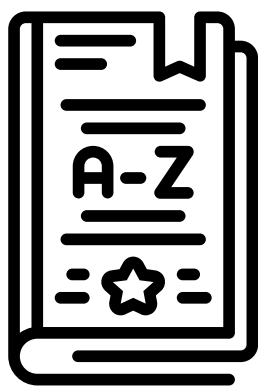


# LET'S TALK ABOUT

## *Terms and Definitions*

Language is constantly evolving and changing. Creating a list of terminology is a challenge because of that. This list is a starting point for your growing knowledge, and we encourage you to do further reading about these terms, their histories, and how our understandings are constantly growing in nuanced ways.



### WHY IS TERMINOLOGY IMPORTANT?

For communities that have experienced marginalization and oppression, terminology related to identity has deep importance. For those whose identities have been vilified, claiming labels proudly can be profoundly empowering. Labels and terminology allow for connections to be made and communities to be formed around common experiences in cisnormative and heteronormative society.

Taking the time to familiarize yourself with these terms is an important part of allyship, as it allows you to better understand your peers and colleagues, and provides a starting point for you to build a greater understanding of yourself.

**Agender:** Individuals who identify as not having a gender. A gender people may identify as gender-neutral, without a gender or as having an unknowable gender.

**Ally:** An individual who is supportive of sexual and gender minority (LGBTQ2+) people and their human rights.

**Asexual:** A person whose attraction to others does not include, or is not solely based on, sexuality.

**Bisexual:** A person whose primary and affection orientation is toward people of the same and other genders, or towards people regardless of their gender.

**Cisgender:** An individual whose gender identity society deems to match the person's sex that was assigned at birth. (i.e. People who are not trans).

**Cissexism:** The pervasive system of discrimination and exclusion that oppresses people whose gender and/or gender expression falls outside of cis-normative constructs. This system is founded on the belief that there are, and should be, only two genders and that one's gender or most aspects of it, are inevitably tied to assigned sex.

**Fag/Faggot:** A derogatory term for a gay man. Historically, the term was used to describe a bundle of sticks used to burn individuals at the stake that went against the church, such as those accused of same-sex behavior.

**Gay:** A sexual and affectional orientation toward people of the same gender.



**Gender Binary:** A social system that recognizes only two distinct genders and requires everyone to be raised as a man or woman according to the sex assigned to them at birth.

**Gender Expression:** How one expresses oneself, in terms of dress and/or behaviors. Society, and people that make up society characterize these expressions as "masculine," "feminine," or "androgynous." Individuals may embody their gender in a multitude of ways and have terms beyond these to name their gender expression(s)

**Gender Identity:** An individual's internal sense of their gender. For example, a person may identify as transgender, genderqueer, woman, man, or some other identity, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth.

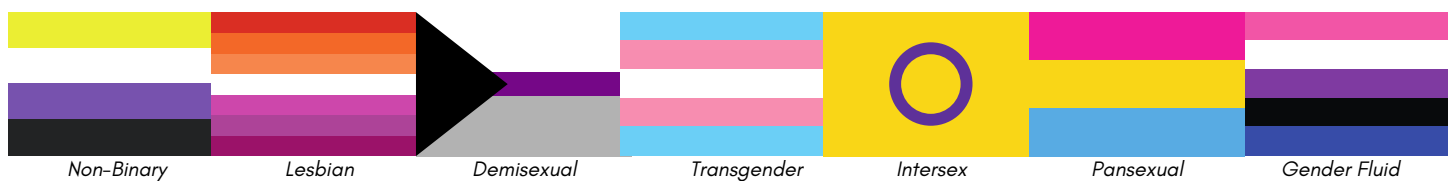
**Gender Non-Conforming (GNC):** People who do not subscribe to gender expressions or roles expected of them by society.

**Gender Transition:** The process of aligning one's physical body and gender expression with one's gender identity. This may or may not include surgery, hormone therapy, and changes in dress, appearance, name, and pronoun usage. Gender affirmation is a synonymous term. For example, gender-affirmation surgery.

**Gender Diverse/Creative:** Umbrella terms referring to individuals whose gender expression (how you present your gender to society, and how others read your gender identity) differs from the culturally constructed male/female gender binary, or what is societally expected of them. The phrase gender creative is often used in reference to children.

