years. There were rules of politeness that softened the edge for boys who didn’t quite fit in,” he says.

While partial decriminalization didn’t change the world for Rayside, who was already on the way to coming out at the time, he still sees it as a turning point. “It was critically important, because it helped open the door to a new level of activism around sexual diversity,” he says. “It began a process of loosening up social attitudes and creating a bit more space around what came to be called LGBT activism.”

## Tim McCaskell, 68

Growing up north of Toronto in the little town of Beaverton (pop. 100), Tim McCaskell was pretty far out on the edge, at least in relative terms.

He ran as a Liberal in his school’s student parliament,

“and there was nothing farther out than that,” he says.

“I remember being terrified that someone was going to ask me a question about what [Pierre] Trudeau was doing around these homosexuals. I was completely terrified about such a question—but I had no idea why.”

He remembers watching an episode of the CBC news program, *This Hour Has Seven Days*. A spokesman for the gay community had to be backlit, with his face distorted—literally hiding in shadows. “This was the image we grew up with of homosexuality, that it wasn’t a very nice thing at all. The best you could say was that it was an illness. Otherwise it was a perversion, a sin, a crime,” he says.

It’s not just that he couldn’t come out to others; small town life even made self-discovery impossible. “There was no anonymity, no place to ‘go downtown and explore.’ Everyone went to church except for one family, and they were a scandal. Everybody knew everybody’s business all the time. So, you simply had to be ‘good,’ otherwise everyone would know,” he says.

In 1969, he went away to college and fell in love with a man, and still he didn’t come out until five years later. “At that point, I couldn’t deny it any longer,” he says. “I knew I had to either come out or jump off a bridge.”

He went on to become a gay activist, a member of the collective that ran Canada’s iconic gay liberation journal *The Body Politic*. He served on a committee advocating the Right to Privacy and spent his career fighting discrimination in various forms.

“Small town life... made self-discovery impossible.”

– Tim McCaskell

Like many in the gay community, he describes the partial decriminalization in 1969 as a helpful first step, but hardly a panacea. It didn’t break down all the barriers, but it did mark the start to a process of change. “All of a sudden it was possible to talk about this. As heinous and awful as it was, it now existed as a thing in the universe,” he says. “Because a cool and trendy liberal government did this, that also associated this thing with ‘modernity.’ It wasn’t cool to be gay, but it was cool to be tolerant.”

He points to a subtle irony that has arisen in the years since 1969. Back then, most openly gay men were comfortably middle class; they shared that in common. Today, poverty is pervasive in the gay community. As a result, a once-cohesive community now finds itself less unified.

“Now we have a society that is legally equal, but socially

much less equal. Half the population has seen a dramatic relative decline in their standard of living," he says. "Now you see a fragmented community. It's harder for people to understand each other. Sexual orientation alone is no longer a strong enough glue to hold us all together."

### Ed Jackson, 73

Ed Jackson has spent his career supporting gay causes. He was one of the founders of the AIDS Committee of Toronto, a Director of Program Development for the AIDS advocacy group CATIE, and co-editor of a book on gay journalism.

He grew up in New Brunswick, worlds away from any of that. As a young man discovering his own sexuality, there were few if any guideposts.

"The library was one of the few places one could learn about these things. I was always a reader and that was how I discovered being gay. I looked in medical books to understand homosexuality," he says.

Beyond the medical journals, little was said. "I might've read about people who seemed like they might be gay, but there was this absolute silence in the mainstream press. There was a conspiracy of silence, it was simply never mentioned," he says.

This made adolescence complex, if not downright excruciating. "My awareness of it was gradually growing, I knew that I was attracted to men, but I didn't want to admit it to myself. This was a deep secret, a thing that people could not know about. I certainly got that message. Keeping it quiet, keeping it under wraps was very important," he says.

That kind of living will take its toll. "I was kind of a reserved, prissy kid because of always feeling that I had to be careful," he says. He had teenage crushes but didn't dare act on them; he became "inhibited," as he puts it.

"Anyone who could have read the tea leaves would have said: There's a little gay boy. In New Brunswick, however, people's 'gaydar' was not exactly vibrating, so my disguise was pretty effective," he says.

In a not uncommon narrative, everything changed for Jackson when he headed off to the big city. "I knew that Toronto was where I wanted to be. I had the sense that there would be some kind of a gay life there," he says. "In Toronto, I met an older man who was also taking classes, who was very open and positive about being gay. He was a gay liberationist before there was a movement."

And today? "It's hugely better," he says. "People can't be fired, can't be dumped out of their apartments. There's all the visibility in media, the celebrities coming out. It's an amazing social change in an incredibly short time."

