

Adapting Social Spaces to Foster Gender-Inclusive Camp Communities

Summer Camp Con - November 2019



WHO WE ARE



PRIDE CAMPING ASSOCIATION

Amanda Grassick (they/them)

Amanda identifies as queer and genderqueer and holds an MA in Interdisciplinary Studies. They draw on their personal experience in the camping community to help organizations foster diversity and to advocate for more inclusive programs and spaces.



Davin Allan (he/him)

Having worked at a summer camp for 2SLGBTQ+ and allied youth in Ontario, Davin saw the need for many other camps to embrace this same sense of inclusion and acceptance, to ensure LGBTQ+ campers are being offered a safe and barrier-free traditional camp experience



WHO WE ARE

The Pride Camping Association was created to help camps better support 2SLGBTQ+ campers and staff. We envision a world where all 2SLGBTQ+ campers and staff have access to safe and affirming camp programs.

We believe this world starts with intention.

The intention to do better.

The intention to create space.

The intention to dismantle barriers.

The intention to support others.

The intention to see others as they want to be seen.



**PRIDE CAMPING
ASSOCIATION**



OUTCOMES and OBJECTIVES

WHAT WE WILL COVER

- Definition and principles of adapting social space
- Overlap between physical and social spaces
- Three models of gender inclusive groupings
- Using centered-spaces to increase inclusion
- How to address concerns regarding inclusive social spaces

WHAT WE WILL NOT COVER

- Principles for adapting physical space (check out Davin's presentation tomorrow at 1pm EST)



BASE KNOWLEDGE

Starting off this presentation, we will work on the following base knowledge:

- Transgender and non-binary people deserve (and in many places have the legal right to) to be fully included in social spaces, camp programs and camp life.
- Inclusion is not about treating everyone the same. It is about allowing for the full expression of human diversity.
- Not every camp or program will can or should adapt their social space in the same way.

Let's quickly review some terminology that will be used in this presentation.



TERMINOLOGY

While much of this terminology is culturally based and the specific meanings vary between regions and cultures, we will use the following definitions throughout this presentation:

Gender Identity: someone's internal and individual sense of gender. A person's sense of being a woman, man, both, neither, or anywhere within a gender spectrum.

Sex assigned at birth: determination of a child's sex (i.e. male, female, or intersex) at birth, most often based on the appearance of external genitalia.



TERMINOLOGY

Transgender: someone whose gender identity does not align with their sex assigned at birth

Non-Binary: someone whose gender identity does not fit into stereotypical gender norms



BENEFITS

- Increase a camp's ability to fully support campers and staff
- Signals to incoming campers, families, and staff that your program is a safe space
- Support physical and mental health of campers and staff
- Fostering a culture of inclusion for both identified and unidentified gender-diverse youth

CHALLENGES/CONCERNS

- Shifting existing camp culture can take time
- Potential of some people feeling uncomfortable with using facilities with people of different genders
- Navigating single-gendered social spaces



WHAT IS SOCIAL SPACE?

- Multiple disciplines (Sociology, geography, urban studies) have definitions of social space, social interactions in social space, etc.

Pride Camping Association's Definition of Social Space

- All space that function as a location for the development of camp culture, including:
 - Language used (spoke and written)
 - Visual images, photography used in collateral and social media
 - Divisions or definitions of physical space (dividing cabins/washrooms, boys/girls cabins)
 - Activities and events



PRINCIPLES FOR ADAPTING SOCIAL SPACE

- Be intentional
- It's all about self-definition
- Small changes can have large impacts
- It's okay to make mistakes
- Ask for input from campers, staff and families
- Start with a Safe Space



TIPS - LANGUAGE

- Use inclusive language when speaking
 - Use “folks”, “everybody”, “campers”, “team”
- Use and ask for pronouns
 - “Hello, my name is _____ and I use _____ pronouns.”
 - Provide space for pronouns on name tags
 - When in doubt use someone’s name or gender-neutral pronouns
- If you ask for gender on forms make it “fill-in-the-blank”



TIPS - VISUAL SIGNALS, PHOTOGRAPHY, SOCIAL MEDIA

- Ensure your photographs are showing the full diversity of your staff and camper population.
- Fly a rainbow flag during Pride
- Like and follow organizations that are committed to inclusion
- Celebrate important 2SLGBTQI+ recognition days and events
- Hang posters that signal your commitment to inclusion
- Use Pride Tape on your hockey sticks, baseball bats, etc.



