

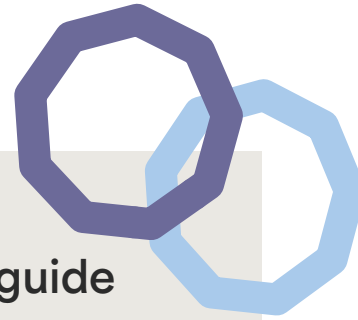


Inclusive Language Guide

Ottawa's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Resource Hub for Sport

Understanding Why

An inclusive language guide is a key step in creating environments where people feel that they belong. This guide includes definitions of terms, words to be avoided, and suggested replacements. We hope this guide supports you and those around you to create a sense of belonging for all participants in your community sport organization.





Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terms to Know



2SLGBTQIA+

An acronym that stands for two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/aromantic, as well as other identities related to gender and attraction (sexual, romantic, emotional), such as non-binary and pansexual. This acronym is often used to refer to a broad spectrum of identities related to gender and attraction.



Ableism

Ableism is the discrimination of and belief system that persons with disabilities are less worthy of respect and consideration, less able to contribute and participate, or of less inherent value than others. Ableism may be conscious or unconscious, and may be embedded in institutions, systems, or the broader societal culture. It can limit the opportunities of persons with disabilities and reduce their inclusion within their communities.



Accessibility

Accessibility is about creating barrier-free communities, workplaces and services for all Canadians.



Anti-
Oppression

Anti-oppression are strategies, theories, and actions that challenge social and historical inequalities and injustices that are systemic to our systems and institutions through policies and practices that allow certain groups to dominate over institutions, as well as policies and practices that allow certain groups to dominate over other groups. It acknowledges the intersections of identity and diversity including race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, record of offences, marital status, family status, and disability and aims to promote equity between the various identities.



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terms to Know



Anti-Racism

Anti-racism is the active process of recognizing and eliminating the existence of racism, including systemic racism. It includes beliefs, actions, policies, and movements developed to actively identify and dismantle prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination on the basis of race. Anti-racism actively identifies, removes, prevents, and mitigates racially inequitable outcomes and power imbalances between groups and the structures that sustain these inequities.



Attitudinal Barriers

Attitudinal barriers are pervasive negative perceptions and value systems that focus on a person's disability and assume that they are unhealthy because of their disability. Attitudes related to stigma, prejudice, and discrimination may come from people's ideas related to disability. For example, someone may see disability as a personal tragedy or as an indication of the lack of ability to behave as expected in society. By thinking of disability as a social responsibility to provide support to all people so they can live independent and full lives, we can work to recognize and address challenges that all people, including those with disabilities, experience.



Belonging

Simply put, belonging is being part of a collective we. It's about how much we believe we fit in a group or place - and how much that place or group welcomes or includes us. It's the result of connecting with others in rich relationships and engaging in our communities to make them better. Belonging is fundamental to our sense of happiness and well-being. Each of us has a personal connection to the idea of belonging that is influenced by our experiences with the people, places and identities to which we feel connected. So where do we belong? What do we belong to? A community, a workplace, a subculture - these are all things to which we may belong.



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terms to Know

Cultural Appropriation



Cultural appropriation is the act of taking from someone else's culture without their consent. This can include using aspects of traditional knowledge or cultural expressions, as well as particular music, dances, regalia, cuisine, symbols, ceremonies, artistic expressions and so on.

Cultural appropriation often reflects a racialized power imbalance between two cultures, the taking of culture – rather than the consensual sharing of it – which often, in turn, involves exploitation of one group over another. Cultural appropriation disregards the sacred meanings and stories associated with those practices or items that are being taken.

Examples of Cultural Appropriation

In Canada, the appropriation of Indigenous culture by white, non-Indigenous peoples is rooted in colonization. Critics of cultural appropriation note that, in many cases, it has been used in ways that either perpetuate negative attitudes about Indigenous peoples or celebrate and romanticize them. Moreover, appropriation separates people, their history and lived experience, from cultural symbols, literatures and objects, many of which hold sacred meaning.

Some examples of cultural appropriation include the sale of ceremonial objects and craftwork, such as dream catchers, by non-Indigenous people; the use of traditional medicines and health practices by those outside the community; and the use of Indigenous designs or stereotypical images in fashion, advertising, literature and film.

