

Let Me Be Me:

a Legal Information Guide
to Canada's Conversion Therapy* Ban



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John Sell



Acknowledging the Land

Before we begin, it is vital to recognize that this guide was written in Mi'kmaw'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People who have lived on, cared for, and protected this land for over 13,500 years.

We all have the privilege to live and work on this land and we are all treaty people. This territory is covered by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship, which Mi'kmaq, Wəlastəkwiyyik (Maliseet), and Passamaquoddy Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1726. The treaties did not include surrender of lands and resources, but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wəlastəkwiyyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations. To learn more about the important and urgent work of reconciliation on Turtle Island (North America), read the **94 calls to action** as outlined by the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada**.

The artwork on the previous page is by **Mi'kmaw artist Whitney Gould**, as a way to honour and acknowledge this land, Mi'kmaw'ki. We urge you, the reader, to take a few moments to look at, take in, and appreciate her art as you consider your relationship to reconciliation today.

Introduction

Welcome to **Let Me Be Me: A Legal Information Guide to Canada's Conversion Therapy Ban**.

In 2022, Canada added new provisions to our *Criminal Code* that address the widely discredited and harmful practice of conversion therapy. Conversion therapy* is a practice that is intended to change a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression to heterosexual and/or cisgender. Conversion therapy* is rooted in homophobic and transphobic ideas about acceptable behaviours and identities.

This new legislation came into force on January 7, 2022 and means that it is now illegal in Canada to provide, promote, or profit from the practice of conversion therapy.*

This guide is intended to help you understand what conversion therapy* is and is not, what its impacts are on the health and wellbeing of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, and what these new laws mean for people across our country.

In writing this guide, we have relied on this wisdom, expertise, and generously shared life experiences and stories of the many members of our Nova Scotian 2SLGBTQIA+ community with whom we have consulted. Due to the sensitive and often traumatic nature of conversion therapy*, many of these individuals have chosen to stay anonymous, though some have allowed us to share their stories as part of this publication.

We are grateful to each and every individual who has participated in our consultation process. We hope that this guide authentically reflects and honours your experiences, your resilience, your identities, and your truths.

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RABBI DR. N SIRITSKY, MAHL, MSSW, RSW, BCC

Pronouns: they/them

Works in: #queeringisredeeming

Listen to N's story on their podcast episode [here](#).

I am a second-generation Holocaust survivor who has dedicated their life to fighting injustice and hatred in all its forms. My understanding of Jewish theology, along with my personal intersecting identities and years of experience have taught me that queering is redeeming. Both personally and professionally, I seek to honour this truth and align myself with those brave enough to affirm their uniqueness despite systemic oppression and violence-of which conversion therapy is a despicable example. I believe that those of us working to create queer-affirming sacred spaces are working to decolonize religion from some of the many ways that it has been used as a weapon to reinforce false binaries (male/female; gay/straight; black/white; Christian/sinner; good/bad etc). All Love is sacred and my goal is to do what I can to heal the brokenness that perpetuates the illusions and bias that hurt us all.

A note on language



Throughout this guide, we have chosen to place an asterisk next to the phrase “conversion therapy.” We have done so because the term conversion therapy* is misleading, in the sense that it is not actually a therapeutic practice in any traditional or reasonable understanding of what therapy involves and what its purpose is.

Conversion therapy* is also not recognized as a credible practice by any reputable or accredited medical or therapeutic organization or governing body.

Therapy or counseling are, in a general sense, practices focused on the healing and wellbeing of the individuals seeking out these services. In contrast, **conversion therapy* is an inherently harmful practice that seeks to suppress or alter an essential aspect of an individual’s identity and sense of self.**

Some organizations, such as Canada’s **Community-Based Research Centre** (CBRC), prefer to use the phrase “conversion practices” to avoid using the term therapy. One of CBRC’s core projects focuses on “sexual orientation and gender identity and expression change efforts” (abbreviated as “SOGIECE”), which include any practice or effort, explicit or implicit, that pressures a person to change their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression to heterosexual and/or cisgender. SOGIECE includes conversion practices but also encompasses other ways and situations in which 2SLGBTQIA+ people experience harmful pressure to suppress their authentic selves.

We have chosen to retain the term conversion therapy* for the sake of clarity and simplicity, given that this is how the practice is most commonly known. We have also kept the term ‘conversion therapy’* because this is the term used in the *Criminal Code* itself.

At the same time, however, we wanted to preface this guide by emphasizing that conversion therapy* is far removed and fundamentally at odds with the ethical guidelines and client-centered, healing-focused practices of therapy or counseling.



JORDAN SULLIVAN

Pronouns: he/they

Gender identity: trans man

Listen to Jordan’s story on his podcast episode [here](#).

Jordan, who himself is a survivor of conversion therapy*, works at the Community-Based Research Center as the SOGIECE/CP* Prevention & Survivor Support Coordinator for the Community-Based Research Centre.



VERONICA

Pronouns: she/her

Works in: engineering, advocacy, education, diversity equity and inclusion consulting

Listen to Veronica's story on her podcast episode [here](#).

Survival

by Veronica

They told me “You are wrong!”
They told me “You’re not valid!”

I didn’t choose this

They told me “You’re an abomination!”
They told me “You’re a sin!”

Can I just be?

They told me “You don’t belong!”

They ground me down

“Get out of our lives!”

They spat me out

“You’re still an abomination!”

They..
erased..
my..
Me..

Nothing left.

My am, a daily fight for thrival,
Just beyond the point of survival.
Self validation, so hard, so wrong,
Nothing there to start it from.

It’s hard to boot the imposter of self.
Is this my voice or someone else?
I’m poorly equipped to do it myself,
Some days I just need the help.

I dare not ask,
I don’t deserve.
There is no healing.
Stark.

Ten thousand days it has been
Each morning thankful, I begin
Another new day, I’ve been given
Another day not to give in

Each day I remember Ashley
We shared the torture together
They took their life where I had failed
I remember Ashley



Do you know my name?

by Veronica

I knew myself, you still don’t know me.
I just wanted to be myself, you had other plans.
I told you everything, you heard nothing.
I needed to be, you wanted me out of your lives.
I trusted you, you threw it away.
I knew no difference, you knew better.
I was only eight, you were childish.
I understood the cost, you saw no value.
You abandoned me, I had to stand by myself.
I suffered alone, you saw nothing.
You were no comfort, I cried in isolation.
I tried to die, to you I did.
I stood tall, an embarrassment to you.
I feel the loss, you lost sight.
I know love, will you ever?
I had to walk away, you gave marching orders.
I know how little I know, you gave empty lectures.
I am open, you couldn’t be more closed.
You were not invited in, you barged anyway.
In spite of you, I miss you.
I forgave you, you blamed me.
I live, are you alive?
Your names are Mum and Dad.
Do you know my name?

Read more of Veronica’s poetry on [her website here](#).

What is conversion therapy*?

Conversion therapy* is a controversial and widely discredited practice of trying to alter a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression through psychological, medical, or faith-based or religious methods and practices.

Conversion therapy* is now defined in section 320.101 of our Criminal Code as follows:

Conversion therapy means a practice, treatment or service designed to

- a. change a person's sexual orientation to heterosexual;**
- b. change a person's gender identity to cisgender;**
- c. change a person's gender expression so that it conforms to the sex assigned to the person at birth;**
- d. repress or reduce non-heterosexual attraction or sexual behaviour;**
- e. repress a person's non-cisgender gender identity; or**
- f. repress or reduce a person's gender expression that does not conform to the sex assigned to the person at birth.**

Conversion therapy* is intended to change or repress any sexual orientation other than heterosexual and any gender identity or expression other than cisgender. (If any of these terms are new to you, please refer to the glossary at the end of this guide.)

