Suggestions for acting in allyship with the Two Spirit Community on Campus
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INTRODUCTION

About Egale Canada Human Rights Trust

Egale works to improve the lives of LGBTQI2S people in Canada and to enhance the global response to LGBTQI2S issues. Egale will achieve this by informing public policy, inspiring cultural change, and promoting human rights and inclusion through research, education and community engagement.

WHAT IS THIS GUIDE?

This guide is designed to help campuses build inclusive environments for Two Spirit and self-identified Indigenous and LGBTQI students by:

- Providing basic information about the processes of settler colonialism and its impact on Indigenous and Two Spirit people;
- Discussing Indigenous approaches and barriers to mental health
- Outlining strategies to support Two Spirit students on campus.

Students, staff members and directors, health service providers, and residence staff can use this guide as a resource to support Two Spirit, self-identified Indigenous, and LGBTQI people on campus, and to build environments that are inclusive to their unique and diverse experiences and needs.

WHAT IS ALLYSHIP?

Allyship is a process of standing up for and with people who experience marginalization. An ally is someone who believes in the dignity and respect of all people and takes action by supporting and/or advocating with groups experiencing social injustice. An ally does not identify as a member of the group they are supporting. For example, a heterosexual person can act as an ally for gay people and communities and a cisgender lesbian can act as an ally for trans people and communities.

Allyship is a never-ending process of education and continual learning about institutions that continue to isolate, stigmatize, and discriminate against racially diverse, Indigenous, queer, trans and gender diverse people. Only through education can allies gain the skills and language to recognize and help to disrupt the workings of a system which they themselves are not negatively impacted. Only through acting in allyship, including engaging in processes of educating oneself, listening to those who experience social injustice, and addressing issues of social injustice, can that person be able to help create a safer space.
Everyone has the right to feel safe and included. Creating a safer space is about building an environment where someone can feel free to be themselves, regardless of race, religion, sex, attraction (sexual orientation), size, age, ability, socioeconomic status or any other intersection of identity. A safer space is an environment in which everyone feels comfortable expressing themselves and participating fully, without fear of attack, ridicule or denial of experience. An LGBTQI2S safer space is welcoming, supportive and free of any type of discrimination for queer, trans, and questioning individuals. For Two Spirit people and communities, it is important that safer spaces are aware of what anti-Indigenous racism looks and sounds like, and have steps and protocols in place to challenge it. When these safer spaces are created and fostered, it allows each of its members to achieve their greatest potential which only work to strengthen the entire community.

An absolute safe space has the challenges and limitations of trying to achieve perfection, which is nearly impossible (how can we guarantee a space will always be safe for everyone?). Instead, it is more productive to work towards making spaces safer for all students and staff. Hence ‘safer space’, a concept that acknowledges safer spaces are a ‘work in progress’, and spaces in need of constant maintenance and attention to keep them safer, inclusive, and welcoming to LGBTQI2S communities and allies. This means we need to ensure proper policies are put into place and that homophobic, biphobic and transphobic comments, behaviours, and attitudes are not tolerated and always reprimanded. Safer space means continuously addressing all forms of discrimination in a space including racism, ableism, classism, fatphobia, sexism, ageism, and xenophobia. A safer space is one in which discomfort and learning happens in respectful and caring ways.

For more information on Indigenous approaches and barriers to mental health, please refer to our Mental Health Resources & Peer to Peer Networking Guide.
Beginning in the 1400s, European people voyaged in search of resources that could be exported back to Europe for profit. When these settlers and explorers arrived on foreign lands, they brought with them their beliefs and judgements about race, gender, governing, and all aspects of culture. These ideas included systems of oppression that we know today as racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia. They were imposed onto Indigenous societies throughout the world — including the peoples on the land we now know as Canada. These systems of oppression affect many communities, in particular racialized communities and LGBTQI communities.

Indigenous peoples represented a barrier to the ability of settlers to export land-based resources back to Europe. To fully gain access to the resources that Turtle Island had to offer, Indigenous peoples needed to be removed.

In many cases, Indigenous peoples were forced to relocate or to inhabit only a small portion of the land that they once would have used. In some cases, entire nations, such as the Beothuk of Newfoundland, were completely wiped out.
“When Columbus arrived in America there were a large number of different and distinct Indigenous cultures, but there were no Indians. The Indian is the invention of the European… the Indian began as a White a man’s mistake, and became a White man’s fantasy”.

