



Pride season

Commemoration Guide 2025



Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion
Centre canadien pour la diversité et l'inclusion

ccdi.ca

Commemoration guide: Pride season

The reality of Pride

Pride Month has its roots in the Stonewall Uprising of June 1969—a pivotal moment in the modern 2SLGBTQIA+ rights movement. The Stonewall Uprising marked a turning point in the struggle for equality, inspiring 2SLGBTQIA+ people to stand up against police brutality and systemic discrimination. In the wake of Stonewall, new activist organizations emerged, and one year later, on June 28, 1970, the first Pride marches were held to commemorate the uprising and demand equal rights. The world around us shapes the tone of Pride every year, and the reality of today and recent years adds many layers of consideration to this year's celebration. Sadly, between 2020 and 2021, Canada experienced [a 64% rise in hate acts against 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals](#) and communities, followed by an additional 12% increase from [2021 to 2022](#). The rise of this hate must be prevented in our societies and workplaces, for the benefit of us all.

Around the world, we are seeing a rise in legislation limiting the rights and access to services for 2SLGBTQIA+ community members. Globally, there are currently only [38](#) places where same-sex marriage is legal. In the United States alone, 42 bills passed targeting trans and gender-expansive people and limiting their rights by the end of 2024 according to [Trans Legislation Tracker](#). Canada is not immune to this trend. Since 2023, three provinces have recently introduced laws and policies that restrict trans rights. In October 2023, Saskatchewan enacted [a law requiring parental consent for students to use their affirmed names or pronouns in school](#). New Brunswick introduced a similar policy, later [amended](#). Alberta proposed even more [restrictive measures](#), including limits on access to gender-affirming care and sports participation for trans individuals. As of March 2025, Alberta's policies are nearing enactment, sparking [court injunctions](#) and raising significant concerns about the future of 2SLGBTQIA+ rights in Canada.

These legislative actions, and the increasing rhetoric against DEIA initiatives, show a movement towards less inclusive nation-states, and this is not just a reflection of your employees' personal lives, but also impacts the workplace. For example, the majority of 2SLGBTQIA+ people in the Canadian workforce have witnessed or experienced prejudice, microaggressions, and discrimination. The Canadian Labour Congress reported that 73% of gender-diverse respondents reported experiencing multiple forms of harassment and violence at work. This is because workplaces are often, underpinned by heteronormativity and cisnormativity as the status quo, such that 2SLGBTQIA+ people's lives and identities were

seen as inappropriate, suspicious, or incompatible with workplace expectations.¹ Organizations have an obligation to uphold the human rights of their employees in the workplace, and under both the United Nations resolution and the Canadian Human Rights Act, gender identity is supposed to be protected for 2SLGBTQIA+ employees.²

This year, we hope that Pride encourages you to prioritize the dignity, safety and human rights of all 2SLGBTQIA+ people. Stickers and social media posts are not enough. We encourage you to go beyond symbolic gestures: seek out education and training on 2SLGBTQIA+ issues, attend Pride events, and spend time in community spaces with trans and queer people. These are powerful ways to deepen understanding, build relationships, get involved with your local and global 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, and support the many organizations fighting for their rights, like [Trans Alberta Action](#) and [Skipping Stone Foundation](#). Through this commemoration guide, we invite you to learn how to engage ethically, inspire action in those around you, and reflect on your role as an ally, community member, and activist. Consider the impact of businesses withdrawing from Pride sponsorships and scaling back DEIA initiatives. What does this mean for the future of Pride celebrations and the message it sends to 2SLGBTQIA+ communities? How will you show up this year, and how will your organization demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity and equity?

Reflective activity

Recognizing the importance of learning during Pride Season, we have developed a brief exploratory set of questions and prompts to support your learning, either as an individual or in small teams. These learnings can support the efforts to combat the spread of misinformation and provide avenues for deeper conversations in your workplaces around topics that impact the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

1. Learn more about Pride in your local region
 - For those in or close to big cities, search your city and Pride (ex. [Calgary Pride](#) or [Fierté Montréal](#)) to learn about the events taking place in your region.
 - For those farther from big cities, try searching your region (ex. [Central Alberta Pride Society](#) or [Pride on the Prairies](#)).

