

## **K–12 Methods: Social Studies, History, and Geography**

This module focuses on content related to social studies, history, and geography. Depending on the age level, these may be standalone courses or part of integrated curriculum units. In this module, we consider what stories are told in historical narratives, who is represented by these stories, how social movements are treated, and what the role of social citizenship and human rights might play in having conversations about 2SLGBTQ+ people.

### **What does it mean to queer teaching methods for social studies, history, and geography content areas?**

*Queering social studies, history, and geography courses involves revealing the stories that have been overlooked or undervalued and interrogating the role of the stories that are told in producing, normalizing, and reinforcing the status quo in the present day. While rights for 2SLGBTQ+ people have not always existed in every community, there have been many events and movements that have been led by 2SLGBTQ+ people, and contributions made by queer/trans folks in many fields that are seldom discussed. By disrupting the narrative of a white, heteronormative history of Canada and the world, we normalize the participation and contributions of 2SLGBTQ+ people in all spheres. Queering social studies, history, and geography courses normalizes 2SLGBTQ+ experiences as part of our society—not just in the 21st century but throughout history—and encourages students to think more critically about the curated histories we have learned and how they shape our current society.*

### **Why do we need to do this?**

*2SLGBTQ+ people have been part of many social, political, and cultural movements around the world, and yet are often not included in official textbooks, dominant narratives, or social studies or civics courses. This representation of 2SLGBTQ+ people is important, and omitting queerness from these materials and courses perpetuates a heteronormative school environment (Block, 2019). Beyond inclusion of queer stories, it is also important to correct the historical record. 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion and participation in society have been edited out of historical texts and documents, through misrepresentation, deliberate omission, and direct censorship (Blumenfeld, n.d.). With only cisgender and heterosexual representations included, queerness becomes an invention of the 20th century and not an inherent part of the human experience.*

### **How do we do it?**

- *Lead by example.* Teacher educators in these areas should be showing teacher candidates what it looks like to meaningfully involve queer/trans representations and discussions of homophobia, transphobia, and violence against 2SLGBTQ+ people (Smith Crocco, 2002). It can be difficult for teacher candidates to imagine what 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion in history, social studies, and geography courses could look like, so by modeling within the teacher education course and providing content to support

2SLGBTQ+ inclusion, we create teachers who will in turn show queer/trans perspectives in their classrooms.

- *Normalize conversations about queerness.* Some educators are hesitant to include 2SLGBTQ+ content in social studies/civics courses because they worry that it will cause controversy. Normalizing conversations about queerness and including references to 2SLGBTQ+ identities challenges the narrative that discussions of queerness are controversial or inherently sexual (Block 2019). It is important to make these discussions part of everyday classroom conversation, rather than an extraordinary occurrence. 2SLGBTQ+ students need to see themselves regularly reflected in their classrooms and curriculum.
- *Expand 2SLGBTQ+ content.* Queer content should also not be constricted only to conversations about human rights or during lead up to events like Pride. Queer content needs to be included across topics and courses and stories should not be omitted or censored to avoid discomfort. Look for opportunities to include 2SLGBTQ+ content and examples throughout your curriculum specifically in social, political, and historical contexts.
- *Operationalize queerness.* The default conversation around gender and sexuality remains focused on heterosexual relationships between two cisgender people. Operationalizing queerness means expanding the way we talk about/think about gender and sexual and romantic relationships from this heteronormative default, and then challenging the dominant paradigms of gender and sexuality that have shaped, justified, and normalized the legitimacy of abuse of 2SLGBTQ+ people and their rights globally. Instead of focusing on making queerness knowable, shift the conversation to the larger picture: 2SLGBTQ+ people exist, have inherent rights, and deserve respect, regardless of personal opinion or comfort. Remember, 2SLGBTQ+ individuals have and continue to exist in every faith, culture, and community in the world. Because you cannot see them, does not mean they are not there. Visibility is often tied to safety, and safety is connected to inclusion.
- *Correct the historical record.* As Blumenfeld (n.d.) highlights, 2SLGBTQ+ stories and histories have been censored from the historical record, and it is essential to both challenge and highlight both the implicit and explicit censoring of queerness within the curriculum and within texts. For example, the role that Black trans women played in the Stonewall Riot is often ignored or minimized in favour of a whitewashed narrative of queer rights. In Canada too, the queer BIPOC community's responses to the Toronto bathhouse raids of the 1980s (which culminated in the first Pride Day in Toronto) are missing from discussions about Pride.
- *Examine current climate.* In some communities, especially in urban centres, students might have the idea that 2SLGBTQ+ equality has been fully achieved. It is important for students to understand where current social realities lie for 2SLGBTQ+ folks in Canada and around the world. Learning about ongoing inclusion efforts (e.g., MMIWG2S inquiry, QTBIPOC movements) can solidify for students the ongoing need for change and

