

# TIPS TO SUCCESSFULLY WELCOME 2SLGBTQIA+ GUESTS TO YOUR BUSINESS/COMMUNITY

ENHANCING CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT & LOYALTY



*Visit*  
**THUNDER BAY**



Diversity and inclusion as a best practice is a value that many organizations, including Superior Country and Tourism Thunder Bay, uphold and foster. As recommended in our 2SLGTQIA+ Product Strategy and Plan, we have developed this information booklet to assist your business or organization in successfully welcoming 2SLGBTQIA+ guests.



# WHY DO I NEED TO SPECIFICALLY WELCOME 2SLGBTQIA+ GUESTS?

Did you know that safety is the number one concern for this community when deciding on a vacation destination? Countries, cities, and communities that have a reputation for being unsafe or unwelcoming to those that identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ will be avoided. Besides being the right thing to do, providing a safe, welcoming environment for guests from this community also makes good businesses sense. According to the Canadian Gay Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (CGLCC), 2SLGBTQIA+ travellers represent a major opportunity for recovery of our Canadian tourism industry following the pandemic, outspending their mainstream counterparts by as much as seven times the average trip expense. The Canadian 2SLGBTQIA+ travel market is valued at over \$12 billion annually.





## OTHER FACTS AND FIGURES:



Since 2018, Canada has ranked #1 as a 2SLGBTQIA+ friendly destination through travel researchers Spartacus and Asher Fergusson.



2SLGBTQIA+ tourism spending in North America is estimated at more than \$70 billion USD.



The 2SLGBTQIA+ traveller is loyal and tends to support destinations and operators that support the community and are committed to them.



Canada is the top travel destination for American 2SLGBTQIA+ travellers.



Thunder Pride festival (Thunder Bay) is an award-winning free and family-friendly event that has existed for over a decade.



# HOW CAN I MAKE MY BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION MORE WELCOMING TO THE COMMUNITY?

In this booklet, we give a general overview of how you can become more inclusive, safe, and welcoming to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Simply displaying a Rainbow or Pride flag may be a nice symbolic gesture, but it does not guarantee that misunderstandings or even incidents of discrimination won't surface between staff and guests. In the age of social media, a negative interaction at your place of business can affect your bottom line, reputation, and growth potential. Consider the following tips and continue to learn about the community. Becoming fully welcoming and inclusive does not happen overnight, it is an ongoing learning process. Putting forth the effort will go a long way in helping your 2SLGBTQIA+ guests feel safe and welcomed to return again and again.



# HOW DO I RESPECTFULLY INTERACT WITH MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY?



Know the different pronouns and prefixes people may use and understand the importance of respecting them. Using a person's pronoun is as essential to respecting them as using their name.



Offer your pronouns in public facing ways (name tag, e-mail signature, sign on desk, business cards, etc.). This tells people you know what pronouns are, their significance, and that you will respect others.



Do not make assumptions. You can't tell by appearances who someone is attracted to, what body parts they have, or what gender they identify as. Example: Asking someone who presents as male what their wife does, when in fact they have a husband. Example: When someone asks where the washroom is and you point them to a male or female washroom. Instead, pretend they're asking for a big group of people and give all the options of washrooms. They will use the one best for them, and you can avoid misgendering someone.







Use gender neutral language



“Hello everyone/team” instead of “Hello guys/ladies and gentlemen”



Spouse/partner instead of husband/wife



Stick to they/them for all pronouns

Misgendering is the act of referring to someone using a gendered pronoun, title, or other language that does not correspond to their gender identity. If you misgender someone:



Make a quick correction (as soon as you realize)



Move on. If you make a big deal out of it you are now putting pressure on the person you misgendered to comfort you.



Interrupt and correct people if they have misgendered someone





## HOW DO I VISUALLY REPRESENT THAT MY BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION IS WELCOMING?

People feel the most comfortable, welcome, and included when they see themselves represented in your business or community. Indicate that you are welcoming and inclusive by showing your public support



Display Rainbow and/or Pride flags or other 2SLGBTQIA+ signage/imagery



Have 2SLGBTQIA+ representation in your media, advertisements, and on your staff.



Display posters/flyers/signage supporting the 2SLGBTQIA+ community



Support key 2SLGBTQIA+ events by promoting them, donating to them, volunteering at them, giving promotions for them, etc.



# HOW CAN I ENSURE MY OPERATION/COMMUNITY IS SAFE FOR MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY?

As mentioned earlier, when choosing a place to spend their holidays, top of the priority list for 2SLGBTQIA+ community members is safety. Here are some suggestions for ensuring 2SLGBTQIA+ guests feel safe in your establishment or community:



**Gender neutral washrooms** - The 2SLGBTQIA+ community can face harassment, violence, and discrimination, especially in private areas like washrooms and changerooms. Having gender neutral or private changerooms/washrooms can keep your guests safe. If your physical space does not have these options, think of creative ways to find a solution.



**Forms** - Do not ask for gender or sexuality on a form unless medically (biological sex) necessary. If it is necessary, explain why you are asking for that information. If you are asking, make sure you include a variety of answers (beyond male/female), and include a 'prefer not to say' option. Someone's gender and sexuality should not change the type of service they are getting, most of the time this information is not required.



**Confidentiality** – respect people's privacy. Not everyone in the community is 'out'. Never share private or personal information.



**Policies and procedures** – ensure you have public policies in place that state your commitment to inclusion, that everyone is welcome regardless of their sexual orientation, gender, race, age, etc. under the charter of human rights and freedoms.

# THIS INFORMATION BOOKLET WAS HELPFUL, BUT I THINK MYSELF AND MY STAFF NEED MORE TRAINING

Yes, distributing this booklet to your management and staff is a good start. But you should also ensure you and your staff are knowledgeable about the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, which could include more detailed training on:

- 2SLGBTQIA+ diversity and Inclusion
- Cultural sensitivity
- Pronouns and misgendering
- Allyship
- Bias, stigma, and values

**The following organizations will be happy to support your training needs, or point you in the right direction:**

Rainbow Collective of Thunder Bay - [www.rainbowcollectiveofthunderbay.com](http://www.rainbowcollectiveofthunderbay.com)

Thunder Pride - [www.thunderpride.ca](http://www.thunderpride.ca)

Canadian Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce - [www.cglcc.ca](http://www.cglcc.ca)

**If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact:**

Karen Martin (Thunder Bay)  
Partnership Marketing Officer  
Tourism Thunder Bay  
(807) 625-3969  
[Karen.martin@thunderbay.ca](mailto:Karen.martin@thunderbay.ca)

Suzanne Kukko (District of Thunder Bay/North Shore Region)  
Lake Superior North Shore Tourism Coordinator  
Superior Country  
(807) 889-0515  
[suzanne@superiorcountry.ca](mailto:suzanne@superiorcountry.ca)