



Affirmation Counts!

Rogue Witterick
OARTY Conference
June, 2018



SPACE FOR CHANGE



One Hour To Raise Questions

WELCOME

- The power of silence
- Obligations
- Risks and challenges overview
- Opportunities for Affirmation
- Q & A

COMMITMENT

Gender and Sexuality Rights for Children and Youth

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Ontario Human Rights Code and Canadian Human Rights Act
- Child, Youth and Family Services Act
- Safe and Accepting Schools Act
- Affirming Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Act

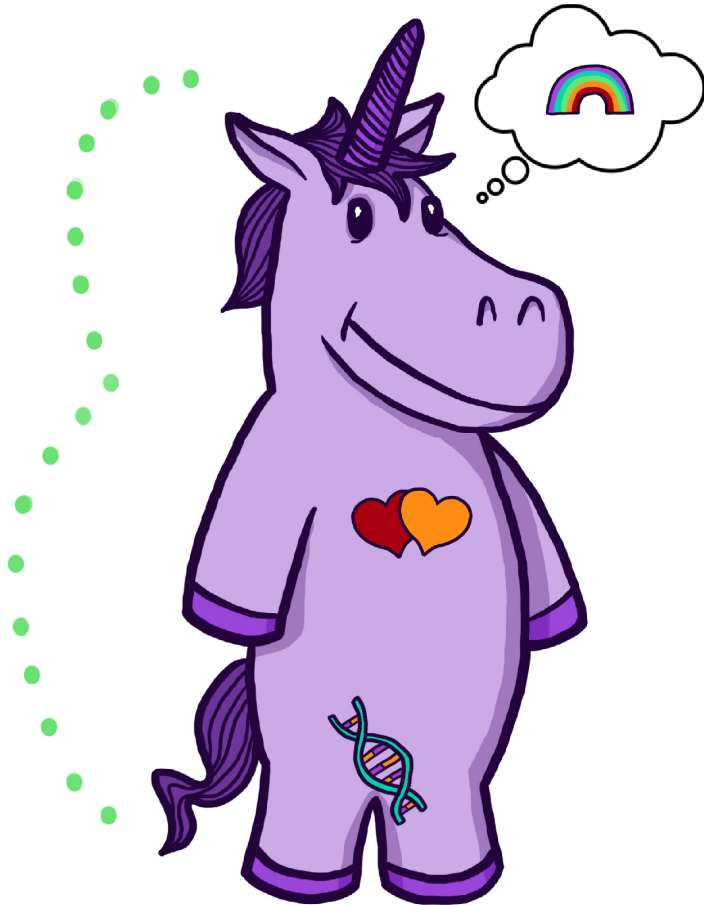


Key Principles of Gender Affirmation




- Gender identity and expression are universal, individual rights, to be protected. No one should experience discrimination or harassment due to their gender identity or expression.
- Childhood (and lifelong) gender variance is part of healthy human diversity, to be respected, included and celebrated.
- Attempts to change, suppress or discourage a young person's gender identity or expression have significant, documented negative health outcomes.

The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



Gender Identity

-  Female/Woman/Girl
-  Male/Man/Boy
-  Other Gender(s)

Gender Expression

-  Feminine
-  Masculine
-  Other

Sex Assigned at Birth

-  Female
-  Male
-  Other/Intersex

Physically Attracted to

-  Women
-  Men
-  Other Gender(s)

Emotionally Attracted to

-  Women
-  Men
-  Other Gender(s)

To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore
www.The519.org

The Power of Silence

Debriefing



- How did it feel?
- What strategies did you use to cope?
- What would be the long term impact of this?

Risks and Challenges

Family Rejection

Repeated rejection from your home (s) based on your LGBTQI2S identity is a traumatic reality for many young people.



How do we need to work with youth where family reconciliation may not be possible?

Risks and Challenges

Housing Instability & Homelessness

- How can we prevent youth with gender and sexual diversities from becoming adults experiencing chronic homelessness?
- Without 2SLGBTQI safe(r) spaces, youth will continue to choose street living



Risks and Challenges

Harassment & Violence

LGBTQ2S YOUTH ARE ESPECIALLY
VULNERABLE

to mental health concerns, and face increased risk of physical & sexual exploitation, substance use & suicide.

98% of trans Ontarians report at least one experience of transphobia. Experiences of transphobia are nearly universal.

WHY ARE LGBTQ2S PEOPLE AT HIGHER RISK?

STIGMA
DISCRIMINATION
REJECTION
VIOLENCE
TRAUMA
PREJUDICE

Risks and Challenges

Inequitable Health Care Access

- Lack of 2SLGBTQI competent, accessible mental health support (and vulnerability to suicide)
- Barriers to accessing medical services related to transition
- Lack of 2SLGBTQI competent sexual health support or information
- Avoidance even of emergency services, due to fear of discrimination and involuntary outing

