

# **Transcript for Supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults in aging and old age webinar presented by RTOERO Foundation**

Mike Prentice:

This is the third webinar in our 2021 series.

My name is Mike Prentice. I am the executive director of the RTOERO Foundation. I'm really excited for today's webinar, which will be presented by Ashley Flanagan. You may be seeing her on your screen up there. And I'll introduce Ashley in a minute, the webinar today is titled Supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ Older Adults in Aging and Old Age. We're very much looking forward to Ashley's presentation. We'll get started very shortly. I'm going to run through a few quick instructions just to remind folks of the format and what to expect.

So, the webinar today with the presentation portion will take about 30 minutes maybe. And then we'll have a lot of time for some questions in the second half. When we get to the discussion section after the presentation will ask you to type your questions into the Q and A. You should see a Q and A button down in the bottom middle of your screen. Please click that to ask your questions when the Q and A portion is over at the end of the hour, a very short survey will pop up. We'd like to ask everyone to stick around just to complete that so we can get some feedback. And before we get started, I need to mention that we are recording this webinar and we will make the recording available on the RTOERO Foundation website in the coming weeks.

So let's get to why we're all here today. I'm very happy to introduce Ashley Flanagan. I'm going to run through some of her background and credentials. Ashley is a research fellow at the NIA. These are our friends over at the National Institute on Ageing. She completed her PhD in Aging Health and well-being at the University of Waterloo. Ashley, if I get anything wrong, you can feel free to correct me. Ashley's research focus is on two 2SLGBTQIA+ aging and old age. The goal of her research is to advance comprehensive health and wellness policy programs and services for older adults with diverse gender and sexual identities. Finally. And this is yet another a lot of interesting credentials. Ashley is also a member of the Ontario Center for Learning, Research and Innovations, Supporting Diversity and Inclusion in Long Term Care Advisory Group. Did I get that right? Ashley, if we have time maybe in the Q and A, we'd love to hear more about your work with that group as well. For sure. Yeah. Excellent. So Ashley, huge thanks for taking the time to be with us today and present and I will turn the presentation over to you.



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Dr. Ashley Flanagan:

Okay. Thanks so much, Mike. Alright. So in typical Zoom fashion, I'm about to share my screen and announce it as I do it. Here we go. There we go. Can everyone see my slides? Thumbs up. Okay. Yeah. So thank you all for coming today. I'm very excited to be here with you all to chat more about how we can all support 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults in aging and old age. And before all else today, I want to start by humbly acknowledging that Toronto and the Nation Institute on Ageing are located in the Dish With One Spoon territory. The Dish With One Spoon is a treaty between the Anishinaabe, the Mississaugas and the Haudenosaunee that bound them to share the territory and protect the land. Subsequent Indigenous Nations and Peoples, Europeans and all newcomers have been invited into this treaty. In the spirit of peace, friendship, and respect.

However, I can't leave the conversation there without specifically speaking to the history of Ryerson University, in which the Nation Institute on Ageing is situated and its namesake, Egerton Ryerson. You may or may not know that Egerton Ryerson is widely known for his contributions to Ontario's public education system, and he also believed in different systems of education for Indigenous and non-indigenous children. These beliefs influence the establishment of what became the Indian residential school system that has had such a devastating impact on First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. It's important to acknowledge this connection, and I stand in solidarity with ongoing efforts towards truth and reconciliation as I continue to learn about and reflect upon the ongoing impact of colonization in Canada. And I've included a link to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada website at the end of the presentation that I encourage you to check out and join me in my learning and unlearning.

Okay, so in the spirit of this continual learning, we're going to move into setting up some context for today's conversation through a discussion of language, definitions, and history. From there, we'll start talking about privilege and what that looks like in the context of 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults, aging and old age and why it matters. And then this will hopefully nicely lead us into how we can better support and or be better allies and advocates with for 2SLGBTQIA+ over adults.