– Daniel Francis, The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture

**Indigenous:** This is the best term to use if you don’t know someone’s specific identity (e.g., Mohawk, Blackfoot, Haida). This term includes First Nations, Métis and Inuit. Whenever possible, it is important to use the names of specific nations, specific bands, and the specific geographical location of their origin. For example, Moose Cree from Moose Factory, Chippewas of Rama First Nation, or Mohawk from Six Nations of the Grand River.

**First Nations:** This term widely replaced the term “Indians” starting in the 1970s. It has no legal definition but refers to communities other than Métis and Inuit.

**Aboriginal:** This term was added to the Constitution in 1982. More recently it’s been rejected in Manitoba and Ontario for lumping all Indigenous peoples together and labeling them with an English term.

**Indian:** This term originated with Columbus’s arrival in North America in 1492. In addition to being incorrect, it is usually associated with discrimination in Canada. It is still used in legal contexts such as the Indian Act.
**Examples of Anti-Indigenous Violence Throughout History Until Today**

Many different processes and tactics contributed to the decimation of Canada’s Indigenous peoples. Click on each of the terms below to read articles about each event.

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There are individuals documented in our history, men who dressed as women and took husbands and of great women warriors who took wives and carried a bow...Sometimes it meant a dream. A young woman who dreamt of warriors' of hunters' weapon would know her course. Young boys who preferred the company of women, cooking instead of going on the hunt, was also born for a different reason than most. People did not interfere with this” (Deschamps, 1998, p1).

In 1990, Myra Laramee coined the term Two Spirit, which was adopted at a gathering of native American and Canadian Indigenous LGBTQI2S people in Manitoba. Two Spirit is an umbrella term that allows for anyone who self-identifies as both Indigenous and as having an LGBTQI identity; it is an English term that captures the many Indigenous words that describe sexual and gender diverse identities. Some Indigenous people choose to identify as Two Spirit rather than, or in addition to, identifying as LGBTQI. Prior to European arrival, many Indigenous nations had gender identities that would not fall within the gender binary, and many nations also supported attraction preferences that were not heterosexual.

“IT has been prophesized that until our Two Spirit people are brought back to the sacred circle, only then will there be healing for our native communities.”

— Harlan Pruden, Founder of the NorthEast Two-Spirit Society

Some examples of Indigenous Two Spirit identities from different nations include:

**Cree:** A Cree Two Spirit identity is encapsulated by the word “aayahkwew”, which means “neither man or woman”

**Inuit:** An Inuktitut word for a Two Spirit identity is “sipiniq”, which loosely translates to “infant whose sex changes at birth”.

**Mohawk:** In Kanien’kehà:ka, or Mohawk language “onón:wat” means “I have the pattern of two spirits inside my body.”

In many nations, those who had identities like those listed above, were respected members of their communities. They were often afforded special status based on their unique abilities to understand both male and female perspectives. The term Two Spirit affirms the interrelatedness of all aspects of identity — including gender, sexuality, community, culture, and spirituality. Many Two Spirit identities and their teachings were lost due to the impacts of colonization. These identities were recognized and celebrated from a young age as gifts from the creator and Two Spirit people were often the visionaries, healers and medicine people.
“The place where two discriminations meet is a dangerous place to live.” — Richard (Anguksuar) LaFortune, Two Spirit citizen of the Yupik tribe, Alaska (Independent Lens — Two Spirit — PBS)

The atrocities of colonialism continues to manifest today. People who are both Indigenous and LGBTQI2S experience homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia as well as racism in their everyday lives. This experience of multiple intersecting forms of oppression is known as “intersectionality”, a term coined by Kimberly Crenshaw.

Inter-generational trauma is ongoing within Indigenous communities as a result of these processes of colonization. Two Spirit people often experience stigma within the broader Indigenous community, which is one of the major factors that many Two Spirit people are forced to migrate to urban centres from reserves or small rural communities.

“You leave your community because it’s not safe in your community anymore. It’s hard probably to even get the approval of others - in your own family. It goes actually against the whole idea of a native family, because a native family is very close and you stay together.”

(Brotman et al. 2002, p 15).