For Indigenous peoples, cultural appropriation is best understood within the context of cultural genocide and assimilation. Indigenous ways of life have been threatened since contact, most notably during the residential school era. For years, laws prohibited Indigenous peoples from practicing their cultures and engaging in ceremonies. (See also Indian Act)

Various minor and major league sports teams have used Indigenous names and icons to promote their teams. Some examples include the Washington Redskins, Chicago Blackhawks and Cleveland Indians. The “Tomahawk Chop” – an act some sports fans of teams such as the Atlanta Braves perform during a game – has also been described as cultural appropriation. Indigenous peoples and their allies have encouraged teams such as these to rename themselves and to use logos and forms of fan celebration that are not culturally offensive. As Anishinaabe columnist Jesse Wentz told the CBC in 2016, “We are not your mascots, we are human beings.”



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terms to Know



Decolonization

Decolonization may be defined as the active resistance against colonial powers, and a shifting of power towards political, economic, educational, cultural, psychic independence, and power that originate from a colonized nation's own indigenous culture. This process occurs politically and also applies to personal and societal, psychic, cultural, political, agricultural, and educational deconstruction of colonial oppression. Decolonization demands an Indigenous framework and a centering of Indigenous land, Indigenous sovereignty, and Indigenous ways of thinking.



Disability

Disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and mind and features of the society in which they live. A disability can occur at any time in a person's life; some people are born with a disability, while others develop a disability later in life. It can be permanent, temporary or episodic. Disability can steadily worsen, remain the same, or improve. It can be very mild to very severe. It can be the cause, as well as the result, of disease, illness, injury, or substance abuse. Because of its complexity, there is no single, harmonized "operational" definition of disability across federal programs.

Reflecting this complexity are the different approaches to understanding the experience of disability. According to the traditional, bio-medical approach, disability is viewed as a medical or health problem that prevents or reduces a person's ability to participate fully in society. In contrast, the social approach views disability as a natural part of society, where attitudes, stigma and prejudices present barriers to people with disabilities, and prevent or hinder their participation in mainstream society.



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terms to Know



Discrimination

Discrimination is an action or a decision that treats a person or a group in a negative way based on prejudiced attitudes. Discrimination includes any form of unequal treatment based on a ground protected by human rights legislation, that results in disadvantage, whether imposing extra burdens or denying benefits. It can be overt or covert, conscious or unconscious, and it may occur at an individual or systemic level in the form of subtle aspects of rules, practices and procedures that limit or prevent access to opportunities, benefits, or advantages that are available to others. Discrimination can be perpetuated individually and systemically. Discrimination can be directed towards people who are perceived as part of a group and has the effect of excluding or restricting their access to housing, jobs, education, etc. In order to discriminate, a group must have social, economic, and/or political power to affect another group.



Diversity

A reality created by individuals and groups from a broad spectrum of demographic and philosophical differences, it is about understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.



Equity

Equity refers to fair treatment of everyone that addresses specific needs, barriers, and accommodations to ensure all have equal access and opportunity to participate in all aspects of society and its benefits. Equality, in which individual needs and differences are ignored, is not sufficient. Equity is the process of analyzing and addressing unfair systems and practices towards the creation of equal outcomes.



Gender Expression

Gender expression refers to how a person publicly presents their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language, and voice. A person's chosen name and pronouns are also common ways of expressing gender.



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terms to Know



Gender Identity

Gender identity refers to each person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is their sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along (or outside) the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be the same as or different from their sex assigned at birth. Gender identity is fundamentally different from a person's sexual orientation.



Homophobia

Homophobia is fear, hatred, discomfort with, or mistrust of people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Biphobia is fear, hatred, discomfort, or mistrust, specifically of people who are bisexual. Homophobia can take many different forms, including negative attitudes and beliefs about, aversion to, or prejudice against bisexual, lesbian, and gay people. It's often based in irrational fear and misunderstanding.



Inclusion

The dynamic state of operating in which diversity is leveraged to create a fair, healthy, and high-performing organization or community. An inclusive environment ensures equitable access to resources and opportunities for all. It also enables individuals and groups to feel safe, respected, engaged, motivated, and valued, for who they are and for their contributions toward organizational and societal goals.



Indigenous

Indigenous peoples is a collective name for the people who are native to a particular area. Indigenous is also a proper term to refer to a group of people. In Canada, the federal government has embraced the term Indigenous as a means of affirming the legal rights of Indigenous peoples when referencing their communities. Indigenous is preferred over the term Aboriginal.

Always capitalize the term Indigenous and when possible, use the names of specific nations.



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terms to Know



Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the ways in which social categories, such as gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and class intersect to create different and unique modes of discrimination and privilege.



Microaggression

Microaggressions refers to everyday snubs and insults that communicate harmful, hostile, derogatory, or negative attitudes toward communities experiencing marginalization. Oftentimes, they take the form of a compliment, 'harmless' comment, or question, but contain a hidden insult that is often discriminatory and rooted in bias and stereotypical assumptions.