Okay, so I always start with presentations, talks, any lecture that I do by spending some time talking about our understandings of sex, gender, and sexual orientation or sexual identity and specifically breaking things down into some more tangible pieces. So sex or, as you can see on the screen, biological sex is the objectively measurable organs, hormones, and chromosomes that you possess. When we think about biological sex, we typically think about the categories of female and male with intersects falling somewhere in the middle of those two categories. And then when we come to think about gender, gender is understood as this multi-dimensional construct composed of biological, psychological, emotional, and behavioural features that are loosely integrated. And most commonly, people come to understand gender as a woman or feminine and then man or masculine. And then somewhere in between that we have gender queer or androgynous identities. And then finally, we have sexual orientation, which is what most people are kind of familiar with as we continue to move forward,



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conversations about sex and gender, and then sexual orientation kind of gets thrown into the mix as well.

So sexual orientation or sexual identity is all about who you're physically, spiritually, and emotionally attracted to. So when we think about it, some conceptualizations are more of the spectrum from straight or heterosexual identities, moving through some bisexual identities towards two spirit, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer identities. And so as I just mentioned, and you may have noticed that all these categories are typically built around this either or mentality that we call binaries or categories, and that's because we as humans, we tend to like categories. I mean, they're stable, they kind of wrap us up, and they just feel comfortable. And a lot of the time these categories are quite useful, such that historically, scientific, philosophical, and religious discourses have tended to narrow our conceptualizations of gender and sexuality to falling somewhere along a spectrum.

So when thinking about concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, as I've unpacked them more and done a little bit more reading, I come to understand that things are a little bit a little bit more complex. And that's where I like to enlist the help of the gender unicorn to unpack some of that complexity found in understanding of sex, gender, and sexual identity. You may have seen or use similar infographics that I typically use this one as it was designed by trans and non-binary folks specifically for the purposes such as this educating and talking about sexual and gender identity. So to start unpacking things a little bit more, as we start to think about what we had just talked about as biological sex and what it actually means, we begin to shift towards talking about sex assigned at birth and saying sex assigned at birth acknowledges that this characterization is based on some sex characteristics, but it's mostly based on the external anatomy that the doctor sees upon delivering a baby and subsequently assigning a sex.

So, rather than kind of thinking about things as the spectrum from female to male, we can start to break these identities up into more distinct categories as you see here on the slide with female, male, and other or intersect identities. And then when we think about gender, things break up into a couple of different concepts. So rather than that spectrum from woman to man, we have multiple different spectrums. So the first one pertains to gender identity, which is all about how you in your head think about yourself. It's how you interpret the chemistry that composes you. So the things that, as you know it, whether you fit kind of into societal gender roles of woman or man, or do neither particularly ring true to you? Or do you fall somewhere in between? Or do you consider yourself to fall and your gender to fall completely outside this spectrum idea completely? And the answer that kind of comes with that is your gender identity.

So on the screen here, it kind of breaks up into spectrum of sliding scale for a female woman girl, another spectrum for man, boy, and then also opportunities to include other gender and gender identities. And so often paired with gender identity is gender expression. And this is all about how you kind of demonstrate your gender through the way that you act, dress, behave, and interact, whether that's intentional or unintentional. Then this expression is interpreted by others preceding your gender based on what we know about traditional gender roles. So things like men wear pants and women wear dresses. And it's all about how the way that you express yourself kind of aligns or



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doesn't necessarily align with these traditional ways of understanding gendered expression.

So like gender identity, there's a lot of room for flexibility, and it's likely that you or we all slide around on these continuums. Once again, there's three different continuums in this diagram throughout the week without even really thinking about it. And then to round out our discussion, we can start thinking about and discussing sexual orientation. But as I alluded to earlier, this may start sliding into thinking about sexual identity, because when we think about orientation, the implication there is that we're

oriented directly towards a single attribute, such as sex assigned at birth or gender, which may not necessarily be the case. So instead, we can start to break down our sexual identities into physical, emotional, and spiritual attraction, rather than being based on necessarily one orientation to another, sex assigned at birth or gender.

So as you see pictured here, we have things broken up into physical and romantic or emotional attraction, and how that can vary depending on a number of factors that include, but aren't necessarily limited to, our gender identity, gender expression or presentation, and sex assigned at birth. So, all of these various definitions come together to kind of shape our individual identities, and it's easy to see how there's so much variety and fluidity here.

