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### 10 Tips for Being More Inclusive of Gender and Sexuality

Centre for Equity and Inclusion

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## 10 TIPS FOR BEING MORE INCLUSIVE OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY

- 1. USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE.** You only know someone's gender or sexuality if they tell you. Try not to assume. Use inclusive language even if you know someone's gender or sexuality. For example, you can use "they" to refer to someone, or to refer to their partner/spouse, instead of assuming "he" or "she."
- 2. DISTINGUISH BETWEEN GENDER, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, AND SEX.** Gender is someone's internal sense of self, related to masculinity or femininity or a rejection of these concepts. Words associated with gender might include trans, woman, man, and others. Sexual orientation refers to someone's sexual, romantic, and personal attractions or lack of these attractions. Words associated with sexual orientation might include bi, lesbian, gay, asexual, and others. Sex often is understood to refer to biological features, but it is not actually clearly defined and, like gender, is also a social construct. Words associated with sex may include trans, female, male, intersex, and others. Sex is also something that some people do.
- 3. REMEMBER THAT ANYONE COULD BE QUEER, BI, LESBIAN, GAY, ASEXUAL, OR IDENTIFY WITH OTHER SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS.** Assuming that everyone is straight, until you are told otherwise, is a type of heterosexism, and this is part of why people who don't identify as straight face discrimination. Try to assume nothing, and work hard to question stereotypes.
- 4. BE CAREFUL HOW YOU USE SOME LABELS FOR GENDER AND SEXUALITY.** Sometimes some members of gender- and sexually-diverse communities use words that were or are insults. Not everyone in LGBTQ+ communities reclaim these words, and they can still be hurtful. It's best to avoid such words or labels, especially when talking to people that you don't know well.
- 5. DON'T 'OUT' PEOPLE.** Don't force anyone to disclose their gender or sexual orientation. Just because someone has told you, it does not mean that they give you permission to tell others. Some people are 'out' in some situations but not in others. For example, a student may be open about their gender or sexual orientation at school, but not at work.
- 6. CREATE SPACE FOR MEMBERS OF GENDER- AND SEXUALLY-DIVERSE COMMUNITIES TO TELL THEIR STORIES, AND HEAR THE STORIES OF OTHERS FROM THEIR COMMUNITIES.** Lived experience is expertise, and it is important to create space for people to talk about their experiences, and to ensure that people see themselves in

curriculum and in the workplace. Making space for people to talk about their experience without being questioned or shut down sends a message that their experience is valuable too, and we can all learn from it.

**7. EDUCATE YOURSELF.** If you don't know or understand something about members of gender- and sexually-diverse communities, do some research, contact LGBTQ+ community services, or at Sheridan, the Centre for Equity and Inclusion. Recognize any discomfort you have and use it as a chance to grow and learn. Don't expect that individual members of the community will educate you, but if you have a friendly relationship with someone, you can ask them, politely, for guidance or about their experiences. Think about whether certain questions would make you feel uncomfortable if they were asked of you.

**8. DON'T LAUGH AT JOKES, SLURS, OR OTHER NEGATIVE COMMENTS THAT PUT DOWN MEMBERS OF GENDER- AND SEXUALLY-DIVERSE COMMUNITIES.** Speak up if you can to interrupt a joke that makes fun of people who are trans, gay, or two-spirit (for example). Silence

promotes these behaviours. There are also ways that you can be supportive of someone who is being harassed; even if you don't feel safe confronting a harasser, you can give someone an opportunity to get out of the situation or you can offer support privately.

**9. KNOW ABOUT INTERSECTIONALITY.** We all have multiple aspects of our identity that interact in complex ways. Someone who identifies as lesbian, and has a visible disability may experience homophobia in different ways than someone who is lesbian and does not have a disability. In this case homophobia and ableism intersect. Someone who identifies as a trans woman and as Black may experience negativity that combines transphobia and racism. Intersectionality means that different parts of our identity may be more or less present based on both our experience and context.

**10. BE OPEN-MINDED.** Just because something may not be your experience, it does not mean that it is strange or abnormal. You will learn a lot about yourself if you open yourself up to better understanding the experience of others.

Adapted from the UBC brochure "Recognizing Heterosexism and Homophobia: Creating an AntiHeterosexist, Homophobia-Free Campus."

To receive this information in an accessible format, please contact the Centre for Equity and Inclusion at the email or phone extension below.

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