Microaggressions can be intentional or unintentional, however, regardless of intent, microaggressions can foster a culture of exclusion, as well as cause long-lasting harm and negative health outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, and elevated blood pressure.



Misgendering

Misgendering means to refer to a person as or consider them to be a gender that they do not identify with. Misgendering can either be intentional or unintentional and can include using incorrect pronouns, using incorrect gender forms of address (e.g., ma'am, sir, ladies). Even if misgendering is unintended, it can still be very invalidating to the person who is subjected to it. Trans, non-binary, and gender diverse individuals are the groups most often impacted by misgendering.

Gender inclusive language includes the use of gender-neutral language to avoid unnecessarily gendering a space or misgendering someone such as "good day folks", letter carrier, etc. Sharing pronouns is one way to reduce misgendering.



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terms to Know



Misogyny

Misogyny is the hatred, dislike, or mistrust of women and feminine presenting persons, manifested in various forms such as physical intimidation and abuse, sexual harassment and rape, social shunning, and ostracism.



Pronouns

(Related to gender)

A pronoun is a word that is used in place of a noun. Pronouns refer to either the people talking (I or you) or someone or something that is being talked about (like she, it, them, and this).

When it comes to people, it is important to use the set of pronouns that a person wants others to use when referring to them. It is not always possible to know what a person's pronouns are by their appearance or the sound of their voice. If you do not know an individual's pronouns, it is best to refer to them by using their name or 'they/them' pronouns until you do know what pronouns they use.

Examples of pronouns include she/her, they/them, he/him, and ze/zir. Some individuals may use more than one set of pronouns, such as 'she/they'. In this case, the individual should be referred to using all the pronouns they have chosen for themselves. The terms "chosen pronouns" or just "pronouns" are more appropriate than "preferred pronouns."



Queer

Queer is a term used by some members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community as a symbol of pride and affirmation of diversity. It is also used as an umbrella term for sexual and gender identities and some communities use it to encompass a broad group of people with different identities related to sex, gender, or attraction. Queer can also be used by an individual as a specific identity label or to reflect the interrelatedness of different aspects of their sexuality and gender.

Queer was historically used as a derogatory term, however, the word has been reclaimed by some members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. It is a best practice to avoid referring to an individual as queer, unless they have explicitly referred to themselves in that way.



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terms to Know



Racism

Racism is an ideology that either directly or indirectly asserts that one group is inherently superior to others. It can be openly displayed in racial jokes and slurs or hate crimes but it can be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, these are unconsciously held and have become deeply embedded in systems and institutions that have evolved over time. Racism operates at a number of levels, in particular, individual, systemic and societal. It can manifest in subtle forms and is not always tangible.

Like any other system of oppression racism can be internalized.

Despite the fact that Canada has made much progress, unfortunately racism and racial discrimination remain a persistent reality in Canadian society. This fact must be acknowledged as a starting point to effectively address racism and racial discrimination.



Reconciliation

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) defines reconciliation as an ongoing commitment to renewing nation-to-nation relationships with Indigenous peoples based on the recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership. Reconciliation is an ongoing process, and all Canadians have a role to play in advancing it. Working toward reconciliation means learning about and acknowledging the ways in which Indigenous peoples have been harmed, and continue to be harmed by colonization, including institutions and systems. It also includes working toward systemic change by challenging the status quo and prioritizing Indigenous perspectives, stewardship, and land rights.



Safer Space

A safer space is a supportive, non-threatening environment where all participants can feel comfortable to express themselves and share experiences without fear of discrimination or reprisal. The term 'safer' is preferred over 'safe' because the concept of safety is relative and subjective - not everyone feels safe under the same conditions.



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terms to Know



Sexism

Prejudice or discrimination based on sex or gender, especially against women and girls. Sexism can be a belief that one sex is superior to or more valuable than another sex. It imposes limits on what men and boys can and should do and what women and girls can and should do. The concept of sexism was originally formulated to raise consciousness about the oppression of girls and women, although by the early 21st century it had sometimes been expanded to include the oppression of any sex, including men and boys, intersex people, and transgender people.



Transgender

‘Trans’ is a widely used shorthand for ‘transgender’. Trans refers to an individual whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. It is often used as an umbrella term to represent a wide range of gender identities. For example, trans people can be (but are not limited to) men, women, and non-binary.