Conversion therapy* is considered a pseudoscience and is not supported or endorsed by any reputable psychiatric, medical, or science-based organization. Conversion therapy* is harmful and invalidating to members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, because at its core it is rooted in the idea that being anything other than heterosexual and cisgender is morally wrong or deviant.

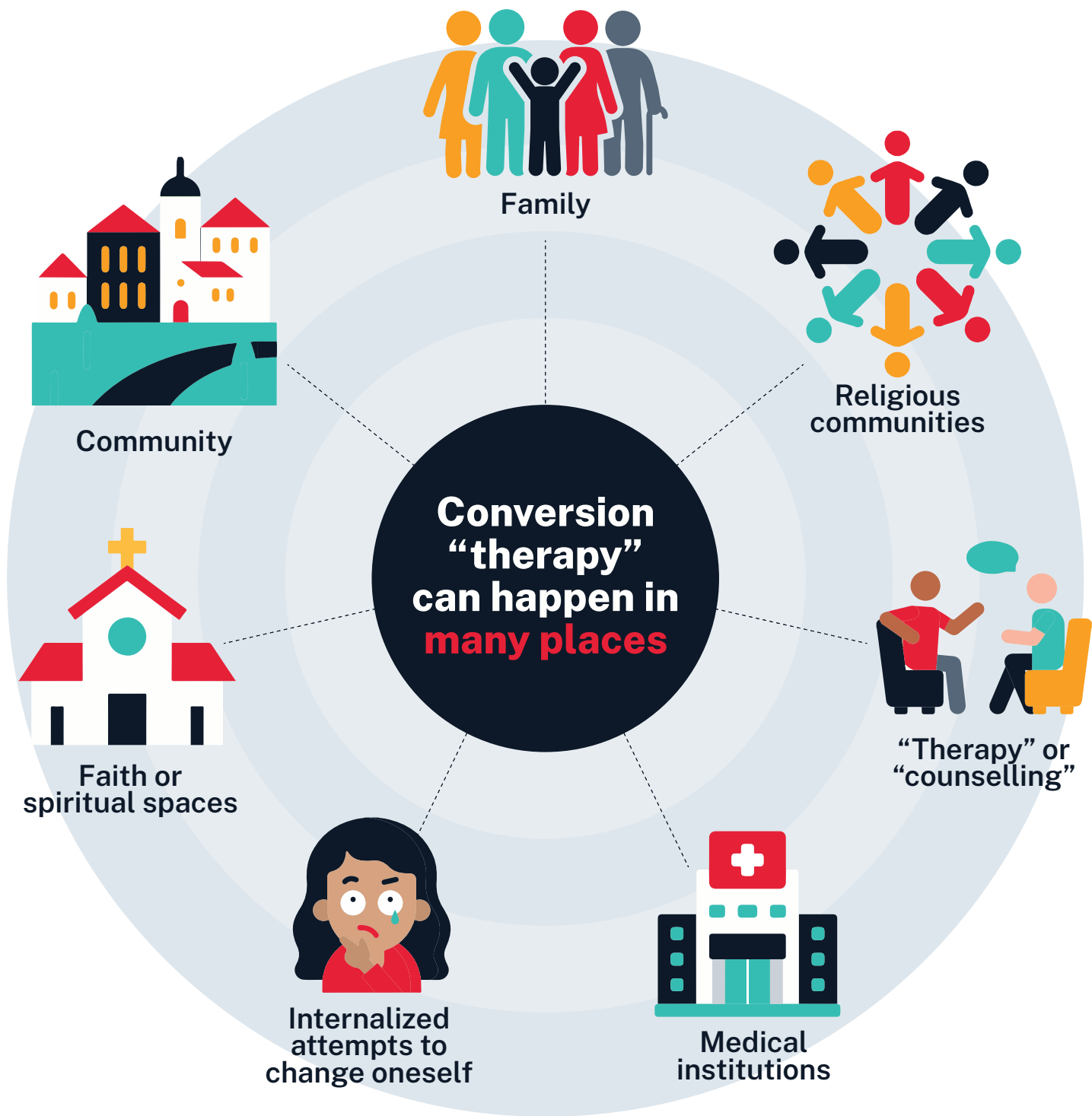
As a country, Canada recognizes and supports the right of 2SLGBTQIA+ people to be their authentic selves and to be free from discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression.

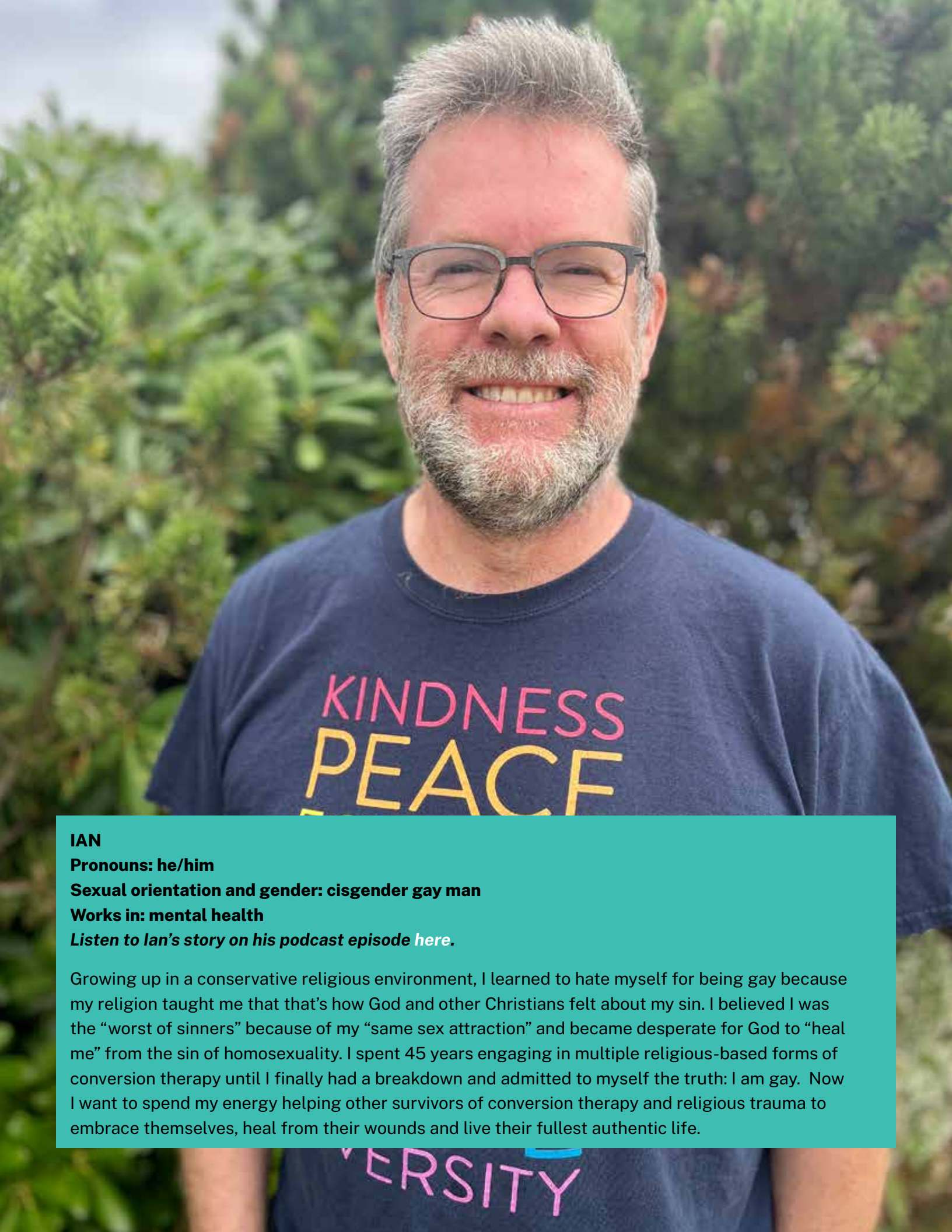
Sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression are all protected characteristics under both our provincial human rights legislation in Nova Scotia and federal human rights legislation.

