

LGBTQ+ Canadians

Queer- and Trans-Inclusive Teaching English as an Additional Language
Teacher's Manual

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Introduction

This guide is meant as a tool to help instructors develop a level of comfort and humility when teaching topics we have not personally experienced - and even then, sometimes, a tool for speaking of your own experiences without laying your own personal history out on the desk for your clients to examine. I ask that you approach this material with openness, with the understanding that we are none of us experts, and with a gentle heart.

My name is Emily Salja, and I am an out queer English language instructor. My pronouns are she/her. I am “out” because I’m talking to you about it publicly. I have primarily taught LINC levels 4 and 5, but have experience teaching levels 2-7. This material is meant to be used for classes at the Canadian Language Benchmarks 4-5, but there are many ways to adapt the material up or down depending on the level you teach.

My intent in writing this material is to give language instructors and students the tools to engage with LGBTQ+ communities. We are everywhere: if you don’t think you know or have ever met a queer or trans person, I’m here to tell you that you have, and you didn’t recognize them as such.

What I can’t emphasize enough is: you don’t need to teach your students “LGBTQ+101”. Your clients do not need to be able to “spot a lesbian” in the wild. They need to know how to respectfully interact with everyone in Canada, regardless of their gender, religion, relationships with others, ethnicity, or socioeconomic class. These are incredibly transferable skills that do not start or end with LGBTQ+ people. They need the language for what they will encounter in Canadian society, and queer EAL teachers need their work environments to be supportive by avoiding unnecessary gendering.

As an important disclaimer, LGBTQ+ politics are inherently racialized and tied to socioeconomic class. White queer people (like me) do not own the history. I hold a lot of privilege in my own community. If a client is queer or trans themselves, they are impacted by economic factors, racial factors, cultural factors, and gendered factors. These factors do not exist in a vacuum.

Going forward, please remember to teach this language within context. Resist the urge to create a crossword for this vocabulary. In these resources there are vignettes with stories about diverse families and individuals. Let your clients learn the words from the stories. We are already too othered and alienated, we don’t need to be turned into a Bingo game.

Some might say this is no different from “don’t ask don’t tell”, however, we are actively giving the agency of telling to each individual person while demonstrating through our language that we are aware and supportive of LGBTQ+ communities. This is how we can move through the world together.

How Did We Get Here?

The material in this section is purely for **your own** reference, to understand a little about how we got here. **You do not need to teach this to students, particularly if you are not comfortable and fluent in the material.**

Some important things to keep in mind are:

1 Every subgroup within the LGBTQ+ acronym experiences North American society differently, and is impacted by other marginalizations. For example, Black trans women experience the highest level of violence in North America as they experience compound marginalization: for being Black in a society whose foundation is white supremacy, for being trans, and for being a woman.

2 If you or your students are interested in learning more about history, there are many documentaries and books and articles to learn from. However, please **be mindful of why you are teaching this module**. You may have gay or trans people in your classroom. The point of this material is to focus on polite ways to interact with **everyone, regardless of their relationships or gender**, not to introduce LGBTQ+ people as a “special topic”—this just ends up making us feel like zoo animals.

3 If you find yourself getting confused, you might be overthinking things. If you listen when people give you **their right words**, it ends up being a lot simpler.

The history of LGBTQ+ people in North America goes back to the beginning of time, but three impactful categories of historical events continuously affect LGBTQ+ people today: colonization, police regulation and persecution, and HIV/AIDS. These factors and systems are still in place today, and affect LGBTQ+ globally as well as in Canada.

History Matters

Colonization

European contact with Turtle Island, which is commonly known now as North America, resulted in the cultural and physical genocide of Indigenous peoples. This is important to how we understand LGBTQ+ history in Canada, because it is built on a violent colonialist system of oppressing gendered deviancy among Indigenous peoples (See references titled “Colonization & Gender”).

