Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workplaces

Written by Mary Vaccaro and Jammy Lo

Acknowledgments:

Executive
Summary

Introduction & Context Setting:

This report presents the findings from the Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workplaces Project - a community-based, qualitative research project focused on developing a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of trans women working within feminist organizations across Canada. The goal of the project was to identify the challenges and structural barriers to trans feminine individuals' employment and leadership in the feminist non-profit sector, and to make recommendations as to how these issues may be addressed.

For the purposes of this report, we define feminist organizations as historically women-serving organizations whose mandate is centred on advocating for gender equity and/or providing direct services to women (inclusive of cis and trans).

The primary objective of this research project was to learn directly from the perspectives and experiences of trans women who are employed in (or seeking employment in) feminist organizations across Canada. Building from their experiences, this report focuses on generating practical recommendations aimed at fostering inclusion for trans feminine women employed in the feminist non-profit sector.

Despite the alignment of trans rights with feminist goals, there is a lack of trans women employed within feminist organizations. While over 100 Canadian feminist organizations have publicly advocated for trans inclusive feminism and condemned trans-exclusionary rhetoric,[1] trans women remain largely unrepresented in these organizations, especially in leadership roles.

Existing research reveals that trans women face substantial barriers to employment and fair compensation.

For instance, in a survey conducted by the Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Secretariat between 2020 and 2021, **30% of trans women** reported being denied employment due to their gender.[2] Additionally, according to a 2019 survey of trans and non-binary people conducted by Trans PULSE Canada, **half of the respondents aged 25 and older had a personal income of less than $30,000 per year**.[3]

This study was launched as the first of its kind in Canada to address a critical gap in research regarding the employment experiences of trans women in feminist organizations. It aims to fill a knowledge gap by exploring the career paths of trans women in the feminist sector, documenting their experiences with systemic discrimination, and providing recommendations for creating more inclusive feminist workplaces.

About the Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workplaces Project:

The Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workplaces (TFIW) Project was developed to understand and combat transmisogyny within the feminist and gender equity sectors. This initiative, supported by the Fund for Gender Equality Grants Fund at Toronto Foundation, is a collaborative effort between the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF), West Coast LEAF, the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS), and Wisdom2Action.

The TFIW project aims to challenge transphobia and promote trans inclusion in the feminist sector, within a broader climate of increasing anti-trans discourse and action. The focus of this work was to address the notable absence of trans feminine voices in leadership and staff positions within feminist organizations, despite trans feminine people's work being central to historical and contemporary intersectional feminist activism.

To better understand this gap, we conducted a community-based, qualitative research study. The primary objectives of this project were to:

1. Identify the challenges and structural barriers to trans feminine individuals' employment and leadership in gender equity seeking organizations and;

2. Recommend potential paths forward for these organizations to redress issues of trans exclusion in feminist workplaces based on lived experience perspectives.

The research was guided by an intersectional feminist framework, which recognizes that trans women's experiences are shaped by multiple, intersecting identities such as (but not limited to) race, Indigeneity, disability, and class. This framework was used to ensure the research moved beyond a single-issue view of trans inclusion and made visible the importance of building intersectional solidarity within feminist movements and organizations.

Research Approach and Methodology:

The research was designed as a community-based participatory project, with trans women involved in every stage, from shaping the objectives to analyzing the findings. This approach was chosen to ensure the research was responsive to community needs and focused on generating knowledge for social change.

A key principle was participatory knowledge creation, where all participants were compensated for their time and involvement. Participant involvement consisted of semi-structured interviews, optional transcript reviews, and an optional virtual analysis workshop.

The project received ethical clearance from the Community Research Ethics Office (CREO).

Participant Demographics and Study Limitations:

Twenty trans women participated in this project. Participants occupied a range of professional roles within the feminist sector, including (but not limited to) consultants, social workers, executive directors, lawyers, peer workers and front-line service providers.

The participants' ages ranged from women in their twenties to those in their forties. Participants had a range of racial and ethnic identities and educational backgrounds.

Most participants had been employed within the feminist sector for ten years or less. As such, the research did not fully capture the historical evolution of trans inclusion in these organizations. Only one participant was actively seeking employment, limiting the perspectives from those who had not yet secured a position working within a feminist organization.

While the study had broad geographical representation across Canada, there was a notable lack of participants from Eastern and Northern Canada.

Findings:

The report is organized around ten central themes that emerged throughout our conversations with trans women about their experiences of employment (or seeking employment) within feminist organizations. Within the report, participants' narratives are used to further explore these themes.