Sexual orientation was added to the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act* and the *Canadian Human Rights Act* in 1996. Gender identity and gender expression were added to the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act* in 2012 and to the *Canadian Human Rights Act* in 2017. Canada was also the fourth nation in the world to recognize and allow same-gender marriage, which was made legal in our country in 2005.

Canada's recognition and validation of the human rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ people through these important developments are part of an important history that set the stage for the conversion therapy* ban.

Now that this ban is in place, 2SLGBTQIA+ people can feel safer knowing that our country has criminalized a practice that is widely recognized as harmful, medically unsound, and that in some forms can involve elements that have been compared to both physical and psychological torture.





IAN

Pronouns: he/him

Sexual orientation and gender: cisgender gay man

Works in: mental health

Listen to Ian's story on his podcast episode [here](#).

Growing up in a conservative religious environment, I learned to hate myself for being gay because my religion taught me that that's how God and other Christians felt about my sin. I believed I was the "worst of sinners" because of my "same sex attraction" and became desperate for God to "heal me" from the sin of homosexuality. I spent 45 years engaging in multiple religious-based forms of conversion therapy until I finally had a breakdown and admitted to myself the truth: I am gay. Now I want to spend my energy helping other survivors of conversion therapy and religious trauma to embrace themselves, heal from their wounds and live their fullest authentic life.

UNIVERSITY

Why is the conversion therapy* ban important?

Many 2SLGBTQIA+ activists, advocates, and researchers have devoted years of tireless efforts toward having the practice of conversion therapy* formally banned in Canada due to the harms it causes, particularly to the mental health and wellbeing of youth.

These efforts were finally realized in late 2021, when the Governor General gave Royal Assent to **Bill C-4: An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy)**. Bill C-4 came into force a month later on January 7, 2022, thus banning the practice of conversion therapy* across all Canadian provinces and territories.

Conversion therapy* can have serious and long-lasting harmful impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of any 2SLGBTQIA+ person who undergoes this practice. These harmful impacts can occur to anyone of any age but take a particular toll on 2SLGBTQIA+ youth.

Youth are particularly vulnerable and susceptible to the harms and pressures of conversion therapy.*

This is because youth do not always have access to support resources and information that can help them recognize that being 2SLGBTQIA+ is valid, normal, and beautiful.

Many young people are influenced or persuaded by parents, other family members, or their religious, spiritual, or faith community into undergoing conversion therapy.* Conversion therapy* can cause rifts in families, broken trust between communities, and a fractured sense of self-worth in those who are subjected to it.

Regardless of whether or not we are members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community ourselves, most of us know from personal experience how impressionable and desiring of acceptance young people can be. Youth is often a time of uncertainty, vulnerability, experimentation, and self-discovery. Before youth reach adulthood and form a firmer sense of themselves and their values, many youth seek approval and validation from those who are in a position of influence or authority.

This can be especially true of youth who face potential or actual rejection from their families and spiritual/religious or social communities, as many 2SLGBTQIA+ youth experience. Practitioners of conversion therapy* often prey on the susceptibility and vulnerability of youth by promising that they will find love and acceptance if they change who they are to align with heterosexual and cisgender identities.

A person cannot and should not be made to change an essential and important part of their identity and authentic self. And yet conversion therapy* practitioners lure youth (and people of all ages) into believing that they can alter their true selves and thus find acceptance.

Sadly, conversion therapy* has been significantly linked to youth suicide. The Centre for Suicide

Prevention, a branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association, **has noted that 28% of 2SLGBTQIA+ youth** who had been exposed to conversion therapy* have attempted suicide, compared to 14% of 2SLGBTQIA+ youth who had not been exposed to this practice.

The impacts and psychological harms of conversion therapy* can be deep and long-lasting, even in cases where the youth is able to come to terms with their identity later in life and embrace their authentic self.

The conversion therapy* ban is important because it protects and affirms 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and people of all ages. The ban recognizes that 2SLGBTQIA+ people have a right to live their lives authentically and free from discriminatory practices that can cause deep and lasting harm to a person's sense of self-worth and wellbeing.

What are the impacts of conversion therapy*?

Conversion therapy* can have many harmful effects on those who are subjected to it. These include feelings of shame and emotional confusion, poor mental health, and alienation from any kind of community of care and support.

One of the main harms of conversion therapy* is that it encourages people to internalize transphobia and homophobia, which can result in depression, self-denial, self-hatred, and, as we have noted above, in extreme cases results in suicide.

Many survivors of conversion therapy* have noted that another harmful aspect of the practice is that it isolates participants from others who are like them and from a wider community of acceptance.

Conversion therapy* teaches its participants that being 2SLGBTQIA+ is invalid and unacceptable. As a practice, it discourages or forbids participants from connecting with others who are 2SLGBTQIA+ and resources that are 2SLGBTQIA+ affirming.

This means that participants do not have access to positive role models and a supportive community that can assure them that the way they are is normal, is nothing to be ashamed of, and in fact is something to be proud of.

Many conversion therapy* survivors experience long-lasting mental health concerns and feelings of shame and isolation due to conversion therapy* efforts. These impacts can be especially strong and powerful when conversion therapy* is delivered by a person in a position of trust, such as a trusted spiritual or religious leader or a counselor or healthcare provider.

What do the new *Criminal Code* provisions on conversion therapy* say and mean?

When **Bill C-4: An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy)*** came into force, it added four new offences to the *Criminal Code of Canada* pertaining to conversion therapy.* In this section, we will review each of these offences and their corresponding penalties.

The *Criminal Code* now defines conversion therapy as “a practice, treatment or service designed to

- a. change a person’s sexual orientation to heterosexual;
- b. change a person’s gender identity to cisgender;
- c. change a person’s gender expression so that it conforms to the sex assigned to the person at birth;
- d. repress or reduce non-heterosexual attraction or sexual behaviour;
- e. repress a person’s non-cisgender gender identity; or
- f. repress or reduce a person’s gender expression that does not conform to the sex assigned to the person at birth.”

In other words, conversion therapy* is a practice, treatment, or service whose intention and focus are to alter a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression so that these align with heteronormative and cisnormative ideas of what is acceptable. Conversion therapy* efforts are intended to make someone be heterosexual and behave in a heterosexual manner and/or identify with and behave in the expected fashion of their sex assigned at birth (i.e. be cisgender).

The new *Criminal Code* provisions create the following four offences:

1. Causing another person to undergo conversion therapy*, including by providing it;
2. Doing anything for the purpose of removing a child from Canada with the intention that the child undergo conversion therapy* outside Canada;
3. Promoting or advertising conversion therapy*; and
4. Receiving a financial or other material benefit from the provision of conversion therapy.*

Each of these provisions apply to conversion therapy* efforts directed at either adults or children, except for the second provision, which specifically protects underage people (people under the age of 18).

In the following paragraphs, we'll take you through each of the four new provisions and what penalties apply to each one:

1 **Causing someone to undergo conversion therapy:***

This offence can apply to any individual who plays an active role in causing someone to undergo conversion therapy*, including by providing it.