For these men, and for so many Canadian men and

women coming of age in the 1960s and '70s, partial decriminalization didn't change the world overnight. Entrenched social mores lingered, and linger still.

The year 1969 nonetheless, marked an important moment in the gay community. No longer confined to the shadows, gay life could now come out into the light of day—even if coming out, on a personal level, remained a challenge for many.

**“There was a conspiracy of silence, it was simply never mentioned.”**

**– Ed Jackson**

Teachers meanwhile face another kind of challenge: To share firsthand accounts like these in a way that is sensitive to the past, and that helps guide and nurture students who may be struggling with questions about sexuality—their own or others'—in the present. By teaching the stories of those who personally experienced a more closed society, educators may help students to better understand the significance of today's shift toward greater openness.

How to teach the history of homosexuality? As demonstrated above, firsthand accounts are a powerful means of communication that allow dialogue and discussion. Perhaps reaching out to the school community and allowing individuals to tell their stories as well as connecting with the community at large may provide a start point for teachers and students. There are community-based organizations that have experts on hand, some of whom also provide outreach to schools.

For example, The Canadian Civil Liberties Association promotes the value of gay-straight alliances (GSA), noting that 85 percent of educators report GSAs having a positive impact on school climate around issues of sexuality. Teachers can seek out or form a gay-straight alliance, reaching out to gay activists and supporters in order to deliver a message that is historically accurate and authentically inclusive.

Fifty years of history are here at work. Opening up dialogue and discussion through any means will help ensure the next fifty years unfold as an era of acceptance and understanding for everyone.

—  
A seasoned journalist with 20+ years' experience, Adam Stone covers education, technology, government and the military, along with other diverse topics.

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# WOMEN IN AND OUT OF THE CLOSET

**By Elise Chenier**

When the Canadian government updated the criminal code in 1954, it made a small but significant change to the law regarding gross indecency. It removed the phrase “male person.”

Gross indecency was a catch-all statute used to charge someone with behaviour deemed indecent according to the morals and values of mainstream society, but it was most commonly used against men who engaged in sexual acts with other men. During World War II (1939-1945), it became more widely known that women also engaged in same-sex relations, partly because the war brought many women into single-sex environments, like military barracks. After the war, a flood of paperback novels, most of which were written by men, popularized the image of sex-crazed lesbians preying on unsuspecting and naïve women.

For the first time, lesbians were viewed as more than just sinful and repulsive. They were a danger to society. By removing the phrase “male person” from the crime of gross indecency, the Canadian government declared sex between women a crime.

The law was revised yet again in 1969, this time eliminating gross indecency as a crime when the two individuals involved were over the age of 21 and engaged in sexual relations in private. Did women breathe a sigh of relief? Yes and no. The change in law mattered, but not because lesbians were able to be open about their

sexuality. It mattered because it signalled the beginning of a new era of greater freedom and acceptance, and, for the first time, allowed women to hope for better days ahead.

That didn't mean that women were free from police harassment, unfortunately. Women who frequented the few lesbian hangouts that existed in the 1950s and 1960s were often charged with loitering, disorderly conduct, and vagrancy—laws that were also used to charge sex workers. Sometimes police didn't bother with criminal charges at all, but would subject lesbians to physical and sexual assault. It was young, working-class women who were most visible on the street that were most often vulnerable to such abuse.

Canada's Criminal Code was based on Christian beliefs about what constitutes proper morality. In the second half of the Twentieth Century, however, there was a strong trend toward separating Christian morality from the law. After World War II, a small number of religious and legal experts posed the question: If same-sex relations caused no harm, should it be a crime?

At the same time, however, a countervailing wind was blowing. A new school of thought arose that viewed same-sex attraction as a mental disorder. Parents of minors and the courts could force lesbians, as well as gay men, into treatment. Some were put into mental health hospitals. Sadly, many adult lesbians and gay men accepted the

were subjected to a diverse range of "conversion therapies," some of which caused life-long damage.

Lawyer Barbara Findlay [sic] and her partner Sheila Gilhooly were both institutionalized against their will because they admitted to lesbian relationships. For "treatment," Findlay [sic] was required to learn how to sew and wear a dress. When she graduated from law school, she could not be called to the Bar until a psychiatrist declared her sane. She deliberately came out in the legal profession—the first queer to do so—and spent her career advocating for queer and trans rights.

Gilhooly took her years-long experience of shock treatment for being a dyke and turned it into art by documenting her experiences in a sculpture gallery and the book *Still Sane*. Oftentimes when she did a public reading from the book, women in attendance spoke for the first time about similar experiences of their own.