Transphobia

Transphobia is fear, hatred, discomfort with, or mistrust of people who are transgender, non-binary, genderqueer, or do not follow traditional gender norms. This term is becoming less common given that the suffix -phobia is used to describe mental health disorders in the DSM. Discrimination and hatred is not a mental health condition but rather will indeed impact the health of those who are being discriminated against.

Discriminatory attitudes aren't a mental illness. Calling it "phobia" legitimates anti-trans bias, lending the right and justification to the actions of those who reject, pathologize, and mock trans people, often without facing consequences for those actions. The same reason why we are moving away from "homophobia, biphobia, etc".



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terms to Know



Two-Spirit

An umbrella term that encompasses a number of understandings of gender and sexuality among many Indigenous North Americans – has its roots in traditions and cultures dating back centuries. Note that two-spirit is a fairly recent term that was coined in the 1990s. The acronym 2SLGBTQIA+ remains a colonial agglomeration of terms and we have to practice caution in using it. Current indigenous communities have started using “indigequeer” as a neoconcept for queerness within indigenous communities.



White Supremacy

White supremacy is a political, economic, and cultural system in which white people overwhelmingly control power, material resources, and ideas of white superiority and entitlement. It is also the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to Black people, Indigenous people, and other racialized people as well as their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. Though this term has typically be associated with extremist racist groups, white supremacist ideas were the building blocks of Canadian institutions and still underpin dominant cultural beliefs as well as policies that uphold racial inequities today.



Gender and Sexuality Terms to Avoid

Parent ❌

Guardian ✅

Not everyone has parents

Girlfriend, boyfriend, wife, husband ❌

Partner or Spouse ✅

De-genders the relationship

He or She ❌

They or Their ✅

Gender Neutral

“Submit his or her request to the supervisor”

“Submit their request to their supervisor”

Girls/Ladies ❌

Women ✅


Transgendered or Transsexual ❌

Transgender or Trans ✅

Proper acknowledgment of identity




Gender and Sexuality Terms to Avoid


 Preferred pronouns

 Chosen pronouns or pronouns




Pronouns are not a preference but rather a way to express one's own gender identity.

 Titles (e.g. Mr, Mrs)

 Mx. or avoid using a title altogether




Titles are rooted in religion, marriage & binary thinking around gender.

 Guys (e.g. "Hey guys!")

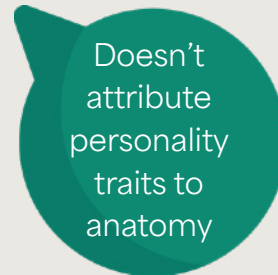
 Girls or Ladies

 Folks, team, everyone, refer athletes as what they are (Swimmers, Players, Etc.)

 Ballys, balls to the wall



 Bold, risk taker

 Doesn't attribute personality traits to anatomy

"They have the balls to..."



Ability Terms to Avoid



Normal

This phrase results in the “othering” of non-White people and those who live with disabilities, mental illness or diseases as not being whole or regular.



Conventional, common, ordinary, typical, regular



“That’s crazy/wild”

Discriminates against those with mental health concerns.



“That’s ridiculous, unreal”



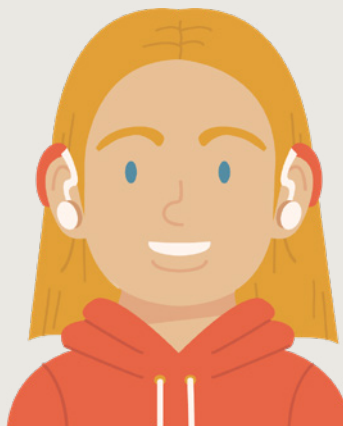
Differently abled, handicapped, crippled

Disability is NOT a bad word. Using euphemisms to describe disability is patronizing and diverges the conversation to make those who are not disabled more comfortable.



Disabled or person(s) with a disability

Some disability-specific organizations are suggesting the following language: **person(s) experiencing a disability or living with a disability.**



“That’s so lame”



“That’s so boring/uninteresting”

