CONVERSATIONS about **INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE**

site **MANUAL** & workbook

Build

NOVA SCOTIA

Introduction: Who is **Writing** This**?**

This document has been worked on by many people! However, it was *written* by Robyn Lee Seale, the Diversity and Inclusion Lead for the Cape Breton Healthcare Infrastructure Redevelopment Project. It's written in my voice to be clear that the content is one person's best attempt to understand and communicate complex and evolving issues.

Our workforce is changing in Cape Breton. We are hiring more newcomers, more women in trades, more people with disabilities. We have working groups and organizations dedicated to seeing more Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotians in the industry as well. My work is to help my contractors and trades workers respect all people in the workforce; this manual is one piece of that work.

Throughout the 2SLGBTQQIPA+ section, I reference the experiences of friends of mine. I have asked these friends to review the section. It got me some hugs!

We tested this document for a year before launching it. We tested it with our team, with the Department of Public Works, and on our construction sites. Our Project's Diversity Working Group, made up of representatives of many experiences, has provided feedback. We are confident that, while this document is not perfect, it is *useful*.

We hope you find it useful, too!

Who...is talking to me?

And why should I listen?

Robyn Lee Seale
Diversity & Inclusion Lead
March 2024

STARTING THE CONVERSATION

As respectful language changes, it's natural to get nervous about "saying the wrong thing."

This booklet is meant to help with that fear. It gives clear direction about what to say and what not to say and gives material for **thinking critically on this topic**. Respect and inclusion are about more than memorizing words: they're about creating spaces where all people's experiences are considered.

We all know people who talk a good talk but fall down when it comes time to act. Carefully considering the impact of the words we use helps us both talk the talk *and* walk the walk. Focusing on impact, not on rules or even on our own intentions, is a game changer.

This document is **not perfect**. If anything concerns you or is inaccurate, **please help us update it**! This education doesn't end and none of us is 100 per cent correct all the time. The best thing to do is to keep learning and be humble when someone points out a mistake.

If you would like to connect with Build Nova Scotia to discuss inclusion on the work site, please reach out! We can connect you to more resources in the community. Email robynlee.seale@novascotia.ca to connect!

Robyn Lee Seale
Diversity & Inclusion Lead
Build Nova Scotia

how to use this manual

This booklet was designed to be **read, discussed,** and **used as a tool**. People should be free to spend time with this doc.

Wherever you have this doc, you should also have Bob Joseph's *Indigenous Peoples: A Guide to Terminology*.
Not only is this a superior review of that topic, it also partly inspired the format of this site manual.

To aid with discussions with your team, we have included two *Word of the Week* pages. These are examples of how you can incorporate information in this document into toolbox talks or safety shares. This format was suggested by a student from the Black Youth Development Mentorship Program, but you can adapt it for your team's purposes. Our Cape Breton Redevelopment team uses this document to anchor monthly conversations on equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) topics, increasing our knowledge *and* our ability to discuss challenging topics.

Use this manual as a starting place. It is full of links to resources for further learning. These resources are based in the experiences of the people these terms refer to. **The more we engage with accounts from lived experience, the better.**

This document is a live document, with planned yearly revisions. It reflects our understanding of best practices in 2024, which will necessarily keep evolving.

Print me and leave me in site trailers!

Robyn Lee Seale
Diversity & Inclusion Lead
March 2024

What you will find **in this doc:**

THINGS TO STOP SAYING
(right now)

Especially Heinous

"N" word (for Black people)
"R" word (for someone with an intellectual disability)
"S" word (for an Indigenous person, also a trendy word in pop music)
"F" word (for a gay man)
"Rag-heads" (for Sikhs, or people who wear turbans)

"**Out of Date & Disrespectful/Offensive**	**Respectful**
"Midget"	"Little person"
"Indian, Native"	"Indigenous, First Nation"
"Eskimo"	"Inuit"
"Disabled"*	"Person with a disability"
"Slow, challenged, special"	"Person with an intellectual disability"
"Gypsy" (also "gypped")	"Roma person"
"Oriental"	"Asian" might work, depending on context
"Coloured"	"Black"
"Mulatto"	"Biracial" "lighter skinned"

With this exception of "disabled," words in this list should generally be avoided in the workplace (and elsewhere) in the context of referring to marginalized groups. Ask yourself if you need to mention the word at all; if so, draw from the *Respectful* list.

"Queer" used to be a slur but has been reclaimed by some members of the LGBTQ+ community and is used as an umbrella term for many groups in that community. However, it can still be viewed as hurtful by some and might be best avoided.

Finally, I suspect many of the words in the first list could be classified as "especially heinous." I simply haven't confirmed this yet. Please let me know if you do!

GENERAL **EDI** TERMS

How do I refer to people who aren't White as a whole?

Here are some common terms that I find useful:
POC—People of Colour (you can say, "P.O.C." or "People of Colour")
BIPOC—Black & Indigenous & other People of Colour (say, "Bye-Pock")
IBPOC—Variation of "BIPOC" (say, "Ib-Pock")

Another term you will hear is **"racialized people***".This term does a good job of recognizing that **the experience of race is created by society**. In other words, when someone faces racism, it's because society creates this experience. This is a hopeful view, because we can work to change social structures.

