

Post-Conference Report

# The Ontario Educators' Conference

April 25, 2018

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## Introduction

The Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity is proud to have partnered again with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education again for the fourth annual Ontario Educators' Conference

This event began in order to address a need for further professional development, following the passing of the Accepting School Act, Bill 13, in 2012. Growing from the initial event in 2013, the OEC conference is about sharing capacity and best practices, to ensure that systemic change in education, happens equally across Ontario and Canada.

Both partner organizations understand the importance of providing knowledge, tools and skills to youth and service providers in order to navigate the creation of systemic change. Access to workshops that provide education on inclusivity can help students normalize their feelings, identities and relationships.

On April 25, 2018 one-hundred school board staff and educators' from across the province converged on the OISE to take part in a full day of equity and diversity training from advocates, politicians, lawyers, and other school board staff. A total of twenty-two workshops were facilitated, in either official language, for the entire day. Participants were able to learn on such topics as "embedding equity in the classroom", "Active Listening", and "Adresser la discrimination et recruter des alliés dans un contexte scolaire."

## Schedule

**8:00 - 8:30am** - Arrival/Registration

**8:30 - 9:10am** - Opening, Land Acknowledgement, Welcome

- Elena Abel - Indigenous Opening
- Jeremy Dias - Welcome from the CCGSD
- Arlo Kempf - Welcome from the OISE
- Soo Wong, MPP - Welcome from the Ministry of Education

**9:10 - 9:50am** - Keynote Session

- Blair Niblett - Social Justice Education: Stories and Strategies for Teachers
- Jacq Hixson-Vulpe - Creating Authentic Spaces

**10:00 - 11:15am** - Workshop Session 1

**11:15 - 12:15pm** - Lunch and Info Fair

**12:15 - 1:30pm** - Workshop Session 2

**1:45 - 3:00pm** - Workshop Session 3

## Keynotes:

**Social Justice Education: Stories and Strategies for Teachers** by Blair Niblett; [trentu.ca](http://trentu.ca)

This keynote mixed activities, dialogue, and a few slides to explore the opportunities and challenges of social justice education. Participants explored environments, ideas, and actions as the foundations of social justice activism education. Key issues included social justice educator identity; effective, age-appropriate design of experiential activities to engage students in thinking and action related to contemporary social justice issues; as well as the limits of activism teaching in school environments.

**Creating Authentic Spaces** by Jacq Hixson-Vulpe; [the519.org](http://the519.org)

The Creating Authentic Spaces toolkit and education program, presented by author Jacq Hixson-Vulpe, is part of the 519 Community Centre's efforts to challenge transphobia and to foster environments that are inclusive of gender identity and gender expression. The toolkit explores the experiences and challenges faced by trans people and supports organizations and individuals to develop approaches to fostering a trans inclusive environment. The toolkit also highlights the small and larger steps they can take personally and within their organizations to create more inclusive spaces and services for trans people.

## Workshops:

### Session 1

**Active Listening in School: Supporting Students, Teachers and Administrators with Essential Skills** by Anthony Lombardi ; [interligne.co](http://interligne.co)

Anthony went through what active listening entails and why it is important for teachers and administrators to use this techniques in an effort to encourage teachers and administrators to be empathetic.

**Coping with 'Clober Texts': The Challenge of Biblical Interpretation Around LGBTQ Issues** by Murray Watson

Certain Biblical texts have traditionally loomed large in debates around LGBTQ issues among Christians. Participants took a closer look at several of these passages, attempting to understand them in their historical and cultural context, and examining whether they are indeed relevant to the questions being asked today. They also looked at some Biblical texts

that can promote a more welcoming, inclusive stance on the part of church organizations and religious educators.

**Transforming Policy into Practice: Creating a Framework for Effective bullying Prevention and Intervention Strategies** by Kenneth Jeffers ; [tdsb.ca](https://tdsb.ca)

This workshop seeks to provide administrators, teachers and education staff with an comprehensive, school-wide framework for bullying prevention and intervention embedded in legislated responsibilities of the accepting schools act. Including a whole school approach model for transforming school climates into positive and accepting spaces, as well as responding to and preventing bullying behaviours through a human rights lens. Integral to this work will be an examination of our own conceptions of the 'bully' and 'victim', impacts of biased social construction and power imbalances on learning and behaviour; with the intention to raise awareness of how our perceptions of bullying guide our responses and action planning.