It is what is called a “**hybrid offence**”. This means it can be tried as either a summary offence (meaning the likely outcome is a fine and/or in some cases can result in prison time) or an **indictable offence** (meaning that someone may be sentenced to time in prison).

As a hybrid offence, the prosecutor can proceed summarily (meaning a fine and/or a term in prison) or by indictment. As an indictable offence, this offence can result in up to 5 years prison time.

For more information about the difference between summary conviction offences and indictable offences, visit [here](#).

2 **Removing a child from Canada to have them undergo conversion therapy*:**

This offence applies to anyone who takes part in removing a child under 18 from Canada if they know that the purpose of removing the child is to subject them to conversion therapy* abroad. This includes making plans as well as concrete actions such as accompanying the underage person on a flight or other means of transportation to a destination country where they will receive conversion therapy.*

It is important to note that this offence can be charged even if conversion therapy* is legal in the destination country.

As a hybrid offence, the prosecutor can proceed summarily (meaning a fine and/or a term in prison) or by indictment. As an indictable offence, this offence can result in up to 5 years prison time.

3 **Promoting or advertising conversion therapy*:**

This offence applies to anyone who promotes or advertises conversion therapy*, including through print media or the Internet.

As a hybrid offence, the prosecutor can proceed summarily (meaning a fine and/or a term in prison) or by indictment. As an indictable offence, this offence can result in up to 2 years prison time.

Importantly, the amendments to the *Criminal Code* also authorize courts to order that advertisements for conversion therapy* be disposed of or deleted.

4 Receiving a financial or other material benefit from providing conversion therapy*:

This offence applies to anyone who receives some kind of financial benefit or other kind of compensation for providing conversion therapy.*

This includes people who provide conversion therapy* as part of a therapeutic counseling practice, religious or spiritual coaching, or through any other practice or program that is aimed at changing a person's 2SLGBTQIA+ identity.

As a hybrid offence, the prosecutor can proceed summarily (meaning a fine and/or a term in prison) or by indictment. As an indictable offence, this offence can result in up to 2 years prison time.



Photo credit: cultmtl.com/2022/01/david-lametti-justin-trudeau-conversion-therapy-ban-in-canada-passed-in-senate-awaiting-royal-assent-bill-c-4



Rev. ANNIKA SANGSTER

Pronouns: she/her

Works as: clergy

Before I could fully embrace my gender identity, I needed to learn to love the parts of me that didn't quite fit with what society told me should be part of my gender identity, or expected would be part of my gender identity. It wasn't until I fully loved myself that I could be comfortable in my own skin. As a feminist, I'm working towards a world where expectations and assumptions placed on someone because of their gender is no longer the norm. Part of the way I do that in my everyday life is by using non-personified language to express my understanding of God. For those of us who maybe don't follow traditional standards, the idea or image of God with no pronouns is liberating – I am created in the image of Love. Isn't that a beautiful thing?

A brief history of conversion therapy*

[Content warning: this section of the guide includes descriptions of some historical conversion therapy* practices that may be triggering for some readers. We chose to include this information because we felt it was important that readers understand the scope of conversion therapy* practices, as well as its potential physical and psychological impacts. If you or your loved ones are 2SLGBTQIA+, we recommend that if you read this section, you do so with caution and an abundance of self-care. Please refer to the back of this guide for a list of support resources that may be helpful if you are feeling triggered.]

Conversion therapy* as a practice stems from European theories and practices of psychoanalysis from the 1920s and 1930s, when same-gender sex acts and relationships were considered deviant and immoral by many medical practitioners.

During this time period and in the decades that followed, the law offered little protection for 2SLGBTQIA+ people. In fact, in many jurisdictions in North America and other parts of the world there were laws against engaging in same-gender sexual relations or exhibiting behaviours that did not align with a person's expected gender role (for example, wearing clothing that was associated with the 'wrong' gender). In Canada, anal intercourse (originally called "buggery") and gross indecency used to be criminalized. Both of these offences were disproportionately enforced against 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

Various religious doctrines and leaders have also at different points in history objected to 2SLGBTQIA+ identities and behaviours and considered these morally and spiritually problematic. Cultural, religious, legal, and social factors have all contributed to the oppression and marginalization of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities at various times in our shared history. All of these factors have worked together to create a society and world in which conversion therapy* has been practiced freely and legitimized.

Early forms of conversion therapy* included psychoanalytic techniques, hypnotism, and even the bizarre and medically unsound practice (devised by Viennese endocrinologist Eugen Steinach) of transplanting testicles from straight men into gay men with the hopes that this would change their sexual orientation.

Interestingly, Sigmund Freud (who is considered the father of psychoanalysis and is its most well-known practitioner) was suspicious of conversion therapy* and considered it unlikely to be effective. Though Freud's theories about homosexuality have problematic elements and should be read with caution, it is important to note that Freud did not believe that same-gender attraction should be regarded as shameful or treated as an illness.

Despite Freud's views, other psychoanalysts and theorists continued practicing and recommending forms of conversion therapy* in the following decades, including Freud's daughter Anna Freud.

The idea that same-gender attraction is deviant or is a psychological illness has long since been discredited by modern practitioners and researchers. In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association finally removed homosexuality as a mental disorder from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental*

Disorders (or DSM, which in its current form, is still widely used as a diagnostic tool).

It has also been widely accepted in the psychiatric and medical community that conversion therapy* is not effective and instead more likely to cause harm than any benefit. As an example of a statement against conversion therapy* and its harms, visit [here](#) to read a letter from the Canadian Paediatric Society in support of Canada's conversion ban.

There are many outspoken activists and advocates who have brought global awareness to the problematic nature of conversion therapy* in recent years.

For example, Sam Brinton (they/them) is a conversion therapy* survivor and outspoken critic of the practice who has done much to bring awareness to the harms caused by conversion therapy*.

In 2014, Brinton and others **testified in front of the United Nations Committee Against Torture** about the inhumane practice of conversion therapy* in America and its impacts on their own life and the lives of many others from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

In raising concerns about conversion therapy* and its impacts on youth, the UN Committee Against Torture recognized and affirmed that many medical experts worldwide have deemed this practice psychologically harmful and ineffective. This acknowledgement by an international human rights entity was an important step in the growing international recognition that conversion therapy* is a damaging practice that must be addressed both through law and meaningful social change.

Click [here](#) to watch a video of Brinton talking about the impacts of conversion therapy* on their own life and their journey toward becoming a prominent advocate for banning the practice.

For further reading, we recommend the following resources and articles for anyone interested in learning more about the history of conversion therapy* and its harms:

- History.com's survey of conversion therapy's* disturbing 19th — century origins: [history.com/news/gay-conversion-therapy-origins-19th-century](https://www.history.com/news/gay-conversion-therapy-origins-19th-century)
- Wikipedia's overview the history of conversion therapy worldwide: [wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_conversion_therapy](https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_conversion_therapy)
- A CBC article on conversion therapy* that touches on its roots in psychiatric practices: [cbc.ca/news/canada/conversion-therapy-what-you-need-to-know-1.5209598](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/conversion-therapy-what-you-need-to-know-1.5209598)

What is the status and history of conversion therapy* practices in Canada?