advocacy. Students can also interrogate what “equality” means for 2SLGBTQ+ people who are also Indigenous, Black, or racialized.

- *Content specific suggestions.*
  - Social movements: Sections on history of civil rights should include queer and trans rights (from legal advances, such as same-sex marriage and legal gender identity changes & nonbinary genders on official ID, to understanding social movements as advocacy-change efforts). These conversations should also include conversations around the specific barriers facing trans, Two-Spirit, and queer Indigenous peoples.
  - Social Studies: Examine the disruption of ways of life for Two-Spirit, trans and queer Indigenous peoples that came with colonization; profile prominent queer people involved in building Canada and various social movements in Canada; discuss the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and how the Charter and other laws serve people at different intersections of race and sexuality. Other topics could include queer participation in trade/industry and labour movements, and 2SLGBTQ+ identity and various social equity topics (e.g., healthcare access, food scarcity, job security and wage equity).
  - Geography: Learning geography is also an opportunity to talk about nationalism, governance, colonialism, and legal systems; rights differ greatly across countries/continents, and there is even regional variation in Canada. Colonization’s impact on ways of life around the globe and criminalization of queer people. Even mapping can be examined as being both part of a (national) identity, and also a visual representation of the colonial project (e.g., compare Indigenous territories maps with maps of colonial Canada), or in having conversations about Land Back movements.
  - History: Queer people in history, civil and social rights movements, significance of legal and social changes for 2SLGBTQ+ people, disrupting the narrative that discrimination against queer and trans people was because of a particular time in history rather than targeted and purposeful discrimination (and that it is ongoing).
  - Human rights: 2SLGBTQ+ rights are human rights. There are many opportunities to include content specifically for 2SLGBTQ+ rights efforts and to talk about the importance of these. Additionally, students can interrogate the intersection of human rights and Indigenous rights, and whether they are truly compatible or whether an alternative paradigm needs to be imagined.

See also: [Indigenous Perspectives Module](#) exercises and activities. This module will contain activities which interrogate the white, heteronormative versions of history, social studies, and geography.

## Teaching Activities

- *Profiling 2SLGBTQ+ individuals throughout history and the present* (activists like: Bayard Rustin, Delwin Vriend, Chrystos, Marsha P. Johnson, Michelle Douglas, Sylvia Rivera; community members like Myra Laramee, Brent Bissailion, Dolly Berlin; authors like Dionne Brand, Billy Ray Belcourt, Makeda Silvera, James Baldwin, Audre Lorde, Beth Brant) and discussing their impacts, as well as critically examining why they are not always discussed in “mainstream” conversations around political/social movements.
- *Queering maps through examining alternative national borders* (Treaties, Indigenous languages, etc.) or mapping places familiar to students (like the school, neighbourhood, or city) in a way that emphasizes both the work being done in the community and the work that needs to be done for 2SLGBTQ+ people’s and BIPOC people’s safety and representation.
- *Co-creating a timeline of civil rights* (for Black, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQ+ rights) and critical moments in that history.
- *Critical literacy analysis of stories, monuments, cultural productions, textbooks* (including social studies books) , and so on. See resources section below for sample questions.
- *Have students develop lesson plans that incorporate 2SLGBTQ+ activism and social movements.* Challenge students to include queer and trans people/perspectives in all their assignments/lessons.
- *Equality assignment:* What does equality look like? Does it go beyond social inclusion? How can activism promote 2SLGBTQ+ equity? How do we measure it? What does queering offer beyond inclusion? These questions might also include class conversations about equity that challenge mere inclusion and look at changing conceptions of social normativities (e.g., see Guidelines for queering approaches), as well as conversations that include political literacy connecting lived realities to 2SLGBTQ+ equity work.
- *Student activism:* Have teacher candidates consider classroom strategies to engage students in participating in activism/advocacy work (e.g., curricular changes for 2SLGBTQ+ content; attending a rally; etc.).