And that's demonstrated by all the identity labels that I've kind of put together into a beautiful word cloud here on the screen. And one of the ways that we group and speak to all these identities is to use the umbrella term. And while I don't necessarily have the time to speak to and go into depth into unpacking what each one of these identities are that are listed here. I do want to take a moment to talk about Two-Spirit identities. So Two-Spirit. It is an umbrella term traditionally used by Indigenous people to distinguish Indigenous concepts of sexual and gender identity and gender diversity from European understandings of the gender binary that spectrum from female to male that we had talked about earlier.

So, rather, when we think about Two-Spirit identities, we think about it being a potentially a sexual, a gender and or a spiritual identity. So depending on the individual person, it can mean different things. And so before that binary understanding about sexual and gender diversity was violently imposed on Indigenous communities. Two-Spirit people actually held a place of honour within Indigenous communities. And so as a way to recognize that and continually demonstrate my solidarity in this time of truth and reconciliation, I joined the movement to place the Two-Spirit or 2S at the beginning of the LGBTQIA+ acronym to Center and acknowledge Two-Spirit as among the first sexual and gender identities that were in existence and what is now known as Canada.

So, kind of equipping all of that and carrying that with us through this presentation and kind of the flow of how these presentations usually go, is there's often a tendency to dive right into and focus discussion on oppression and disadvantage as experienced by certain groups and/or individuals. So, what this does is it leaves discussion of privilege and advantage in particular the unmarked categories, for example, whiteness,



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heterosexuality, and masculinity largely unstudied, unspoken, and continued to be taken for granted.

So, given this, I like to flip things up a bit and I feel it's more useful and productive to focus our discussion on first privilege and advantage, and then use that as a springboard into how we can be better and do better on a daily basis, as as caring and supportive humans in this world.

So what do I mean by privilege? Well, privilege can be framed as this invisible package of unearned assets or advantages that individuals can count on cashing in on a daily basis, whether they're actually aware of it or not. And the term refers to the ways that individuals or groups can enjoy these advantages based on their real or perceived membership. An identity categories. So things on the wheel here that you see, like age, gender, sexuality, etc, And in many cases, the influencing factor or results kind of depending on how you want to look at it. Of privilege is power, and it's power that is negotiated within various socio, political, and economic structures within society. And my hope is that through our conversation today, we can become better equipped to not only examine in our daily experiences of privilege, whether it's age, advantage, or advantage related to sexual or gender identity, but also use our individual power to do something to shift or change the way that we support 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults in aging and old age.

So now we can start to think about what oppression is and what it means. Excuse me, oppression is typically considered to be the opposite side of this coin, where individuals or groups are subject to unjust treatment or control or domination. In many cases, oppression kind of goes hand in hand with systemic marginalization of certain groups as a means to, quote, unquote, justify exclusion. So we can see this highlighted in the image on your screen. So, for example, to use an example, mandatory retirement. So mandatory retirement, when it was enforced, was used as a way to kind of remove, quote, unquote, unproductive, or unfit individuals from the workforce at a specific age, typically older, usually 65. And it was done to make space for younger people in the workforce. And as we look back on that now, we can see that this mandatory aspect of retirement versus being freely chosen. It's clear to see that this mandate was arbitrary and heavily seeped in age, discrimination or ageism. And so the key thing to remember here when we're thinking about power, privilege, oppression is that our identities are actually intersectional, which leads most of us to experience varying levels of privilege and oppression at any given time or in any given situation as a result of the various ways that our social identities kind of interconnect. And this is also known as intersectionality, which we have Kimberly Crenshaw, Black feminist and activists to thank for when she coined the term in the late 1980's.

So intersectionality focuses on specific context, the political, social, and material consequences of social categorization such as age, sexual and gender identity, and so on that can come together to contribute to systemic social privilege and or in equity or marginalization by society. So, we have this great term of intersectionality is not, as we start to think through it, we start to see that it's not necessarily as simple as adding together various social identities, and the result is your level of privilege and oppression.



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Rather, when we start to think intersectionality, it requires us to kind of move beyond that additive approach where oppression has been described as things like double or triple jeopardy based on the number of interconnecting social identities that folks embody. So rather, in moving beyond that kind of additive approach, that's very static. We engage more deeply with the complexity of interplay of interconnecting, social inequities and social identities in ways that help spark conversations about social justice.