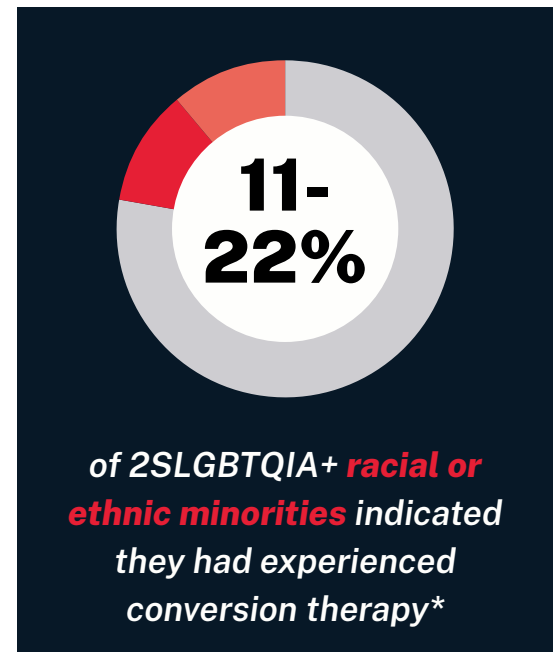
In 2019, the Community-Based Research Centre (CBRC) conducted a Canada-wide survey of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals which focused on various topics, including conversion therapy.* The survey collected data about the ages, settings, and duration of 2SLGBTQIA+ Canadians' experiences of conversion therapy.*

The **results of CBRC's study** confirmed that at that time conversion therapy* was still a common practice across Canada, with as many as 10% of gay, bi, trans, and queer men having experienced conversion therapy* in some form.

The study also found that other identity groups within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community experienced conversion therapy* at even higher rates. For example:

- 20% of non-binary and transgender people indicated they had experienced conversion therapy*
- 13% of 2SLGBTQIA+ youth indicated they had experienced conversion therapy*
- 15% of 2SLGBTQIA+ immigrants indicated they had experienced conversion therapy*
- 11-22% of 2SLGBTQIA+ racial or ethnic minorities indicated they had experienced conversion therapy*

These statistics demonstrate that the more marginalized and susceptible to multiple forms of discrimination a 2SLGBTQIA+ person may be (for example, if they are also a racialized person or a youth), the more likely they will be targeted by conversion therapy* efforts.

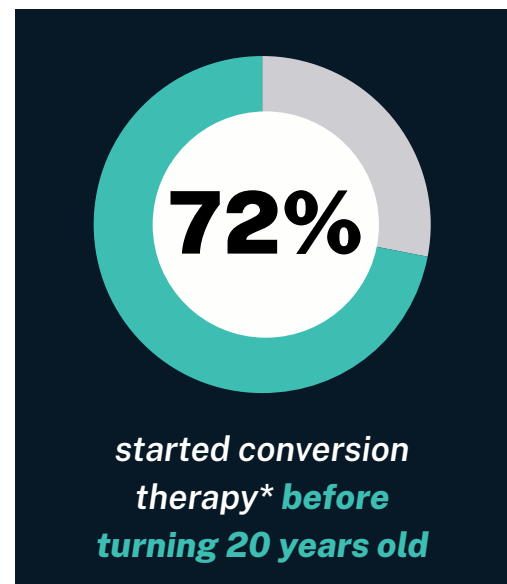


The study also found that among those surveyed:

- 67% of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals had experienced conversion therapy* in religious, spiritual, or faith-based settings
- 30% experienced conversion therapy* under the care of a licensed healthcare provider
- 72% started conversion therapy* before turning 20 years old
- 24% attended conversion therapy* sessions for longer than a year
- 31% attended more than five sessions of conversion therapy.*

We know that conversion therapy* has been widely and recently practiced in Canada, as CBRC's research demonstrates. Even with the ban, it is likely that it is still practiced, though practitioners may now use more subtle and covert means to promote the practice and engage participants.

As some advocates have noted, there are some gray areas of the ban which mean that conversion therapy* sessions are sometimes still conducted in an online video format, as [this article](#) explores. This would mean that the person being subjected to the practice would be in Canada but the practitioner would likely not be, thus making it more complicated to address the matter under the law. We may see further legal developments in future years that address such potential gaps in the current protections.





ROBERT

Pronouns: he/him

Works as: small business owner, religious brother, student

Listen to Robert's story on his podcast episode [here](#).

I wanted to include one of my favorite quotes for the project. It's a quote from the Most Reverend Michael Curry and the Royal Wedding. It really did strengthen me and I hope its secular tone can help others too. He says,

“When love is the way, the earth will be a sanctuary. When love is the way, we will lay our swords and shields down by the riverside to study war no more. When love is the way, there's plenty of room for all of God's children. When love is the way, we actually treat each other, well, like we are actually family.”

This was instrumental to me in healing because love truly is the only way I could get through and conquer the hate of others and more importantly, the hate I had for myself during that time. Although I always have doubt, love always conquers.

A brief history of the 2SLGBTQIA+ rights movement in Canada

The conversion therapy* ban represents a significant development in the 2SLGBTQIA+ rights movement in Canada. We've also included some information below about other notable events and developments that have been important parts of the history of this movement.

It is beyond the scope of this guide to give a thorough overview of the 2SLGBTQIA+ rights movement, but we encourage anyone interested to read and explore the many books, publications, and other resources about this important history written and created by 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations and researchers across Canada.

It is important to emphasize that it has only been in relatively recent years that queer and trans people have had human rights protections in our country. We have the information below on the background of the 2SLGBTQIA+ rights movement in Canada so that readers can understand the realities of what it has meant to be a 2SLGBTQIA+ person in our country over the past several decades and why the conversion therapy* ban is an essential step in protecting vulnerable communities.

Many Canadian researchers and historians view the 1981 Toronto Bathhouse Raids as one of the most notable events that propelled the 2SLGBTQIA+ rights movement into action in our country.


The Bathhouse Raids are sometimes called “Canada’s Stonewall” in reference to the famous and widely recognized Stonewall Riots in 1969 in New York City in which police targeted queer and trans patrons of the Stonewall Tavern.

The Bathhouse Raids happened on February 5, 1981. On the evening of that day, patrons of four bathhouses in downtown Toronto (most of them gay men) were confronted by 200 police officers in a series of coordinated raids, called “Operation Soap.” Police claimed the raids were the result of undercover work into alleged sex work and other “indecent acts” at each establishment.

Over the course of the raids, bathhouse patrons were handled with excessive force by police, who also



Images from [youtube.com/watch?v=Z6s9qvctH10](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6s9qvctH10)



made homophobic verbal taunts. At the end of the night, 286 men were charged for being found in a common bawdy house (a brothel), while 20 were charged for operating a bawdy house.

At that time, the Bathhouse Raids represented the largest single series of arrests in Toronto's history. Most of those arrested were later found innocent of the charges. The raids marked a turning point for Toronto's gay community, and the protests that followed gave voice to many 2SLGBTQIA+ Canadians who refused to continue to endure derogatory treatment and discrimination from the police and other authority figures.

Click [here](#) to view a short video about the Bathhouse Raids which includes first-voice stories from people who were present during the raids.

We've also included some important dates below to give you an overview of some other essential milestones that have occurred over the last several decades:

- **June 27, 1969** – On this date, the *Criminal Law Amendment Act* received Royal Assent. This decriminalized same-gender sex acts between consenting adults. Prior to this, sexual activity between same-gender partners could be charged as an offence under the *Criminal Code*, which meant that many queer people of this era felt compelled to hide their relationships and their authentic selves for the sake of personal safety.
- **1991** – Sexual orientation was added as protected characteristic in the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*. This meant that our province recognized the importance of protecting queer people from discrimination in employment, housing situations, access to services, and all other areas covered by provincial human rights legislation.
- **1996** – Sexual orientation was added as protected characteristic in the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. This meant that on a federal level, our country extended protections to queer people from discrimination in all areas covered by federal human rights legislation.
- **2005** – Canada became the fourth country in the world to legalize same-gender marriage.
- **2012** – Gender identity and gender expression were added as protected characteristics in the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*. This means that two-spirit, non-binary, transgender, and all other identities that fall under the gender diverse umbrella were granted protection from discrimination in employment, housing situations, access to services, and all other areas covered by provincial human rights legislation.
- **2016** – Gender identity and expression are added as protected characteristics in the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and added to the hate crime provisions within the *Criminal Code*. These developments mean that gender diverse people have human rights protections on the federal level and that certain transphobic behaviours may constitute and be charged as hate crimes under our *Criminal Code*.