Ironically, when the parents of a young woman named Arlene (who wishes to remain anonymous) forced her into a psychiatric hospital for being homosexual, she felt "normal" for the first time in her life. Once institutionalized, Arlene met other lesbians who had also been locked up for treatment and realized she was not the only woman in the world to be attracted to other women. They also told her where gay women hung out in the city. Once released from the hospital, Arlene quickly made her way to popular lesbian bars.

During World War II, the federal government worked hard to encourage women to pursue a career in the military. Barbara Minshall, born in 1941, grew up dreaming of a career in the service. What she did not know was that military officials believed that lesbians and gay men spread the "disease" of homosexuality among other troops, and that their sexual practices damaged the military's ability to function effectively. J. Edgar Hoover, director of the FBI from 1924 to 1972, also popularized the notion that homosexuals posed a security risk. He argued that enemies of the state could blackmail homosexuals to reveal state secrets by threatening to expose them. These beliefs resulted in the "lavender scare" whereby thousands of lesbians and gay men in Canada and the United States were fired from the military and civil service.

Minshall was directly affected by these events. She served in the Air Force from 1959 until 1964. During those years, she was investigated for lesbianism three times, but her superiors could never prove she had engaged in sex with women. Then one day, while driving off-base, she was rear-ended by a male troop who was stalking her. Both of them were charged with driving under the influence of alcohol. When their case went to military court, he claimed that she backed her car into his. The court found her guilty despite the testimony of an expert who discredited his

**“There’s no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation... what’s done in private between adults doesn’t concern the Criminal Code...”**

**– Pierre Trudeau**

notion that they were mentally ill and sought treatment voluntarily in the hope that they could live a "normal" life just like everyone else.

Not all psychiatrists agreed with this theory, however, like in the case of Dorothy Fairbairn. She was born in 1933 and raised in Chicago until her family moved to Toronto while she was in high school. In the early 1960s, Fairbairn was taken by her parents to be "cured" of her attraction to girls. Instead, the specialist said that it was her parents who needed an attitude adjustment—not Fairbairn. Not everyone was so fortunate. Many lesbians and gay men

testimony. Because the Air Force did not have jail cells for women, they simply kicked her out of the service, bringing an abrupt end to her life-long dream of serving her country.

Minshall clearly remembers Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau's radical statement that "there's no place for the

**“The changes that would allow women to be open about their sexuality and their intimate relationships would take many more years to come, and would be fought for and won by activists on the ground, not politicians. Almost all would agree, though, that the legal reforms inspired conversations that became significant moments in their lives as a lesbian or queer person.”**

state in the bedrooms of the nation.” However, the criminal code changes he was defending did not make her feel safe enough to be open about her sexual orientation. It was not until 2001 that she finally came out to a straight person. When her partner of 25 years was admitted to the hospital after a heart attack, a staff person asked, “Who are you?” Minshall blurted out, “I am her partner!”

In that moment, she recalls, she felt like a weight had been lifted off her shoulders. “Now I’ve admitted it, and the rest of the staff will know, and I don’t care. It felt good that I finally said, ‘I’m with that woman.’”

Didi Khayatt shares a very similar experience. Born in Egypt in 1944, she came to Canada to pursue a PhD. She knew she was a lesbian, but kept that information from her parents. She made several friends who she was sure were also lesbians. While attending teacher’s college in 1969, one of her best friends “was a gay man who was so feminine and wore very loud ties and yellow shoes.” However, everyone was so secretive that they did not even discuss it amongst themselves. Recalling her friendship with her

classmate she says, “We hung out together because it was a cover for both us.”

When the 1969 reforms came into effect, it became international news. Khayatt distinctly recalls that in a phone conversation from Egypt, her parents remarked that she was lucky to live in such an open and progressive country. “There was a lot of hope in the air,” Khayatt says, however, she felt no safer coming out after the law changed than she did the day before, not even to her own parents. So she remained firmly in the closet for almost two more decades.

Things were different amongst Khayatt’s trusted straight colleagues, however. There was an unspoken understanding that her partner at the time was more than a roommate. No one ever openly acknowledged their relationship, perhaps out of respect for the necessity of staying closeted. Being gay or lesbian was technically illegal and that was grounds for dismissal, as stated in most teachers’ employment contracts. Student’s parents “treated homosexuality as if it were contagious,” Khayatt recalls. They believed that if you had a gay or lesbian teacher, “your whole classroom is going to go from heterosexual to homosexual. People had very weird ideas.”

Khayatt only began coming out in the mid-1980s when she left her partner of 25 years for a woman who had, up to that point, been heterosexual. As her new partner joyfully came out as a lesbian to her family and friends, Khayatt was delighted to be welcomed into their lives “as a real human being.” That inspired her to come out to her own mother, and to begin publishing books and articles about the challenges of being a lesbian and gay school teacher.