So now you may be thinking, okay, great. Like we've talked about gender, we've talked about power, talked about privilege. But what I thought we were all here for is learning how to support 2SLGBTQ older adults in aging. What's the deal here? And to that, I kind of come back with that's a great question, and I happen to have a response is that a lot of the work that I do is building the shared understanding of language that we can use to describe our social identity and our lived experiences. And so as this relates to the intersection of 2SLGBTQIA+ identities of aging, it means that we all, whether we're younger or older, come to this table with this shared language so that we can have deeper and more meaningful conversations and understandings that leave all parties involved feeling better understood and supported, particularly to older within a society that hasn't always been very welcoming or supportive.

So to give you a sense of what I mean by a society that hasn't always been welcoming or supportive, I'm going to walk us through some historical moments that someone who is an 80 year old 2SLGBTQIA+ person has lived through and is caring with them as they age.

So starting in the 1960's, this person would have been 19 years old. And at this point in time, the RCMP was keeping really close tabs on people who were patrons of gay bars in cities like Ottawa and other cities across the country. And not only were they keeping tabs, they also worked with the FBI and alerted them when suspected gay men crossed into the United States. And so, if identified as a potential, "suspect", many queer and trans people faced losing their jobs, their families being arrested and imprisoned. And it wasn't until nine years later in 1969 when this person would have been 28 years old that Canada decriminalized homosexual acts between consenting adults with the passage of the Criminal Law Amendment Act.

And this month it was now up until this point, it was illegal to be 2SLGBTQIA+. And then also in 1969 one of the landmark moments in queer and trans history happened on June 28th when the Stonewall riots occurred in Greenwich Village, New York. And these riots were led by trans women of colour in response to yet another police raid of the Stone Wall Inn. And this riot sparked the gay liberation movement that we now that we now commemorate as Pride Month, the month of June, that I have the pleasure of also speaking to you within. And so, four years later in 1973, when this person was 32, homosexuality is officially removed from the DSM as a diagnosable psychiatric illness. While it was removed from the DSM, the World Health Organization continued to refer to homosexuality as a mental illness until 1990. It was another 17 years.

And so we can move forward into 1986 when this person was 45 years old and sexual



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orientation is added to the Ontario Human Rights Code for Protection.

And then in 1995, almost a decade later, at age of 54, the Supreme Court of Canada jumps on board and rules that freedom from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is a protected right under Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. And so as history continues rolling, we see another 10 years pass. And in 2005, at the age of 64, the Federal Civil Marriage Act is passed, which legalize the same sex marriage across the country. So at the age of 64, if this person was partnered and was looking to get married, they finally could at the age of 64.

So then, at the age of 72, in 2013, almost two decades after sexual orientation was added to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Bill C 279 officially extends human rights protections to and transgender people in Canada. And then we see in 2016 when our example human is 75. Now, for the first time in Canadian history, a pride flag is raised on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on June 1st.

And then one of the final moments that I'll share with you today is when this person is 76. In 2017, bill C16 updated the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code to include gender identity and gender expression that we talked about earlier as protected grounds for discrimination, hate publications, and advocating genocide.

So, as you can see today's to us, 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults have lived through a number of significant shifts and their rights and freedoms and are among the first to live openly with diverse sexual and or gender identities in old age. And as a result, we're only kind of just beginning to see the influence that growing numbers 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults will have on our understandings of aging and support, and also vice versa.

But with that, some of the key considerations that I'd like to share with you today relate to intersections with each ageism which, as we saw earlier, is one of the many possible intersecting isms that can come in to be embodied within our social identities. But for many to 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults, the systemic marginalization that they based throughout their lives doesn't necessarily end at the age of 65. Rather, experiences of real or perceived harassment and misunderstanding may also intersect with ageism and age related issues to influence visions of old age that holds images of fear and isolation and continued harassment.

So, for example, because of historical experiences interacting with the healthcare system that weren't particularly affirming or upholding their identities, many 2SLGBTQI+ fears around long term care and the level of care and treatment that they'll receive in those settings. And so, on the other hand of this, there's also a growing body of research that's a little brighter that indicates that the skills and strategies about 2SLGBTQIA+ possible or adults have developed throughout a lifetime of navigating systemic marginalization by society may offer a protective mechanism that better enables to ask 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults to face challenges in aging.