Are there terms to refer to all groups who are marginalized?

Marginalized groups—all groups experiencing oppression, discrimination, or under-representation (in media, education, law, etc.).

Underrepresented groups—emphasizes *representation* as the measure. We often use this term because our Project's diversity targets are specifically about increased representation.

Equity deserving groups—emphasizes that marginalized groups *deserve* equitable treatment and opportunities. This is a very helpful and healthy term. It should be used in place of "equity *seeking* groups."

What is "representation?" Is it the same as "underrepresented?"

Great question! While **representation** *can* be about numbers (for example, women are nearly 50% of the population but less that 20% of the construction industry) it is also about how a group is presented in media, products, etc.

Essentially, from the time we give baby boys construction trucks and little girls dolls, we are *representing* **men as competent in the construction industry,** while telling women it is not for them. Representation is about how society presents a group and where the people in that group work.

terminology for **INDIGENOUS people** & communities

How do I refer to Indigenous people and communities?

The best source I know for this is Bob Joseph's ***Indigenous People: A Guide to Terminology***. *Please see the Guide,* which reminds us that these are *guidelines rather than simple definitions.*

Indigenous
Umbrella term that includes Inuit, Métis, and First Nations people.

Inuit
Indigenous people group with origins in Northern Canada.

Métis
Distinct people group of mixed European and Indigenous heritage, originating in Western Canada. While people have begun to use this to indicate "mixed" European and Indigenous ancestry generally, this is a contentious and problematic usage.

First Nations
Indigenous peoples of Canada who are neither Métis nor Inuit. Mi'kmaq people are First Nations.

L'nu ("il-new" or "ul-new") & Mi'kmaq ("mig-mah")
The Mi'kmaq are the people who have been in the Unama'ki (Cape Breton) region from time immemorial. The region of the Mi'kmaq people is called Mi'kma'ki.

You may hear a Mi'kmaw person use the word "L'nu" when they say who they are, or introduce themselves. "L'nu" means " The People."

There are no hard "k" (like, "cake") sounds in "Mi'kmaq." It sounds like "mig-mah."

terminology for **INDIGENOUS** **people** & communities

Why can't I say "Native"? It's what my Indigenous friends say!

In the workplace, you can't count on people to know you are using the words your friends use. **Because of this, you can't count on not harming someone.** Usually, the best practice *is* to follow the lead of the group you refer to. However, in this case, you run the risk of sounding disrespectful and ignorant in the workplace.

We know that the word a group uses for itself is not always appropriate to outsiders (think of the "N" word). This is because respectful behaviour changes depending on where you stand. When we stand outside the group (for example, I am not Indigenous, so I stand outside that group), we risk misunderstanding cultural impact, being misunderstood, or doubling-down on stereotypes.

So, which words are best to use?

When possible, refer to the specific group, for example, "Mi'kmaq." "First Nation" is also acceptable, but some communities are moving toward making this more specific when possible, for example, "Eskasoni Mi'kmaq Nation."

"Aboriginal" is still used in some technical and legal contexts, but "Indigenous" is generally considered the more respectful term.

Why have there been so many words used over time?

Bob Joseph points out that the "need for collective nouns and complicated terminology" comes from the *colonial need to define for ease of governing.* Put simply, it's complicated because the Canadian government made it complicated. (Source: Bob Joseph, *Indigenous People: A Guide to Terminology,* 2022.)

some **Mi'kmaq** words & phrases

"Pjilasi" (ji-law-si)

"Welcome!"

"Nmultes"
(na-mull-dis)
"See you later!"

"Unama'ki"
(un-a-ma-gee-g)
"Land of Fog"
(Cape Breton)

"Mi'kma'ki
(mee-gmah-gee)
"Land of the
Mi'kmaq"

Interested in more? Download the *L'nui'suti* app!

**Note that "Potlotek" is
pronounced "bud-low-deck"!**

terminology for **AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN** & **BLACK** folk

How do I refer to these communities? Is "Black" rude?

It isn't. "African Nova Scotian" either refers to Black people in or from Nova Scotia or, sometimes, is used by specific communities within this group. "Black" encompasses all Black people. "People of African descent" is also used, especially in formal settings or in formal documents.

Are all Africans in Nova Scotia "African Nova Scotian"? Why not?

People of all ethnicities live in Africa. However, because racism and discrimination impact each group differently, we need language to describe each group's experience. In Nova Scotia, we use "African Nova Scotian" either to refer to Black experiences in our province, or to the experiences of one group of Black folks.

That's why, while my white South African friend is a Nova Scotian from Africa, we don't refer to him as "African Nova Scotian." His experience is different than the experiences of Black people, which is what we're trying to express.

I work with someone who said "Black" IS rude!

This doc is sharing guidelines that reflect the opinions of *most* people in each group. However, individuals will have their own opinions about terms that refer to them. This opinion will be based on experience, so if you are challenged, listen respectfully! Likewise, it is usually respectful to follow this person's lead and use the language they say is best.