## Resources

*An LGBTQ History Educators’ Guide* by Dr. Warren Blumenfeld  
[https://lgbtplushistorymonth.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/An LGBTQ History Educators Guide.pdf](https://lgbtplushistorymonth.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/An_LGBTQ_History_Educators_Guide.pdf)

Equaldex (equaldex.com) – A knowledge base tracking LGBT laws around the globe  
<https://www.equaldex.com>

Teaching LGBTQ History: Instructional Resources for California Educators, Students, & Families

<http://www.lgbtqhistory.org/lgbtq-educational-resources/>

University of Alberta Queer History App “Go Queer”

[https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ca.ualberta.goqueer&hl=en\\_CA](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ca.ualberta.goqueer&hl=en_CA)

Unheard Voices: Stories of LGBT History

<https://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/unheard-voices-stories-of-lgbt-history>

OK2BME Resources for Schools and Classrooms

<https://ok2bme.ca/resources/parents-educators/resources-for-schools-and-classrooms/>

“This is Not an Atlas” – a collection of counter-cartographies from around the world (open access)

<https://notanatlas.org/book/>

Queering the Map

<http://lucaslarochelle.com/queering-the-map>

Canadian Queer Archives and their national portrait gallery <https://arquives.ca>

*Prairie Fairies: A History of Queer Communities and People in Western Canada, 1930-1985* by Valerie Korinek (University of Toronto Press)

OutNorth

<https://arquives.ca/latest-news/out-north>

*Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada* by Tom Warner (University of Toronto Press)

*The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation* by Gary Kinsman & Patrizia Gentile (UBC Press)

UVIC Transgender Archives

<https://www.uvic.ca/transgenderarchives/index.php>

University of Saskatchewan Library and Archival Resources: Sexual and Gender Diversity

<https://libguides.usask.ca/sexual-gender-diversity/>

Canadian Queer History Timeline

<https://www.queerevents.ca/queer-history/canadian-history-timeline>

*Becoming Visible: A Reader in Gay and Lesbian History for High School and College* by Kevin Jennings (Ed.) (Alyson Books)

*Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution (2nd edition)* by Susan Stryker (Seal Press)

*Introduction to Transgender Studies* by Ardel Haefele-Thomas, with the participation of Thatcher Combs

*Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality* by Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang (Eds.) (University of Illinois Press)

Two-Spirits: Map of Gender Diverse Cultures

[https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/content/two-spirits\\_map-html/](https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/content/two-spirits_map-html/)

Video: Queeroes: The People who Made LGBTQ+ History

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fihLL73DvIw>

## References

Block, C. R. (2019). Educator affect: LGBTQ in social studies curriculum. *Critical Questions in Education* 10(1), 1–16.

Blumenfeld, W. J. (n.d.). *An LGBTQ history educators' guide*.

[https://lgbtplushistorymonth.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/An\\_LGBTQ\\_History\\_Educators\\_Guide.pdf](https://lgbtplushistorymonth.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/An_LGBTQ_History_Educators_Guide.pdf)

Smith Crocco, M. (2002). Homophobic hallways: Is anyone listening? *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 30(2), 217–232. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2002.10473192>