At the end of each section of this report, you will find the TFIW Project's recommendations – **Calls to Action** as to how feminist organizations can action trans inclusion. The Calls to Action are reproduced at the end of the report, organized thematically and with concrete tips as to how to implement them. The last document in this report is a **self-guided audit tool**, which distills the Calls to Action down to a checklist form.

We sincerely hope that the Calls to Action and the accompanying self-guided audit tool will be useful for gender equity seeking organizations in their continued efforts to action trans inclusion. Please note that the suggestions we have provided below many of the Calls to Action are examples of how you can engage in trans feminine inclusion meaningfully. There is no one way to advance trans inclusion in feminist spaces. The Calls to Action and supplementary suggestions are both an ideal and a starting point – adapt them for your workplace as appropriate.

1. Seeking an Alignment of Values between Feminist Work and Trans Identities:

Many participants shared their desires to work in feminist organizations to contribute to work focused on advancing gender equity, engage in advocacy work, and provide direct support to their communities. However, as participants became more entrenched in their roles, a significant disconnect often emerged for many participants between their expectations and the reality of the organizational culture in feminist non-profit organizations.

> **"Being able to work within an organization that was somewhat compatible with my values"**

2. Recognizing Women's Intersecting Identities:

> **"It's not only about my gender, what about my disabilities or my status as a refugee?"**

Participants occupied a range of intersecting identities, but many participants shared feeling that feminist organizations tended to solely focus on their trans identity. Within this study, participants highlighted that this tendency to focus only on their trans identity not only erased the complexity of who they are, but also prevented them from bringing the full scope of their lived experiences to their work.

3. Contending with Tenuous Inclusion:

Almost all participants reported that despite enjoying their current jobs, their sense of inclusion within feminist organizations felt unstable and conditional on a variety of factors. They felt their acceptance was tenuous, not guaranteed, and could easily change with shifts in leadership or the broader political climate relating to trans inclusion.

The participants also felt that their organizations' commitments to feminism were often superficial and didn't address the practical realities of their lives. For example, they noted a lack of gender-affirming healthcare in benefits packages and a failure to create truly flexible and supportive work environments.

"I feel like my acceptance within feminist spaces is much more tenuous than it would be in other places."

4. Working Without Other Trans Women:

"I tend to have an expectation that I will be the only person working there that is a trans woman."

Most of the participants reported that they were the only trans woman employed in their organization, which led to feelings of isolation and being tokenized.

Participants in this study highlighted that feminist organizations need to not only hire more trans women, but also ensure trans women are represented in leadership, as this has a direct and positive impact on organizational culture and the well-being of trans feminine employees.

5. Negotiating the Extra Labour of Being Trans in Feminist Workspaces:

Almost all participants reported facing an "extra ask" in their work, which involved taking on additional, often unpaid, labour directly related to their identity as trans women.

This included being responsible for providing all trans-specific client support, leading equity, diversity and inclusion training, and sitting on various committees (both internal to the organization and in the broader community). Many felt these requests were tokenistic and unfulfilling, as they rarely led to meaningful systemic change or changes in organizational policy.

"Opportunities are offered to me, but in ways that seem pretty unfulfilling or unspecified."

6. Limited Opportunities for Promotion and Career Advancement:

"Don't just confine us to low level positions."

Most of the participants in this study held frontline positions, with only two in leadership roles, highlighting a significant lack of trans women in positions of power.

Participants made several recommendations to address this issue. These included creating clear pathways for trans women to move into leadership roles by investing in mentorship and professional development programs. Participants also stressed the need for organizations to value lived experience as much as formal education and to address the systemic discrimination that confines trans women to lower-level positions within organizations.

7. Transmisogyny in Feminist Workspaces:

Women who participated in this study reported experiencing various forms of transphobia and transmisogyny in feminist workplaces, ranging from explicit exclusion to more subtle microaggressions. Participants revealed how transmisogyny is compounded by other forms of discrimination, such as racism and ableism.

The pervasive nature of these experiences points to an urgent need for these organizations to address the complex ways transphobia and other systemic inequities manifest within feminist organizations.

"I've often felt like I'm being perceived as kind of an agitator, or I am kind of aggressive."

8. Trans Stigma from Co-Workers:

"I can sense that they're kind of tiptoeing around me and I'm like, I just want to bring everybody's shoulders down"

Most participants in the study shared instances of experiencing transphobia and stigma from their co-workers within feminist organizations.