¹ Brennan, K., Halpenny, C., & Pakula, B. (2022). *LGBTQ2S+ voices in employment: Labour market experiences of sexual and gender minorities in Canada*. Social Research and Demonstration Corporation. <https://www.srdc.org/project/lgbtq2s-plus-voices-in-employment-labour-market-experiences-of-sexual-and-gender-minorities-in-canada>

² Hixson-Vulpe, J. (2017). *Creating authentic spaces*. The 519. https://www.the519.org/wp-content/uploads/PDF_Download/519_CASToolkit_ENG_AODA.pdf

- For those in small and remote communities, we recommend watching the [Small Town Pride](#) documentary on CBC Gem.
 - Based on this search, what is one thing you've learned about Pride in your city or region?
 - Is there an opportunity for you to participate, volunteer, or financially support the efforts in your local community?

- 2. With the rise in restrictions on trans rights, as well as anti-2SLGBTQIA+ rhetoric, it is important to be informed. Take five minutes today to reflect and explore.
 - What information have you heard that you are uncertain about?
 - What questions do you have about trans rights or heteronormativity?
 - Here are a few resources to get you started: [Common myths and misconceptions about trans youth](#) and [Myths about transgendered people](#) or CCDI's [Educational Guide about creating a Trans, non-binary, and gender diverse inclusivity in the workplace](#)
 - Based on the information you have read today, what is one thing you can share the next time you hear misinformation about this topic?

- 3. Connecting with community. Recognizing allyship as an important and welcome aspect of Pride Season, it is also essential to create spaces where the 2SLGBTQIA+ community can come together to support one another.
 - For larger organizations, do you have times and spaces for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to come together and support each other (ex. Mentoring or ERGs, for educational organizations GSAs)
 - For smaller organizations, can you offer volunteer hours or time off for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to join groups beyond your workplace (ex. [Calgary Outlink](#) or [pflag Canada](#))
 - Within your organization, are there any opportunities for you to advocate or create space for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to come together?

Storytelling as resistance

As anti-2SLGBTQIA+ rhetoric and policies escalate, the need to amplify queer and trans voices – especially those of racialized and marginalized communities – becomes even more critical. Pride is not just a celebration; it is an act of remembrance, hope, and shared human rights. Literature, art, and public advocacy have long been tools of resistance, shaping narratives that counter erasure, challenge harmful ideologies, and inspire solidarity.

In Canada, several queer creators are using their platforms to reclaim space, rewrite histories, and challenge the systemic barriers that persist today. Through their work, **Joshua Whitehead**, **Billy-Ray Belcourt**, and **Vivek Shraya** offer powerful narratives that combat anti-2SLGBTQIA+ sentiment while imagining futures where queer and trans people thrive.

Joshua Whitehead: Narratives of Indigeneity and queerness

Joshua Whitehead is a Two-Spirit writer and scholar whose work deconstructs colonial narratives about gender, sexuality, and Indigenous identity. His debut novel, *Jonny Appleseed*, follows a protagonist navigating life beyond the reservation, highlighting the intersections of Indigeneity and queerness in a world that often seeks to erase both. In *Full-Metal Indigiqueer*, Whitehead crafts a cyberpunk-inspired poetry collection that explores queer Indigenous futurism, pushing against the constraints of colonial language and storytelling. The book reimagines Indigeneity through a digital and poetic lens, presenting a fierce reclamation of space for Two-Spirit and queer Indigenous people in literary and cultural landscapes.

Whitehead actively speaks against the colonial roots of homophobia and transphobia, linking the struggles of 2SLGBTQIA+ people to broader Indigenous rights movements. His work dismantles stereotypes of Indigenous masculinity and challenges cis-heteronormative frameworks in literature and academia. As an advocate, he highlights the importance of Indigenous storytelling as a form of cultural survival and resistance.

