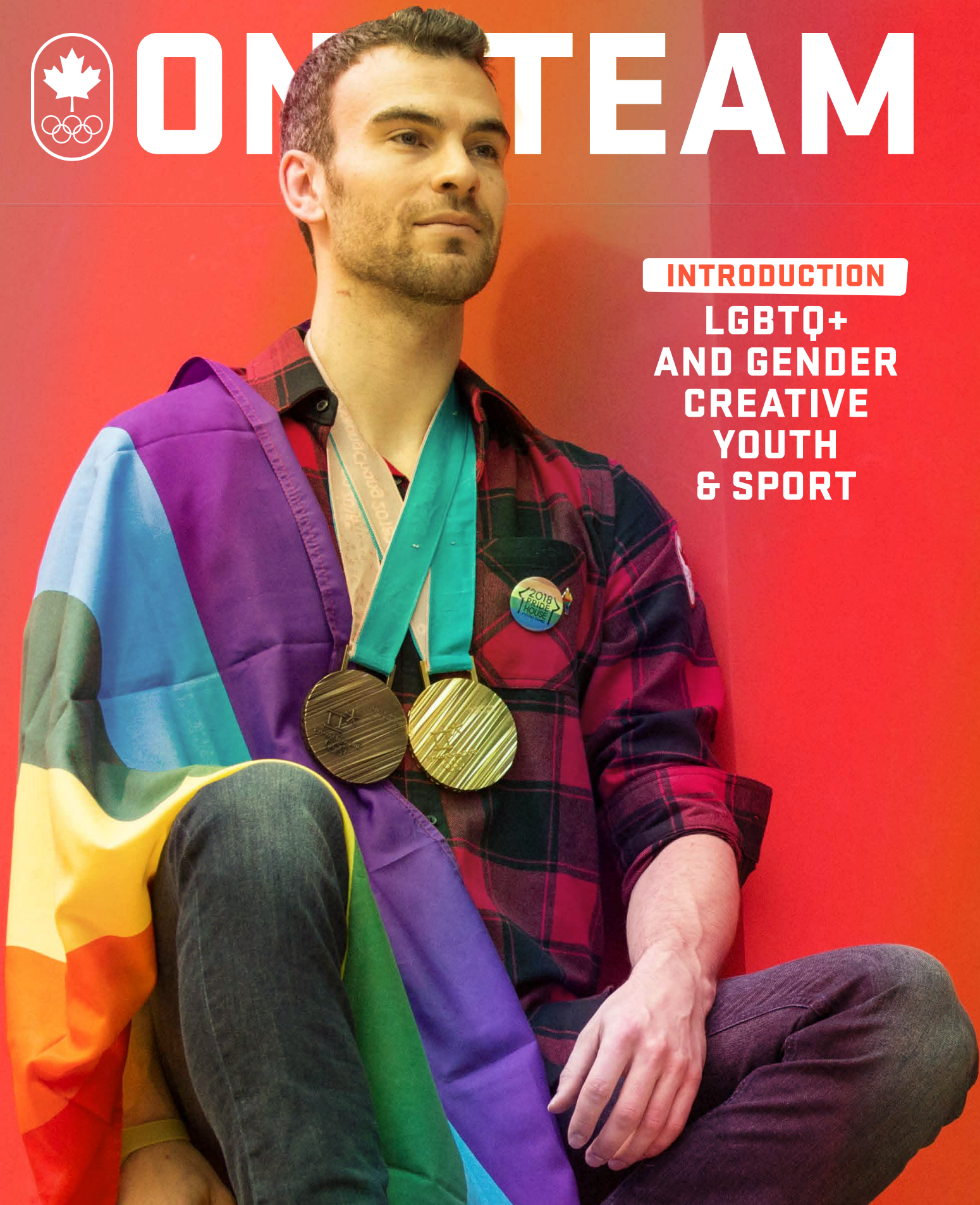




ONLINE TEAM

INTRODUCTION

LGBTQ+ AND GENDER CREATIVE YOUTH & SPORT



LGBTQ+ AND GENDER CREATIVE YOUTH & SPORT

WHILE MUCH HAS been made of society's progress in accepting diversity over the past few decades, the reality is that many school and sport environments remain unwelcoming, and even unsafe, for LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Two Spirit, Queer and Questioning) children and youth. In Egale Canada Human Rights Trust's First National Climate Survey of Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in Canadian Schools (2011), they found some shocking results:

- Almost two thirds (64%) of LGBTQ+ students and 61% of students with LGBTQ+ parents reported that they feel unsafe at school.
- 70% of all participating students, LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+, reported hearing expressions such as "that's so gay" every day in school, and almost half (48%) reported hearing remarks such as "faggot," "lezbo," and "dyke" every day in school.
- 74% of trans students, 55% of sexual minority students, and 26% of non-LGBTQ+ students reported having been verbally harassed about their gender expression.
- More than one in five (21%) LGBTQ+ students reported being physically harassed or assaulted due to their sexual orientation.