While some of these interactions were overtly exclusionary and hostile, many were described as well-intentioned yet clumsy attempts at being inclusive. These interactions often made trans women feel Othered and as if they were constantly under scrutiny, with coworkers seemingly afraid of saying or doing the wrong thing.

The findings highlight the critical need for feminist organizations to actively address the subtle and overt ways transphobia manifests among co-workers to create truly inclusive feminist workplaces.

9. Navigating Transphobia from Service Users:

Several participants shared experiences of navigating transphobia directly from the people they served. Many of the women we interviewed spoke about this being a difficult aspect of their work, leading to distress and feelings of being unwelcome within the organization.

Several participants also highlighted how their trans identity was an asset in their frontline work, noting that seeing a trans staff member helped many trans clients build trust and rapport. This helped create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for trans women who access feminist organizations for support and services.

"They kind of make a big deal about it. And I feel bad because it's like, I don't want to make you feel unsafe or upset because of my presence. I'm just trying to do my job."

10. The Importance of Finding Solidarity and Networks:

"Trans femme individuals gather and connect for safety."

Participants living and working in urban centres tended to have more meaningful and robust support systems, while participants in rural locations had far less access to these connections. Our participants consistently emphasized that having connections to other trans women working in feminist organizations was important and fostered a sense of community.

Conclusion

The **Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workplaces Project** is the first project of its kind to shed light on the experiences of trans women working in Canadian feminist organizations.

Our findings reveal a significant gap between the publicly stated values of feminist organizations and the daily reality for many trans feminine employees. The women in this study, who are deeply committed to social justice, often feel that their inclusion in feminist organizations and feminist movements is both conditional and tenuous. They shared openly about a range of challenges they face in their daily work, including transmisogyny, transphobia, and being expected to take on "extra labor" related to their identity. Many of the participants we spoke to were the only trans women hired in their organization, leading to feelings of isolation and added responsibility for advancing trans feminine inclusion. As a result, many participants in this study felt a strong need to build networks and find solidarity with other trans women working in the feminist sector.

Ultimately, the report demonstrates that for feminist organizations to fully achieve their mission of gender equality, they must authentically embody trans inclusive values. The women who contributed to this project are not only committed to their work in the feminist sector but are also providing a clear roadmap for how to strengthen the feminist movement and its organizations from a trans inclusive perspective. **Feminist organizations now have the opportunity to act on the Calls to Action and to create a future where feminist organizations are truly inclusive and safe spaces for trans women.**

Calls to Action:

At the end of each interview, participants were invited to provide **Calls to Action** for feminist organizations, their leadership, and their co-workers.

These recommendations reveal a deep desire for a shift away from performative inclusivity towards genuine, structural change within feminist organizations. Recommendations generated by participants highlight the need for organizations to embed trans feminine inclusion into their workplace culture, policies, and practices in a way that is meaningful, transformative and led by trans feminine people.

The recommendations provided by the participants in this project offer a clear roadmap for building truly inclusive and equitable feminist spaces where trans women can make meaningful contributions to the organizations they work in.

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Introduction:
A note from LEAF, West Coast LEAF, CAEFS, and Wisdom2Action:

Over the past two years and with the support of the Fund for Gender Equality, an organizing group of feminist, gender equity seeking, and historically women-serving organizations – namely LEAF, West Coast LEAF, and the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS), in partnership with Wisdom2Action – has been coordinating efforts to unpack the legacy and current impacts of transphobia and transmisogyny within the feminist and gender equity seeking sectors.

We have worked to:

- ↳ Challenge transphobia and transmisogyny within our organizations and sector;

- ↳ Collaborate with other feminist and gender equity seeking organizations to better serve, include, and advocate for trans and non-binary people; and

- ↳ Support each other in the current environment of escalating and organized trans hate.

We are motivated by questions of how to make gender equity seeking organizations such as ours more inclusive for trans women.

As we engaged in efforts to increase trans inclusion in feminist work, it was made plain to us that trans feminine individuals were largely absent from organizational staff and leadership in feminist and gender equity seeking organizations. Given the fact that trans feminine people have been at the centre of the historical and ongoing transphobia in feminist spheres, we believed that the absence of trans feminine voices at the table was an issue that merited focused attention.

To bring the perspectives of trans feminine people who work in feminist workplaces to the forefront of these conversations, we launched the **Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workplaces (TFIW) Project**, a community-based and qualitative research project. The objectives of this research project were to:

1. Identify the challenges and structural barriers to trans feminine individuals' employment and leadership in the feminist non-profit sector and;

2. Recommend potential paths forward for gender equity seeking organizations to redress the issues of trans exclusion in feminist workplaces based on lived experience perspectives.