Beyond his creative works, Whitehead is a vocal advocate for Indigenous sovereignty and 2SLGBTQIA+ rights. He addresses the colonial roots of homophobia and transphobia, advocating for storytelling as a tool of resistance and healing.

Learn more about **Joshua Whitehead's** work below:

- [Jonny Appleseed](#) (2018) - A Giller Prize-nominated novel exploring Two-Spirit identity and resilience
- [Full-Metal Indigiqueer](#) (2017) - A radical poetry collection that fuses cyberpunk aesthetics with Indigenous queerness

Billy-Ray Belcourt: Decolonizing queer imagination

Billy-Ray Belcourt is a poet, writer, and scholar whose work intersects Indigeneity, queerness, and decolonization. His poetry and prose reflect on love, loss, and survival in a world structured by colonial violence and heteronormativity. Belcourt's work challenges the Eurocentric lens of queerness, asserting that Indigenous queer identities have existed long before colonial contract. His academic work critiques the ways in which institutions, including workplaces, reinforce cisnormativity, and settler colonialism. Through poetry and essays, he dismantles stereotypes and expands the possibilities of queer futures beyond trauma-based narratives.

Belcourt's memoir, *A History of My Brief Body*, pushes the boundaries of form by blending critical theory with autobiography. The book explores his experiences as a queer Indigenous scholar and writer, challenging mainstream representations of queerness and Indigeneity that often frame them solely through trauma. Belcourt writes about joy, intimacy, and the possibility of living outside imposed colonial structures. Both his academic and creative work refuse to let Indigenous queer existence be confined to suffering.

As a scholar, Belcourt critiques the ways institutions reinforce heteronormativity and settler colonialism, advocating for Indigenous storytelling as a method of both survival and decolonization.

Learn more about **Billy-Ray Belcourt's** work below

- [This Wound is a World](#) (2017) – A Griffin Poetry Prize-winning collection that redefines love and intimacy in the face of colonial violence
- [A History of My Brief Body](#) (2020) – Belcourt's debut memoir shares early life in Jossard, Alberta and on the Driftpile Cree Nation, and situates his life experiences within a constellation of seminal queer texts

Vivek Shraya: Challenging gender norms and visibility politics

Vivek Shraya is a multidisciplinary artist whose work spans literature, music, and visual art. As a trans woman of color, her storytelling unpacks the complexities of gender, race, and the politics of representation. She is a vocal advocate for trans rights, using her public platform to challenge transphobia in media and workplaces. She examines the pressures and consequences of visibility for trans individuals, urging institutions to move beyond tokenism and toward meaningful inclusion. Her creative projects, including music and film, amplify the narratives of racialized trans women, countering mainstream depictions of queerness that often exclude them.

In her work *I'm Afraid of Men*, Shraya unpacks the violence and fear tied to masculinity, both as an external force and as something she was socialized into before transitioning. The book dissects gendered expectations and the ways in which trans individuals navigate public and private spaces under constant scrutiny. *Death Threat*, a graphic novel co-created with artist

Ness Lee, directly addresses the real-life consequences of trans visibility, using experimental storytelling and surrealist imagery to depict the harassment Shraya has faced.

Beyond literature, she has made a name for herself in music, film, and education, consistently pushing for more representation and institutional change. She founded [VS. Books](#), a mentorship initiative supporting emerging BIPOC writers, and is a vocal advocate for trans artists in creative industries. Her work underscores the necessity of meaningful inclusion, warning against tokenism and performative allyship in both workplaces and the arts.

Learn more about Vivek Shraya's work below:

- [I'm Afraid of Men](#) (2018) – A powerful reflection on gender, fear, and the societal expectations of masculinity and femininity
- [Death Threat](#) (2019) - Shraya began receiving vivid and disturbing transphobic hate mail from a stranger, and in this comic book, Shraya's responses to them becomes a compelling act of resistance

Reflection and introspection:

The works of Whitehead, Belcourt, and Shraya illustrate how storytelling serves as both an archive of queer existence and a fight against erasure. It urges each of us to consider how we can engage with and support 2SLGBTQIA+ communities not just during PRIDE but in our day-to-day lives. These artists remind us that Pride is more than a celebration – it is a commitment to action, resistance, and reimagining a more inclusive world.

