



# STRENGTHENING THE STATUS QUEER:

## A LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM FOR AND BY QUEER PEOPLE

Friday October 24, 2025

(all day) at the Red River College  
Polytechnic Exchange District Campus -  
Manitou a bi Bii daziigae  
(319 Elgin Avenue)



**mts** THE  
MANITOBA  
TEACHERS'  
SOCIETY

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## Program of Events

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2025**

Red River College Polytechnic (Exchange District Campus)  
Manitou a bi Bii daziigae building, Winnipeg, MB

<b>8:30 AM – 9:00 AM</b>	Registration
<b>9:00 AM – 9:15 AM</b>	Opening
<b>9:15 AM – 9:25 AM</b>	Introductions
<b>9:25 AM – 10:30 AM</b>	Keynote
<b>10:30 AM – 10:45 AM</b>	Break
<b>10:45 AM – 12:00 PM</b>	Breakout Sessions (choose one <b>A</b> session)
<b>12:00 PM – 1:00 PM</b>	Lunch
<b>1:00 PM – 2:15 PM</b>	Breakout Sessions (choose one <b>B</b> session)
<b>2:15 PM – 2:30 PM</b>	Break
<b>2:30 PM – 3:45 PM</b>	Breakout Sessions (choose one <b>C</b> session)
<b>4:00 PM – 8:00 PM</b>	Qmunity (optional)

STRENGTHENING  
THE STATUS  
QUEER

## Cost

**REGULAR: \$40**

**UNEMPLOYED: \$20**

**FULL-TIME UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE STUDENTS: FREE**

The Manitoba Teachers' Society respects safe spaces for everyone. Photos will be taken during the Symposium and might be shared on our website, publications and social media. By attending this event, you may be included in these photos. If you do not consent to being in a photo please let us know. While all efforts will be made to respect your decision, there may be circumstances where this is not possible.



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FROM 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM  
IN THE MITAKUYE OYASON OKAIYAPE



Evaluate the SSQ  
symposium today!



# Keynote and Breakout Sessions Schedule

<b>Opening Keynote</b>	9:25 AM – 10:30 AM	Sean Wiltshire
<b>A Sessions</b>	10:45 AM – 12:00 PM	<p><b>A1</b> Beyond Tolerance: Improving LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion in Higher Education</p> <p><b>A2</b> Building Canada's Rainbow Wave: Queer Leadership by and for Our Communities</p> <p><b>A3</b> Queer The Music</p>
<b>B Sessions</b>	1:00 PM – 2:15 PM	<p><b>B1</b> Queer A.F.: Queer Educators in Affinity Family Personal-Professional Development</p> <p><b>B2</b> The Two-Spirit Archives: Challenging Colonial Narratives by Centering 2S/Indigiqueer Communities, Leadership, and Ways of Knowing</p> <p><b>B3</b> Culturally Responsive Health Literacy for Newcomer Black Gay, Bisexual, and Other Men Who Have Sex with Men (GBM)</p> <p><b>B4</b> Queer in a Climate of Refusal: Curricular Leadership and the Ethics of Cultural Sustainment in Sexuality Education</p>
<b>C Sessions</b>	2:30 PM – 3:45 PM	<p><b>C1</b> Exploring the Joys and Challenges in Leading Rural Pride Festivals</p> <p><b>C2 (VIRTUAL)</b> Lending Your Privilege: Inclusion of, and Allyship to, 2SLGBTQIA+ People at Work</p> <p><b>C3</b> Queer and Far From Home: Unsettling the Margins of International Student Discourse in Canadian Higher Education</p>



## OPENING KEYNOTE – SEAN WILTSHIRE

### The Powerful Role of Quiet Queerness: My Journey to Queer Leadership

**TIME:** 9:25 AM – 10:30 AM

In a time when authentic leadership is more crucial than ever, this keynote explores how queer leadership—rooted in advocacy and inclusion—is not just transformative for our own community, but for society at large. By leading with purpose, resilience, and intersectional awareness, queer leaders are building pathways that uplift other marginalized groups and create a more just and equitable world.

This keynote will highlight how commitment to equity expands capacity across communities, how voices catalyze structural change, and how visibility paves the way for the leaders of tomorrow. Join Sean as we reflect on the power of inclusive leadership to reshape systems, amplify solidarity, and reimagine the future—for all of us.