The conversion therapy* ban can now be included among these significant developments in Canadian 2SLGBTQIA+ history.

It is essential to recognize that the conversion therapy* ban came about as the result of the tireless and often unpaid labour of the many advocates, lawyers, activists, community members, and conversion therapy* survivors who lobbied the federal government to formally ban the practice under the law.



JULIE

Pronouns: they/them

Sexual orientation and gender: queer, gender queer, non binary, trans

Works in: publishing, writing

Listen to Julie's story on their podcast episode [here](#).

Despite the harmful messaging I received as a young child that I was a danger to myself and to my community, I have a distinct sense that how I participated in my sexuality and gender in youth was a joyful experience. By the time I'd graduated kindergarten, I knew I was queer. By the time I entered high school, I knew I was gender queer. I tested the outer limits of each in creative ways, through play, dress, and storytelling. I emphasize this because I know I came into this world a fully loved and realized person. Somehow, even as a young person, I knew I was fine as I was, and am. I credit that joy for getting me through my teens and early 20s, in particular, a time in which my actions were constantly ridiculed and surveilled. It's my hope that other survivors have also found their joy and continue to expand upon it.

What kinds of practices are considered conversion therapy*?

[Content warning: this section of the guide contains descriptions of some conversion therapy practices which are egregious and violent in nature and that may be triggering for some readers. We chose to include this information so that readers can understand the severity of many conversion therapy* practices and the harms they can inflict. If you or your loved ones are 2SLGBTQIA+, we recommend that if you read this section, you do so with caution and an abundance of self-care. Please refer to the back of this guide for a list of support resources that you may wish to access if you are feeling triggered.]*

Various kinds of practices and methods have been employed by conversion therapy* practitioners in their attempts to alter participants' sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.

These practices range in scope from methods that are comparable to therapy or religious/spiritual counseling to more egregious and shocking practices that many would consider akin to torture.

Some practitioners of conversion therapy* use what seems on the surface like traditional therapeutic counseling methods. However, in these kinds of cases, the 'therapeutic' efforts are used to plant the seed that any identities other than cisgender and heterosexual are deviant, immoral, and can be changed. Often such strands of conversion therapy* rely on the misguided notion that someone becomes 2SLGBTQIA+ due to an unhealthy bond or lack of bond with a parent during childhood.

Some people who practice conversion therapy* have training in therapeutic counseling or healthcare provision. Others are leaders in religious communities who are seen as authorities on all matters of spirituality and spiritual doctrine.

Importantly, numerous individuals who practice conversion therapy* have no training at all in counseling or therapeutic practices, but instead are people who have appointed themselves experts due to their belief that being 2SLGBTQIA+ is wrong.

Some of the more frightening methods of conversion therapy* that have been practiced in North America include electroshock therapy combined with nausea-inducing drugs while potentially arousing images of same-gender couples are shown to the person who is the subject of the practice. This kind of practice, which is sometimes also referred to as "aversion therapy," is intended to create a negative association with same-gender sexual relationships and behaviours.

We know that such practices do not actually free someone from same-gender attraction. Instead, **these practices can instill a sense of shame, fear, and aversion in anyone who undergoes this kind of treatment.** This kind of experience can of course make someone want to repress who they are in order to avoid pain, fear, and judgment.

What kinds of treatments are NOT considered conversion therapy*?

It is important to note that the new *Criminal Code* definition of conversion therapy* discussed above also includes a clarification about what conversion therapy is NOT. It reads as follows:

“For greater certainty, this definition does not include a practice, treatment or service that relates to the exploration or development of an integrated personal identity — such as a practice, treatment or service that relates to a person’s gender transition — and that is not based on an assumption that a particular sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression is to be preferred over another.”

It is important to be clear that therapies, treatments, and programs aimed at **helping individuals understand and come to terms with** their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression **are not considered conversion therapy.***

This includes support groups, counseling services, and access to hormone therapy and other gender-affirming care.

Treatments and programs may sometimes take similar formats to conversion therapy* - for example, group counseling sessions, help updating pronouns and names, medical and psychological services focused on gender identity and sexual orientation, and other similar resources and practices. But it’s important to note that these practices have these **opposite** intention and effect of conversion therapy*, because they are designed to be affirming and supportive of 2SLGBTQIA+ people in their process of self-discovery.

Practices and programs are NOT conversion therapy* unless they include the idea that only one sexual orientation (i.e. heterosexuality) and one gender identity/expression (i.e. being and presenting as cisgender) is acceptable.

Let’s look at a couple of examples to help you understand what practices and programs would **not** be considered conversion therapy*:

Ember is a 15-year old youth who for now uses she/her pronouns. Ember has been thinking a lot about her gender identity lately and wondering if it could be more complex and interesting than she previously believed. She has been thinking about whether she could be non-binary, but she is only beginning to explore what this might mean for her life and her identity. Ember’s parents are supportive but feel like they don’t have enough knowledge and understanding about gender diversity to provide what Ember needs right now. Ember’s father picks her up a pamphlet about

the Youth Project in Halifax and offers to drive her there if she is curious about their support groups and programming. At the Youth Project, Ember encounters other gender diverse youth and caring staff who support her in experimenting with different pronouns. One of the staff members also gives her information about access to gender affirming healthcare in case this is something she ever wants to explore. Ember realizes she has a lot to think about, but in her heart feels excited about getting to know herself and her new community better.

This example involves services that are clearly not conversion therapy.*

Instead of trying to deny and repress Ember's gender identity and exploration, the programs and people she encounters are focused on **supporting and affirming** her gender journey, not trying to change who she is and how she wants to express herself. There may be changes that happen to Ember's identity and self-expression, but these are as the result of others supporting her in discovering herself, not others taking steps to repress or stifle aspects of her identity.

Let's look at one more example of what is **not** conversion therapy*:

Ahmed is a university student who has been living in Canada for two years. He tells his friends that he's straight if the topic of dating ever comes up, but he secretly thinks he may be queer. Ahmed comes from a part of the world where queerness is criminalized. This means that for many years he felt he had to stifle any romantic feelings that arose in him, particularly if these feelings were toward fellow men. Ahmed is generally a hopeful and happy person, but over the last several months has started to have a low mood and trouble sleeping. He decides to go to therapy at the encouragement of a friend in the hopes that this can help him understand his negative feelings. Ahmed's counselor listens compassionately as he tells a story about a teacher catching him secretly holding hands with a boy when he was 15. Ahmed remembers being punished for this behaviour, which was seen as shameful and improper. The counselor affirms to Ahmed that being queer, gay, or any other identity under the 2SLGBTQIA+ spectrum is not shameful or wrong and that no matter who he is he is deserving of love and acceptance. The counselor recommends a couple of books that may be helpful and encourages Ahmed to come back for further sessions so that together they can explore the feelings that this memory evoked.

Like the previous example, the example of Ahmed's treatment program is also clearly not conversion therapy.* Though Ahmed is exploring a potential change to how he identifies to others, his counselor is not making an effort to suppress this exploration but rather encourages it in a supportive way that affirms that it is okay not to be straight.



Rev. MICHAEL HENDERSON

Pronouns: he/him

Works as: clergy

Being a trans affirming minister and person is important to me for many reasons. I have known exclusion, so I want to make sure others are included.