Why are there so many terms? Why can't people agree?

Because of the African diaspora and the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the languages and cultural roots of millions of Black ancestors were stolen. Not only are there many "Black" experiences in Nova Scotia, Black people are often working to define our experiences within the reality of this loss. We are constantly working to define how beautiful and excellent we are in a context that wants to disagree.

terminology for **AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN** & **BLACK** folk

My Black friend says I can use the n-word. Are you saying I can't?

I'm not going to tell you how to speak to your friends off-site (although I'll strongly suggest not using that word). I am telling you what is acceptable at work, and even if your friend works with you, that word is unacceptable.

Here's the thing: language isn't science, it's social. You can find people to disagree with just about anything in this document, and some of them will have thoughtful reasons for doing so. In this case, the overwhelming consensus is that only Black people should feel free to say the n-word. How do you factor one person's opinion within this broader consensus? Also, *why do you want to say it?*

Is it rude to describe someone as Black?

Sometimes it's important to say someone is Black. "Robyn Lee, a Black woman, will be educating us on inclusive language" is a reasonable thing to say. It's useful to know this fact about the person providing this kind of education. "My friend, Sarah, who's Jewish, is coming over for dinner, so I'm researching kosher meals" is a parallel example. The information is important to the conversation.

When it comes time to describe *anyone* by one part of their identity, I think twice. I ask myself, "*Why* is it important **to me** to describe this person as Indigenous/gay/blind/Nigerian/trans/whatever?" Am I hung up on that part of their identity? Does the person I am talking to need to know that fact about them?

Describing a person by the identity that is marginalized risks tokenizing them. It risks boiling them down to one part of their identity (even if it is a beautiful and valued part). And when we do this, we often hold ourselves back from seeing other parts of who they are. So, as proud as I am of *being* a Black woman, it is good to think twice before describing me as "Black":

BLACK folks & CODED LANGUAGE

What is Coded Language? Why is it dangerous?

Most people understand they can't say the "N" word. However, there are plenty of ways to describe people as *less than* and *not White* in the same breath. People who are full of hate are good at this. It's sneaky and devastating.

Coded language is a way to draw on stereotypes without being explicit. Some people use coded language unthinkingly, but it is also away for bigots to signal to one another (this is called "dog whistling). Both usages are damaging and dangerous.

Coded language is dangerous when it **allows the group with societal power to degrade or marginalize a group with less societal power.**

Ghetto, Thug, and **Hood/Hoodlum** are examples of coded language. These words all pull on stereotypes, usually of Black people, that imply Black and brown folks are dangerous, poor, and uneducated. It is a specific view of Blackness cultivated by hate that non-Black people, and especially White people, should avoid. The more aware we are of coded language, the less it will serve bigotry. In this, **knowledge is power.**

> How does our awareness of coded language limit its power? Do you agree that it does?

> Why is it important to consider who has the social power when we think about coded language?

Can you list examples of coded language that:

- Harm Indigenous people?
- Harm the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community?
- Harm immigrants?
- Harm people living in poverty? People who are unhoused (homeless)?

"CAUCASIAN" versus "WHITE"

Which term should I use? Isn't "White" informal or rude?

While I'm not White, I have strong reasons for preferring "white." The reasons are accuracy and history. (By the way, there are arguments for and against capitalizing "white." I've used both to give a sense of how each makes a reader feel, as I'm not convinced there is a consensus yet on which practice to follow.)

Accuracy
"Caucasian" refers to a specific people group from the Caucasian mountains. This makes "Caucasian" on par with "Gaelic" or "Mediterranean" as a way to refer to all white folks. It's not accurate!
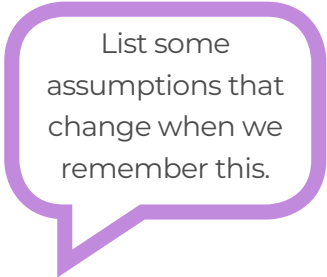
History
"Caucasian race" is part of a theory of races founded in the 1780's by a group of German academics. This theory promoted itself as scientific, but was based on methods that are now outdated. This makes sense-the scientific approach has developed in the last 250 years! Modern scientists *do not consider* "race" a biological category. It's a **social category.** The mistaken belief that race is biological has been the basis for a range of horrors, including genocide.

That's why I get uncomfortable with the term "Caucasian": it's a hangover from a time when "science" was supporting racism.

Source: Caucasian race - Wikipedia

Race is a social construct!

List some assumptions that change when we remember this.

2SLGBTTQQIPA+

I don't know what to say! I don't know what it all means.

This grouping can be intimidating. You will see different versions of the above grouping, which makes it difficult to feel confident that you are saying the most respectful thing. The best thing you can do to increase your confidence is to increase your understanding. Here is what each letter stands for:

2S—Two Spirit
L—Lesbian
G—Gay
B—Bisexual
T—Transsexual
T—Transgender
Q—Queer
Q—Questioning
I—Intersex
P—Pansexual
A—Asexual, Agender, and Aromantic
+—All others in the Community.

