Leading the Way: LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Sport

Jennifer Birch-Jones, CAAWS Program Lead, LGBTQI2S Inclusion with Nadine Rolland, COC #OneTeam Ambassador

Swim Ontario, September 22, 2018
Acknowledgement of Traditional Land As An Act of Reconciliation

To begin, let us acknowledge that we are situated on the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, our meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to come together on this land.
CAAWS Program Lead, LGBTQI2S Sport Inclusion

- Cisgender, Lesbian
- Use the pronouns she, her, hers
- Wide ranging involvement at all levels of sport:
  - Creating positive spaces for Team Canada missions
  - 2010 & 2015 Pride Houses in Canada
  - Author of CAAWS’ Leading the Way and co-author of CCES’ Trans Inclusion Guidance for Sport Organizations
  - LGBTQI2S Sport Inclusion Task Force; NSO Pilot and Toolkit Projects, Sport Inclusion Summit, …
CAAWS – At a Glance

- Women and Leadership Program
- Workshops
- Women on Boards
- Network
- Most Influential Women in Sport and Physical Activity List
- Fueling Women Champions
- Female Coach Mentorship Project
- LGBTQI2S Inclusion in Sport
- WISE Fund – (Women in Sport Encouragement)
- Canadian Sport for Life – CS4L
- Physical Activity for Women 55-70+
- On the Move
- Mothers in Motion
- Aboriginal and Newcomer/Ethnic support
- Resources & Publications
- Consultation & Support to Partners
- Monthly “In the Loop” e-newsletter

Supported by the Government of Canada

www.caaws.ca
Nadine Rolland

- Cdn. Olympic Athlete Sydney 2000
- 18 Medals on the FINA World Cup Circuit (2000-02)
- Cdn. and World Master Records Holder
- Founder of the Swimming Team Les Loutres de Montreal (The Montreal Otters) in 2007
- Head Coach of Les Loutres since 2007
- PNCE level 4 coach
- Helped create a Save Environment for athletes, especially within the LGBTQ community
- #OneTeam Ambassador since 2014

CANADIAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEE
#ONETEAM
LGBTQ+ INCLUSION IN SPORT
COC #OneTeam #UneÉquipe

The #OneTeam #UneÉquipe initiative is committed to creating safe sport and learning environments across Canada.
Why CAAWS Cares

Homophobia, bi-phobia and transphobia is driven by fear, founded on ignorance, and hurtful and harmful to all.

I’m LGBTQ+

It’s not safe

I’m not welcome

I won’t play / participate

I’m not LGBTQ+

It’s not safe

I’m not LGBTQ+

I won’t play / participate
CAAWS - Leading the Way

- Early conversations and resources (2007-2013)
- Leading the Way: Workshops, Webinars (2014-2018) and Organizational Support
- Other resources, e.g., addressing LGBTQ+phobic language, CAAWS Position Statement on Trans Inclusion
- Positive Space buttons, stickies, and signs (8.5 x 11)
- Access at: https://www.caaws.ca/lgbtqi2sinclusioninsport/
Overview

• Understanding Language – the Basics

• Understanding LGBTQ+phobia in Sport

• Taking Action

• Q&A
Unpacking Language – The Basics

L – Lesbian
G – Gay
B – Bisexual
T – Trans or Transgender
Q – Queer, Questioning
I – Intersex
2S – Two spirited
+ - Expanding identities under the sexual and gender diversity umbrella(s)
Unpacking Language - The Basics

The Gender Unicorn

- **Gender Identity**
  - Female/Woman/Girl
  - Male/Man/Boy
  - Other Gender(s)

- **Gender Expression**
  - Feminine
  - Masculine
  - Other

- **Sex Assigned at Birth**
  - Female
  - Male
  - Other/Intersex

- **Physically Attracted to**
  - Women
  - Men
  - Other Gender(s)

- **Emotionally Attracted to**
  - Women
  - Men
  - Other Gender(s)

