

5 MISTAKES PEOPLE ARE AFRAID TO MAKE **ABOUT DIVERSITY** and SEXUAL and GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

1 What if I want to support and/or engage in anti-violence work, but I feel like I don't know enough?

Sometimes our fear of not knowing enough leads to fear of not knowing where to start, which can lead to not doing anything at all. If you feel this way about anti-violence or anti-oppressive work because you feel like you don't know enough about sexual violence, or about diverse groups, or about both...you're not alone! That said, beginning by doing something with care and with a willingness to learn is still often better than doing nothing at all. **You can start by listening and learning.** That's still engagement and is a great place to start!

*Big changes can come from small gestures. Learn more about the **Moose Hide Campaign**, a nationwide Indigenous-led movement in Canada that engages men and boys in ending violence against women and children.*

2 What if I've learned the wrong things?

We are all socialized differently, but we are all socialized. Our ideas and views about all things, including various communities and groups, and sexual health and sexual violence, are shaped by many different sources, and none of us are immune to learning things that may prove to be incorrect, now or later. **Each of us are always engaged in processes of learning, unlearning, and relearning**, and remembering this can help keep us from feeling like we can only take steps only if we feel we know everything first. Because, well... that's impossible.

*Take a peek at this 2020 video presentation, **Gender-Based Violence Through an Intersectional Lens**, that explores how pop culture and media perpetuate sexual violence, highlighting the intersection of anti-Black racism, colorism, fatphobia, and disability, while providing tools for allies to support survivors.*

3 What if I make a mistake?

Sometimes, when wanting to support others, we might be so worried that we will say or do the wrong thing that we don't say or do anything at all. While you might fear making a mistake when supporting people from communities that you are not part of, **it matters that you are making an effort to, and that you are trying.** Just like everyone else does, sometimes you too will misstep and say or do the wrong thing. If you do and someone offers you a correction, it is important to acknowledge what you did or said and to engage in repair work. This is a learning opportunity and a way to make our allyship and our communities stronger. It is, indeed, how most allies have become allies.

*Check out **Taking Action in Our Spheres of Influence**, a framework that provides guidance and strategies for creating and maintaining an intersectional, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive approach to addressing gender-based violence.*

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4

What if my thinking is misguided or wrong?

Unconscious biases and the reasons we form them—such as our need to take cognitive shortcuts—can lead us to inadvertently make assumptions. It is helpful (and important) to know that we do this, and to make efforts not to. If you are aware that you don't know much about various communities, whether broadly (e.g., about Indigenous peoples, racialized groups, disabled people, folks with 2SLGBTQIA+ identities) or specifically (e.g., a particular group of Indigenous peoples, a specific racialized group, people with a particular intellectual or physical disability, a specific community of gender and/or sexually diverse people), be aware of this tendency to make assumptions and/or to revert to stereotypes, and then challenge yourself not to, perhaps by seeking out learning. **Getting curious is a really helpful antidote to assumption-making.** It also helps to remind yourself that just as you do not perfectly represent any group that you are a member of, communities are just as diverse, full of unique individuals, themselves at the intersections of various groups.

*Read this comprehensive piece from the Learning Network that explores **sexual violence faced by women labelled with intellectual disabilities** with an intersectional, strengths-based approach.*

5

What if I don't centre everyone in the conversation?

Sexual and gender-based violence can impact anyone, regardless of community membership. Sometimes, in our thinking, conversations, and/or work, we or others will necessarily focus on a particular community's experience of sexual and gender-based violence, and this may be important to avoid generalizing where nuance is important. That said, if, for example, the focus is on women and 2SLGBTQIA+ groups as targets of sexual violence, this does not mean that men are not targeted too. What it may mean is that *that* is not the right time to focus on men's experiences. A focus on one is not and should not be to the exclusion of others. **Sometimes, it is essential that not everyone is centred at once.**

*With respect to nuance, watch this great **outline of research on cultural betrayal trauma** focused on the impacts of intra-cultural pressures and violent victimization, and the role of systemic oppression and intercultural trust in healing as described by the researcher herself.*