2SLGBTQIA+ Terminology and Media Reference Tool (8.5 × 11 in) (ourspectrum.com)

Two Spirit in our region :
(359) Two Spirit Identity - YouTube

More 2S Experiences:(359) What Is Two Spirit? - YouTube

I typically use "2SLGBTQIA+" to refer to this group. I have memorized it and say it confidentally. You can also say "LGBTQ+".

I think **respect** in this case **comes from learning about the identities** in this community. Then *do your best to say it*. If you have learned technical terms for your work, you can learn this one. "I'm not sure what to say" sounds like you aren't making the effort, and we're an industry that makes the effort.

When can I say it?

In general, don't describe things as gay. "Gay" as a descriptor ("that's so gay") tends to be negative and derogative. There are exceptions! Be thoughtful about context. For example, a gay bar *is* a gay bar. You can say so!

We can say people are gay, but we should consider the context to decide if it is respectful. Ask yourself *why* you are saying someone is gay. Is it important to your point? If the person were straight, would you point it out?

Sometimes, we describe something as gay because we tend to think of the thing as straight. This is harmful. "Gay wedding" "gay best friend" "gay couple" and "gay sex" are often examples of this. Think of it this way: while we may be used to seeing straight couples as the typical wedding, a wedding between two women is absolutely not exceptional to the women getting married. **To the people getting married, being gay isn't an exception—it's their beautiful, every-day norm. And the fact that these relationships aren't celebrated more in mainstream media and art is harmful.**

Because dominant Canadian society often wrongly associates 2SLGBTQ+ experiences as *less natural* or *bad* (remember same-sex marriage was legalized in 2005) expressions that center relationships on straight people run the risk of reinforcing these misconceptions and harming gay people. So, no "gay wedding." "My friends Julia and Sarah are getting married this weekend" is enough.

It's only remarkable to straight folks

That gay folks live and love.

Can you think of other times when the "norm" is based in straight experiences?

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PRONOUNS

What are pronouns? Why are they important?

We may not realize it, but we use pronouns all the time. For example, I say, "Send **him** the contract" or "**they** left **their** gloves in the trailer." *She, him,* and *they* are pronouns**.**

Many of us have been raised to think we can know a person's pronouns by looking at the person, but this is not always the case. A close friend of mine is sometimes mistaken for a man, but she is a woman. Because she doesn't look like we expect a woman to look, people stare at her (a lot. It's obvious and uncomfortable). **We know it is rude to stare, but people clearly ignore this.** Another friend is tall and masculine looking, but often wears a dress. Sometimes this friend is stared at so much that it interrupts our conversation. The stares feel hostile and rude. This friend has to consider this experience *when they take their children outside to play*.

Growing up in Cape Breton, I was taught that staring is rude. Lots of us were taught not to stare. The fact that my friends are stared at in spite of this tells me **people feel *entitled* to stare at my friends**. This is a form of disrespect they encounter every day because of the way that their **gender expression** does not match our expectations. People treat them in a way they would never treat me, simply because I meet society's expectations. **I want our industry, which prioritizes equity and respect, to be leaders when it comes to respecting people like my friends**.

My friends' stories show me that not assuming people's pronouns (in other words, not assuming "she" "her" "him" or "they") signals respect to people who are regularly disrespected because they don't look like we expect them to look.

So, pronouns are a way we regularly refer to people. We can't assume we know what pronouns people use and we need to be particularly careful to respect people whose gender expression doesn't match our expectations.

"gender" versus "sex"

What does "they/them" mean?

"They/them" are pronouns used by people who don't always identify as "he" or "her." These people are often **non-binary**.

Here's an example. My friend, who often wears dresses, uses "they/them" pronouns. They used to use "he/him" pronouns, but "he/him" never felt accurate or comfortable. When I try to understand this, I imagine someone calling me "him" or "they." I really don't feel like a "him!" In some ways, it really is that simple.

What is the difference between "gender" and "sex"?

"Woman" and "man" are **genders**-they refer to how we experience the world. "Female" and "male" are **sexes**-they refer to human biology.

Many people are **intersex**, meaning they are not, biologically, simply male or female. If you were taught that there are only two genders (man and woman) because there are only two biological sexes (male or female, penis or vagina), you were taught something that is simply not based in science.

Non-binary people have a **gender** that is not "woman" or "man." Non-binary people often use "they/them" pronouns.

Are you telling me you can be a "man" and not have male genitalia?

Exactly. A trans man might experience the world as a man but not have male genitalia. And here's the thing: other people's reproductive organs *aren't our business*. **Do you want people thinking about yours? About your family's?**

Key Actions

Use pronouns in email signatures, respect people's pronouns, don't assume pronouns. Look for situations where you, or our processes, assume gender.

Phrases to Avoid

"Preferred pronouns"
For example, "My preferred pronouns are she/they." Pronouns aren't a preference—they're who you are! In other words, I prefer cream (rather than milk) in my coffee; I don't *prefer* to use "she/her."