To learn more, go to: www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Dog and Anna Myers
Unpacking Language - The Basics

- Transgendered” or “trans” is an adjective used to denote someone who does not identify with the gender or sex they were assigned at birth

- We can have a sense of our gender identity in our very early childhood years; gender expression is how we choose to present our gender identity to the outside world

- Trans children, youth or adults may choose to align their gender identity with their gender expression through their very own unique and personal “transition” process throughout their lifetime

- Being a trans person is not a lifestyle choice!
Unpacking Language - The Basics

• Sexual orientation (who you are attracted to / love) is different from gender identity and expression (who you are and how you express yourself)

• Gender diversity / inclusion (welcoming a range of people within the gender and non-binary spectrum) is different from gender equity (making sure that those who identify as girls / women have equal access and opportunities relative to those who identify as boys / men)
Unpacking Language - The Basics

Continuum of disclosing sexual and gender identity

1. I’m out to myself
2. My teammates, body talks
3. 1-2 teammates / the coach know
4. >2 teammates or the coach know
5. All my teammates and the coach know
6. I’m publicly out

Adapted from Viel and Demers (2013)
Understanding Language - The Basics

• You don’t need to be an expert but you do need to know the basics - CAAWS and CCES resources can help.

http://cces.ca/gender-inclusivity

https://www.caaws.ca/lgbtqi2sinclusioninsport/
#ONETEAM RESOURCES

Cooperative Games
This resource includes eight activities for educators to engage students in programming that reinforces inclusive environments.

Fostering Mental Fitness in LGBTQ Students
This resource introduces the concept of Mental Fitness and the basic Mental Fitness needs of Acceptance, Competence and Relatedness.

The Sport Landscape
This resource focuses on what are some of the challenges for LGBTQ children and youth regarding participation, the barriers and how these barriers can be eliminated/reduced.

Creating safer spaces for LGBTQ Students
Designed to provide educators, community leaders and parents a quick reference/remind of what their role is and how they can support LGBTQ participants within the classroom and in sport.
Understanding Language - The Basics

How much of the LGBQTI2S language was:

1) Mostly new to you?

2) Somewhat new to you?

3) Not at all new to you?

Are there any additional questions you still have?
Understanding LGBTQ+phobia in Sport

How many of you here today know someone in your swim club / team who identifies as a:

1) Lesbian?
2) Gay (male)?
3) Bisexual?
4) Trans or two spirit?
5) Gender nonconforming / non-binary / gender queer?
Understanding LGBTQ+phobia in Sport

• ~30 years of research on LGBGTQI2S athletes & sport
• Majority focused on L and G athletes & coaches
• Experiences of overt homophobia and transphobia
  • “Culture of silence”
  • “Don’t ask, don’t tell”
• Shifting levels of acceptance
• Experienced differently based on gender

LGBTQ+phobia in Sport – Sexual Diversity

Homo- and bi-phobia is different for women and men

*For Women*

- Women who play traditional feminine sports, and are suspected of being lesbian, are singled out by other players.

- Women who play traditionally masculine sports such as hockey are accused of being lesbians. The lesbian label is pervasive and women may chose not to play these sports for fear of being labelled as a lesbian.

- Female excellence in sport continues to challenge notions of traditional masculinity. If traditional masculinity is coded as ‘strength and endurance’ when women display those attributes we assume they are lesbians.

- There is a greater openness toward lesbian team members now than 20 years ago. But this acceptance can be conditional: knowledge of being lesbian must often not go beyond the locker room in order to protect the team’s image and reputation.