Police Regulation

Key events: Stonewall Riots (1969) / Toronto Bathhouse Raids (1981); HIV/AIDS (1981-present)

The police, as a colonial institution, were developed to and continue to police Indigenous and Black populations (Gerster, 2019) and have historically regulated anything deemed “deviant”. Raids among gay bars and bathhouses were common place, and many LGBTQ+ elders were deeply traumatized or killed. Black trans women lead the Stonewall riots, and we are indebted to them. Further research is easily available on the Stonewall Riots of 1969, as well as the Canadian version, the Toronto Bathhouse Raids in 1981. These riots and protests sparked the gay rights movements of the late 1900s.

HIV/AIDS

In 1981, when AIDS was first recognized in North America, both the American and Canadian governments delayed responses and resources as HIV/AIDS appeared to only affect gay men (for example, HIV/AIDS was colloquially referred to as the “gay cancer” for years). Between 1981 and 1985, the first wave of HIV/AIDS killed over 20,000 people world wide (See references titled “HIV/AIDS”). The LGBTQ+ community lost an entire generation of elders due to HIV/AIDS and how the government administration deprioritized research and resources. Even now, a common (untrue) stereotype is that HIV/AIDS is most or only prevalent in gay communities.

Topic Overview

Gender and Relationships are two building blocks, for better or for worse, in current North American conversation. In these materials, we will address these two basic topics. If we think about conversation when you meet someone new, common small talk questions will always circle back to talking about who we are in relationships with.

When it comes to relationships, some people have relationships with people of the same gender as theirs, and some people have relationships with people of a different gender than theirs. If you want to explore this on your own time because you are curious about your own gender or relationships, good! However, avoid spending classroom time on what a “bisexual” is.

In the context of teaching settlement English, we are here to accomplish two goals:

- 1) Teach polite ways to interact with anyone, regardless of relationship or gender.
- 2) Teach current laws in Canada regarding protection of all relationships and genders.

Logistics of Personal Identities

There are three basic factors in everyone’s personal identity, most of which are nobody’s business unless they are your own or a prospective partner’s identity.

Gender (whether you are a man, a woman, both, or neither). Linguistically, this is usually signified by pronouns: he, she, or they. There are also some new pronouns in less common usage. In some cases, someone’s pronouns may not match their gender. It is always best to listen carefully or ask if you are unsure what pronouns to use for someone.

If that gender is the **same gender or a different one than the doctors assigned** to you (this is where trans- (across) or cis- (on the same side) gender comes in).

What **relationships** you have. Sometimes this a big part of someone’s identity, sometimes it’s not. Either way, the most important thing is to keep things open. Instead of guessing, remain calm and avoid gender-specific partner or family questions until you know.

Gender Neutral Language

Neutral language is an important tool in our quest to avoid gender-specific questions such as “what does your husband do?” after being told someone is married. Some useful gender neutral vocabulary is as follows:

Partner/s or significant other: gender-neutral terms for someone in a committed relationship (see: boyfriend, girlfriend)

Spouse: gender neutral term for married partner

Parent: gender neutral term for someone who has children (see: Father, Mother)

Child/Kid: gender neutral term for a young person (see: Boys, Girls)

Sibling: gender neutral term for two or more young people born to the same parents

Grandparent: gender neutral term for a parent’s parent (see: Grandmother, Grandfather)

Everyone/Distinguished guests/Friends and enemies: Ladies and Gentlemen

Practice Makes Perfect

Remember, neutral language will feel clunky at first. As a language instructor, you know how resourceful the human brain is when learning new language. It will, as everything does, get easier with practice.

Shifting Paradigms

As language instructors, we are very good at simplifying language and concepts to their basic working parts. The material in here may challenge how you view language instruction, as we often rely on social expectations of heteronormativity to get concepts across to learners.

Think of the countless pre-made worksheets that tell learners to match “husband” and “wife”, or “find the opposite of a woman”. In dispersing these worksheets, we are not just teaching English language, but colonial gender binaries that actively harm LGBTQ+ people on a daily basis. We are teaching a language with no space for variance. This may take a minute to absorb. Take your time.

Common Missteps

Language is constantly evolving. We are all constantly learning. As with all teaching, if you don't know something that a student asks you, please say "I don't know". If you can, look it up in the Resources section and get back to them.