So depending on context and your lived experience, intersections of sexual and gender identities in aging kind of create a multitude of experiences and concerns for aging. And

one of these concerns and thoughts of aging kind of centers around experiences of living with dementia and stemming from fear of rejection, discrimination, and harassment that we've talked about many of today's 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults have become adept in negotiating and mediating their identities as they navigate relationships with family, with friends, health care providers, and the general population.

So for some, there's the fear that memory loss or changes in your cognitive ability may challenge their ability to manage the disclosure of their sexual and gender identities, or may even start to unravel their sexual and gender identities as they come to know and understand them. So there's a lot of fear of that unknown that relates to dementia and living with dementia. And kind of a long side conversations of living with dementia. We can start to think about experiences of care and support.

So some 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults have a robust network of support that include varying levels of biologically related kin, spouses or partners, and chosen family that they can rely upon to provide care and support. And aging and old age. Well, for others, this may not necessarily be true whether or not they had close friends who lost their lives during the aids pandemic, or older adults who are experiencing social isolation stemming from years of mistreatment, and that systemic marginalization that we've talked about.

So, as 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults grow older, many unknown to remain around, who will be there to support and advocate with and for their care needs. And so with that in mind, we currently have a research partnership with EGALE Canada to explore the intersections of of care and dementia. And specifically, we're exploring the unique and various ways that 2SLGBTQIA+ and their primary unpaid caregivers navigate the mix of triumphs and challenges that occur within daily life. And so we're still very much in the preliminary stages of analysis for that study. So I can't share much with you today, but if you want to be notified about important updates about this project or other work at the NIA, I really encourage you to sign up for our newsletter, and we'll do our best to keep you updated. So follow along.

And so as life experiences to 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults come together to influence expectations for aging and old age, we can start to think towards the future. And for some, when they think towards the future, there's this overwhelming sense of that unknown. The uncertainty that I had mentioned we're aging and getting older doesn't necessarily offer any or very little positive content. So, that is balanced in some cases. For others, we're facing that unknown. Kind of feels like more of a call to action, to ramp up the advocacy that the 2SLGBTQIA+ community is known for and to continue pushing forward for future generations. And so, part of the work that we're doing with the EGALE is to collectively look towards the future alongside 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults, particularly those living with and caring for 2SLGBTQIA+ people living with dementia, to reimagine what growing older looks like, and how we can enable and provide better care and support within that context. So I encourage you to stay tuned.

And so, by working to increase our understanding of the diversity that exists within our experiences of aging it will open up opportunities to not only be supportive to



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2SLGBTQIA+ older adults, but enhance the lives of Canadians as they age.

So up until this point, I've done a lot of talking about how we develop our shared understanding to 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults and experiences of aging and old age. And so now what where do we go from here? And I recognize that for some of us, this is kind of the start of a conversation. It's the beginning stages of learning and listening well for others, and this is contributing to an ongoing and much larger conversation. But what I want to kind of think through and leave you all with today is how do we take what we've experienced here in this conversation and move it into the world and continue to act upon it?

So, the most immediate thing that we can do is to continually work on being allies and advocates. So becoming an ally to 2SLGBTQIA+ people is an ongoing and it's a fluid process. It's something that we, including myself, must continually work on. And these tips or strategies or ideas, whatever we want to call them, they might seem simple, but they will provide you with kind of the starting place as you learn more about 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults and supporting them in aging and old age. And then not only that, how to become just more generally an even better ally and advocate. So some of the things I want to leave you with today are you can't assume that you can tell if someone is 2SLGBTQIA+ or even that this community of people are all younger. So, 2SLGBTQIA+ people don't all look a certain way. There's no template or checklist that we all fit. However, when society people think about 2SLGBTQIA+ I'm willing to bet that the first image that comes to mind if we weren't having this conversation right here and right now is someone who is a young adult, maybe even someone who looks like me.

So but as we're having this conversation here today, we do know that 2SLGBTQIA+ plus people get older and come into their identities at a variety of different points in their life journeys. And it's up to us, all of us, to open our hearts and our minds towards supporting them and not making those assumptions around identities and recognizing that fluidity throughout the life course.