Lauren Elizabeth Neidigh
Univ. of Arizona
LGBTQ+phobia in Sport – Sexual Diversity

Homo- and bi-phobia is different for women and men

**For Men**

- Sport allows boys to develop their manliness, competitive spirit and strength of character, and become “one of the boys”
- Men have their heterosexuality called into question when they play badly or when they choose to participate in a `feminine` sport. By definition, men who play badly cannot be heterosexual men – they must be sissies, girls, or they must be gay - attitudes which are both sexist and homophobic
- Male sport team locker rooms are often extremely homophobic. ‘The idea that there might be a gay man on the men`s team was unconscionable for other men who, because of the male-to-male intimacy and bonding, need to believe that they were not the object of a male sexual gaze’ (Symons at al, 2010 p. 43)

Men who play team sports and who are suspected of being gay know that they are likely to be unsafe in change rooms. But John Amechi (former NBA player) talks about it being nothing more than a work place

Thierry Cherjui, Cdn. Swimmer
There are still not many “out” coaches. Many LGB coaches fear their employer’s or organization's reaction, athletes not wanting to play for a coach who is lesbian or gay, or being considered a sexual predator, especially if coaching at the youth level. Coaches believe that coming out will cause more problems and pose more risks than concealing their sexual orientation. A range of strategies are then used to conceal their sexual orientation. Negative recruiting is also a concern.
LGBTQ+phobia in Sport – Gender Diversity

Transphobia is different for women and men

Natalie Fahey, NCAA female trans swimmer

For Women

- The motives of trans women athletes who wish to participate in sport in the gender in which they identify are often questioned
- Lingering misbelief that they are not really “women”
- Assumption that trans women will have an “unfair” competitive advantage (more so than cisgender women who may also be stronger, taller, more muscular) so eligibility must be regulated

For Men

- The motives of trans men athletes who wish to participate in sport in the gender in which they identify is not often questioned
- Lingering misbelief that they are not really “men” less frequently raised
- Competitive disadvantage assumed so no need to regulate eligibility

Schuyler Bailer, NCAA male trans swimmer
Progress but …

Out on the Fields (Denison & Kitchen, 2016) (Cdn. participants = 1,123)

• 81% witnessed or experienced homophobia in sports against women and / or men
• 70% believe youth team sports are not welcoming for LGB persons
• 66% felt that an openly LGB person would not be safe as a spectator at a sporting event

Complete results at:
www.outonthefields.com
LGBTQ+phobia in Sport

Expression of Sexual Orientation (Demers ongoing Cdn. research):

Who knows my Sexual Orientation:

- Nobody: 24%
- The Coach: 2%
- 1-2...: 22%
- Few...: 4%
- Everybody: 48%

How do I express my Sexual...:

- Hetero: 13%
- Hidden: 24%
- Implicit: 15%
- Explicit: 11%
- Public: 37%
LGBTQ+phobia in Sport

Experiences of LGBTQ+ phobia (Demers ongoing Cdn research):

**HETEROSEXUAL**
- Yes: 37%
- No: 63%
- N = 844

**LGB**
- Yes: 33%
- No: 67%
- N = 450

**TRANSGENDER**
- Yes: 19%
- No: 81%
- N = 16
LGBTQ+phobia in Sport

Experiences of (Demers ongoing Cdn research):

577 LGB respondents
1. Cyberbullying
2. Exclusion from social groups
3. Verbal abuses, bashing, derogatory remarks

25 Trans respondents
1. Voluntary bad gender identification
2. Deliberate
3. Ridicule
LGBTQ+phobia in Sport

Explanation of: (Demers ongoing Cdn research):

Social Media

- Very: 30%
- Important: 40%
- Low: 22%
- Not: 8%

Teammates’ Attitude

- Very: 27%
- Important: 43%
- Low: 21%
- Not: 9%

Type of Sport

- Very: 24%
- Important: 44%
- Low: 21%
- Not: 11%
LGBTQ+phobia in Sport
Experiences of transphobia: (Demers ongoing Cdn research)

“It’s always there.”

“I quit organized sports with my transition to avoid problematic situations.”

“For a whole 2 years after coming out as transgender I was forced to be closeted while playing in competition. This caused depressive episodes and anxiety attacks to arise. My physical and mental health had declined greatly.”