That being said, here are some **things to avoid saying**, to be safe:

"Are you a man or a woman?"

This is rarely relevant.

"a transgender"

Transgender, like cisgender, is an adjective, not a noun.

"a transsexual"

An outdated term that, unless someone explicitly uses it for themselves, you should avoid.

"they identify as a they"

Pronouns are pronouns, not nouns! Revisit grammar rules if this is difficult.

"Are they a woman? Or a man?? Where did they start?"

It's nobody's business where they started. A trans woman is a woman. A trans man is a man. You don't need to know what stage of transition they are at to use the right pronouns or label.

Think about: is someone's gender actually important to the statement?



"This is my friend Sarah. You might remember her when she was a man and her name was Bill. She's a trans woman now, and she owns a bakery."



"This is my friend Sarah. She owns a bakery"

When you misgender someone (use the wrong pronouns):



I was talking to Sarah, he—oh, I mean she, it's so hard, you know? These pronouns are so hard and I feel so bad!! Okay, so I was talking to HER, and she said..."



"I was talking to Sarah, he—I mean, she told me that traffic was really bad this morning"

When someone misgenders a person in front of you:



"Oh, Sarah's pronouns are she/her. It's okay, now you know"

References & Resources

Police Regulation

Gerster, Janet (2019) The RCMP was created to control Indigenous people. Can that relationship be reset? <https://globalnews.ca/news/5381480/rcmp-indigenous-relationship/>

Christmas, Robert (2016) Justice on Turtle Island: Continuing the evolution of policing with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples in Canada. <https://journalcswb.ca/index.php/cswb/article/view/8/29>

Colonization & Gender

Two-Spirited on Turtle Island - Information and Resources: <https://teachingcommons.lakeheadu.ca/two-spirited-turtle-island-information-and-resources>

Indigenous Peoples: Language Revitalization & Gender Identity. <https://kwetoday.com/2014/05/03/indigenous-peoples-language-revitalization-gender-identity/>

Canadian Queer History Timeline: <https://ccgsd-ccdgs.org/queer-history/>

HIV/AIDS

Avert: Global information and education about HIV and AIDS. <https://www.avert.org/>

LGBTQ+ Canadians

Activity Guide pt. 1

LGBTQ+ Canadians - Talking to Everyone in Canada

- Slide Show
- Student Worksheet

Learning Objectives

1. Learners will learn explicitly what personal pronouns are as a social tool (SI).
2. Learners will begin to think critically about social and cultural rules and expectations that influence how we talk and interact with others (RIV, SI, SIII, WIV).
3. Learners will encounter legal facts of marriage, gender, and sexuality in Canada (RIV, WII).
4. Learners will begin to use gender-specific grammatical vocabulary and prefixes (cis-; trans-; non-binary) (SI, RIV, WIV).
5. Learners will encounter Canadian social rules around marriage, gender, and bodies through vocabulary (RIV, WII).
6. Learners will encounter tenets of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and discrimination (RIV, WII).
7. Learners will identify gender and relationship vocabulary, including LGBTQ vocabulary (RIV).

Introduction - Slides 1-3

Learning Objective 1

Online (WI): Create a forum in your online classroom. Model the formula with your first post, and include slide 2-3 for self-directed reading about pronouns. For LINC 5-8, students should be able to reply to two of their classmate's introduction posts with a greeting (for example, "Hi May, nice to meet you").

Online (SI, LI): Depending on your student's technology skill level, you can have them make a voice recording and post it to the forum. Students should then be able to listen to their classmate's introductions, and reply with a comment.

Classroom (SI): Dispense worksheets. Introduce yourself to the class using the formula. Your students will likely be unfamiliar with pronouns in a social context. Here is a good space to elicit different ideas about what pronouns might be, before showing slide 2 to help illustrate. You can then return to slide 1 to complete a round of spoken introductions.

Note: When we are uncomfortable with material, it can be easy to be heavy-handed about respectability. The goal and focus is that it is respectful to use the right pronouns. Nobody will throw your students in prison for making a mistake.

