

SOLIDARITY AND STRENGTH

**FORGING PATHWAYS TO COMMUNITIES WHERE
LGBTQI REFUGEES CAN THRIVE**

A note on the language

No language can adequately reflect the many beautiful and ever-evolving ways that humans live and name their sexualities, genders, sex characteristics, and relationships. The language to name diversity of Sexual Orientations, Gender Identity, Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) is never perfect—but to work together, we need some common terms.

As a step towards decolonizing our practices, we are watching the language we are using.

We have been asked by Two-Spirit and Indigenous Queer organizations to only use Two Spirit (2S) in reference to the Indigenous people of Turtle Island, or North America. When we talk about our communities in Canada collectively, we will use 2S LGBTQI. We will place 2S first, in recognition of the ancestral and enduring Indigenous presence on Turtle Island. The Federal government uses LGBTQ2 for their Secretariat.

When we speak about people arriving as refugees or newcomers, we use LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex). Again, imperfect, but understandable.

You are welcome to use the language you are comfortable with to self-identify and asked to listen for and respect the language others use to self-identify.

Acronyms

There are too many acronyms in the refugee regime. We are going to try to avoid acronyms and use the full name. You can always ask a speaker to explain the acronym.

- BVOR: Blended Visa Office-Referred
- CBSA: Canada Border Services Agency
- CG: Constituent Group
- GAR: Government Assisted Refugees.
- IDP: Internally Displaced People
- ILGA: International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association •
- IOM: International Organization for Migration
- IRB: Immigration Refugee Board
- IRCC: Immigration Refugee Citizenship Canada
- JAS: Joint Assistance Program
- POE- Port of Entry

- PRAA: Pre-removal risk assessment
- PRS: Private Sponsorship of Refugees
- RRAP: Rainbow Refugee Assistance Partnership
- SAH: Sponsorship Agreement Holder
- SOGIESC: Sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics.
- Trans- Trans is an umbrella term that aims to include all non-cisgender gender identities, including transgender, transsexual, genderqueer, genderfluid, intersex, two-spirit, non-binary, trans masculine, trans feminine, trans male, trans female, trans woman, trans man, cross-dresser, genderfuck, third gender, genderless, and agender. This list is not comprehensive, nor should it imply that all the aforementioned gender identities (or non-identities) embrace “trans*” terminology.”
- UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

SOME KEY ANTI-OPPRESSION TERMS

Anti-oppression work (Also referred to as “Anti-O”) in real terms includes but is not limited to individual and group strategies for:

- Seeking and holding the complex histories that have gotten us here,
- Interrogating and dismantling systems and social practices that are oppressive,
- Excavating and leveraging the power and privileges we have in the world,
- Healing from personal, community, and ancestral oppressions,
- Creating and fighting for community-based resources and spaces that are accessible, inclusive, and affirming for all people, especially those underserved and exploited in our society.
- Celebrating the resilience of folks surviving and thriving creatively in spite of oppression.

Equity refers to systems and strategies for understanding and influencing the idea and practice of “fairness”. For example, the distribution of resources in political, professional and social situations. These resources can include basic needs like food, housing, clothing, and money, but also education, employment, and safety from violence among other things. In order to have equity in diverse communities we must be able to identify the forms of oppression and discrimination that causes inequity and challenge them.

Oppression is the use of power to marginalize, silence or otherwise subordinate one social group, often in order to further privilege the oppressing and/or dominant person or group. It is Prejudice + Power.

Internalized oppression is a belief that there is something wrong with being part of a marginalized group. Shame, self-hatred, and low self-esteem results when members of an oppressed group take on society’s attitudes toward them and adopt myths and stereotypes about themselves. Internalized oppression can manifest through a sense of inferiority, lowered expectations and limited imagination of possibilities, among other things.

Discrimination is any action that denies social participation or human rights to an individual or categories of people based on prejudice. It can be interpersonal (e.g. an interaction between people) or systemic (e.g. unequal access to services).

Prejudice is an attitude, perspectives and assumptions based on limited information, often

stereotypes. Usually, but not always, negative. Prejudiced beliefs, language and practices are damaging on personal and social levels because they deny the individuality and complexity of the person. It forces people into basic (often derogatory) caricatures, one-dimensional identities, and hurtful labels. No one is free of prejudice because we have unfortunately all been raised with prejudiced ideologies all around us.

Unconscious biases are prejudices we hold, but are not conscious of, as a result of how our society and culture oppresses and marginalizes certain groups. These biases affect our behaviours and reactions, and also how (or if) we perceive oppressive behaviors and systems.

Marginalization is the effect of people being considered outside of, different or other than the ruling class and dominant ideas of what is normal. Often marginalization is directly connected to a person or groups real or perceived class, education, social networks, race, ability, age, gender and sexuality among other things. People who are marginalized or “othered” in a society will often experience social and systemic exclusion resulting in limited access to resources and opportunities.

Privilege is the effect of people being considered "normative", or due to their membership of the ruling class or dominant culture. Systems and institutions are designed to service the needs of those who hold privilege to the disadvantage of those who are marginalized. Privileged persons have easy or unrestricted access to resources and opportunities.

Power, in this context, refers to the ability to influence others and impose one's beliefs. All power is relational, and the different relationships either reinforce or disrupt one another. The importance of the concept of power to anti-oppression is clear: oppression cannot be understood without understanding that power is not only an individual relationship but a cultural one, and that power relationships are shifting constantly. Power can be used malignantly and intentionally, but need not be, and individuals within a culture may benefit from power of which they are unaware.

Normativity This refers to the values, standards and models in society that are considered normal, what we ought to think, how we are supposed to behave. For example in the West it is considered normal to shake hand when you greet someone. People that deviate or stray from these norms or prescribed ways of being are often punished in a variety of ways by society ranging from being ostracized or excluded, looked down upon and even legal consequences like imprisonment.

Social position is something we each hold and is based on our multiple identities (gender, ethnicity, age, education, etc.) and how these identities impact our experience of the world and society around us. For example, a dark skinned person experiences search for accommodation differently than a light-skinned person, a trans person experiences healthcare institutions differently than a cis person.

Intersectionality refers to how the multiple identities we each hold affect our experiences of power and marginalisation. For example, racialized women experience both racism and sexism, often at the same time; a cis man who is gay may not feel the power that their gender identity might afford them due to homophobia.

Reference:

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>