**Gender Queer:** A person 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.

**GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance or Gender-Sexuality Alliance):** Student organizations found in some K-12 schools and post-secondary institutions that create safe and supportive places for sexual and gender minority students and their allies. Queer-Straight Alliance is also a commonly used term in Alberta.



*\*Please note that there are many more flags than we have space in this document.*

**Heterosexism:** The assumption that all people are or should be heterosexual. Heterosexism excludes the needs, concerns, and life experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer people while it gives advantages to heterosexual people. It is often a subtle form of oppression, which reinforces realities of silence and erasure.

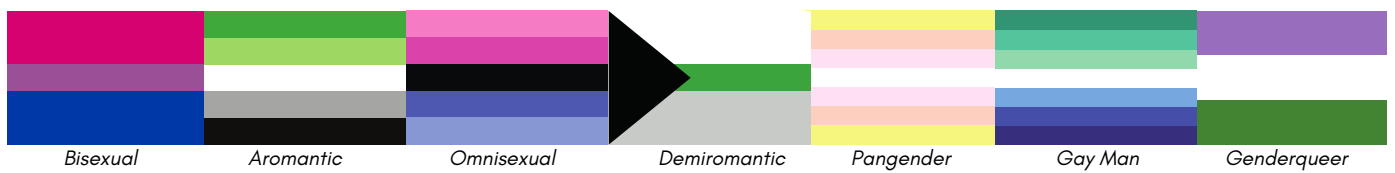
**Heteronormativity:** A system or cultural bias, that works, often unconsciously, to normalize behaviors and societal expectations that are tied to the presumption of heterosexuality and an adherence to a strict gender binary.

**Homonegativity:** Negative attitudes towards lesbian, gay, and bisexual people and relationships.

**Heterosexuality:** A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of a gender other than their own.

**Homophobia:** An irrational fear or hatred of people who are, or perceived to be, gay, lesbian, or bisexual, often exhibited by prejudice, discrimination, intimidation, or acts of violence.

**Homosexual:** Associated with a medical model, this term refers to a person who is physically and emotionally attracted to someone of the same gender. This is an outdated term that carries negative connotations due to its association with the medicalization and discrimination of LGBTQ2+ people.



Bisexual

Aromantic

Omnisexual

Demiromantic

Pangender

Gay Man

Genderqueer

**Inclusive Language:** The use of gender non-specific language (i.e. “partner” instead of “husband/girlfriend” or “they” instead of “he/she”, etc.) to indicate consideration of sexual and gender minority and non-binary individuals.

**Intersex:** A general umbrella term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn’t seem to fit the culturally constructed categories of ‘female’ or ‘male’. Some people’s natal physical sex may be physically ambiguous, and others may not discover that they are intersex until later on in life if they are chromosomally sex-variant and absent of any external indicators. There are more than 20 variations of intersex conditions.

**Lesbian:** A woman whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same gender.

**LGBTQ/LGBTQ2+/LGBTTTQIAP\*:** Initialisms that represent the constellation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two-spirit, queer, questioning, asexual, and pansexual identities. The asterisk or plus sign represents the inclusion of additional identities not represented in the initialism. ‘Sexual and gender minorities’ is synonymous and is often used as an umbrella category.

**Misgendering:** Attributing a gender to someone that is incorrect/does not align with their gender identity. Can occur when using pronouns, gendered language (i.e., “Hello ladies! “Hey guys”), or assigning genders to people without knowing how they identify (i.e., “Well, since we’re all women in this room, we understand...”).

**Non binary/Nonbinary/Non-binary:** A gender identity and experience that embraces a full universe of expressions and ways of being that resonate for an individual, moving beyond the male/female gender binary. It may be an active resistance to binary gender expectations and/or an intentional creation of new unbounded ideas of self within the world. For some people who identify as non binary there may be overlap with other concepts and identities like gender expansive and gender non-conforming.

**Outing:** The public disclosure of another person's sexual orientation or gender identity without that person’s express permission or knowledge. This can be very disrespectful and is potentially dangerous.

**Pansexual/Omnisexual:** Terms used to describe people who have romantic, sexual, or affectional desire for people of all genders and sexes.

**Pink Triangle:** Pink (for gay men) and Black (for lesbian women) triangle symbols were used by Nazis for gay and lesbian prisoners; now reclaimed as symbols of LGBTQ2+ pride.

