

Community Standards on Allyship

The following outlines the beginning of an ongoing and relational process that the Community of Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Student Nurses (C2SLGBTQSN) define as allyship. This process has already started within our community of student nurses and between the Community of Black Students in Nursing, Community of Indigenous Students in Nursing, and Community of International Student Nurses. Within the C2SLGBTQSN, we have had to explore multiple identities within the context of sexual orientation and gender identity. There is an incredible amount of diversity to attend to, we are still exploring this, and will continue to do so on an ongoing basis. This is an expectation we have set within our community group. Anyone who seeks to operate in solidarity with our group must fulfill these community standards. We have decided that we have gained enough appreciation of how we can demonstrate allyship to existing members that we are in a position to open our group to those who do not identify as members of the 2SLGBTQ communities. As such, we offer the following as a means by which we can advance our understanding of allyship to include intersections of identity beyond those of which are related to gender and sexual orientation. If there are any questions or need for clarification, please do not hesitate to contact Jennifer Lane, who is the contact person for any inquiries as such. Her email address is jesearle@dal.ca.

We have learned about allyship by listening to each other and unconditionally accepting each other's experiences.

Allyship, as we understand it, must be defined by the group with whom allyship is sought.

Allyship is not passive. It is an intentional and reciprocal process whereby those who occupy social positions with relatively more power and privilege within a broader social context than others take direction from those who occupy social positions with relatively less power and privilege within a broader social context.

We see allyship as a partnership in relation to the structural marginalization that we experience as a result of sexual orientation and/or gender identity. To us, this means that members from groups with more power and privilege than us in relation to sexual orientation and/or gender identity engage in ongoing consideration of this inherent imbalance, which we see as a fundamental aspect of allyship.

Perceived hate will be addressed respectfully with an understanding that allyship is a relational process, but hate speech or acts of hatred will not be tolerated in any form. We reserve the right to ask any person to exit a meeting or rescind the membership of any member at any time for what is perceived as a justifiable reason for doing so. The group is accountable for any such incidences by providing an opportunity for discussion with the group leads. Our goal is to support learning around issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion, particularly our own, and we will use a system of accountability that mirrors that used by the Nova Scotia College of Nursing, which has yet to be fully translated to reflect our group's objectives and goals.

As allies to each other, we seek understanding from a marginalized perspective. We have insider knowledge of how structural inequalities manifest in the lives of individuals. This is often of a very subtle nature. Thus as allies, we operate from a position of unconditional acceptance in terms of an individual's experience of structural marginalization. It is, therefore, strictly against our community standards to question, negate, or deny another person's experience. This can be

done inadvertently or subtly. Allyship entails unconditional acceptance of the perspectives of others, which means that a person's experience is NEVER up for debate.

Cultural safety is ongoing in terms of understanding the issues of group(s) without stereotyping. The challenging nature of stereotypes is that they are often grounded in a reality that falsely attributes something negative to a marginalized group without showing the structural cause. For example, in the past, homosexuality was deemed a mental illness. Gay men in particular were stereotyped as being mentally ill. This has been debunked because it is now widely known that the stigma that targets members of the 2SLGBTQ communities causes them to experience disproportionately high mental health disparities. The stereotype of members of the 2SLGBTQ communities being mentally ill is thus grounded in a truth of there being higher than average mental health disparities, which can be attributed to social stigma NOT "homosexuality".

We take a strengths-based approach in how we demonstrate allyship. In the past, when other approaches are taken, we have experienced this to feel like we are labelled as a problem to be somehow fixed or saved by allies from dominant groups. While we recognize that this may not have been the intent of those who only wished to help, the impact has been one of harm, not support. As such, we expect allyship to be demonstrated by taking a strengths-based approach. This can be as simple as asking what kind of support an ally can offer prior to demonstrating allyship. Without checking in with those who are in need of support, you cannot be sure that you are actually being an ally.

Meetings are **one-hour in length**. Allies are expected to demonstrate their allyship by staying for the entire hour. It is disruptive to leave before the meeting is over and it is perceived as disrespectful by our members. Please only attend meetings when you can commit to the full hour.

If you are an ally, there is an expectation that you will contribute in ways that align with our group's [goals and objectives](#). These will be updated periodically and all members of the group are expected to keep current with any changes that are announced and to ask for clarification on meaning if any is required.

Active listening is understood to include remaining silent. It is expected that allies will challenge themselves to avoid interjecting in a conversation in such a way that your comments might be perceived to be dismissive or downplaying a lived reality that you do not experience. When a person interjects in a conversation where they may not fully appreciate the issues being discussed, it is often negatively experienced by those who have a broader understanding of the issue(s). For example, a straight white man who claims to have feminist views would refrain from speaking over a person from a marginalized group, particularly if that person is a member of the 2SLGBTQ communities, a POC, and/or a woman. Further, sharing his opinion on the implications of structural marginalization would not fulfill our expectations of how allyship is demonstrated within the C2SLGBTQSN. If allies are called upon in a meeting, and they will be, this is done with an expectation that their understanding of an issue will be shared. This is important so that we can gain an understanding of our work from a person with a world view that we do not have. Unsolicited opinions are different than being called upon to provide your perspective on a specific issue.

When speaking to an issue that is beyond an individual's lived experience, a person must preface their comments by situating themselves. For example, one might say, "I am commenting from an allied position with regards to this issue". For example, if a white student is

speaking about Two-Spiritness, they would be expected to say this statement prior to sharing their perspective. This cultivates a space of respect for different perspectives, but with the acknowledgement that perspectives derived from lived realities that are not impacted by the issues that a person is speaking to should come with a recognition of outsidership.

In C2SLGBTQSN, there is an expectation to demonstrate allyship to one another with what we see as a responsibility to self-educate before asking for information on a subject. This can be done by asking for clarification on information that was unclear or issues that you feel you need more context on to gain a full appreciation of their implications on our lived realities. When we are hosting an event, we will be explicit in what level of education we will be offering so that expectations are clear. That said, we always hold the right to disengage from any interaction that we feel has gone beyond the limitations of our role as persons from a group with less power and privilege within broader society.

While the C2SLGBTQSN respects the views of others, religion has been particularly harmful to members of the 2SLGBTQ communities. For example, conversion therapy has long been discredited; however, many religious communities still maintain this practice as a means by which “homosexuality” can be “treated”. “Homosexuality” is a social construct that was legitimated by psychiatry when it was included in the DSM as a mental disorder. Like any social construct, “homosexuality” is therefore not something that can or needs to be treated. While we appreciate that it may not be the intent of a religious person to share views that are perceived by members of the 2SLGBTQ communities to be homophobic, due to the way we are defining allyship, we are in the position to determine what is or is not homophobic and whether the community standards of C2SLGBTQSN are being upheld or undermined.

Sharing personal stories of harm are not permitted during meetings. This standard is important because it seeks to avoid triggering members who have had their own harmful experiences. Stories of homophobic parents, for example, are not permitted. Experiences that have been experienced at school or in professional settings are permitted, but only from persons who identify as members of the 2SLGBTQ communities. Such experiences often expose work that needs to be undertaken by our group. Our space is **not** for allies to share their experiences, even positive ones. Our group is engaged in a number of projects at any time and our meetings are held to discuss this work.

Finally, allyship is not selectively demonstrated. If a member of the group is demonstrating what is perceived to be a selective form of allyship, membership will be revoked. This is necessary because not only is this not what we understand allyship to be, but would undermine the goals and objectives of the C2SLGBTQSN and Student Equity Coalition more broadly.

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