#### SEAN WILTSHIRE

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Sean Wiltshire is an internationally acclaimed diversity advocate, and program developer. Renowned for his infectious laughter, resonant voice, and unwavering dedication to fostering change within organizations, businesses, and communities across the globe.

With over three decades of experience, Sean has made it his mission to highlight the importance of diversity as a fundamental aspect of business strategy.

A captivating storyteller, Sean seamlessly weaves personal experiences into his presentations, whether discussing the challenges of finding jobs in the garment factories of Bangladesh or collaborating with crown corporations to develop effective diversity plans. His candid approach resonates with audiences worldwide, from St. John's to Bombay and Vancouver to Kathmandu, always underpinned by a belief in the potential for improvement and progress.

For the past 32 years, Sean has served as the Chief Executive Officer of Avalon Employment Inc. (AEI), an employment agency dedicated to supporting individuals with disabilities and autism. Under his leadership, AEI has not only provided essential employment services but has also established a thriving social enterprise, completing over \$154 million in payroll for other non-profits and local businesses.

Sean's influence extends beyond his role at AEI. He is a former President of the Provincial Regional Economic Development Association and has actively participated in the Ministerial Committee on Regional Renewal for the Government of Newfoundland & Labrador. His commitment to enhancing diversity and inclusion has led him to serve on two Federal Ministerial Advisory Committees and to be an Alumnus of The Governor General's Canadian Leadership Conference (2000). Currently, he is a member of the National Executive Board.

In recognition of his impactful work, Sean was a member of a team honored at the United Nations in Vienna in 2017 with the prestigious Zero Project Award, addressing employment and diversity issues in Southeast Asia.

In February 2021, he and his organization were awarded the Zero Project Award once again for their Autism Employment Inclusion Pilot, distinguishing it as one of the top 75 diversity and inclusion practices globally. This Autism Employment Program is now running in four provinces in Canada.

## **A1 Beyond Tolerance: Improving LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion in Higher Education**

**TIME:** 10:45 AM – 12:00 PM

This workshop will examine the intersectional experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, Two-Spirit+ (LGBTQ2S+) staff and students in a university setting, with a closer look at how higher education structures can reinforce and uphold heterosexism and cissexism. Using the Riddle Scale, participants will engage in critical reflections of attitudes towards LGBTQ2S+ people that are communicated at the institutional level through priorities, administration, policies, curricula, and physical spaces, and at the individual level through pedagogies and interpersonal interactions. We will draw on research that highlights competencies and practices that move beyond tolerance, which, for many, is considered a negative attitude, and towards nurturance of LGBTQ2S+ individuals in campus communities.

### **TONYA D CALLAGHAN**

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Professor Tonya Callaghan is an Academic Director for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit+ equity, inclusion, and intersectionality with the University of Calgary Office of Institutional Commitments in the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) division. Their research in the field of IDEA explores resistance to anti-homophobia and anti-transprejudice education in curriculum and policy. They specialize in critical social justice theories and anti-oppression education.

### **JAMIE ANDERSON**

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Jamie Anderson (he/they) is a trans parent, educator, SSHRC scholar, and doctoral candidate in the Werklund School of Education. They have been a teacher for ten years in the Alberta K-12 education system and an advocate for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in the health and education sectors. Their research seeks to understand the myriad ways that trans educators resist and queer notions of teacher professionalism in Canadian schools.

## A2 Building Canada's Rainbow Wave: Queer Leadership by and for Our Communities

TIME: 10:45 AM – 12:00 PM

Queer leadership often begins in resistance. This session explores how Canada's Two Spirit, queer, and trans leaders are building sustainable momentum for change across a range of institutions. Drawing on lessons from Pride at Work Canada's fifteen-year history, it will centre both lived experience and evidence-based strategies.

### COLIN DRUHAN

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Colin Druhan is Executive Director of Pride at Work Canada and serves on the board of the Stephen Lewis Foundation. An internationally recognized expert on gender, sexuality, and labour market participation, he pairs over two decades of experience making practical community-led impact with executive training from Rotman, Cornell, and Harvard Business School, building on a BFA in painting from NSCAD University.

## A3 Queer the Music

TIME: 10:45 AM – 12:00 PM

In "Queer the Music" we invite you to explore an active queering of the music classroom! Participants will participate in making music together, both experiencing and practicing actively dismantling common gender binaries, assumptions and stereotypes in Western traditional music classrooms.