“I fear that whenever I'm on the start line, someone will make a comment or complaint that it's not "fair" for me to be there”

“I grew up playing sports. From this I learned that it was better to be tough. I hid who I really was for a long time due to the remarks I heard. I had always tried to fit in so I wouldn't be the person to take the brunt of the comments.”
LGBTQ+phobia in Sport

Social media has a significant negative influence:

![Twitter statistics showing the number of tweets with offensive language.](image)
LGBTQ+phobia in Sport – Gender Diversity

• Cdn. expert guidance on trans inclusion to Cdn. sport organizations: *Allow individuals to participate in sport in the gender in which they identify*

• Research suggests people’s concerns about trans persons participating in sport include:
  • Advantage thesis - Trans women will have “natural”, unfair advantage over cisgender women
  • Safety of athletes (youth and rec sport)
  • Locker rooms (all levels of sport, trans women)

• CCES’ Guidance on Trans inclusion and CAAWS’ Trans Inclusion Position Statement address these aspects and more
LGBTQ+phobia in Sport – Gender Diversity

• Barriers to participation for trans and non-binary kids in recreational sport in Canada (Travers, 2016)
  • Potentially toxic environments in sport and physical activity spaces
  • Issues of access related to the fact that many sport programs and facilities are sex-segregated
  • Differentiation of activities based on sex stereotypes even within gender integrated (i.e., “co-ed”) sports

• “As a result of barriers transgender and gender nonconforming kids face to participation...the desire to participate in sport is often a catalyst to kids’ binary and medical transition”. (Travers, 2016, p. 185)
How Welcoming is Your Club / Team?

At your table, share your thoughts on how welcoming is your club / team? Think about;

• If you have any out LGBTQI2S athletes and / or coaches?

• If so, how was / is their experience of being out at your club / team?

• If you do not yet have any out LGBTQI2S athletes or coaches, why do you think that is?
Taking Action
Making the Case – Why This Matters

Ethical

Just Do The Right Thing.

Legal

Professional

Diversity Is An Asset
Making the Case – Why This Matters

LGBTQ+ persons:

- Drop out of sports more frequently than heterosexual and cisgender peers or feel that medical interventions are necessary to continue participation
- Experience social isolation if they remain in “toxic” sport environment
- Present coming out as having “gone better” than they anticipated
- Found more acceptance when they had “athletic capital”
- Experience improved performance after coming out
- Wished they had more role models when they were young
- Face barriers in youth sport that cause high drop-out rates
- Have considered, attempted, or died by suicide

"In order for an athlete to compete at their highest level I believe it’s important to have a high level of self-worth and confidence. When you are in an environment that accepts you regardless of race, age, religious affiliation, or sexual orientation, then and only then can an athlete really push the limits in competition. I realize there is a separation between what we do and whom we are - but the second we feel as though we have something to hide our performance suffers. This is the best I have ever played and I think it's a direct reflection of being proud of who I am on and off the field." Erin McLeod, Goalkeeper and Olympic Bronze Medallist with Canada’s Women’s Soccer Team in London 2012. Pro Ambassador, Athlete Ally (2013)
Taking Action

Recommendations (Demers ongoing Cdn. research):

1) A greater number of allies (heterosexual and cisgender) athletes must speak out publicly and denounce LGBTQ+phobia in sport.

- Very important: 79%
- Important: 21%

Very important  Important
Taking Action

Recommendations (Demers ongoing Cdn. research):

2) **Schools, coaches** and **parents** need to be aware at an early stage that LGBTQ+-phobia has to be taken seriously in sports environments.
Taking Action

Recommendations (Demers ongoing Cdn. research):

3) **Sport organizations at all levels** must **adopt and promote** anti-homophobic / transphobic and inclusive LGBTQ+ policies [and practices] for all amateur and professional athletes.
Taking Action

1) Educate yourself / your organization.