See/Don't See Think-Pair-Share - Slides 4-5

Learning Objective 2

The objective with this exercise is to get students thinking about how people may not want to share things like religion, sexuality, politics, etc (things you might not be able to "see").

Online (SI, WIV): Post slide 4-5 with an attached forum eliciting responses. Ask students to complete the exercise with a family member or a classmate over the phone. Students should have access to the worksheet either in PDF or paper format.

Classroom (WIV, SI): Conduct the think-pair-share. When you switch to slide 5, take note of your students' reactions. If nobody wants to share their feelings, ask students to write their feelings on their worksheet. Elicit classroom discussion on why sharing might be hard.

Cultural Rules (SI, WIV) - Slide 6

Learning Objective 2

Online (WIV): This can be executed as a discussion forum or video/audio submission, depending on your students' ability. Students should type out a list of ideas for rules in their culture, Canadian culture, and the consequences for breaking those rules.

Classroom (SI, WIV): This is a great discussion to have with a whiteboard. Elicit cultural rules for both countries of origin and Canada, then elicit consequences for each one. Depending on your comfort level, you can introduce the idea of LGBTQ+ marriage, adoption, children, gender, and sexuality. You can also talk about who has broken social rules in the room.

Facts in Canada - Slide 7-8

Learning Objective 3, 5

Online (RIV, WII, LIV): Post slide 7-8 in your online classroom, and open comments for discussion. Students should have access to the PDF worksheet or a paper copy. Teachers can also record themselves reading the slides and have students listen and read (especially for lower levels).

- Students of higher levels could be instructed to comment with one example of one fact: i.e. “Men can marry men in Canada. Muslims can marry Christians in Canada. Chinese people can marry Iranian people in Canada.”

- Students of lower levels could merely (WII) copy the text into a comment to practice their typing, capitalization, and spelling compared to the original text.

Classroom (WII): This is a basic cloze exercise to familiarize students with vocabulary and the legal rules in Canada. One way to check comprehensions is to draw a stick figure on the whiteboard, and ask the students if the stick figure is a man or a woman, or if it has a husband or wife, etcetera.

Reinforcing that “we don’t know, and that’s okay” is the primary objective in this exercise.

Gender Vocabulary Exercise (Prefixes (trans-, cis-, non-)) - Slide 10-11

Learning Objective 4 (These slides are best suited for LINC 4 and above)

Online (RIV, WII): Post slide 10-11 in your online classroom. Students should have access to the PDF fillable worksheet or a paper copy. Reading comprehension can be tested through building a quiz with cloze activities or multiple choice answers. Take it slow, the material is simplified but students may still get confused by the similarity to double-negatives.

Classroom (WII): This is another cloze exercise on the worksheet to practise new vocabulary and ideas. A good way to check comprehension is through more stick figures. Draw a doctor stick figure, and a baby stick figure, and an adult stick figure. Change the stick figures to reflect the trans woman, cis woman, trans man, and cis man.

- Remember: Nobody “changes” to be a woman or a man. They were labelled the wrong label at birth. Please be careful with your wording here.

- If students become concerned with the idea of trans people, you can say 1) This happens all over the world, and it is legal and okay in Canada; and 2) You have definitely met a trans person before, you just did not recognize them.

- Resist answering any student who wants to know how to tell if someone is transgender or gay. There will be at least one student. The only right answer is “there is no way to tell”.

Discrimination (WII, WIV) - Slide 12-13

Learning Objective 5, 6

Online (WII, WIV): Post slide 12-13 in your online classroom. Students should have access to the PDF fillable worksheet or a paper copy. Teachers can also record themselves reading the slides and have students listen and read (especially for lower levels).

- Similar to slides 7-8, higher levels should be able to make a discussion post outlining what they were surprised by, what is the same and different between Canada and their country of origin, and any questions they have.

Classroom (WII): This was developed as a very simplified cloze version of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as it pertains to discrimination. It is a cloze exercise, and can be expanded into a range of activities. At its base, it's valuable as a document for students to refer back to.