So with that in mind and thinking about that variation in when and how we come into our various social identities, the process of coming into our identities is highly unique, and it's a very personal journey that continues to unfold as we get older. So some of us came out when we were earlier in our lives. Well, for others, they're coming out later in life after living most of their life. But no matter when we come into ourselves, we all deserve once again to be met with that kindness and respect whenever these moments kind of arise and are also ongoing. And so while we're all working to respect 2SLGBTQIA+ it's also our responsibility to stand up and speak out if we witness disrespect. So keep in mind the histories that 2SLGBTQIA+ carry with them as they age. These histories and experiences may in some cases make it more difficult for two spirit, queer or trans older adults to confront as respect or intolerance. And in these instances, it's the responsibility of us allies and advocates to use our power that we talked about to stand up and speak out in these instances.

And so I'll give you, for example. So Let's say we're finally able to gather with your friends and loved ones again, and you're sitting with a friend chatting over coffee, and



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the conversation turns towards the raising of a Pride flag in front of your local retirement home, and your friend voices that they don't really feel like the pride flag belongs there and doesn't necessarily have a place, since that stuff is just for younger people. What can you do in that situation?

Well, I think we can call upon our discussion today to explain, number one, that 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults do exist and are very much part of our communities, and that raising a pride flag is a way of signalling to individuals in our communities that the space behind the flag is inclusive and supportive. And it's really important, especially as we consider the histories that 2SLGBTQIA+ folks are carrying with them. So it's a moment to not only call out, but call in and educate as we speak up, stand up and speak out for in support of 2SLGBTQIA+ plus older adults.

So, that kind of leads us into listening and to listen to 2SLGBTQIA+ voices and to be present in that listening. So that means keeping an open mind and heart to the experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults. They're the experts in their own lives. And one of the most important parts of being an ally is learning to listen in, to support. And hand in hand with that listening is continuing to educate ourselves on the experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ old adults. So being an ally and an advocate is dynamic and ongoing process in which we should always strive to know better and do better. To paraphrase Dr. Maya Angelou So, talk to 2SLGBTQIA+ in your community. If that's not an option, check out books, films, YouTube channels, blogs to find out more about 2SLGBTQIA+ people and older adults and the issues that people within our community face.

So with that in mind, I've done some of the starting legwork for you all, and I've compiled a list of resources for ongoing learning. I know that you can't click the link, so I'll give you a little bit of a synopsis, and if you were to search in the titles here, they should pop up for you pretty easily in whether you're Googling or whatnot.

Another Second is about a 15 minute documentary on YouTube where 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors share their stories and it's woven together. And it's really beautiful. And then alongside with that larger piece is shorter videos that highlight the individual experiences of the folks in that longer documentary. So I encourage you to check that out. And then EGALE Canada has a rainbow table, and it's a web series for connecting 2SLGBTQIA+ and I believe it's in its second season. So if you were to Google it, all the past episodes are links there, and it's a great, quick resource for further learning.

And then we have the photography interview project called To Survive on This Shore. And it's a project out of the US that really intentionally sought to focus and highlight the aging experiences of trans and non-binary older adults. So it's this really beautiful series of photography and accompanying interviews, so you can see it on the website. But it's also a book if you want to support the project in purchasing that book. And then Toronto Senior Pride Network, given that June is Pride Month, is put together a Pride guide for all the links to events for seniors and older adults, I believe there's a couple of webinars coming up that are included in that Pride guide that would be really wonderful to check out as well. And then as part of the work that I'm doing with and that we're doing with EGALE Canada, we've created a little bit of a lit review that kind of gives a broader



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context of what is known about experiences living with dementia, and their unpaid caregivers across Canada.

So that is a little bit of a lit review and additional resources that you can check out as well. And as I mentioned at the start, I've included a link to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada website where their reports are hosted, specifically calling your attention to the report on calls to action, the 94 calls to action that I continue to learn from and also unlearn from.

So I'll leave this slide up and I thank you all for your time and listening to me, and I'm excited to hear some questions. So thank you.