“You leave your community because it’s not safe in your community anymore. It’s hard probably to even get the approval of others - in your own family. It goes actually against the whole idea of a native family, because a native family is very close and you stay together. Traditionally if you’re married you’re still there, you stay with the family, you don’t leave. . . you’re always together, you spend lunches, dinners, you’re living together. And when you’re Two Spirit you’re different and unaccepted and everybody in the family wants to make sure that that fact is hidden. The only way that you can be yourself is to leave the place, essentially [stop being] native, which is to leave your family and try to find something elsewhere” (Brotman et al. 2002, p 15).
Mental Health in Marginalized Communities

Positive mental health is “more than the absence of a [...] condition or illness; it is a positive sense of well-being, or the capacity to enjoy life and deal with life challenges we face” (CMHA, 2016).

Marginalized people and communities encounter discrimination, stigmatization and traumatic experiences at disproportionately higher rates than non-marginalized populations. These experiences are motivated by intolerance, fear, or hatred in many social contexts: homes, schools, communities, religious and spiritual centres, public spaces, and health institutions.

Having to constantly navigate hostile social environments can result in the development of mental health challenges (Mental Health commission of Canada, 2012) and imposes a ‘minority’ stress. This type of chronic high level stress is faced by people of minority identities that experience ongoing internal and external stigmatization, discrimination, victimization, lack of societal understanding and concealment of identity in these social environments.

LGBTQI2S people are more likely to experience mental health issues in comparison to cisgender and/or heterosexual people. For example, according to an Ontario study on the mental health of trans people, almost 75% of trans adults had considered suicide and 43% had attempted suicide at some point in their lives. Oppressive societal norms, including lack of gender neutral facilities like bathrooms and change rooms, under/unemployment due to discrimination based on gender identity, homelessness and housing instability, lack of matching identification and access to appropriate transition care, and experiences of pathologization, trauma and mistrust within the healthcare system all contribute to marginalized stress and resulting mental health challenges.

When people experience intersectional marginalizations (e.g. attraction/gender identity AND ethnic/racialized discrimination), it increases the likelihood of developing a mental health concern and/or mental illness over and above individuals presenting with one form of oppression. This is why rates of mental health can be higher among Indigenous, racialized and newcomer LGBTQI2S people as it compounds with racism and homophobia.

\[
\text{“One cannot consider mental wellness without considering the connectedness to all aspects of mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual. This consideration should not be just centred on the individual but on the family and to the community as a whole” (Source: Input Request Survey, MW & SU Tripartite Strategy Council, 2012).}
\]

Suppressing indigenous identities and cultural practices is a form of disempowerment and oppression that impacts one’s self-identity, well-being, self-esteem, and agency. It is important to engage in cultural practices and language revitalization to allow for individual and community healing. This includes adopting Indigenous approaches to mental health and wellness.
For many Indigenous nations, the Medicine Wheel or Sacred Hoop, represents a worldview in which life is interconnected of the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual elements of one’s well-being. The circle represents the continuous interaction of all elements, the cycle of knowledge, as well as the four stages of life - childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and elderhood. Medicine Wheels are culturally-specific among Indigenous nations and are tied to their cultural teachings, relation to ancestral land, and their nation’s traditional medicines.

Indigenous people exist in urban centers (where there tends to be more mental health care services) yet we continue to health disparities because of racism and social exclusion. A study conducted by The Urban Aboriginal Task force (UATF) found that 78% of Indigenous participants identified racism as a major problem that compounds mental health, including housing and employment discrimination, interactions with the police and treatment in public spaces. We also see that Indigenous people are less likely to access mental health resources in times of need because of this fear of discrimination and history of institutionalization. Self-determination is a very important part of mental health and wellbeing, and it is difficult to access that when you cannot see yourself represented in systems of healthcare or when the care you do receive is unsafe.

The Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP) indicated that 48% of participants reported experiences of racism and Indigenous youth were more likely to report internalized racism because it has become so deeply ingrained in the environment and circumstances that they are in.

It’s important to understand that Two Spirit people can fall anywhere along the LGBTQI spectrum if they also self-identify as being Indigenous. The Genderbread person is an explanation of the differences between Gender Identity, Gender Expression, Assigned Sex, and Attraction identity. Two Spirit identities can look many different ways in that folks with different different combinations of Gender Identity, Gender Expression, Assigned Sex, and Attraction Identity can all identify as Two Spirit.
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**Glossary**

**General Terms**

**Sex/Assigned Sex:** The classification of a person as male, female or intersex based on biological characteristics, including chromosomes, hormones, external genitalia and reproductive organs. Most often, sex is assigned by a medical professional at birth and is based on a visual assessment of external genitalia.