- This is of course a difficult subject. Be mindful as you expand on this topic. Without question, every single one of the students in your classroom has experienced discrimination of some kind in Canada. Do not tell them that “there is no racism in Canada”. It is untrue, as the very government of Canada is founded on Indigenous genocide. Honour their experiences and avoid trivial exercises.

Teacher's Note

The key to teaching this vocabulary is to **leave no room for opinions**. This is not up for debate. Do not pull out those mid-90s “controversial” debate worksheets. Those actively enact harm upon our communities.

The reason the vocabulary is at the end is to focus on the **context of LGBTQ+ people**. We do not exist apart from everyone else. We are subject to the same cultural expectations. I would not recommend teaching this section in isolation, though I know it will be tempting. Please do the social unpacking with your class first. It will make a difference as they encounter the vocabulary.

Note that these materials **do not focus on sexuality**. This is because it is not polite to ask someone on the street who they like to have sex with, and the focus of this material is how to talk to everyone in Canada. Your students will encounter gender and relationships in their social contexts, and there is no need to further alienate students who are uncomfortable with same sex relationships.

Families & Relationships (WII) - Slide 14-15

Learning Objective 3, 5, 7

Online (WII): Post slides 14-15 in your online classroom. Students should have access to the PDF fillable worksheet or a paper copy to complete the cloze exercise. Teachers can also record themselves reading the slides and have students listen and read (especially for lower levels).

- To assess comprehension, teachers can build a simple quiz with a cloze or multiple choice exercise.

Classroom (WII): This is another cloze and vocabulary exercise built so that students have a completed copy of notes in partially their writing to refer back to. The gender and relationships words will be used in the Reading Practice with family vignettes on the last five slides.

Families & Relationships Reading Practice - Slide 16-21

Learning Objective 3, 5, 7

Online (RIV, WIV): Post slides 16-21 in your online classroom. You can use these slides to start a forum conversation with questions such as “who is Amani?” (answer: Amani is Rina’s girlfriend.)

Students should have access to the PDF fillable worksheet or a paper copy to complete the cloze exercise.

Classroom (RIV, WIV): Show students slides 16-21 and read aloud with the class. Students can complete the cloze exercise on the worksheet, and circle gender and relationship words (answers below). You can also ask questions about relationship, similar to the online instructions.

1. Amani & Rina

Amani is an artist. She lives in Calgary with her girlfriend, Rina. Amani is a lesbian trans woman. Her pronouns are she/her/hers.

Rina is also a lesbian trans woman. Her pronouns are she/her/hers. She is a car mechanic.

Amani and Rina like to have fun with their friends, ride bicycles, and read together.

2. Sunesh & Alex

Sunesh is a writer. He lives in Winnipeg with his partner, Alex. They have one dog named Frankie. Sunesh is a gay trans man. His pronouns are he/him/his.

Alex is a cis gay man. His pronouns are he/him/his. He is a store manager.

Sunesh and Alex like to go to the beach, skateboard, and go to nice restaurants.

Families & Relationships Reading Practice - Slide 16-21 continued

3. Kasim

Kasim is an accountant in Toronto. He broke up with his boyfriend last year. He is single. He has a dog named Noodle.

Kasim is a bisexual cis man. His pronouns are he/him/his. He likes to play video games, run, and make dinner for his friends.

4. May & Hana

May is an English teacher. She lives in Vancouver with her spouse, Hana. They have one cat named Boo. May is a queer cis woman. Her pronouns are she/her/hers.

Hana is a non-binary queer person. Hana's pronouns are they/them/theirs. They are a counsellor.

May and Hana like camping, dancing, and cooking.

5. Kamal & Ravina

Kamal is a bank teller. He lives in Regina with his wife, Ravina. They have two small dogs named Banana and Ted. Kamal is a straight trans man. His pronouns are he/him/his.

Ravina is a straight cis woman. Ravina's pronouns are she/her/hers. She is a florist.

Kamal and Ravina like running marathons and watching funny TV.

6. Leah & Wei

Leah is a dancer. She lives in Halifax with her wife, Wei. They have two kids, Sol and Ruth. Leah is a trans bisexual woman. Her pronouns are she/her/hers.