CAAWS Position Statement on Trans Inclusion in Sport

https://www.caaws.ca/lgbtqi2sinclusioninsport/

http://cces.ca/gender-inclusivity
Taking Action

1) Educate yourself / your organization.

http://www.youcanplayproject.org

http://www.egale.ca

http://ccgsd-ccdgs.org

https://olympic.ca/education/oneteam/

https://www.viasport.ca/inclusion/lgbtqi2s

https://www.viasport.ca/inclusion/lgbtqi2s

https://www.transathlete.com/
Taking Action

1) Educate yourself / your organization.

http://www.cbc.ca/sports/live-stream-can-i-play-1.4313055
Taking Action

2) Seek out LGBTQ+ voices in your organization / sport to understand their experiences and ideas on what more can be done.

“Coaches / the club need to foster a culture of acceptance that is not based on who is the best swimmer(s) … Be open to listening to the concerns raised by an LGBTQI2S swimmer … When you hear the term “faggot” or other insulting words / terms used for LGBTQI2S swimmers, the coach / team leader needs to address it right away ... Ditto for lane switching because a person doesn’t want to swim in the same lane as an LGBTQI2S swimmer ... Bullying is bullying.” (Thierry Cherjui, Quebec Gay Swimmer)
Taking Action

3) Be visible in your allyship / leadership.

1. Understand your privilege
2. Listen and do your homework
3. Speak up not over
4. Realize you are going to make mistakes and when you do, apologise
5. Ally is a verb

Franchesca Ramsey
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_dg86g-QIM0
Taking Action

3) Be visible in your allyship / leadership.

CAAWS’ (or your own) visible signs demonstrate not only your acceptance of those who are LGBTQI2S but your willingness to take a stand on any LGBTQ+phobic actions you experience.
Taking Action

3) Be visible in your allyship / leadership.

COC and You Can Play #OneTeam
Pride Parade
Taking Action

3) Be visible in your allyship / leadership.

LGBTQI2S Sport Inclusion Task Force and Skate Canada Announce a Pilot Project to Make Sport More Welcoming to Sexual and Gender-Diverse People

Safe Sport

- Inclusion

Skate Canada supports an inclusive environment of openness and respect for everyone regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, religion, class, size, or sexual or gender identity. We are committed to providing strong and positive leadership that models fair and respectful behaviour.

Resources on Sex Gender Sexuality

https://skatecanada.ca/safe-sport/
Taking Action

4) Model inclusive language, including preferred pronouns and names, and address inappropriate language

• Must be intentional about inclusive language (and not only if you think someone on the team / organization is LGBTQI2S)
• Work from the premise that there are LGBTQI2S team / organization members (or those who you may be trying to recruit or hire) and use inclusive language
• Using someone’s preferred pronouns is a basic sign or respect and a protection under the Ontario Human Rights Code
People use the word gay to mean “stupid” or “not tough”. Although I don’t take these words personally there are others who may. Some of the homophobic comments are also sexist as well as homophobic and it’s like insulting women twice. And for the kids involved in our sport we can all be better off by not using these words.” (Leading the Way: Out Female and National Team Member, 2017)
Taking Action

4) Model inclusive gender-neutral language, including preferred pronouns and names, and address inappropriate language
Taking Action

5) Be ready for when someone comes out to you (CAAWS and CCES resources can help)

Continuum of disclosing sexual and gender identity

- I’m out to myself
- My team suspects, but nobody talks
- 1-2 teammates / the coach know
- >2 teammates or the coach know
- All my teammates and the coach know
- I’m publicly out

Adapted from Viel and Demers (2013)
Taking Action

5) Be ready for when someone comes out to you

**Coming Out Do’s**
- Know this is a huge sign of trust
- Check-in on how confidential it is
- Remember that their gender / sexuality is just one dimension of who they are
- Show interest and curiosity about this part of them that they are sharing with you
- Ask them how you can best support them

