

# Cheat Sheet to More Inclusive Language

One important caveat to the information below is that every person has their own preferences, so when in doubt, ask. But, for general public consumption, here are some good practices.

## Use 'Person First' Language

When speaking about people with disabilities, it is important to define them as a person and not their disability.

Instead of This	Try This
Deaf person	Person who is deaf
Epileptic	Person with epilepsy
Wheelchair bound/Confined to a wheelchair	Person who uses a wheelchair
Disabled Person	Person with a disability

It is never acceptable to use words like "crazy", "nuts", "retarded", "dumb", "defective", "normal/abnormal" when speaking about people with disabilities.

## De-Gender Your Language

A quick and easy adjustment to make is to de-gender your language. Avoid gendered terminology and make your language fit everybody.

Instead of This	Try This
He, she, her, and his	They, their
Husband, wife	Partner
Ladies and Gentlemen	Folks, Distinguished Guests
Men or Women	Everyone, Everybody
The Lady/Man in the red shirt	The person in the red shirt
Guys	Folks
Man-made	Machine-made, artificial
Businessman	Businessperson

## Stay Up to Date

Be careful to keep up to date on terminology. The use of outdated terminology can be offensive, so here are some things to consider.

- **2SLGBTQ+** is the commonly used acronym in Nova Scotia for 2 Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, communities.
- **African Nova Scotian** is the terminology commonly used by the provincial government and other Nova Scotian entities. Any 'N' word is highly unacceptable.

Keep in mind that you may hear “offensive” terms being used within a community. This is a form of linguistic appropriation or reclamation. Be mindful of this.

## Be careful with Identifiers

Instead of This	Try This
Foreigner	Newcomer
Foreign	International
Asian, African, European	If known, use specific country to avoid this qualifier and use Canadian or find other means of identifying.
Geriatric, Elderly, Senior	People over..., Older adult

## Learn where Common Phrases Come From

Many English “idiomatic phrases” are rooted in racism, ableism, and homophobia. Here are some phrases to avoid

Instead of This	Try This
Keep an eye on your email	Stay up to date on your emails
Turn a blind eye	Ignore
Low on the totem pole	Least important
Blacklist/Whitelist	Blocklist/Allowlist
Master bedroom/bathroom	Largest bedroom/bathroom
Crippled with fear	Overcome with fear

## Indigenous Related Language

- **Mi'kmaq** – This is a noun meaning “people” and is plural
  - *The Mi'kmaq have a rich history and culture.*
- **Mi'kmaw** – This is the singular.
  - *A Mi'kmaw came to visit me today.*
- **Indian** – Is a legal term, but should only be used as such when referencing specific legislation *The Indian Act* or *Indian Status* (which you could just say “status”)
- **Indigenous**
  - Inclusive term for those who see themselves as Indigenous
  - Always capitalize
  - Never use a possessive when referencing → “We stand in solidarity with our Indigenous neighbours” – “We stand in solidarity with the Indigenous People”
- **Aboriginal**
  - A legal term in the Canadian Constitution. Refers to Indian, Inuit, and Métis only.
  - Always capitalize
  - Never use possessives
- **L'nu (L'nuk)**
  - Term the Mi'kmaq use to describe themselves as Indigenous people. It means “the people.”
  - Government of Nova Scotia recently implemented the Office of L'nu Affairs
- Use the term “Reserve” and not “Reservation”
- Avoid using acronyms when speaking about important documents or Indigenous entities
  - UNDRIP → United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People
  - TRC → Truth and Reconciliation Commission

For more detailed information, visit University of Victoria's Inclusive Language Guide at: <https://www.uvic.ca/brand/story/style/inclusivity/index.php>