Layers of Barriers



- Internalized



- Interpersonal



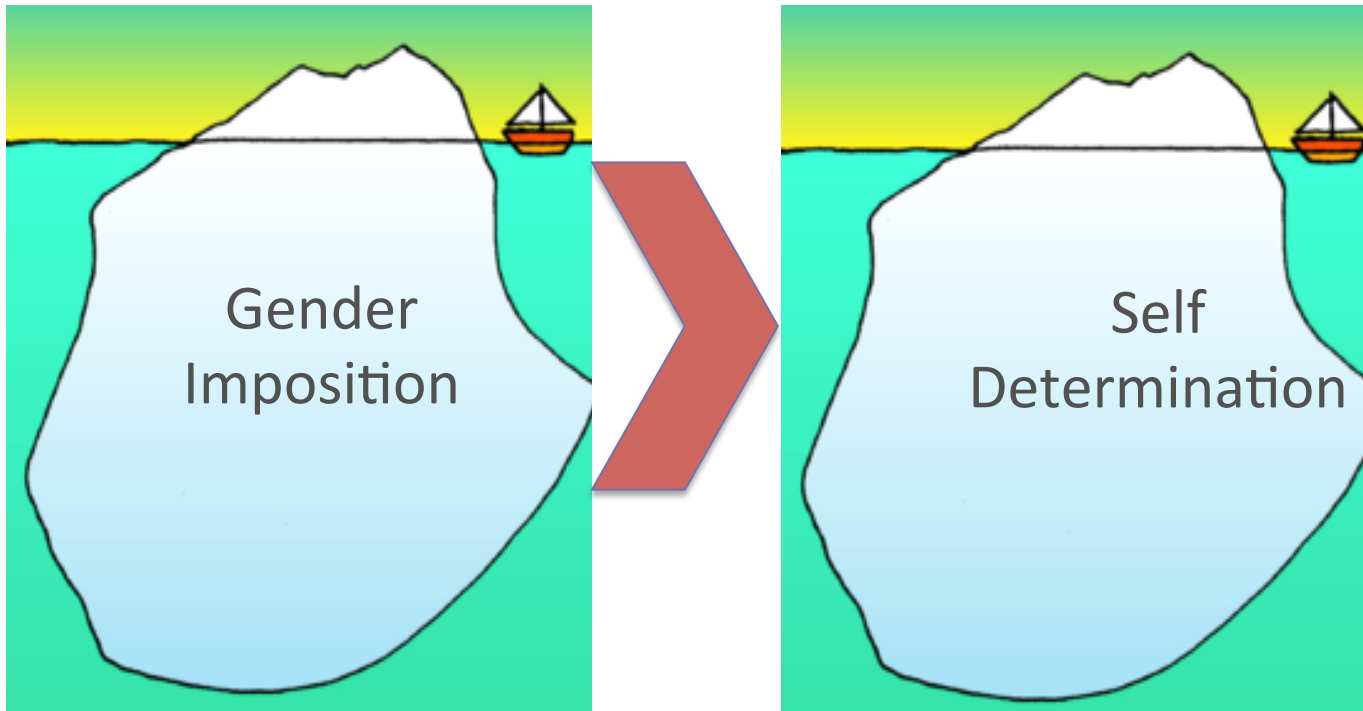
- Institutional



- Cultural

Opportunities for Affirmation

Names and Pronouns



- Protected by human rights law
- Promotes health and well being

How do we make everyday interactions – starting conversations, talking about relationships and/ or addressing people – more inclusive?

GENDER-SPECIFIC PRONOUNS

are the ways we refer to each other in the third person. People who are transitioning in some way **might choose to change their pronouns.**

SHE

HIS

HE

HERS

GENDER-NEUTRAL PRONOUNS

THEY
THEM
THEIR

ZE [ZEE]
SIE [SEE]
ZIE [ZEE]
HIR [HEAR]

A person's right to tell you what name and pronoun to use (even if it doesn't resonate with legal ID or appearance) is protected under the OHRC protection for gender expression.

Opportunities for Affirmation

Access to Transition

- How can you support a young person to navigate access to social, legal or medical transition activities?
- Recognize transition as defined and driven by the individual themselves

Opportunities for Affirmation

Adults Need Affirmation Skills

- Closed spaces
- Equipping families and staff working in home spaces with affirmation skills
- Fostering connection
- Role modelling and representation

Opportunities for Affirmation

Educate with First Impressions

1. Promotion
2. Intake, registration and data management
3. Recruitment for Employment
4. Venues for communicating expectations
5. Waiting Rooms, Phone Manner & Bathrooms

A SPACE WHERE PEOPLE CAN FIND THEMSELVES REPRESENTED AND REFLECTED AND WHERE THEY UNDERSTAND THAT ALL PEOPLE ARE TREATED WITH RESPECT AND DIGNITY.

Opportunities for Affirmation

Start with Small Safer Space and Grow

“We know that LGBTQ students are at higher risk for suicide, in part because they are more often targeted for bullying and discrimination,” says Elizabeth Saewyc, lead author of a UBC study. “But heterosexual students can also be the target of homophobic bullying. When policies and supportive programs like GSAs are in place long enough to change the environment of the school, it’s better for students’ mental health, no matter what their orientation.”

The Trauma of Micro Aggressions



This Work is About Listening

- Listen and acknowledge what a person's experiences are and what that person identifies as their needs
- Prioritize relationship and trust (avoid intrusive questioning, focus on fostering open and welcoming space for people to share if they want to)
- Provide education, learning opportunities and increased visibility of diversity for everyone in the space
- Understand the importance and positive health outcomes of facilitating consistent connection

519 Tools and Resources:

Creating Authentic Spaces

A GENDER IDENTITY AND GENDER EXPRESSION
TOOLKIT TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF INSTITUTIONAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE



Thank You!