

A quick guide about nonbinary identities for an elementary school & above audience.

Common Questions

What is Nonbinary?

Nonbinary is considered to be any gender identity outside of the binary! The binary is the specific gender identity boxes of “male” and “female.” The word binary itself means anything involving two things- for example, 0 and 1’s are a computer’s binary! Nonbinary refers to any gender identity that doesn’t fall into either of those two gender boxes. Nonbinary is a large and sweeping term, so it can be used to refer to a large amount of gender identities. Think of “nonbinary” as an umbrella term, with more specific nonbinary identities falling under its umbrella.

Is Nonbinary just a trend?

Nope! The reason we’re seeing more people who openly identify as nonbinary is because our world is growing to become more open and accepting of all different gender identities, including those underneath the nonbinary umbrella. There have always been nonbinary people, it’s just safer for them to come out now. It was illegal to be gay in Canada up until 1969- imagine how that would make nonbinary people feel! Nowadays, there’s more education and support for nonbinary people, allowing them to express who they truly are.

Do other places have Nonbinary people?

Yes. North American Indigenous cultures have nonbinary people! Before the Europeans colonized North America, 2SLGBTQ+ people were elevated in society and considered to have multiple perspectives. Many countries legally recognize nonbinary gender identities. India & Nepal have recognized Third Genders. In Canada, we now allow “X” to be written on IDs for nonbinary people instead of “M” or “F”.

What are some nonbinary identities?

There’s lots! Agender is a gender identity where someone doesn’t feel attached to the idea of gender, and identifies as without a gender. Genderfluid is a gender identity where someone’s gender varies over time- they may identify as male, female, or other nonbinary identities at any given time. Genderqueer is a gender identity that is similar to the term nonbinary, when someone identifies as outside of the gender binary. There are many more identities than this, and it’s important to listen to the individual person’s self-description of their gender identity!

What pronouns do nonbinary people use?

Nonbinary people can use any pronouns. He, she, they, xe, ze, it ~ there are plenty of options! All of them are possible, and it depends on the individual deciding on how they feel most comfortable and suited to a set of pronouns! Some people may have multiple sets of pronouns, such as he/him AND they/them, or their pronouns may change depending on how the person feels at any particular time. Some folk create their own new words. These are called neopronouns.

What do I do if I don't know someone's pronouns?

It's okay to ask what someone's pronouns are! The simple question of "what are your pronouns?" is usually very good to ask. It's always better to ask someone's pronouns rather than assuming, because you could get it wrong and hurt their feelings!

Do nonbinary folk need to do anything to be 'officially' trans?

No! Figuring out you are nonbinary is all it takes. Nonbinary folk don't even have to tell anyone! Some people may make changes to their body, others don't. Some people may dress more androgynous, or use "binders" or other garments to present how they feel. Some people may legally change their names or gender markers. There is no right or wrong way to be nonbinary or trans!

Can someone's identity change? Or their name?

Absolutely. Gender identity is a journey, and sometimes people undergo changes to their identity. People's names may also change. It's all about how the individual feels, and it's important to meet them wherever they're at. Humans evolve and change all the time and if an individual chooses to change their name and pronouns multiple times before becoming comfortable, that's completely okay!

What is Two-Spirit?

Two-Spirit is an identity that is specific to those Indigenous to Turtle Island. Many Indigenous people believed that everyone is born with a single spirit- a masculine, or a feminine. Those who were 2S or otherwise LGBTQ+ were seen as carrying both spirits, thus making them see the world differently; they were often healers or leaders in their communities. When Europeans colonized North America these beliefs were forced out, erasing the acceptance of LGBTQ+ people. In 1990, the term "Two-Spirit" was coined. Note that Two-Spirit is an English/Colonial word. Unique 2S words exist in many Indigenous languages. Only those Indigenous to Turtle Island may identify as Two-Spirit, as it is a closed cultural identity.

Visit w2sa.ca to learn from Two Spirit experts.

Any more questions?

It would be impossible to answer everything in one tiny brochure. The Youth Project is happy to answer any questions you may have. Give us a call, message our Facebook page, or send one of our awesome staff an email. We would be happy to set up a time to chat about what else you would like to learn! We can also provide a workshop to your classrooms, businesses & non-profits, youth groups & more!

People You May Know

Demi Lovato (They/She)	Actor, singer, musician & songwriter. They came out publicly as Non-Binary in 2021.
Angel Haze (They/Any)	Agender & pan rapper and singer. Themes of their identities are reflected in their rap. Haze is Black & Indigenous
Lachlan Watson (They/Them)	Non-Binary actor most known for playing Theo Putnam in "The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina".

About the Youth Project

The Cape Breton Youth Project is a non-profit charitable organization dedicated to providing support and services to youth, 25 and under, around issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. We have a provincial mandate and travel around the province to meet with youth in other communities.

We provide a variety of programs and services including support groups, referrals, supportive counselling, a resource library, educational workshops, social activities & a Gender Affirming Garment program.

We are a youth directed organization. Youth have decision making control over the direction and action of the Project. We promote and nurture an environment that is appreciative of youth from all races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, abilities and socioeconomic backgrounds. We value the contribution and experiences of all youth. All activities and events run by the Youth Project are drug and alcohol free.

Contact

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