Mike Prentice:

Thank you, Ashley, for a super informative and very important presentation. It's kind of incredible how much information you were able to get into, in about half an hour, 40 minutes. Interesting you mentioned Pride Month. We plan this webinar based on Ashley your availability and ours and our webinar schedule, but it just kind of happened to work out in June. So a perfect time to hear about the really important and essential work that you're doing and for us all to be discussing and learning together.

So we do have a lot of questions. Let's open up the Q and A portion, and we've got about 15 minutes for that. So we'll get to as many as we can. We have a number submitted right now. So Let's just get started. Let me just pull up the first one here. Okay.

So this is an interesting question. So the question is, Ashley, given that many of our 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults were not permitted to marry well into their fifties, many are in long term relationships that have never been formalized, our long term care homes and hospital staff being instructed regarding the respect and dignity afforded to long term partners even when there is not a legal or a formal relationship.

Ashley Flanagan:

Yeah. Great question. And I think the most straightforward answer is Yes. Many homes and long term care homes and hospitals have policies around respecting partnerships, and long term partnerships. The challenge there is whether when things hit the road, if the policies are enacted There are continuing to be stories and experiences from people who are not having their relationships respected. That being said, many of the folks that I've talked to haven't had any issues with that in their experiences. So that's a positive and I think that really signals in the way that society is changing in the motion that we have and the momentum. So, a little bit of a bright side there.

Mike Prentice:

Yeah, definitely. And I'm just looking through some more questions. There's a bit of a theme with long term care and retirement homes with some of these questions. There's another one here. Where is it? So someone asks, are there plans I mean, I guess you



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could say, does it already exist, or if not, are there plans to create a long term care home specifically for 2SLGBTQIA+ folks and communities?

Ashley Flanagan:

It does exist, I think, not necessarily in Canada. I've heard rumblings of a few places, maybe in Vancouver and Toronto, that want to. And the idea is there. But in terms of actual long term care homes or retirement communities that exist, there are a number across the US and internationally that are thriving, and then the actual desire and need for that. There's two camps when it comes to whether folks want a specific home or long term care home dedicated to 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors and older adults. So there's folks that are like, Yes, of course. Why wouldn't I want to be surrounded by people who know my experience, know my history, I can communicate. We can joke and laugh about our histories. And then there's another camp of folks who feel that they fought their whole life for inclusion and to be welcomed into society and not have to think necessarily about their 2SLGBTQ+ identities and want policies that we had just talked about within long term care homes and hospitals that kind of enforce that and force that right to inclusion, which I mean, it depends. I think that there's a way to walk that middle ground, and people have the right for choice

if where they want as long as we can get some places that that kind of open up here in Canada for 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults

Mike Prentice:

Right. Thanks for that response. Here's another question, around long term care. The question is, is anyone or organizations working with the Ministry of Long Term Care to guess, educate or collaborate with them on the needs of the community, specifically in light of what's been going on during the pandemic in sort of what's been exposed about vulnerabilities and a lot of long term care homes?

Ashley Flanagan:

Yes. Actually, the other group that you mentioned in my bio there that I'm a part of is the Ontario Centers for Learning, Research and Innovation, Ontario CLRI, the Advisory Committee for Diversity and Inclusion and Long Term Care. So that group is working with various organizations, and we've come up with kind of this toolkit for organizational and culture change within organizations that specifically aims to educate around 2SLGBTQIA+ racial and ethnic diversity, and inclusivity for Indigenous elders as well. So a really comprehensive kind of step by step guide for kind of assessing where long term care homes are at, and also how offering suggestions for how to move forward, to be more inclusive and equitable. So the work there is being done and then also kind of more on an organic basis. There is kind of aging with pride or older LGBTQIA+ organizations across the country that specifically do kind of come in on and as hired basis, I guess, to chat with long term care homes, retirement homes organizations about ways to be more inclusive for 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults. So there's like, little bits and pieces. And so there is kind of this nice little momentum growing when we think



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about equity and inclusion within long term care.

Mike Prentice:

Right. Right. On the same long term care, seeing it's on everyone's minds, I guess Here's a question, what about the stigma or what's being done, if anything, about the stigma of HIV it creates. This question is what's being done about the stigma of HIV that creates an unspoken prejudice in aging and long term care specifically?