We hired researchers, Jammy Lo and Dr. Mary Vaccaro, to undertake the first part of this work, and to contribute to the development of recommendations. Using qualitative semi-structured interviews, Ms. Lo and Dr. Vaccaro gathered detailed information regarding trans feminine perspectives on barriers to meaningful employment in the feminist sector.

This report, therefore, presents Dr. Vaccaro and Ms. Lo's findings from a community-based, qualitative research project focused on developing a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of trans women working within (or wishing to work within) feminist organizations across Canada.

At the end of each section of this report, you will find the TFIW Project's recommendations – **Calls to Action** as to how feminist organizations can action trans inclusion. The Calls to Action are reproduced at the end of the report, organized thematically and with concrete tips as to how to implement them. The last document in this report is a **self-guided audit tool**, which distills the Calls to Action down to a checklist form.

We sincerely hope that the Calls to Action and the accompanying self-guided audit tool will be useful for gender equity seeking organizations in their continued efforts to action trans inclusion. Please note that the suggestions we have provided below many of the Calls to Action are examples of how you can engage in trans feminine inclusion meaningfully. They are meant to be illustrations of what may be possible, rather than prescriptions of what must be done. They may not be suited to your workplace environment, or you may not have the resources to implement them. They may not

align with employment and labour laws relevant to your jurisdiction and workplace environment (for example, intentionally hiring and recruiting trans women may not be permissible in all jurisdictions). **There is no one way to advance trans inclusion in feminist spaces. The Calls to Action and supplementary suggestions are both an ideal and a starting point – adapt them for your workplace as appropriate.**

Context Setting:

Feminist non-profit and community-based organizations across Canada have a long history of working towards gender equality and against gender-based violence, misogyny, and oppression through advocacy, developing responsive programs, and influencing policy change at all levels of government.

For the purposes of this report, we define feminist organizations as historically women-serving organizations whose mandate is centred on advocating for gender equity and/or providing direct services to women (inclusive of cis and trans) and their children.

Across Canada and beyond, we are seeing an increase in hate and violence towards trans communities. As we observe this rise in hate, anti-trans organizers and activists continue to use feminist rhetoric to organize against the rights of trans and gender diverse people – often calling for the exclusion of trans women from women-serving organizations and programming.

Importantly, the voices of trans women are often excluded from work focused on advancing gender equity, even when it is directly related to their own identities. For example, the "Rapport du Comité de sages sur l'identité de genre",[4] a report on gender identity commissioned by the Québec government to assist it in making informed decisions on gender identity-related issues, was drafted by a committee composed entirely of cisgender individuals.

Trans liberation is not a threat to gender equality and gender justice cannot be achieved without trans liberation. The increasingly hostile and hate-fueled rhetoric targeting trans communities has brought the issue of trans feminine inclusion to the forefront of feminist spaces. **This has revealed the need for more explicit trans feminine inclusion in feminist organizations.**

In 2021, over 100 feminist and allied organizations from across Canada, which represent tens of thousands of people, signed onto a statement calling for a feminist movement that is trans inclusive and rejects the dangerous and bigoted rhetoric and ideology espoused by Trans Exclusionary Radical 'Feminists' (TERFs) in Canada.[5]

Since 2021, the dismantling of trans rights has increased not only in Canada, but internationally.[6]

Feminist organizations are stronger when they adopt queer, intersectional, anti-racist, and trans inclusive frameworks that are in solidarity with Indigenous-led decolonization efforts – and ensure that their work, organizational policies, and program delivery include trans women. To do this work in a meaningful and ethical way, **trans women have an important role to play working within and leading feminist organizations.**

Despite increased advocacy from some feminist organizations about the important role that trans women play in intersectional feminist movements, very few trans women are employed within feminist non-profit and community-based organizations. Even fewer are in leadership positions.

This is the first pan-Canadian study that focuses on the experiences of trans women who work in feminist non-profit organizations.

While there are several studies that have focused on the experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ people and employment more broadly, there are very few examples of studies that focus on trans feminine people specifically.