**Helping Transitioning Kids Thrive** by Greg Farrell

As a Principal in an elementary school there are many ways that Greg can help transitioning or gender fluid children feel safe, secure, accepted and ready to learn. This was an informal sharing of best practices and a sharing of possibilities to help support transitioning student thrive.

**Supporting Out Two-Spirited Youth** by Elena Abel ; [ottawaaboriginalcoalition.ca](https://ottawaaboriginalcoalition.ca)

This workshop helped participants understand the intersectionality of Two Spirit identity, and how participants, as educators, can help create safe spaces in the classroom and in their community. The presentation included a discussion on the impacts of colonization as well as reconciliation efforts happening today.

**On the Threshold of Awesomeness: The Festival of Puberty** by benjamin lee hicks ; [leehicks.weebly.com](https://leehicks.weebly.com)

The Festival of Puberty evolved under circumstances that were as much about learning to be a better teacher/mentor for my students as they were about teaching middle school health and sex education. The activities shared in this workshop represented one possible day in ten-month(+) project of building safe(r), more welcoming learning opportunities for all members of a classroom community. The content was intended to help teachers anticipate, include and celebrate the full spectrum of gender identities, sexualities, and family structures that compose our communities and will include a combination of story sharing, social context, hands-on participation and group discussion.

**Legislation Affecting Non-Binary/Tran Students** by Susan Gapka

This workshop helped participants identify and understand legislation that has been or is needed to be tabled at the provincial and federal levels of government that will have major impacts of non-binary and trans folks in Canada

**Comment construire des espaces plus sûrs dans nos écoles** by Christopher Karas ; [christopherkaras.ca](http://christopherkaras.ca)

Une discussion sur les déterminants d'une école inclusive, de la collaboration nécessaire entre les administrateurs, les éducateurs et les jeunes, et des façons dont nous pouvons affirmer nos jeunes en tant que des leaders.

## Session 2

**Social Justice Education: Stories and Strategies for Teachers** by Blair Niblett; [trentu.ca](http://trentu.ca)

This workshop mixed activities, dialogue, and a few slides to explore the opportunities and challenges of social justice education. Participants explored environments, ideas, and actions as the foundations of social justice activism education. Key issues included social justice educator identity; effective, age-appropriate design of experiential activities to engage students in thinking and action related to contemporary social justice issues; as well as the limits of activism teaching in school environments.

**Creating Change on a Board Level** by Patrick Barnholden

Patrick and the participants explored new strategies and ideas on creating change at the board level. Educators frequently express that they have difficulty changing board policy and ensuring the school board administration and equitable and diversified. Participants were able to engage in a thought-provoking discussion with Patrick and each-other to brainstorm new tools and strategies.

**Gender is Like and Ocean: Exploring Adolescents' and Teachers' Collaborative Inquiry into All-Gender Identity and Inclusion** by Rob Simon, Sarah Evis, Benjamin Lee Hicks, Ben Gallagher, & Ty Walkland ; [addressinginjustices.com](http://addressinginjustices.com)

This workshop involved a screening of the 45-minute film, Gender is Like an Ocean, followed by both small- and large-group discussions among audience members and the filmmakers and research team. Participants were invited to critically reflect on the ways in which collaborative inquiries can support empathy, solidarity, and critical readings of texts, and how feminist and anti-transphobic readings in particular may serve as a catalyst for sustained inquiry and activism in response to broader social problems.

**The Canadian War on Queers: The Apology from Above and Below** by Gary Kinsman

This workshop drew on Gary's with Patrizia Gentile on The Canadian War on Queers and his work on the current apology process. After a quick summary of the Canadian war on queers including the thousands purged from the public service and the military and the "fruit machine" research this presentation turned to a critical examination of the recent apology process. This apology from above has allowed for some queers (mostly but not only cis white middle class gay men) to reconcile with neoliberal racialized capitalist

relations and the Canadian settler colonial state. This new class/race strata provides a basis for some queers who were constructed as 'risks' to the nation during the Canadian war on queers to become part of the 'nation' and to be deployed against the 'national security risks' of Indigenous land and water defenders, anti-tar sands and anti-pipeline activists, Muslim and Arab identified people, and others. In particular this talk focused on the long history of queer resistance to the Canadian war on queers which produced the basis for an apology from below which has been transformed by a number of social and state forces into an apology from above identified with the 'nation' and national security. The potential for continuing resistance to national security and homonationalism was at the centre of the workshop.