To this end I have taken professional development courses on creating trans friendly spaces for both youth and adults. I am also acutely aware of the harm done by the Church to members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community historically and presently, and I am committed to ensuring that people, especially people who have been historically excluded, are safe, heard, and affirmed when in my community of faith.

I believe we are all created in the image of the Sacred, and I believe being trans is a reflection of the diversity of the Sacred.

What steps can I take if I've experienced conversion therapy* or am supporting someone who has experienced conversion therapy*?

For those who have experienced conversion therapy*:

People who have experienced conversion therapy* may have a broad range of feelings about their experience. These feelings may include confusion, anger, denial, a sense of betrayal, uncertainty, sadness, and a mix of many other complex emotions.

If you are someone who has experienced conversion therapy*, no matter what you are feeling, your feelings are valid, and you are not alone in your experience.

It is normal to have complex feelings and reactions if you have undergone conversion therapy*. Oftentimes, practitioners of conversion therapy* are those with whom a person may already have an established trust relationship, such as a leader in a religious community, a trusted healthcare provider, or someone else in a similar role.

If a person who you look up to or trust has performed or attempted to perform conversion therapy* on you, this can make it challenging to come to terms with the impacts of the practice and its harms.

You may feel like you're being pulled in two directions. You may feel like you need to change who you are to be accepted, but please know that you don't. You may be angry, hurt, or confused that someone you trust made you feel this way. These feelings are normal and understandable.

Similarly complex feelings are common if a family member or guardian has pushed or forced a person to undergo conversion therapy*. Family dynamics can be complex at the best of times, and those of us in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community know that acceptance by family is wonderful but is not always the reality for all members of our community.

For many members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, **chosen family** is essential. This is a group of loving, accepting friends who provide unconditional love and support, particularly for those whose family (those a person is related to by blood) is not accepting or understanding of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

If you have undergone conversion therapy*, we encourage you to reach out to a caring, supportive community that accepts you as and appreciates your 2SLGBTQIA+ identity.

You deserve love, acceptance, and to be seen and appreciated as the valid, beautiful person that you are. No matter what conversion therapy* may have tried to teach you, **you are worthy of respect and you do not need to change who you are to fit into the world.** You belong in this world and with a community that affirms and celebrates who you are.

You may already have a community of 2SLGBTQIA+ friends and allies who can support you. If you do, we encourage you to seek validation and care from this community.

If you are feeling isolated and are not connected to a community, there are many great organizations you can contact to find out about local events and initiatives where you can get connected to others in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. We encourage you to check out some of these resources at the back of this guide.

If you are a 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in Nova Scotia, we particularly encourage you to connect with the **Youth Project**, an organization that provides support for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and education and outreach across Nova Scotia.

There are also some support groups and resources across Canada that may be helpful for those who have experienced conversion therapy and are looking to connect with others who personally understand this experience. For example, **CT Survivors Connect** is a Canada-wide support group and online platform that allows conversion therapy* survivors to connect and offer mutual support and care.

As a final note, community can be an essential part of self-acceptance, but we wanted to acknowledge too that **conversion therapy* may have impacts that are deep-seated, complex, and that would benefit from professional care.** Conversion therapy* can be a traumatic experience for many survivors.

We know that accessing professional support can be complicated for many members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, often due to financial barriers (for example, if you don't have a job with a health plan or if your health plan does not cover therapy/counselling).

At the same time, we wanted to encourage those feel they would benefit from professional therapy or counselling services to access these if and when they are ready to.

There is no shame in needing support in order to heal and find self-acceptance, particularly if you have experienced deeply harmful and invalidating messages about who you are. Who you are is perfect. We all deserve to feel this deeply and have others in our lives who believe in us and accept us as the unique and beautiful beings that we all are.

For those supporting a person who has undergone conversion therapy*:

If a friend, family member, client, community member, or any other person comes to you in trust and lets you know that they have experienced conversion therapy*, **the best first step is to believe this person and let them know that you accept them.**

If it feels right, you can also thank them for trusting you with this deeply personal information and assure them that you're there to listen and support them. For many people who have experienced conversion

therapy* it can be challenging to open up about this experience. This can be particularly true if the person has been pressured or coerced into conversion therapy* by people who they trusted, such as family members or religious leaders.

Another helpful thing you can do is to ask the person what kind of support they are looking for rather than assuming. Remember that people who have experienced conversion therapy* may be accustomed to others pushing them toward particular outcomes or making decisions on their behalf.

For someone who has experienced this kind of pressure and coercion, it can be helpful and validating if you help them regain their sense of power and agency over their own lives and decisions. This can look like saying any of the following:

- *“Thank you for sharing your experience with me. I’m here to support you. Is there anything that you need right now?”*
- *“What can I do to support you?”*
- *“Would you like me to look up some support resources for you? We don’t need to do this right now, if you just want to talk. But please know if there’s anything I can do to help out, I’m willing to.”*

We also encourage you to read this guide in full to help you understand the impacts of conversion therapy* and resources that are available for those who have experienced it.

As a final note, **we wanted to also acknowledge that supporting someone who has experienced conversion therapy* can be difficult**, particularly if we are someone who has experienced conversion therapy* or any kind of homophobia or transphobia ourselves.

If this is your situation, we encourage you to recognize and prioritize your own emotional needs and wellbeing, particularly if what the person is sharing with you is bringing up complex feelings.

Some survivors of conversion therapy* find healing and community in listening to and connecting with the stories of others who have been through this experience.

That said, if hearing others’ stories makes you feel triggered or unsettled, it is perfectly okay to step back and acknowledge that you are not the right person at this moment to provide support to the person who has come to you.

You can still thank the person for sharing and let them know you believe and accept them. But you can also let them know that this subject is bringing up difficult feelings for you and encourage them to speak to others as well. Part of being a caring community member is understanding our own limits and honouring where we are on our own journey toward healing.



TAMSIN MICHAEL ROBSON

Pronouns: they/she

Sexual orientation and gender: genderqueer trans lesbian

Works in: clergy in training

I'm currently finishing a Master of Divinity degree in preparation for (hopefully) eventual ordination in the United Church of Canada. As far as I know, I might be the first openly transgender student at my theological school — which has been a little bit challenging at times, but has been an incredibly rewarding experience overall. I honestly enjoy upsetting the churchy status quo a little bit just by being someone who is immediately queer in ways that can't be ignored or swept under the rug.

Along the way, I've become involved with Halifax's Queer Spirit Church as one of its co-leaders (along with Arla Johnson, a Baptist minister). We're an ecumenical congregation that currently meets once a month for regular worship services as well as the odd discussion group. It's incredibly gratifying to know that we've already touched a few lives in the one year that we've been around, and I'm excited to see what happens next.

I consider myself extremely fortunate to have been able to come out publicly in an affirming environment (an urban United church in Halifax). Although I've had to do a lot of education in church spaces around the topics of gender and orientation — which, luckily, I consider to be part of my calling — I find that most people have been more than willing to accept me for who and what I am. That I didn't have to cut ties with my faith community or go through a long and messy process of deconstruction is an incredible blessing, and I hope that someday every queer person of faith can enjoy that privilege.

One of the things we try to do at Queer Spirit Church is flipping the theological script on the relationship between our beloved queer community and our Christianity. We're not just debunking a few homophobic passages, and we don't stop at merely affirming that God loves us (although that's still incredibly important). Rather, we're looking at our faith and our scriptures through a specifically queer lens, and exploring the radiant queerness that we find in the basic concepts of Christianity. It's something that doesn't get a lot of airtime elsewhere, and we've met all kinds of different people who show up just to see what we're about.