ADDRESSING HOMOPHOBIA HAS IMPORTANT BENEFITS FOR ALL

- Athletes and coaches perform best when they are treated with respect. Inclusiveness, acceptance and diversity are essential ingredients to strong and cohesive teams.
- By removing destructive stereotypes and reducing fear and ignorance, the incredible learning environment that sport can offer is enriched and improved.
- Addressing homophobia in sport improves the situation of lesbian and gay youth who are at greater risk of isolation and harmful behaviours than their heterosexual counterparts.
- Dealing with homophobia removes barriers to participation in sport and makes sport a more welcoming place for girls and women, many of whom may stay away from sport, or remain in the closet, out of fear they will be labelled as lesbians.

(CAAWS, 2012. Position Paper on Homophobia in Sports)

**33% OF LGB YOUTH AND 47% OF TRANS YOUTH HAVE
ATTEMPTED SUICIDE. THOSE RATES ARE MUCH HIGHER THAN
FOR NON-LGBT YOUTH (7%).**

(Hatzenbuehler, 2011; Saewyc, 2007; Scanlon et al, 2010)



Melissa Tancredi, Women's Soccer

THE ROLE OF AN ALLY

An ally is an individual who does not identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ communities, who is supportive of LGBTQ+ communities. Allies believe in the dignity and respect of all people, and are willing to stand up in that role. Allies do not identify as members of the group they are fighting for (eg. A straight person could be an ally for LGBTQ+ communities; a lesbian could be an ally for trans communities). Allyship is not a status a person can reach, but rather an ongoing commitment to creating more inclusive spaces in an ongoing capacity.

“SPORT TOUCHES MANY ASPECTS OF CANADIANS’ LIVES— THEIR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING, THEIR SOCIAL NETWORKS, THEIR SENSE OF SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS. ORGANIZED SPORT CAN HELP CHILDREN GROW, GIVING THEM A SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT WHILE BUILDING TEAMWORK, LEADERSHIP, PROBLEM-SOLVING, DECISION-MAKING, AND COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS.”

(Clark, 2014)

“DYLAN MOSCOVITCH WAS ALSO A MAJOR PART OF ME ACCEPTING MYSELF AND LEARNING TO BE COMFORTABLE IN MY OWN SKIN. HE WAS THE FIRST GUY I WASN’T AFRAID TO BE MYSELF IN FRONT OF. IT HAS MADE A HUGE DIFFERENCE FOR ME NOT ONLY IN DECIDING TO COME OUT PUBLICLY BUT ALSO IN HOW I FELT WHILE I WAS AT THE OLYMPICS IN PYEONGCHANG.”

—Eric Radford, Olympian, Figure Skating



Dylan Moscovitch

THE CURRENT LGBTQ+ LANDSCAPE IN SCHOOL AND SPORT



DURING PRIMARY AND secondary school years, children and youth are growing, their bodies and brains are developing, and they are learning skills as well as learning about themselves, others, and the world around them. Participating in sport adds to healthy development, not just physically, but socially and emotionally as well.

Children's sport involvement is impacted by several factors including parental involvement, household income, parental education, immigration status, and household structure (Clark, 2014). In addition, not every child's experience with sport is positive. Children who are overweight, less coordinated than their peers, who lack the skills or who are (or are perceived to be) LGBTQ+ may not experience sport as a bolster to their self-esteem or mental fitness, or as a place where they feel valued or connected to their peers.

While there is limited research on LGBTQ+ and gender creative children and youth in sport, studies with LGBTQ+ adults suggest that the sport climate can be less than welcoming to people with LGBTQ+ identities, suggesting that teams, locker rooms, physical education classes and other sport-associated areas are unsafe spaces for LGBTQ+ and gender creative children and youth (Barber & Krane, 2007; Krane & Kauer, 2007).