“Lame” is an ableist term



Retarded

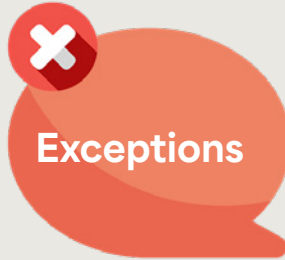


Boring, uncool

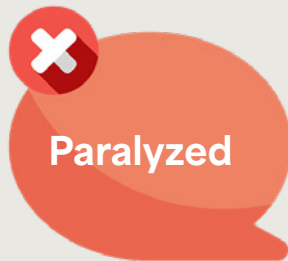
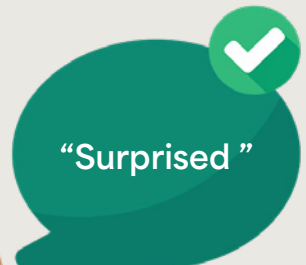
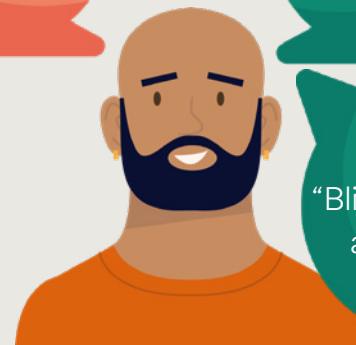
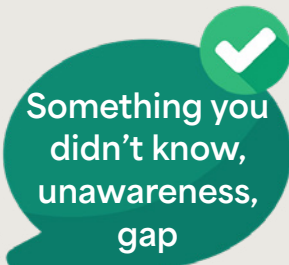
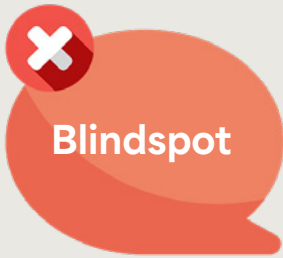
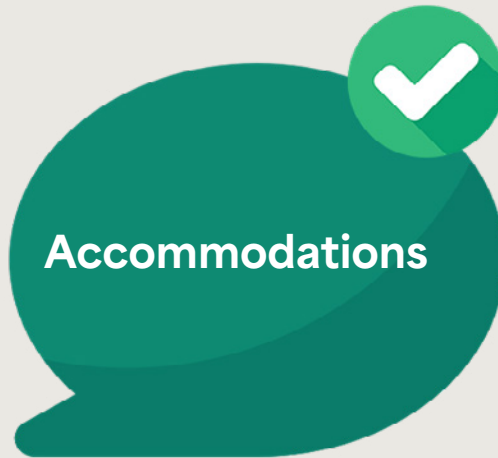
This term is a slur against those who are neurodivergent or have a cognitive disability. It should not be used to make a point about a person, place or thing.



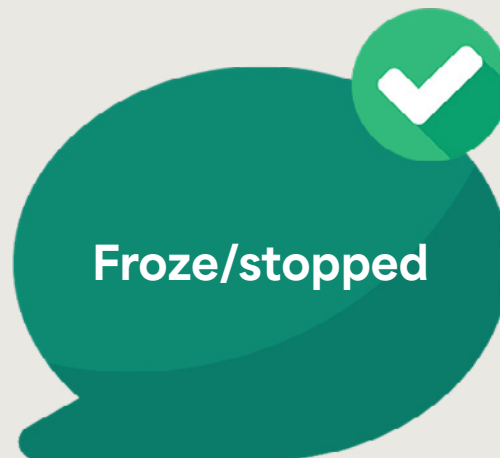
Ability Terms to Avoid



Implies negative connotation of more effort opposed to accessibility.



This term can be triggering to those who live with some type of paralysis.

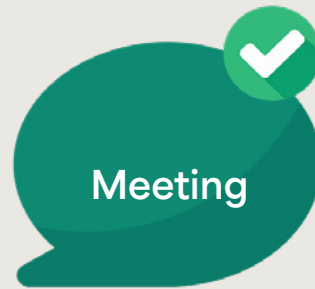




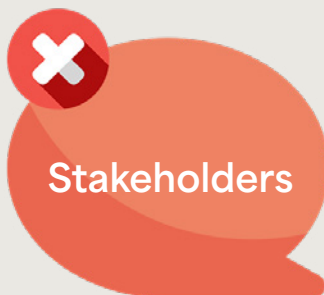
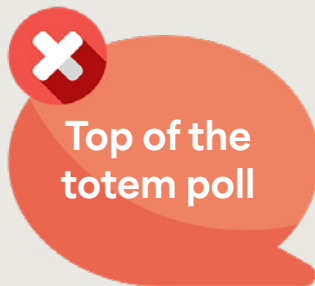
Indigeneity Terms to Avoid



“Let’s have a pow-wow”



“Let’s meet and discuss”



Colonizers would literally put a stake in the land when they were colonizing.





Slave Trade Terms to Avoid

Master

Leader, in charge

Masters were the owners of slaves.

Violence Terms to Avoid

Suicides (a common conditioning drill)

Running, intervals

Killing it, killed it

Doing a good job, did a great job

Doing a good job should not be equated with death.

The term could also be triggering.

Other Terms to Avoid

Black/white list

Refrain from identifying things in black and white.

Nicknames

Make sure it's okay first