For those who took notice of the news, Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau’s declaration that there is no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation signalled better days ahead. However, the truth is, most gay and lesbian individuals remained firmly in the closet years, or even decades. Some never came out at all. The changes that would allow women to be open about their sexuality and their intimate relationships would take many more years to come, and would be fought for and won by activists on the ground, not politicians. Almost all would agree, though, that the legal reforms inspired conversations that became significant moments in their lives as a lesbian or queer person.

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*Editor’s Note:* The information in this article is primarily based on original research on the part of the author.



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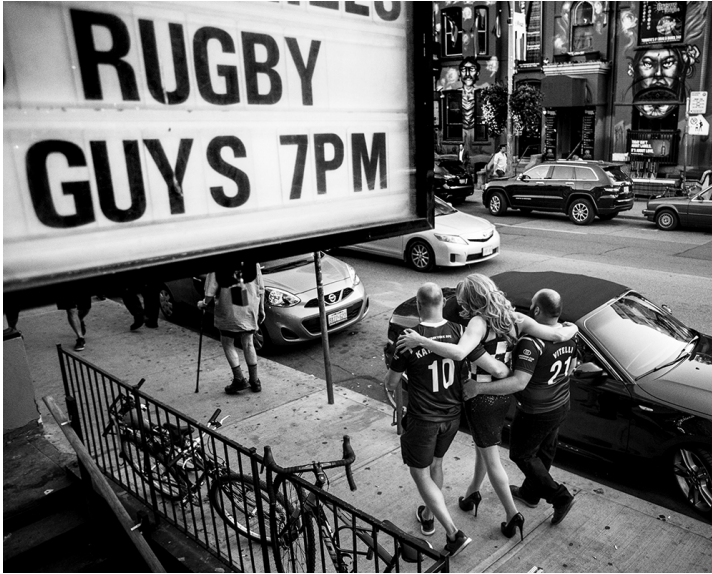
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# BOYS WILL BE BOYS

## A Photo Essay

By Giovanni Capriotti

Toronto, Canada is considered one of the world's most diverse cities, attracting migrants from distant corners of the globe, as well as those from closer by – rural, suburban and interurban migrants seeking changes to their economic or social circumstances.

LGBTQ often flock to urban centres like Toronto in search of belonging or acceptance not found in their home communities. They have typically experienced high rates of discrimination, suicide, mental illness and other negative outcomes.

Team sports and recreational activities also provide opportunities for camaraderie, but the notion of gay athletes has always encountered resistance and controversy. Gender roles are constructed and performed within society. The binary code is widely imposed by tradition and, in the worst case, is the only one allowed by law.

In rugby, considered a manly hard contact game, the pervasive stereotype of homosexual men as weaker than



'straight guys' contradicts the prototypical player. Until recently, the possibility of gay players on the pitch was not even contemplated, and the locker room was considered a sacred space devoted to pure masculinity.

However, it was these multiple layers of exclusion and discomfort that led a few gay rugby players, pushed to the margins of the quintessential gentlemen's sport, to form Muddy York RFC, Toronto's first gay-friendly rugby team. They unconsciously started the process of describing and deconstructing the idea of performance within masculinity.

More than just a sports team, the club brings together a small community of players and their partners, supporters and fans. They primarily compete against 'straight' teams in the Toronto Rugby Union. The club also travels for exhibition matches against other gay teams, hosts the annual Beaver Bowl Tournament and every two years participates in the Bingham Cup, an international competition often labeled as the LGBTQ Rugby World Cup.





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Giovanni Capriotti is an independent documentary photographer and videographer pursuing long-form visual narratives with a focus on unique and intimate stories exposing how time and inevitability of compromise affect individuals, communities, history and the human condition. In addition to his documentary practices, Giovanni deals with brand visual journalism as a Multimedia Image/Video Producer at University of Guelph-Humber, and continues to accept commissions. He is on the Advisory Board of the Loyalist College Photojournalism Program and runs photography workshops, lectures and talks. Among several accolades that his work has earned him, Giovanni's long-term project "Boys Will Be Boys" gained 1st Place Sport Stories at the 2017 World Press Photo, while recently ISMEO, the Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East, awarded him a \$20,000 grant to follow the footprints of its former president and early Tibet explorer Giuseppe Tucci. Giovanni's projects have been shown in exhibitions and installations at venues around the world, including the World Press Photo Foundation, Contact Photography Festival Toronto, NPAC, Italian Institute of Culture Montreal, DDProject Trieste, Tokyo International Foto Awards, IGR Bingham Cup Amsterdam 2018, PX3 - Prix De La Photographie Paris. Wopzines, an indie publishing house, is his latest ambitious endeavor. [www.giovanncapriotti.com](http://www.giovanncapriotti.com)