As people who identify as LGBTQ+ or gender creative make up about 6-10% of the general population, this topic is relevant to your school community, which likely includes LGBTQ+ students, staff and families. It is also important to recognize that there may be some LGBTQ+ students, staff or families who are not open

“DESPITE THE ENORMOUS BENEFITS OF SPORT, AND THE EARNEST EFFORTS WE UNDERTAKE TO MAKE SPORT INCLUSIVE AND POSITIVE, SPORT IS NOT ALWAYS WELCOMING TO LESBIAN AND GAY PEOPLE. THE TERM ‘HETEROSEXISM’ REFERS TO THE WIDELY HELD ASSUMPTION THAT EVERYONE IS OR SHOULD BE HETEROSEXUAL. THIS ASSUMPTION IS PREVALENT IN SPORT, FROM THE GRASS ROOTS TO ELITE LEVELS.”

CAAWS, position paper on homophobia in sport, 2012, p. 4

about their sexual orientation or gender identity for fear of being discriminated against or bullied. Nevertheless, children and youth are coming out at younger and younger ages. Researchers from the Family Acceptance Project found that adolescents self-identified as LGB, on average, at age 13.4.

And increasingly, parents/guardians and families report children identifying as gay at earlier ages – between ages 7 and 12. Similarly, gender creative students are visible as early as preschool

(Ryan, 2009).

With this in mind, creating LGBTQ+ safer and inclusive classrooms and schools (and by extension physical education classes, sports teams and locker rooms) is just as important in elementary and middle schools as it is in high schools. Creating LGBTQ+ safer and inclusive schools helps to ensure that all students can be who they are, and can enjoy participating in all school activities that interest them. Understanding language and concepts (see the Glossary), using gender neutral language, challenging gender norms and stereotypes, including LGBTQ+ realities into your curriculum, and checking your biases and assumptions are a few things that help to create such environments.

WHY IS THE CANADIAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEE COMMITTED TO THIS CONVERSATION?

THE OLYMPIC RINGS stand for so much more in the world than just sport; they are transcendent, they have the ability and the power to impact society and culture. The COC believes in equity and justice for all, and that athletes should be judged by their performance on the field of play and their character as people, and embrace all athletes for who they are. By creating change in sport, we can create change across all segments of society. Children and youth who participate in sport and physical activity can access a wide range of physical, psychological and social benefits, summarized in Table 1. For this reason, it is of the utmost importance to make school and sport settings safe and accepting for all children and youth, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We encourage you to explore the many resources available as part of the Canadian Olympic School Program in order to expand your knowledge and role as an ally, and to engage your students and participants in critical and dynamic discussions and activities on the importance of inclusion.



“I KNOW THAT SPORT DOES HAVE THE POWER TO CREATE CHANGE IN SOCIETY. LOOKING BACK, I WISH I COULD’VE BEEN TRUE TO MYSELF WHILE COMPETING BUT AT THE SAME TIME I FEEL NOW I HAVE LEARNED LESSONS THAT I CAN HELP OTHERS WITH AND I FEEL EMPOWERED TO DO SO.”

—Eric Mitchell, Olympian Ski Jumping

PHYSICAL HEALTH BENEFITS

- Cardiorespiratory fitness
- Muscular strength and endurance
- Bone health, osteoporosis prevention
- Cardiovascular health
- Healthy body composition and body weight management
- Chronic disease risk reduction
- Obesity prevention
- Pain management associated with both fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BENEFITS

- Positive gender construction
- Positive and healthy body image
- Social inclusion
- Positive relationships with adults and peers
- Teamwork
- Community involvement
- Social capital and networks
- Risk behavior prevention / reduction
- Improved academic outcomes (aspirational and achievement)
- Diversity or perspectives

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL BENEFITS

- Positive psychological well-being
- Enjoyment and positive affect
- Positive self-perceptions and self-concept
- Empowerment
- Motivation for continued activity
- Mature moral development
- Goal setting
- Optimal cognitive functioning
- Stress management and mental health
- Decreased levels of anxiety, depression, neuroticism and various kinds of stress
- Maintenance of functional capacity and quality of life into old age

MOTOR SKILL BENEFITS

- Performance-related physical fitness
- Basic motor skill competencies
- Fundamental movement skills
- Fundamental sports skills
- Physical activity competencies
- Physical active lifestyles
- Talent development

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING

GRIS MONTRÉAL

<http://www.gris.ca/>

GRIS-Montréal is non-profit organization founded in 1994 with a mission to ensure a better awareness of the homosexual and bisexual reality and to make it easier for gays, lesbians and bisexuals to integrate into society.

Since the values of our youths are being shaped in school and since schools are where knowledge takes precedence over ignorance, we have chosen to focus most of its actions in the school to demystify homosexuality and bisexuality. We work mainly in secondary schools and cégeps in the Greater Montréal Area and have adapted our workshops for students in third cycle of primary.

WWW.MYGSA.CA / WWW.EGALE.CA

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