**Coming Out Don’ts**
- Say “I always knew” or downplay the significance of their sharing with you
- Share information with others without permission
- Forget that they are still the same person you knew before
- Ask probing questions or cross personal barriers you wouldn't have crossed before
- Assume you know why they came out to you

Adapted from Kellerman (2016).
Taking Action

6) Ensure you provide safe spaces for LGBTQI2S team members

- Changing rooms, toilets (especially) and shared sleeping spaces are the most uncomfortable and unsafe spaces for LGBTQI2S people because of fears of unfounded accusations and/or actual violence
- Unfounded concerns expressed by non-LGBTQI2S people need to be unpacked and addressed (most often reflect a conscious or unconscious bias)
- Any accommodation (to address a specific need/request of an LGBTQI2S person) requires a conversation with that individual (and possibly their family)
- Need to also think about safe spaces at other away venues
Taking Action

7) Take stock of your LGBTQ+ inclusion polices and practices

- Is sexual orientation, gender identity and expression explicitly referenced in our policies and procedures?
- Do we need an LGBTQ+ inclusion policy and related procedures?
- Do we understand the confidentiality requirements around disclosure of sexual and gender identities?
- Do we understand our obligations as an employer in providing a safe and welcoming workplace for all staff?

Note: The Sport Inclusion Task Force’s Sport Inclusion Checklist serves as an assessment tool to not only evaluate the climate of the environment within the sport organization(s) that governs the sport, but to also engage people in LGBTQ+ inclusion by starting conversations.
Taking Action

Key Learnings

• Senior leadership is essential and sends a strong message
• Your LGBTQ+ members must be involved; they (and their families) will help you on this journey
• You don’t need to tackle everything at once but you do need to start somewhere
• Don’t re-invent the wheel - use the organizational resources that are out there
• Develop your policies and procedures to meet your sport’s needs, not your IF’s or the IOC’s
• Think about implementation as well as policy as that is where many questions get raised
• You will make mistakes; it’s okay - apologise and learn from them
Taking Action

Knowing what we now know, is there anything that I / our club / organization should:
• stop doing?
• keep doing?
• start doing?

Marion Lay and Mark Tewskbury, LGBTQI2S pioneers in Cdn. swimming and sport
Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity

Good Luck and Thank you
Any / all feedback welcome

Jb-j@caaws.ca


Ramsey, Franchesca. Five Tips on Being an Ally. Access at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_dg86g-QIM0


References


Sexual Diversity:

University of Arizona lesbian swimmer finds freedom after coming out


Swimmer dedicates Olympic medal to her girlfriend, coming out in the process

Before coming out, [Cdn.] gay college swimmer [and now coach] found comfort and confidence in the pool


Gay Olympic swimmer Amini Fonua on coming out at Texas A&M and carrying a national Olympic flag

https://www.outsports.com/2013/6/3/4386592/olympic-swimmer-amini-fonua

What this gay Univ. of South Dakota athlete’s coach said to him made all the difference

**Gender Diversity:**

Meet the Transgender NCAA Swimmer from Harvard
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niBM3li662U&itct=CAkQpDAYCSTICKqh64vD99gCFRYbfwodzBUFGjlHcmVsYXRIZEjprtgtOTpwelB&app=desktop](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niBM3li662U&itct=CAkQpDAYCSTICKqh64vD99gCFRYbfwodzBUFGjlHcmVsYXRIZEjprtgtOTpwelB&app=desktop)

Q&A with Schuyler Bailar, the First Openly Transgender NCAA Division I Swimmer

Trans Swimmer Natalie Fahey on Her Decision to Transition
Additional Swimming Specific Resources

Organizational / Club Resource:
USA Swimming’s LGBTQ Cultural Inclusion Resource Guide

Pride in Sport’s Guidance for Swimming Governing Bodies on LGBT Inclusion and the Prevention of Discrimination and Violence