"Decided" (for a transition)
Zarvan doesn't *"decide"* he's a man now. He's. A. Man. Try describing a cis-gendered person this way. "Mark *decided* he's a man." Does it sit well? That's why we don't use it for a trans person. We want to affirm that they are the gender they tell us they are.

What *Not* to Ask

Don't ask about genitals. It's bizarre to have to write, but people ask trans people about their genitals. I worked with a 17 year old who was regularly asked "what's in your pants" by strangers. **Again, we know that this is off limits, but many people do it anyway.** This shows another way we feel **entitled** to disrespect gender minorities. This is why our industry must set an example of respecting pronouns and minding our manners with gender minorities.

PRONOUNS & MISGENDERING

What do I do if I misgender someone?

Don't freak out! Just correct yourself.
"Graeme is so intelligent. He—they—run their project well."
"I told her—sorry, him—the meeting is tomorrow."

Why is it important to not make a big deal when I misgender someone?

Making a big deal out of using the wrong name or gender puts the focus on **you** and your discomfort. Some people are regularly misgendered. People regularly mistaking your gender is enough to deal with, without also worrying about the feelings of the many people making the mistake.
Just correct yourself, and work to use the correct pronouns going forward.

What is a "dead name"? What do I do if I dead name someone?

A "dead name" is what a person was called before they transitioned. "Dead naming" is using the dead name, instead of the name the trans person currently uses. Intentionally dead naming someone disrespects a person's gender identity and is discriminatory behaviour.

Accidentally dead naming is a form of *misgendering*. Just correct yourself. "Julie—, Evan—could you share your report?" "Josh—Aja, thanks for sharing."

If you consistently find yourself accidentally using the dead name, ask yourself why. Do you need to practice the new name more? Are you resisting the change, or do you just need to support your memory more? Remember that **this work is critical to making respectful work sites.**

Johnny! I was just saying how long it's been—

—Rachael.

Oh! Gosh, right, I'm so sorry!

How is your—

—This is embarrassing! But you know, I'm sorry. I'm trying! Gosh, this is uncomfortable. But this must happen to you all the time?

...it sure does.

Whose feelings is the blue speech bubble prioritizing? **Why** is it important to prioritize the feelings of the orange speech bubble? Do you agree that it is?

AFAB
Assigned Female At Birth (someone said, "It's a girl!")

AMAB
Assigned Male At Birth (someone said, "It's a boy!")

Cisgender (or just "cis")
Having a **gender identity** that corresponds with their **biological sex**. For example, if you are **man** and your biological sex is **male**, you are cisgender.

Non-binary
Umbrella phrase referring to any person who does not identify as only man or only woman, or simply as a man or a woman. Non-binary people often use "they/them" pronouns. Non-binary also indicates the belief that the gender binary (the belief that gender is only "man" or "woman") is *false* or inaccurate. Please note that all people can believe this.

Two Spirit
Used strictly for Indigenous people, "Two-Spirit" can have different meanings among different Indigenous cultures. It may indicate a third gender, or group of genders, with specific roles in the community. "Two-Spirit" is often associated with a sacred way of seeing the world.

Further Reading

Trans 101: glossary of trans words and how to use them - Gender Minorities Aotearoa
Gender Unicorn - (transstudent.org)

PEOPLE with DISABILITIES

"Disabled" or "Person with a Disability"?

In the past, some of us heard terms like "disabled" to describe someone with a disability. The problem with this term is that it defines an entire, complex person by one characteristic. Jess has two degrees, an interesting career, and is an accomplished artist: why would we define them as "disabled?"

Remember that **society works hard to define people by their disability**. If you think this is unfair, your job is to consciously work against this. One simple way to do this is to use the phrase "person with a disability" instead of "disabled." This small change **avoids defining a person by their ability and disability.**

Is it really that simple?

Nope! As we've discussed, these things often are complex, and the complexities are important. I've read articles of people working to reclaim "disabled" as a term that reveals their pride in their experience. As one article notes, "person with a disability" puts the disability outside of the person in a way that doesn't reflect everyone's lived experience. Our best practice is to listen to how people refer to themselves. **When in doubt, I suggest leading with "person with a disability."**

See *theconversation.com* for more examples.

People First Language

Many terms have switched to the "people first language" approach. People first language says "person with (the disability)" to show that the disability is just one part of what defines the person. Below are more examples:

PEOPLE with DISABILITIES

Examples of People First Language

Use	Avoid
"Person with a mental health diagnosis"	"Mentally ill"
"Person with dementia" (or, "she has dementia")	"Demented, senile"
"Person with an intellectual disability"	"Disabled"
"People without a disability"	"Normal"
"Wheelchair user"	"Crippled, disabled"

See *Disability-Inclusive-Language-Guidelines.pdf (ungeneva.org)* for more examples.

What is "ableism"?

"Ableism" (able-ism) refers to discrimination against people with disabilities. Ableism can refer to our words, our actions, or our structures & practices.
Ableist words: "Joe is retarded" or "Are you off your meds?"
Ableist action: Not hiring someone because they have ADHD or a hearing aid.
Ableist structure: Not allowing an apprentice with dyslexia to have a testing assistant for their written test.