**Polyamory:** Denotes consensually being in/open to multiple loving relationships at the same time. Some polyamorists (polyamorous people) consider “polyam” to be a relationship orientation. Sometimes used as an umbrella term for all forms of ethical, consensual, and loving non-monogamy.

**Queer:** Historically, a negative word for homosexuality. Recently it has been reclaimed and used in positive ways to describe LGBTQ2+ identities, communities, and social movements.



Agender

Two-Spirit

Polyamory

Genderflux

Polygender

Queer

Polysexual

**Rainbow Flag:** An international symbol of the LGBTQ2 movement designed by Gilbert Baker in 1978. Each of the six colours has a unique meaning. Red for life. Orange for healing. Yellow for sunlight. Green for nature. Blue for serenity. Purple for spirit.

**Reclaimed Language:** Taking back and reinvigorating historically negative and derogatory terms used by infusing them with positive meaning for personal, social, and community empowerment.

**Romantic Orientation:** Romantic Orientation is attraction or non-attraction to other people characterized by the expression or non-expression of love. Romantic orientation can be fluid and people use a variety of labels to describe their romantic orientation. See also Orientation.

**Sex:** a medically constructed categorization. Sex is often assigned based on the appearance of the genitalia, either in ultrasound or at birth.

**Sexual Orientation:** Feelings of attraction, behaviour, intimacy, or identification that direct people towards intimacy with others.

**Stonewall:** An LGBTQ2+ bar in New York City that was the site of 1969 riot between patrons and police. This event is considered to be the beginning of the modern gay liberation movement.

**Transgender/Trans/Trans-Identified:** Umbrella terms used to refer to individuals whose gender identity or expression differs from the sex or gender assigned to them at birth.

**Transmisogyny:** The unique discrimination experienced by trans women and transfeminine individuals, who face a combination of anti-trans and anti-women beliefs and practices.

**Transsexual:** An older term sometimes used to describe trans people undergoing gender affirmation surgeries and/or medical treatments. Unlike the word trans or transgender, transsexual is not an umbrella term, and not all trans individuals identify as transsexual. *NB This term is still considered a slur and its use is discouraged for non-trans people.*

**Two-Spirit:** A spiritual identity for some Indigenous people. This term implies the embodiment of both masculine and feminine spiritual qualities within the same body, and has different meanings for different Indigenous communities. Some Indigenous people use this term instead of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, etc.

Just as language continues to evolve, so too do visual symbols such as flags. In recent years, additional bands of colour have been added to better reflect the diversity within queer communities, and to acknowledge the additional struggles faced by BIPOC, trans, and intersex people.



Original, 1978



1978-1979



1979 Onwards



Philadelphia Pride  
Flag, 2017



Progress Pride, 2018

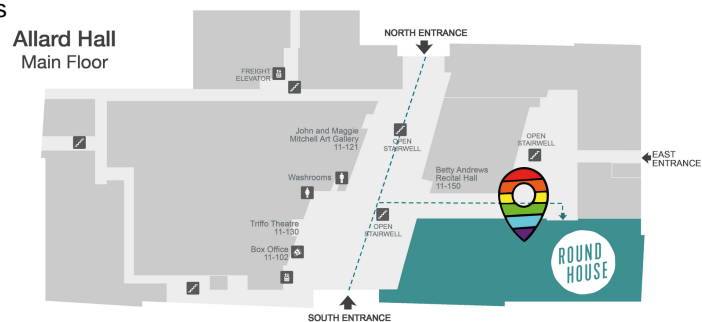


Progress Pride, 2021

- Black - Diversity
- Brown - Inclusivity
- Red - Life
- Orange - Healing
- Yellow - Sunlight
- Green - Nature
- Blue - Harmony
- Purple - Spirit
- Pink/Light Blue/White - Trans Pride Flag
- Yellow/Purple Circle - Intersex

## THE MACEWAN CENTRE FOR SEXUAL & GENDER DIVERSITY

The MacEwan Centre for Sexual and Gender Diversity serves as a dynamic interdisciplinary hub designed to foster community-engaged research, teaching, and an inclusive learning environment in support of sexual and gender minorities. The Centre supports the development of inclusive and responsive policies, evidence-informed practices, and encourages the full and equitable participation of sexual and gender minorities on campus and in society.



@CSGDMacEwan



Roundhouse, 11-188 Allard Hall