Wei is a lesbian cis woman. Her pronouns are she/her/hers. She is a high school teacher.

Leah and Wei like to go to the park with their kids, watch movies, and play board games.

Discussion Questions (SIII, SIV) - Slide 22

Online (WII): Post slides 21 on a forum in your online classroom and have students answer below, replying to each others' posts (higher levels). Students should have access to the PDF fillable worksheet or a paper copy with bonus reflection questions.

Classroom (WII): Bring slide up on Smartboard or write questions on board, use think-pair-share to have a classroom-wide discussion.

LGBTQ+ Canadians

Activity Guide pt. 2

LGBTQ+ Canadians - Small Talk in Canada

This is a component lesson to teach after the Talking to Everyone in Canada or as a standalone full lesson. This lesson can fit in Family & Relationship units or Community units. Send out the worksheet portion either via email or upload to your online classroom if you are teaching this completely online. For classroom lessons, use printed worksheets and projected slideshows.

- Slide Show
- Student Worksheet

Learning Objectives

1. Learners will begin to critically think about easy and difficult conversation topics in their own culture and in Canadian culture (SI).
2. Learners will identify “too personal questions” in Canadian society and compare them to their own culture (SI).
3. Learners will be able to ask “too personal questions” in a socially acceptable way in Canadian society (SI, SIII).
4. Learners will be able to answer or decline to answer “too personal questions” in conversation (SI, SIII).

What is Small Talk? - Slide 1

Learning Objective 1

Online (WI, SI): Create a forum in your online classroom with the title slide and slide 1. Students should write a forum post answering the discussion question, and reply to two of their classmates' posts agreeing or disagreeing with the post.

- Teachers can also pair up students with each other for assigned telephone conversations for the discussion questions. Students would then write their forum post saying what they discussed with their partner.

Classroom (SI): Conduct as a classic think-pair-share. Ask students to write their answers after discussing with a partner. Whole classroom should come to collaborative idea of small talk.

Too Personal Questions - Slide 2

Learning Objective 2

Online (WI): Post slide 2 in your online classroom. Create a forum. Students should write a short post answering the following (or similar) questions:

- 1) Which topics are too personal in your culture?
- 2) Do you feel uncomfortable talking about these topics? Why?
- 3) What is different between Canadian culture and your culture?

Classroom (SI): Introduce too personal questions and ask your students why they are uncomfortable topics. Pair students up to discuss if these questions are too personal in their cultures. Then, open the discussion to the class.

- If students have difficulty understanding what a too personal question is, ask an older woman in your class how old she is, or how much she weighs. Alternately, ask a man how much money he makes. Most cultures in the EAL classroom will find those questions uncomfortable. You know your class best.

- In Canadian culture, commenting on young peoples' bodies or marital status is actually too personal, even if the person means well. Telling a young girl that they are "so thin and beautiful" is just as inappropriate as telling an older woman that she is "so fat and old". This is often a difficult distinction for many people.

Asking Too Personal Questions - Slide 3-7

Learning Objective 3, 4

Online (SI, LI): Create a forum in your online classroom with slide 3-7. Upload the audio recordings. Pair students up for practice phone calls. Ask students to listen to the audio recordings three times before calling their partner and practicing the dialogues over the phone.

Classroom (SI, LI): Choral practice asking, answering, and declining to answer too personal questions (Slide 3). Listen to the audio recordings of each dialogue followed by choral practice. Then, pair students with partners and let them practice each dialogue multiple times, switching roles.

Community Barbeque Dialogue Practice - Worksheet page 3

Learning Objective 3, 4

Online (WI, SI): Create an assignment in your online classroom. Assign partners to create a dialogue using the worksheet. Students can phone call each other or use google docs to complete the assignment text. To submit assignment, students can either submit the text or a recording of them practicing the dialogue with a family member or friend.

Classroom (SI): Students work in partners to write an 8-10 page dialogue from the worksheet. Students will present in front of the class with their papers in hand. This is a skill using activity to practice for a Speaking I assessment.