### BECK WATT

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Beck Watt (they/he) is a musician and music educator in Winnipeg. They have been the band and music teacher at St John's High School in the Winnipeg School Division since 2018 and have remained an actively performing flutist across Winnipeg for the past 15 years. In addition to their work as a musician and music educator, Beck is passionate about educating on gender inclusive practices within education and advocating for the transgender and/or gender non-conforming teacher experience.

### J KOOYMANS

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J is a multidisciplinary artist who has called Winnipeg home since 2020. They completed their MA in Applied Drama at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in 2016 and founded OnTRAC, a theatre company dedicated to teaching and producing theatre with incarcerated individuals. J teaches visual and performing arts in Winnipeg School Division and is the founder and Artistic Director of Lavender Theatrical Productions.



## **B1 Queer A.F.: Queer Educators in Affinity Family Personal-Professional Development**

**TIME:** 1:00 PM – 2:15 PM

This presentation/workshop is designed to engage participants in both reflective and collaborative inquiry. Attendees will explore key concepts including heteroprofessionalism, affinity group methodology, and tools for conducting both self and organizational inventories.

The session will include a balance of direct instruction, small group collaboration, and whole group discussion to ensure multiple points of entry and engagement for participants across varied roles and experiences.

### **JAMES EGISTO AGUIRRE**

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James (he/him/él) is a 20-year high school English teacher from Sunnyvale/Cupertino, California, USA– the heart of Silicon Valley! He recently completed his Ed.D. in Educational Leadership at San José State University, where he is also an adjunct professor of Sociology of Education in the credential program. He lives in a 1928 storybook cottage with his husband, four cats, and pitbull.

## **B2 The Two-Spirit Archives: Challenging Colonial Narratives by Centering 2S/Indigiqueer Communities, Leadership, and Ways of Knowing**

**TIME:** 1:00 PM – 2:15 PM

Through the leadership of the Two-Spirit Archives Advisory Council, and the preservation and provision of access to historical records by and about the Two-Spirit community, the Two-Spirit Archives works to enhance Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer representation in our culture and heritage in a way that is community-driven and respects Indigenous traditions and protocols.

### **DANIELLE MARIE BITZ**

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Danielle Marie Bitz is a citizen of the Métis Nation and a Canadian of mixed Métis and German-Ukrainian descent. Danielle has familial ties to both settler and Michif/Métis communities across the Métis homeland including those in the Red River Valley, Saint François Xavier (Grantown), Skull Creek in the Cypress Hills, Montana, and what is now Balgonie, Saskatchewan. Danielle's Métis family tree includes the names Swain (Swan), Breland, Dauphinais, Desmarais, and Grant.

Danielle has worked in libraries for over a decade and completed their MLIS in the spring of 2020. Danielle has a strong interest in relational knowledge, knowledge systems, and building connections between the two.

## ALBERT MCLEOD

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Albert McLeod is a First Nation queer activist who has advanced 2Spirit awareness, outreach, and advocacy since the mid-1980's. He is a member of Team Thunderhead, the design group that won the international competition to design the LGBT Fund's 2SLGBTQI+ National Monument in Ottawa.

**B3**

## Culturally Responsive Health Literacy for Newcomer Black Gay, Bisexual, and Other Men Who Have Sex with Men (GBM)

**TIME:** 1:00 PM – 2:15 PM

In this presentation, grounded in the narratives of newcomer Black, gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (GBM) interviewed in Toronto, Ontario, Dr. Lance T. McCready considers a framework for culturally responsive health literacy for GBM.

## LANCE T. MCCREADY

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Dr. Lance T. McCready is Associate Professor in the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education. He served as Director of the Transitional Year Programme at University of Toronto 2018-2025. His research, teaching and service focus on the education, health and welfare of Black families, youth and adults. He has over three decades of experience as a community-based educator, researcher and policymaker in Black and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in the United States and Canada.

**B4**

## Queer in a Climate of Refusal: Curricular Leadership and the Ethics of Cultural Sustainment in Sexuality Education

**TIME:** 1:00 PM – 2:15 PM

This session presents a novel framework—Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy for Sexuality Education (CSPSE)—rooted in culturally responsive pedagogy. It offers an urgent rethinking of queer curricular leadership that challenges liberal inclusion models and invites ethical, plural, and relational approaches to sexuality education.