Here is what we do know:

↪ 30% of trans women reported having been denied employment opportunities due to their gender in a 2020-2021 Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Secretariat survey.[7]

↪ In a Trans PULSE Canada survey, despite being highly educated, half of the trans and non-binary people aged 25 and older reported a personal income of less than $30,000/year.[8]

↪ Research from the United States shows that when trans women do find employment, they are often not adequately compensated for the work they do. A 2021 study reported that trans women were paid 60 cents for every $1 earned by other workers doing similar work.[9]

↪ In an Ontario Trans PULSE survey, 28% of respondents reported that they were either fired because they were trans or believed they may have been fired as a result of their trans identity. Further, 50% of respondents were turned down for a job or suspected they were turned down for a job because they were trans.[10]

↪ After decades of work on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the workplace, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities are still largely underrepresented at leadership levels in organizations (both for profit and non-profit) across Canada - particularly those who are trans, non-binary, Black, Indigenous, racialized, and disabled.[11]

↪ There are systemic barriers that limit the inclusion of trans people within the organizations they work in. For example, 30% of openly 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Canada leave their workplaces because they feel unwelcome or unsupported by management.[12]

In our extensive review of the literature, we could not find any examples of qualitative studies that focus on the experiences of trans women who work in feminist organizations in Canada. As a result of this gap in literature, here is what we do not know:

↪ We do not know the pathways that trans women take to gaining employment in feminist organizations, including the barriers and roadblocks that prevent employment and the facilitators of meaningful experiences of employment.

↪ We do not know the extent to which trans women working in feminist organizations face systemic discrimination, transphobia, transmisogyny and trans stigma. And therefore, it is difficult to make recommendations for how to make feminist spaces more trans inclusive.

↪ We do not know the organizational policies and practices used in feminist organizations that are helping to foster a more trans inclusive workspace.

↪ We do not have a list of recommendations for improving organizational policy and practices in feminist organizations that are generated from the perspectives, knowledges and lived experiences of trans women working in the feminist sector.

To respond to this substantive gap in knowledge, the **Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workplaces Project** was initiated to improve the work conditions of trans women working in feminist organizations and create a pathway towards more trans inclusive feminist organizations, generated from lived experience perspectives.

Our Research Approach:

This section outlines the approach we used to develop and conduct the research aspect of the TFIW Project.

We reflect on situating our work within an intersectional feminist theoretical framework, our methodological commitment to employing a community-based and participatory approach, our approach to qualitative interviewing, and our participatory analytical process. We also discuss the process of obtaining research ethics clearance from the Community Ethics Research Office, as well as the study limitations.

Theoretical Framework: Intersectional Feminism

Kimberlé Crenshaw's work on "intersectionality" developed an analytical framework for understanding how aspects of social and political identities combine, moving us away from single-issue feminism.[13]

By using this theoretical framework, our research sought to make visible the ways that trans women's identities are diverse and textured. Their relationships to power and systems of marginalization will differ based on their race, Indigeneity, gender expression, queerness, (dis)ability, age, class, ability, criminality, citizenship status, and more. **It is not only their trans identity, but also their multiple, intersecting identities that impact and shape their experiences.**

Intersectional feminist thought can help us to think critically about identity and power structures, in a way that allows us to build connections between social justice movements. By building connections among communities working against social injustice, intersectional feminism can offer a starting place for building solidarity in our work towards social change.[14]

Hill Collins & Bilge describe an intersectional feminist framework as an "analytical, practical and creative tool for the merger of everyday life, social justice activism and research."[15] Drawing on intersectionality as a tool in our research allowed us to think critically about women's intersecting identities, elevate lived experience as knowledge, and generate recommendations for social change from a place of solidarity.

Methodological Approach: Community-based Participatory Research

The Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workplaces Project is grounded in a commitment to community-based and participatory research principles. Our approach to community-based research was reflected by using the following principles to guide our work:

- ‣ **Trans Women's Involvement at Every Stage of the Research:** This research was conducted by and in collaboration with trans women. Trans women were involved as decision makers at all phases and stages of the research process and shaped the project's objectives and outputs. Importantly, all the participants had an opportunity to participate in data analysis and shape the recommendations put forward in this report.

- ‣ **Responsive to Community Needs:** This project directly responds to a gap in knowledge and the need to generate knowledge from the lived experience perspectives of trans women. The intention of this project is not to generate research for research's sake - but rather to respond to a community-identified issue – in a way that centres lived experience and existing community knowledge.

- ‣ **Participatory Knowledge Creation:** Community-based research strives to find pathways to participatory knowledge creation that are responsive to the complicated barriers of overburdened and under-resourced communities. We undertook several steps to prioritize a low barrier approach to participatory knowledge creation. Importantly, participants were compensated for all of their involvement in this project.