Ashley Flanagan:

Yeah. I mean, that's a really great question. And to my knowledge, there is work emerging specifically within this area and raising awareness around the lived experiences of folks living with HIV and or AIDS and how we can best support them within the long term care context. Because to date, I mean, I'm not sure. I don't think that we're including it in curriculum for whether it's for PSW's or Health Care Aid, etc. So I think that is a change that's needed. And there is there's a kind of I've seen rumblings and surgeons of conversations around this specifically. So I'm hopeful that we'll see more of a dedicated effort and also within the work kind of that I'm doing with the EGALE Canada it's coming out as a concern within folks living with dementia who are also living with HIV and how to navigate that intersection when it comes to long term care in home support, etcetera.

Mike Prentice:

Okay, Here's a question that I'll read to you, and it's kind of along the same lines of, I guess the challenges of possibly haven't come out and then moving into a retirement home or long term care facility and either being forced back into the closet and or we're having to come out again.

So I'm just reading your full question. Thanks for helping to build a very clear understanding Ashley. We are increasingly aware that people moving into elder care are often forced yet again to come out.

How can we best help change the training? You were just touching on this of long term care staff to assist with the transition. So you touched on this a little bit that you feel like there's not as much or maybe not as many formal programs certainly are required. But there are some programs out there and some projects that are trying to train staff on how to deal with that. But have you had that experience or did your research touch on that issue of when folks move into another living space or

studying that they're either forced back in and or have to come re-come out? And that whole issue.

Ashley Flanagan:

I mean, that's the thing was coming out. It's depending on the space that you're in. It's an ongoing process and 2SLGBTQIA+ plus are continually making that choice of whether to come out depending on the space and what they perceive as supportive of



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their identities. So up until kind of more recently, there's been this generalized fear of having to go back into the closet when you enter or move into retirement or long term care home. Because as I mentioned in the presentation, there's the what kind of treatment or care am I going to receive if someone knows who knows my identity and that fear I think one of the things that we can do to help alleviate that fear and to equip people with the knowledge is have conversations like this and to build that awareness within society more broadly.

And I think that that is happening. And I think also to my earlier point of getting more dedicated time and space within curriculum and training programs and then also providing opportunities for continuing education and so having resources for folks that they can check out and also encourage people to it's kind of this ongoing process of learning in many ways right now is a little bit self directed, but to continue to seek out resources, talk to people, watch webinars, kind of come to the table with that open heart and mind that I mentioned a few times, and so that we can kind of create this space where people don't even have to worry about whether or not they need to come out again and they can just be who they are.

Mike Prentice:

Excellent. Ashley, thank you. The time flies, especially with a presenter as interesting, as polished, as engaging as yourself. So we're like a couple of minutes from three o'clock. So there were a couple of questions we didn't get around to, but generally I think there were a few themes in those questions, and I think you touched on a lot of the questions I saw that we didn't get to. I think you still touched on a lot of it. So that was excellent. Going to share a screen quickly? Yes. Okay. We have a minute.

Two minutes until three o'clock. Thank you to everyone for joining us today and being part of a great discussion. From everyone at the foundation Thanks for joining. A huge thank you, of course, to Ashley Flanagan for taking the time to present today. Ashley, anything you'd like to add before we finish, just give you a break from speaking for the last almost hour.

Ashley Flanagan:

No worries at all. Nothing more to add. I just want to add up my thanks to you all for taking the time out of your Wednesdays. I think it's Wednesday to kind of converse and learn with me, I really appreciate it.

Mike Prentice:

Thank you. I'll mention a couple more things before we wrap up. The Foundation has a few more webinars coming up in the fall. We're going to take the next few months off. Enjoy the summer as everybody will hopefully, what enjoyment we hopefully can squeeze out of this summer. We'll be back with webinars in October and November and possibly December. So everyone, please keep an eye out for those registration emails, which will be coming your way near the end of the summer. I want to remind everyone



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as we close this webinar. If you can stick with us for just another minute, there's a very short survey that will pop up on your screen. Your feedback is very important to us. Please take a minute just to let us know how we did today so we can continue to develop our webinar series.

Thank you one last time to Ashley Flannagan and to everyone for joining us today for the great questions and the great conversation. This concludes today's Webinar from the RTOERO Foundation. And Ashley, please, everyone, stay safe. Stay healthy until next time.

Thank you.



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