## JACOB DESROCHERS

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Jacob DesRochers (he/him) is a researcher and educator focusing on the complex interplay between sexuality, gender, culture, and religion in education, particularly within K–12 settings.

He serves as a research ethics board member for Queen's University and a national public health organization. His scholarly commitments center on justice-oriented, community-engaged research that interrogates how systems of power shape educational policy, practice, and everyday experience.



## C1 Exploring the Joys and Challenges in Leading Rural Pride Festivals

TIME: 2:30 PM – 3:45 PM

Amid rising populism and anti-queer sentiment, rural 2SLGBTQ+ pride events in Canada emerge as sites of queer leadership and critical adult education. Drawing on interviews with 28 organizers and visual ethnography from nine rural communities, this study examines how pride leaders enact courage through grassroots organizing, reclaiming public space, and resisting erasure. These leaders facilitate intergenerational learning, challenge dominant ideologies, and model liberatory praxis beyond institutional settings. Rather than corporate pride politics, rural prides offer alternative, community-driven pedagogies where fear becomes a teacher, visibility is radical, and leadership itself becomes an act of everyday resistance and transformative education. Strategies for community-based queer leadership will be explored in this presentation.

### ROBERT MIZZI



Dr. Robert Mizzi is the Canada Research Chair in Queer, Community and Diversity Education and Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. He has over 200 publications and presentations. His most recent book is “LGBTQ+ Issues in Education: Theoretical Interventions in Curriculum and Pedagogy” (Palgrave, 2025). He is President Emeritus of the Canadian Association of Adult Education and is Editor Emeritus of the Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education. Dr. Mizzi has been inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame and the Royal Society of Canada (College of New Scholars)

for his achievements in 2SLGBTQ+ studies in adult education.

## C2 Lending Your Privilege: Inclusion of, and Allyship to, 2SLGBTQIA+ People at Work (VIRTUAL)

TIME: 2:30 PM – 3:45 PM

A discussion of the importance of 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion in the workplace – with a heavy focus on both the ‘why’ (the rationale both for the individuals in question and for the teams and organisations within which they work), and the ‘how’: practical guidance and tools to facilitate a work environment in which 2SLGBTQIA+ people can thrive and contribute.

### GEFFRYE PARSONS



Geff Parsons, whose consulting business is certified as a Diverse Supplier by Canada’s LGBTQ+Chamber of Commerce, is a gay cis man who has worked to improve 2SLGBTQIA+inclusion in workplaces for 10+ years. His work has been recognised by accolades from the Pride Power List, British LGBT Awards, Pink News Awards and Stonewall in his native UK. He is also a Director of the LGBTQ+ Corporate Directors Canada Association, which works to increase LGBTQ+ representation at Board level across Canada.

**C3**

## **Queer and Far From Home: Unsettling the Margins of International Student Discourse in Canadian Higher Education**

**TIME:** 2:30 PM – 3:45 PM

This session explores the often-overlooked experiences of queer international students in Canada, highlighting institutional ways of addressing the compounded challenges they face due to intersecting identities of sexuality, gender, race, and newcomer status.

### **GERALD WALTON**

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Dr. Gerald Walton holds a PhD in Education from Queen's University and has been a professor in Education at Lakehead University since 2008. He teaches and supervises in the BEd, MEd, and PhD programs, conducts research on identity, bullying, and violence, and publishes his work through academic and non-academic venues.

### **MOHIT DUDEJA**

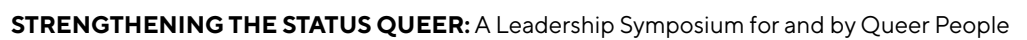
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Founder and President of Mendlife Foundation, India and Canada, Mohit Dudeja (they/she/he) is a lecturer in the Faculty of Education and the Department of Gender and Women's Studies at Lakehead University, Thunder Bay. They are also a PhD Candidate in Educational Studies at Lakehead University. Their research explores the internationalization of education, with a focus on social justice, queer inclusion, and transnational identities in higher education. Drawing from their background as a social worker, educator, and queer-affirmative psychotherapist, Mohit's work engages with intersectional approaches to

education and community building. They write from the standpoint of a queer migrant scholar and international student, committed to advancing equity in academic and community spaces.

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