Casual ableist (aka harmful) comments

Many phrases we use unconsciously make light of mental health disorders & disabilities. This is partly because we don't understand the difference between our experience and the disorder we're referencing. **"Feeling anxious" and *having an anxiety disorder* are as similar as having a queasy stomach versus having Crohn's disease.** One is chronic and life changing; the other is uncomfortable.

When we say, *"I have anxiety"* but really only *feel* anxious, we're doubling down on that confusion. It can harm the people with an anxiety diagnosis because we might think what they face with a disorder is the same as what we face on a stressful day. It's not. Learning more about anxiety and depression and avoiding ableist comments will both make sites psychologically safer for all of us.

PEOPLE with DISABILITIES

"Neuro...what?"

Neurodiversity is a term explaining that, instead of there being "normal" and "abnormal" ways of thinking, human brains exist on a spectrum. **Learning disabilities** are examples of neurodiversity.

While many brains work similarly enough to each other to be considered typical or "**neurotypical**," *many* work differently. These differences are not bad or weird. They're part of human diversity, which is why we use the term "neurotypical."

There's a fun CBC podcast episode that reflects on ways disabilities like ADHD and Autism might have been useful to human survival and are part of natural selection. This isn't a scientific consensus (yet), but makes sense to me!

Social Model of Disability

The social model of disability is one way of understanding disabilities. It says that disabilities exists because of the way social structures are set up.

I understand it this way: right now, I do not have a disability. However, if I woke up tomorrow and all buildings were designed only for little people, I might have a disability. If everything was written in braille only, I might have a disability. If all jobs needed me to focus for several hours at a time on one subject without pause (like some of my friends with ADHD do), I might have a disability.

Because the way my brain and body works is what society is set up for, there are barriers I don't face. The social model of disability says our job is to set up social structures like the ones I've named to serve everybody, not just bodies like mine.

So, what's the parking called?

It's **accessible parking**. See how this fits under the social model of disability?

NEWCOMERS & "home"

Why can't I ask someone where they're from? It's what Cape Bretoners ask!

It's true! It's a way that we connect with people. However, when we ask newcomers where they are from, the question can have a different impact.

People ask me where I'm from for many reasons. They ask when they see my last name and associate it with my family, its history, and Whitney Pier. They ask when they wear I've lived in other places and notice my darker complexion. They ask when they're wondering, "Does she know what she's talking about?"

All of this can make me uncomfortable. However, my discomfort is brief because I have an answer that **counts me in**. "I'm from Cape Breton!"

When we ask newcomers where they are from, we are often **counting them out**. Sometimes we're saying, "We noticed you're not one of us." We can also be asking them a more complicated question than we realize.

What do you mean, "home" can be complicated? It's where you're from!

"Where are you from" is not easy for all of us to answer. **"Home" can feel complicated when:** you're from a region with disputed borders; you've been a refugee; you've grown up in multiple countries; you've faced discrimination in your home country.

So, before we ask someone where they are from, we should remember that this question is not always easily answered. Are you ready to listen to the answer? Do you want to add that little bit of pressure to someone's day? What are the chances that this person is asked this question often and is tired of hearing it?

"Newcomer" or "Immigrant"?

We use "newcomer" to cover both "immigrant" and "refugee." It is an attempt to move past the stigma associate with "immigrant" and "refugee."

Can I ever ask newcomers where they are from?

You can**.** However, we need to think about our intention. *Why* are you asking? **Curiosity** is not a good enough answer, because we risk harming the person. It's even riskier if you're asking a person who's not white, because there is a bias that Canadians are white. (Non-white Canadians get this in other countries & here).

"That doesn't sound like a Canadian name" is also out. What *is* a Canadian name?

What's best practice?

Wait until a person says something about being from another country! This has saved me from asking other Canadians where they are from because they visibly practice a religion that is not Christianity (for example, they wear a hijab or a turban) or because they are not white.

When we assume someone is not from here because they are 1. not white, or 2. not from a Christian background, we are **counting people out** of the "in" group.

A newcomer I work with pointed out that he was asked this question often when he first arrived. For him and his wife, the key was how the questioner responded. "You're new here? Welcome! How are people treating you, how can we help?" These were very helpful responses. He also points out that the experience was less layered for him as a white man from England than it was for his German wife.

What do I need to remember?

"Home" is complicated. But we know that immigrants living in Cape Breton have chosen this island for their home and worked very hard to immigrate. They are working, living, building, investing, and loving here. Do we want to suggest that this island isn't their home?

The simplest rule is this: if you ask someone where they are from, accept their answer. *Don't* ask "Where are you really from". Let's be proud that people want to live in Cape Breton. Let the person you ask decide what their "home" is.

"WHERE are you FROM?"

Hey! I've been wondering, where are you from?

I have a home in Ashby!

Yes, but where are you *really* from?

I'm from Sydney.

But *really*, where are you from?