- How does storytelling challenge dominant narratives about 2SLGBTQIA+ people?
- What commitments can you or your organization make to support 2SLGBTQIA+ people in tangible ways?
- In what ways can workplaces, organizations, and individuals uplift queer voices beyond performative allyship?

From celebration to action

Pride Season is a time of celebration, reflection, and advocacy. However, true allyship extends far beyond a single month. These activities invite organizations to take a deeper look at their year-round commitment to 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion.

Exercise 1: Debunking myths and misconceptions

To help participants recognize and challenge misinformation about Pride and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, fostering a more informed and inclusive workplace.

Instructions

1. Divide into small groups (or work individually). Each group will receive a set of statements about Pride or 2SLGBTQIA+ identities.
2. Decide whether each statement is a fact or a myth.
3. Discuss why it is a myth (if applicable) and find accurate information.
4. Groups present their findings, and a facilitator provides additional context.

Sample statements

| Statement | Fact or myth? | Explanation |
|--|---------------|--|
| Being 2SLGBTQIA+ is a modern trend or phase. | Myth | No, being 2SLGBTQIA+ is not a modern trend or phase. It is a natural aspect of human diversity that has existed across cultures and throughout history . |
| Canada is a safe haven for 2SLGBTQIA+ people. | Fact or myth? | Why? Try doing your own research to learn more. |
| 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion efforts benefit only 2SLGBTQIA+ people. | Fact or myth? | Why? Try doing your own research to learn more. |

Reflection questions

- Were any of these myths surprising to you?
- How does misinformation about 2SLGBTQIA+ communities impact workplaces and society?
- What is one action you can take to challenge myths when you encounter them?

Exercise 2: Create your year-round 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion action plan

Instructions

1. Work in teams or individually. Each participant or group will analyze different aspects of the organization's 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion efforts.

2. Review the provided categories. For each, examine the Action, discuss the Reflection Questions, and complete the Action Planning Table below with specific and measurable commitments.
3. Prioritize actions. Identify at least one immediate action and one long-term initiative that your team will commit to implementing.
4. Share insights. Teams will present key takeaways and discuss accountability measures to track progress.
5. Follow up. Schedule a check-in (e.g., in six months) to review progress and make necessary adjustments.

Reflection questions

- How can our organization amplify 2SLGBTQIA+ voices and create a culture of belonging year-round?
- Beyond Pride Month, how does our workplace actively support 2SLGBTQIA+ employees in daily operations and policies?
- How can we engage meaningfully with 2SLGBTQIA+ communities beyond corporate sponsorships or Pride-themed branding?

| Current practices | Gaps identified | Actions | Who is responsible? | Timeline |
|---|---|--|---------------------|----------|
| Example: Our organizational forms include only “male” and “female” options. | No gender-inclusive pronoun options on forms. | Update forms to include “they/them” and an open field for self-identification. | Operations team | Q2 2025 |
| | | | | |

Small changes can lead to significant impact. Whether it’s updating policies, fostering a more inclusive workplace culture, or strengthening community partnerships. Take this opportunity to identify concrete actions, assign responsibilities, and set timelines to create lasting change.

Wrapping up and moving forward

As anti-2SLGBTQIA+ rhetoric and policies escalate, workplaces and individuals must move beyond symbolic gestures to create lasting change. This means actively advocating for 2SLGBTQIA+ rights, amplifying queer and trans voices, and fostering environments where all employees feel safe, valued, and supported. It also means recognizing the role of storytelling, activism, and community in resisting discrimination and shaping a more inclusive future. As you reflect on this guide, consider the steps you and your organization can take to stand in meaningful solidarity with 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.