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

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

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

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

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

**Gender Fluidity:** The recognition that social constructions of gender identity and gender expressions lie along a spectrum and cannot be limited to two genders; a feeling that one’s gender varies from societal notions of two genders.

**LGBTQ:** An acronym for “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Two-Spirit, Queer and Questioning” people. This acronym is often used as an umbrella term to encompass a broad spectrum of identities related to gender and attraction. This acronym takes many forms and can include: LGBPTTIQ+.
**Ally:** An ally is someone who believes in the dignity and respect of all people and takes action by supporting and/or advocating with groups experiencing social injustice. An ally does not identify as a member of the group they are supporting (e.g., a heterosexual person can act as an ally for gay people and communities; a cisgender lesbian can act as an ally for trans people and communities).

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

**SEX**

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

**ATTRACTION**

**Asexual (adj):** A person who may not experience sexual attraction or who has little or no interest in sexual activity.

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

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

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

**Lesbian (adj or n):** A female-identified person who experiences attraction to people of the same sex and/or gender.
**Gender Identity**

**Cisgender (adj):** A person whose gender identity corresponds with the sex assigned to them at birth (e.g., a cisgender man is someone who identifies as a man and who was assigned male sex at birth).

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

**Gender Diverse (adj):** An umbrella term for gender identities and/or gender expressions that differ from cultural or societal expectations based on assigned sex.

**Transgender (adj):** A person who does not identify with the gender associated with the sex assigned to them at birth. This term is most frequently associated with movement from one side of the gender binary to the other. Many transsexual people feel a strong need to access medical transition to physically alter their bodies (e.g., hormone therapies and/or gender affirming surgeries). For some people this is a stigmatizing term because of its historical association with the pathologization of gender diverse people, and the implication that a person’s gender identity is not valid unless they medically transition.

**Trans (adj):** Often used as an umbrella term to encompass a variety of gender-diverse identities, including transgender, transsexual and genderqueer. Some people may identify with these or other specific terms, but not with the term trans. Similarly, some people may identify as trans, but not with other terms under the trans umbrella.

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

**Trans Woman (n):** A person whose sex assigned at birth is male or intersex, and identifies as a woman may identify as a trans woman. May also be referred to as MtF/M2F (Male-to-Female) or ItF/I2F (Intersex-to-Female).
**Terms Associated With Both Attraction Gender Identity**

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

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

**Two Spirit (or 2-spirit) (adj):** An English umbrella term that reflects the many words used in different Indigenous languages to affirm the interrelatedness of multiple aspects of identity—including gender, sexuality, community, culture and spirituality. Prior to the imposition of the sex/gender binary by European colonizers, some Indigenous cultures recognized Two Spirit people as respected members of their communities. Two Spirit people were often accorded special status based upon their unique abilities to understand and move between masculine and feminine perspectives, acting as visionaries, healers and medicine people. Some Indigenous people identify as Two Spirit rather than, or in addition to, identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or queer.
**DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF GENDER IDENTITY AND ATTRACTION**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Monosexism (Binegativity):** Prejudice and discrimination in favour of single sex and/or gender attraction. This includes the presumption of monosexuality as the superior and more desirable form of attraction.

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

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

**Transphobia:** Fear and/or hatred of any perceived transgression of gender norms, often exhibited by name-calling, bullying, exclusion, prejudice, discrimination, or acts of violence—anyone who is trans (or assume to be) can be the target of transphobia.
The work of supporting Two Spirit individuals involves practicing of allyship. This is a constant and ongoing process of learning as well as unlearning the current social structures to challenge those oppressive systems that make spaces unsafe for Two Spirit individuals.

In doing this work, allies act out of responsibility - in order to do so, it is important to do the following:

- Listen to Indigenous and LGBTQI2S people when they tell you about their experiences of discrimination, harassment, stress and anxiety. Engage in conversation to understand the needs of Two Spirit people and how you can better support them. In doing so, it’s important to give more space for listening and less for speaking in order to understand how these experience might differ from your expectations and perceptions.