(sighs)

WOMEN **in trades**

What does it mean to be in an industry that is traditionally a space for men?

Walk onto any construction site in Cape Breton and you will see fewer women than you would if you went to a grocery store. This is what we meant by "underrepresented." Because we have had so few women in the industry historically (compared to men), the culture and expectations in the industry have been built without women's input. Think of how recently women's washrooms became normal on site, long after they were typical in every other workplace.

This makes women very visible on sites. We stand out. We aren't what you expect to see out working. This creates an **unconscious bias.**

Even though we don't consciously *think* "Women don't belong here," it's still something we've been taught by society. We learn it every time we go to the toy section in WalMart and find all the tool toys in the "boy's" section. Women hear it again when we can't find work boots in our size, or other PPE designed for us.

All of this influences our behaviour and this influence can be unconscious. If you think women deserve to be judged based on their skills and attitude (d'uh), **your job is to get conscious about how women are treated on site.**

Reflection: Name some things women deal with on site that men may not?

If you have worked on site for any length of time, you have some examples. Write down three barriers that women might face on a construction site that men won't.

1._____
2._____
3._____

WOMEN in trades

Sexualizing comments

Construction sites often have work cultures where women are sexualized. Women are more likely to be spoken *about* sexually than men are. "You look good bent over that work," or "You're wearing too many layers for this heat" (when men are wearing as many layers) are examples of sexualizing women.

I have two simple tests for if a comment is sexualizing. First, **can you imagine saying this to a man**? Second, **picture your daughter or a woman you respect and value. Would you her to hear those comments?**

If the answer to either of these is "no way," you may be making a comment that sexualizes a woman. Remember, the comment's **impact** can be negative *even if your intention isn't to harm.* If the woman *feels* uncomfortable, that's the point.

Sexualizing conversations

Most of us can tell when a group of men have been talking sexually *about* a woman on site, even if we don't directly hear what they say. This is unacceptable.

Walking through a job site where people are sexualizing you is disgusting. *None of us* should have to do it. The more isolated you are (physically isolated, or isolated as one of the only women/gay people/immigrants/Indigenous people/etc. in the space) the more harmful this can be.
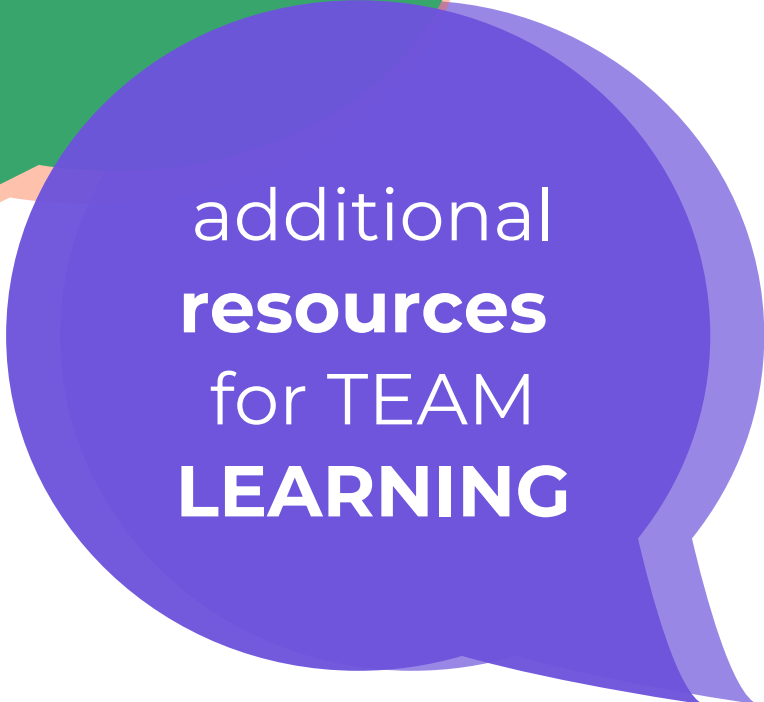
Some of us are statistically more likely to face physical and sexual violence. This, and the fact that some of us are not historically represented in some spaces (like women in trades), make sexualizing conversations even more damaging. So if you're around sexualizing conversations, stop them if you can. These make for psychologically unsafe sites.

- **Stop** using the words in the list on Page 1.

- **Read** Bob Joseph's *Indigenous Peoples: A Guide to Terminology*

- Continue looking for coded language and **call it out!**

- Think before you call something as "gay" (and then probably don't)

- Add your pronouns to your email signature & business cards

- Practice not assuming pronouns & pay attention to when we unnecessarily gender language and experiences

- Pay attention to whose feelings are prioritized in conversations around diversity and inclusion

- Explore *Trans 101: glossary of trans words and how to use them - Gender Minorities Aotearoa Defining LGBTQIA+ (gaycenter.org), List of 2SLGBTQ+ Sexualities & their Definitions – Rainbow & Co (rainbowandco.uk), 2SLGBTQIA+ Terminology and Media Reference Tool (8.5 × 11 in) (ourspectrum.com)*

- Practice using the "people first language" when talking about people with disabilities

- Stop and think before you ask a newcomer where they are from

- Complete the reflection on Women in Trades

- Make the **Word of the Week** into Safety Shares or Toolbox Talk

- Share this doc with coworkers

- Check out our Inclusive Site Guide

TOOL**KIT**

I hear someone using unacceptable language on site. What can I say?