**Appuyer une élève transgenre ou créatif par rapport au genre : stratégies et ressources** by Miriam Greenblatt, Daniel DiMatteo and Alijah Alexander

Dans cet atelier, un élève transgenre va expliquer son parcours et partager son expérience par rapport à sa transition à l'école secondaire. Son enseignant partagera les stratégies utilisées par l'école pour l'appuyer. Nous allons aussi vous partager des stratégies concrètes et des ressources en français pour appuyer des élèves transgenres ou créatif par rapport au genre à l'école. Cet atelier sera en français.

**Explorer la loi et comment améliorer la Justice** by Christopher Karas ;  
[christopherkaras.ca](http://christopherkaras.ca)

Une discussion pour explorer la loi et comment améliorer la Justice.

### Session 3

**Intentionally Imbedding Equity in the Classroom** by Robert Durocher

This teacher workshop is positioned in that equity is something that is intentionally embedded into content and pedagogy, not something done onto people. It was an opportunity to share resources and strategies that bring the intersectionality of gender, sexuality, race, religion and notions of ability into conversation. Participants also looked at frameworks to embed equity, inclusion and anti-oppression into the classroom.

**Choose Your Voice: Voices into Action** by Nicole Miller

How can we respond appropriately to incidents of racism, homophobia and discrimination? This interactive workshop provided participants with two award-winning resources free online to use in your schools and communities. A wealth of cross-curricular content is explored in: Choose Your Voice for grades 6-8 (4 units) and Voices into Action for grades 9-12 (6 units, 33 chapters). Several of the 38 original videos were shown and focused on a few of the topics: The Aboriginal Experience, Antisemitism, cyberbullying and homophobia. There was also demonstration of the valuable teaching tools for educators – lesson plans, rubrics, curriculum links, handouts and more.

**Ontario's Long Road to Equity in Education** by Tim McCaskell

This workshop looked at the fight for LGBT equity in education, who drove it and its connection to equity struggles by other communities.

**Age-Based Legal Rights for Children and Youth** by Andrea Luey ; [jfcy.org](http://jfcy.org)

This interactive workshop will discuss the legal rights and milestones of children and youth, including in the areas of social benefits entitlement, education law, health care, family law and human rights law, specific legal issues of youth leaving home, how JFCY provides legal services directly to young people, and how JFCY lawyers can assist students.

**Providing Comprehensive Care to LGBTQ Substance Users** by Faith and Tim McConnell ; [breakawayaddictions.ca](http://breakawayaddictions.ca)

Pieces to Pathways (P2P) is a peer-led initiative substance use support program for LGBTQ youth ages 16 to 29 years old in Toronto. This presentation provided an overview of the particular issues, barriers to care, unmet needs, and lived experiences of LGBTQ youth substance users. Participants learned how to best support LGBTQ substance users.

**HIV/AIDS: Why/How to Implement HIV/AIDS in Curriculum** by Armen Shanazarian

The goal of this workshop is: 1) Through pedagogical documentation, to illustrate the importance and the urgency for us to address HIV/AIDS, in both its historical and contemporary contexts, in our classrooms. 2) Through exemplars and reflection, to share Armen's journey in planning and teaching a unit on the history of the AIDS epidemic, and the current landscape of HIV as a manageable, chronic disease. Armen shared resources he found most useful, in addition to texts, graphic novels, and various media pieces. Through discussion, to brainstorm potential ways to work through roadblocks that may hinder one from taking up HIV/AIDS within their classrooms

**Adresser la discrimination et recruter des alliés dans un contexte scolaire** by Martin Flintoff

Les participants auront la chance d'explorer différents scénarios de discrimination qui ont lieu dans un contexte scolaire ainsi que les stratégies à utiliser pour diffuser ces situations ainsi que pour recruter des alliés à sa cause.