Here's my favourite example: the idea that something of God, who already encompasses all of gender and even blurs the binary of singular and plural, could have become incarnate in a multiply-marginalized human being who had a messy childbirth in a barn, breastfed, ate, drank, slept, defecated, went through puberty, and probably fell in love at least once or twice — that feels to me like the queerest thing ever. And if all of those profoundly human experiences can become inherently sacred in and through Christ, maybe — as we let the Holy Spirit infuse us with God's goodness — our experiences as queer people can be sacred too.

Glossary of common 2SLGBTQIA+ terms

Ally – Someone who actively supports a marginalized community through their actions and commitment to learning. An ally is usually someone who is not part of the community (for example, a straight ally who supports 2SLGBTQIA+ rights) but sees the importance of making positive changes that benefit the oppressed group.

Bisexual – A person who experiences sexual and/or romantic attraction to two or more genders.

Chosen family – A group of friends and community members that a 2SLGBTQIA+ person has a close, family-like bond with. Chosen family can include other people who are 2SLGBTQIA+ and also allies who love and accept the person as they are. Chosen family can be especially important for members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community whose family related by blood is not accepting or welcoming.

Cisgender – Someone whose gender identity is the same as the gender they were assigned at birth. For example, a cisgender woman is someone who was identified as female when she was born and still identifies with this gender.

Conversion therapy* – A harmful practice of trying to change someone’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression through psychological, medical, or faith-based or religious methods and practices. Conversion therapy* is not actually therapy, which is why we have marked the term with an asterisk throughout this guide. Conversion therapy* is considered a pseudoscience and is not supported or endorsed by any reputable psychiatric, medical, or science-based organization.

Gay – A word used to describe a person who experiences same-gender attraction. Some members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community prefer the word “queer” (see below), so it’s always good to check in with a person about what term they use to name their own identity.

Gender assigned at birth – This term refers to how someone is categorized at birth according to the gender binary. For example, a baby with a penis will usually be assigned male at birth and a baby with a vulva will usually be assigned female at birth. A person’s gender identity can be different from the gender they were assigned at birth.

Gender expression – How someone expresses their gender (for example, whether they wear clothing or hair styles that are traditionally read as masculine or feminine; what pronouns they use; how they speak; the name they use).

Gender identity – How someone identifies and understands their own gender (for example, if they identify as a man, a woman, two-spirit, agender, genderqueer, more than one gender, or somewhere else within the gender spectrum). Gender identity refers to a person’s internal sense of self, while gender expression more often refers to how they outwardly express their gender.

- Genderqueer** – Someone whose gender identity cannot be categorized as exclusively male or female. Some genderqueer people identify with both ends of the gender spectrum, while others identify as outside of gender or have a fluid understanding of their gender.
- Lesbian** – A woman (including cisgender and transgender women) who experiences romantic and/or sexual attraction to other women (including cisgender and transgender women).
- Non-binary** – Someone who identifies outside the gender binary of male and female. Non-binary people are often grouped under the trans umbrella, but not all non-binary people identify as trans. Non-binary people sometimes use gender neutral pronouns such as they/them, but not all non-binary people do. Remember to ask about someone’s pronouns rather than assuming.
- Pansexual** – A person who experiences romantic and/or sexual attraction to more than one gender.
- Trans or Transgender** – Someone whose gender identity is different than how they were identified at birth. Trans people may identify with the gender binary (for example, trans men and trans women) or outside the gender binary (for example, non-binary people).
- Transfeminine** – A term to refer to trans and gender diverse people who are on the feminine end of the spectrum, for example trans women.
- Transmasculine** – A term to refer to trans and gender diverse people who are on the masculine end of the spectrum, for example trans men.
- Two-spirit** – A term used by Indigenous communities to describe someone who identifies as having both a masculine and feminine spirit. “Two-spirit” can refer to gender identity or sexual orientation or both of these. Being two-spirit may mean that someone experiences same-gender attraction, or it can mean that the person is gender diverse (i.e. not cisgender), or it can mean both of these things. “Two-spirit” should only be used to refer to people who are Indigenous.
- Queer** – A term used to refer to people who are not straight and/or not cisgender. If someone refers to themselves as queer, that person may fall anywhere in the 2SLGBTQIA+ umbrella. “Queer” doesn’t necessarily tell you a lot of information about someone, such as what kind of people they’re physically or romantically attracted to (if they experience attraction) or how they identify in terms of gender. “Queer” used to be a slur but has been reclaimed by the 2SLGBTQIA+ community as empowering.
- 2SLGBTQIA+** – An acronym used to refer to the following identities: two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and + for the many other identities that exist within the queer spectrum.



CYNTHIA CONLEY

Pronouns: She/They

Works in: Social Work Education, Research, and Consulting

Identity: Queer

My research and social work practice has focused on working with 2SLGBTQIA+ children and young adults, identifying risk factors that impact their well-being as well as developing evidence-based tools for therapists to use when working with their family members.

In particular, I developed an instrument (COPLAG) for effectively understanding the unique concerns that parents may experience upon learning about a child's identity. This is essential in ensuring 2SLGBTQIA+ well-being because poorly managed parental reactions and concerns can contribute to the number of children who are rejected and become homeless or are subjected to conversion therapy or other harmful treatments.

In my experience, understanding parents' concerns and experiences is a crucial component in ensuring that a therapeutic intervention is appropriately positive and helpful. Too often, a therapist's personal bias can influence their understanding of parents' concerns, and their assumptions can cause them to misunderstand the real concerns that parents may be experiencing and affecting their reactions to their children's identity. My work has therefore focused primarily on prevention and reducing risk factors that may otherwise affect the decision to seek out conversion therapy.

My research has identified three primary areas of concern that may challenge parents' abilities to respond in a constructive manner. Most parental concerns about having a 2SLGBTQIA+ child have little to do with what one might expect, namely their physical, psychological, and social well-being. And yet, too often this is where therapists may focus their efforts and because this is what parents feel most comfortable discussing, thereby ensuring poor therapeutic outcomes.

Research-based and statistically validated evidence-based tools are essential when working in this practice arena to prevent the risk of unintentionally biased or harmful therapeutic interventions. My research demonstrates that frequently, parents worry about having to deal with society's judgment of them or dealing with rejection and loss of their own friends and loved ones. When a child comes out, their parent(s) must come out too and deal with their own form of stigma. This is a critical component in successfully supporting families dealing with this issue.

On a professional level, I have found that organizations like PFLAG, queer-positive faith communities, and other support groups can be the most significant variable in ensuring the well-being of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals and their families.

Local and national support resources for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities

2SLGBTQIA+ organizations that provide support and outreach on the local or national level:

- **CT Survivors Connect**– CT Survivors Connect is a Canada-based support group and online platform that allows conversion therapy* survivors to connect and offer mutual support and care. ctsurvivorsconnect.ca
- **The Youth Project** – A Halifax-based organization that provides support for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and education and outreach across Nova Scotia. youthproject.ns.ca
- **Valley Youth Project** – A satellite organization of the Youth Project, providing support for youth in the Annapolis Valley valleyyouthproject.wordpress.com/about-us/
- **Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project** – A volunteer-run 2SLGBTQIA+ advocacy organization that does work across Nova Scotia. Email: nsrap@nsrap.ca / nsrap.ca
- **prideHealth** – The prideHealth navigator provides healthcare-related navigation support for 2SLGBTQIA+ adults and youth Tel: 902-487-0470, Email: prideHealth@nshealth.ca nshealth.ca/content/pridehealth
- **Trans Lifeline** – A peer support hotline run and staffed by trans people for trans people. Toll free in Canada: (877) 330-6366 translifeline.org