Great question! People want to fit in—when you challenge disrespectful language, you pressure the person using it to change their behaviour. You are changing the tone for the group. And you're showing anyone who might be harmed that you've got their back.

You should also speak to a Respectful Worksite Champion or a site super. They can help get education to site or deal with the situation.

Why would you say that?

That wasn't funny.

What did you just say?

Could you repeat what you just said?

This site doesn't tolerate that language.

Say more about that?

What you said harms a lot of people I care about.

We don't say stuff like that here.

Could you explain to me what you mean by that?

lived experience

What is "lived experience"?

Lived experience is what it sounds like: the knowledge gained from experiencing something directly. As a Black woman, I directly experience racism and sexism. I *don't* directly experience transphobia or ableism.

When I want to learn about discrimination that I don't face, I listen to people's **lived experience**. I do this through podcasts, articles, books, educational talks, and when my friends decide to share their experiences with me. I don't expect people to educate me because we each have responsibility to learn.

Why is listening to lived experience important?

When I started learning about the construction industry, I didn't talk to other people who worked in offices. I talked to tradespeople, project managers, union leaders, and safety professionals. They explained (and continue to explain) everything from what rebar and formwork are to how a change-order works. I learned slowly through a lot of conversations. I had to be humble and admit I knew almost nothing about the industry.

Learning about other people's experiences of marginalization is like that. You have to admit you don't know what it's like and listen to the people who do know. Learning about people's lived experience is essential to getting things right. It's how we'll be more respectful of each other's experiences.

Some things to consider when engaging lived experiences:
- I can never own someone else's story
- I can never completely understand someone else's story completely
- One person's experience does not speak for an entire group
- My understanding of one person's story cannot override another person's story from the same group

bathrooms:
a case study

Scenario: Wanda in the Washroom

So, you walk into the women's washroom and you see someone who doesn't really...look...like a woman to you.

This is wrong, right? This is someone in a space that is supposed to be for you, for women. You should say something!

Right?

Reflection Time

1. In the "Wanda in the Washroom" scenario, whose feelings are "you" prioritizing?
2. Have you ever wondered which washroom was designed for your use?
3. Do public washrooms ever feel unsafe to you?
4. Have you ever avoided going somewhere (the mall, the gym) because you would feel unwelcome or unsafe in the washroom?
5. Have you ever been considered a threat because you needed to use the washroom? What was that like? Was it fair?

History Time

In the 1950's and 60's, the Federal government actively presented 2SLGBTQIA+ people as sexual predators. It conflated being in this community with being perverted. Laws were created to support this view and oppress the LGBTQ+ community. The harm from this carries on today.

This active misrepresentation is one reason we worry about trans women and cis-gendered women sharing washrooms, even though **trans people are at higher risk of assault in public washrooms.** Knowing this, we are prioritizing the _comfort_ of cis-woman over the _safety_ of trans-people.

bathrooms:
a case study

Reflection *on Barriers*

Our comfort around public washrooms is an opportunity to consider the barriers we may or may not face socially. This <u>absence of barriers</u> is commonly called **privilege.**

As a cis-gendered woman, I have a privilege that trans and non-binary people don't have concerning my inclusion in public spaces.

How does my experience compare to other groups?

- versus straight men?
- gay men?
- people with mobility aids?
- people with Irritable Bowl Syndrome (IBS), Crohn's, or diverticulitis?
- fathers with babies? straight fathers? gay fathers?
- white cis-gendered women?

Deeper thinking:

Have you ever felt unsafe in public spaces? What was that like?

What are some other groups that might face barriers in public washrooms?

Have you ever stared at someone in the washroom?

What would you do if you saw someone being harrassed about what washroom they chose?

iv.

word of the week: "non-binary"

What does it mean?

Read the definition in this booklet and then write in your own words:

_____

_____

_____

_____

How is it used?

Example: "My friend Erin uses they/them pronouns because they're non-binary." Give two more examples:

_____

_____

_____

Who does it support?

Understanding what "non-binary" means supports people who don't identify as "man" or "woman." It makes the world less hostile and healthier for all of us. Who do you know who benefits from this?

What is one thing we can do differently?

Ask your team what they can do differently and have some suggestions for the team prepared.

v.

word of the week: "gender"

What does it mean?

Read the definition in this booklet and then write in your own words:

_____

_____

_____

How is it used?

Example: "Doctors can tell us the baby's sex. We'll learn later what gender the child is!" Give two more examples:

_____

_____

_____

Who does it support?

Understanding the difference between **gender** and **sex** especially supports trans and non-binary people. It makes us all more accurate critical thinkers.

What is one thing we can do differently?

Ask your team what they can do differently and have some suggestions for the team prepared.