TIPS - DIVISION AND DEFINITION OF PHYSICAL SPACE

- Even if your camp has a “girls side” and “boys side” use non-gendered names for those groups
 - Bobcat and Lynx, Pine and Oak, etc.
 - This allows for the trans+ campers to still feel included in these groups
- Same goes for washrooms and showers
 - West and East, Upper and Lower, etc.
- Spa and barber shop



TIPS - ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

- Team Leaders
 - In an attempt to foster gender equality we often have teams led by a female staff and a male staff
 - Unconsciously reinforces a gender binary
 - Choose group leaders that are representative of your camp's values
- Encourage staff and campers to have roles in skits and plays regardless of gender.
 - Make it a normal part of camp that female-identifying folks dress in suits and wears ties and male-identifying folks wear dresses.
 - Ensure that this is not seen as a joke, but a normal part of camp



USING CENTERED-SPACE TO FOSTER INCLUSION

- Safe time and space for groups to get together and discuss their shared identities
- Facilitated by trained staff who belong to that group
 - Trans+
 - Queer
 - Indigenous
 - Newcomers/refugees
 - Learning disabilities
- Fantastic way to encourage people to share ways to make camp a better place



THREE MODELS OF GENDER-INCLUSIVE GROUPS

1. Accommodation groups organized gender (typically girls and boys), activity groups organized by age
2. Accommodation organized by age, regardless of gender
3. Accommodation organized by gender, gender inclusive accommodation are one of the options



ACCOMMODATIONS BY GENDER, ACTIVITIES BY AGE

Pros

- Most similar to “traditional” girl and boy grouping
- Can be easier for some families to accept
- Provides space for those who prefer a single-gendered cabin
- Still provides lots of opportunity or campers to participate with individuals of all genders

Cons

- Without a strong and public trans-inclusion policy this arrangement can feel unwelcoming
- Campers and staff who are not out are still using gendered-space that may not be congruent with their gender



ACCOMMODATIONS BY AGE

Pros

- Does not require individuals to be out to be in a space that is congruent their gender
- Encourages all campers to form friendships regardless of gender
- Strong signal to campers, staff and families that your camp is an inclusive space

Cons

- Some campers may feel uncomfortable sharing sleeping/changing space with those of different genders
- Some campers' religions may not allow for campers of multiple genders to share accommodations
- Families may have difficult with this arrangement



GENDER INCLUSIVE CABINS AS AN OPTION

Pros

- Provides gender-inclusive space for those who chose it
- Provides space for those who prefer a single-gendered cabin

Cons

- Campers and staff who are not out are may still use gendered-space that may not be congruent with their gender
- Could actually single-out campers who are trans+
- Can make cabin groupings difficult



COMMUNICATE YOUR ACTIONS

Communicate to your families the commitments to inclusion you have made and the options you have in your facilities to ensure the safety of transgender and non-binary youth.

Communicate any changes to your facilities to your campers and review with everyone the location of your gender-inclusive spaces.

Communicate that you have gender-inclusive spaces on your job postings to help build a staff team and culture that is passionate about supporting 2SLGBTQ+ campers.



RESOURCES

- Adapting Physical Spaces to Foster Gender-Inclusive Camp Communities - Summer Camp Conference presentation by the Pride Camping Association
- Pride Camping Association Resource Section: <https://www.pridecamping.org/resources>
- The 519 - Creating Authentic Spaces (English, French and Spanish):
<http://www.the519.org/education-training/training-resources/our-resources/creating-authentic-spaces>
- GLSEN - Safe Space Kit: <https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/GLSEN%20Safe%20Space%20Kit.pdf>
- OK2BME - Resources for Schools and Classrooms:
<https://ok2bme.ca/resources/parents-educators/resources-for-schools-and-classrooms/>



MORE FROM PRIDE CAMPING ASSOCIATION

- 2020 ACA Tri-State Camp Conference (March 10 - 12, 2020)
- Various 2020 Provincial Camping Association Conferences
- Pride Camping Professionals Facebook Group
 - facebook.com/groups/pridecampingpros

CONTACT US



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