- Reflect on your level of understanding regarding Indigenous and LGBTQI2S identities and seek for more information to learn.

- Do your own research to learn more about Indigenous and LGBTQI2S identities and experiences, specifically in understanding the connection between how racialized and ethnic identities are often constructed in relation to gender identities (a good place to start is in the attached resources!). It is important to understand how Indigenous identity and LGBTQI2S identities can intersect and be held by one person - and that their experience moving through the world will be impacted by holding those identities simultaneously.

- Though hearing lived experience first hand is crucial, do not expect or rely on others who hold those identities and experience oppression based on them to educate you.

- Reflect on your potential biases and privileges, and acknowledge them in open discussions.

- In learning about other experiences, it is important to first reflect on your own biases and privilege so as to feel confident in consciously addressing and challenging potential student stereotypes and inappropriate language regarding Indigenous and LGBTQI2S people.

- An important part of understanding the concept of privilege is understanding the different ways in which elements of an individual’s identity may, or may not allow them access to resources and acceptance in society. Many of these identity elements are determined early on in life, as a result of birth, such as race, gender identity, sex and ability. Others may be a choice later in life, such as religion and aspects of cultural expression. The ways in which someone's varying identities intersect, in any given social space, will often determine the way they are treated.

- When someone is used to the privileges they have access to, they might not always be aware of the impact it has on their life – and that’s one way privilege works! Sometimes you don’t have to think about it so you can focus on other things. However, this lack of awareness can perpetuate ideas of what is considered “normal” and “not normal”, which is why acknowledging your privilege is a really important first step to act in allyship. Particularly for Indigenous communities, acknowledging gender identity is really essential, because cisgendered men hold power...
in both Indigenous and LGBTQI2S communities, and are sometimes better positioned to advocate for the needs of others.

- Gauge and inform yourself about the school culture and level of inclusiveness regarding Indigenous and LGBTQI2S identities

- Engage your students in conversations about awareness and assess the climate of your school. It may be worthwhile to connect with coworkers to gauge the degree to which gender and racial diversity has been included in other courses, student services, and campus life.

- Hold yourself and others accountable of actions and behaviors - be ready to name and challenge stereotypes and inappropriate language

- Language is powerful. Not only is it important to think about the language you use and how it makes spaces safe or unsafe for Two Spirit individuals, but it’s also important to hold other people accountable if and when they do the same. Part of that includes naming experiences, behaviors, actions, words or phrases as oppressive, and using the language of transphobia, homophobia, biphobia, sexism and racism as well as the concepts of colonialism is a first step in identifying what is going on.

- Not only do you have to hold yourself accountable to address oppressive behavior and language that make spaces unsafe for Two Spirit individuals, it is important to be able to identify, label and address those of others that you witness. Part of that includes naming experiences and actions as oppressive. So if you see behavior, action, words, and phrases that negatively treat or impact Two Spirit people, labeling that as racism, sexism, homophobia is the first step to addressing how it hurts and what you can do to change it.

- Be ready to make mistakes, receive feedback with humility, and strive to do better.

- Allyship doesn’t mean you’re always going to get it right. Due to the privileges people hold, mistakes will be made, sometimes without knowing. When receiving feedback, this process may elicit discomfort and you will be challenged; in this incidence, it is crucial to understand that your needs as an ally will have to be secondary to the Indigenous and LGBTQI2S people you seek to support. Moreover, it is important to appreciate receiving feedback so to build trust and rapport with Indigenous and LGBTQI2S people that you are working with.

In doing this work of support for Two Spirit students, it is absolutely pertinent to remember that allyship is a verb and not a noun. It is action driven and should only be identified by those who you seek to act in solidarity with. Lastly, do not expect recognition or praise for confronting oppression that Two Spirit individuals have to live with everyday - it is part of the role as an ally and a support to be acting in allyship out of genuine interest to create safer spaces on campus.

For lists of resources that are specific to Two Spirit Mental Health Supports for Post Secondary Students, see our Peer to Peer Support Guide here.
About Egale Canada Human Rights Trust

Founded in 1995, Egale Canada Human Rights Trust (Egale) is dedicated to advancing LGBTQI2S human rights through education, research and community engagement. Egale’s vision is a Canada, and ultimately a world, without homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and all other forms of oppression so that every person can achieve their full potential, free from hatred and bias.

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