- ‣ **Change Oriented:** The ultimate objective of community-based research is to generate knowledge that has social change-oriented objectives. Throughout this project we sought to generate pragmatic and practicable recommendations - Calls to Action - for improving organizational policy and practices within feminist organizations and working towards creating more trans inclusive workplaces.

The Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workplaces project was developed in direct response to a lack of co-produced knowledge that elevated the perspectives of trans feminine women working within feminist organizations. In doing so, our project aimed to highlight the perspectives and expertise of women working within feminist workspaces including their pathways to employment, their experiences of feminist workplaces and their recommendations for improving trans inclusion.

Researcher Positionality:

The research was guided by organizational leadership at LEAF, as well as partner organizations, but led by two community-based researchers who have varying connections to the work and to the communities being researched.

Aligned with our commitment to community-based research principles, it is important to make our positionality as researchers visible.

Jammy Lo: Jammy Lo is a community-based researcher, a harm reduction worker and a community advocate located in Hamilton, ON. She identifies as a Black, trans woman who has been working in feminist organizations since 2022.

Mary Vaccaro: Mary Vaccaro is a community-ty-based researcher, a consultant for feminist non-profit organizations and faculty member at McMaster University's School of Social Work. She identifies as a White, cis woman who has been working in feminist organizations since 2012.

Ethics:

This project received ethical clearance from the Community Research Ethics Office (CREO) in Waterloo, Ontario (Project #408).

Participant Recruitment:

A recruitment email script was created and sent out to various networks, organizations and individuals who might be interested in participating, or sharing information about the study within their own networks.

Participants were asked to help recruit other participants from their social networks. This approach is called snowball sampling and is commonly used when researching with communities that can be difficult to reach.

Finally, as we were nearing the completion of the data collection phase, we identified regions where we were seeking additional representation and began reaching out to organizations serving these regions (Northwest Territories, Yukon, Nunavut, Eastern Canada and Quebec).

Methods for Data Collection:

Our methods for data collection included semi-structured qualitative interviews, transcript review by all participants and a participatory analysis workshop.

Semi Structured Qualitative Interviews:

We completed twenty semi-structured qualitative interviews with participants using Zoom. Both Jammy and Mary were present during the interviews, but Jammy led the questions and conversation.

The interviews began with a short demographic questionnaire which asked questions about age, geographical location, ethnicity, Indigeneity, source of income, housing status, formal education and length of time employed within feminist workspaces.

The interview questions were broken down into three overarching themes including: context setting, experiences in the workplace and recommendations for trans inclusion in feminist workplaces.

‣ **Context Setting:** These questions were focused on getting to know the participant, including gaining a better understanding of the work they do within their community, their current role within a feminist organization, and past roles they have held. We also asked what led to their interest in working within feminist organizations, and how they have found the process of seeking employment within the feminist sector.

‣ **Experiences in the Workplace:** These questions were focused on better understanding the experiences of working or seeking employment in the feminist sector. This included questions about organizational culture, policies and procedures that foster trans inclusion, experiences of transphobia, transmisogyny and trans stigma in their work and where participants seek support in their workplace.

‣ **Recommendations:** Each of the interviews concluded by asking participants to generate a series of recommendations for feminist organizations, for leaders of feminist organizations and for co-workers working within feminist organizations, all directly relating to trans feminine inclusion.

Participatory Transcript Review:

Within seven days following the interview, the research team generated a transcript of the interview. This was sent back to the participants for their review, edits and approval.

All participants had an opportunity to directly review and edit the transcript of our conversation. This ensured participants had complete control over the ways their story was authored and what might be included in the report and used for future advocacy. Given the sensitive nature of this research, the transcript review also offered an opportunity for participants to omit anything they felt could identify them to their employer or the public.

All twenty participants reviewed their transcripts prior to the researchers beginning the report writing.

Participatory Analysis Workshop:

Following the completion of all the interviews, we hosted a virtual participatory analysis workshop inviting the participants and lead organizations together for an hour and a half virtual session. Using virtual technologies including Miro Boards, Zoom and Google Documents, we held an interactive 90-minute workshop that focused on engaging in participatory data analysis.

The purpose of the participatory analysis workshop was to:

‣ Bring participants together to learn more about the preliminary analysis;

‣ Discuss the emerging themes to present context and a more nuanced understanding;

- ‣ Develop recommendations based on the emerging findings about what a trans inclusive feminist organization would be like.

Fourteen out of the twenty participants attended the virtual participatory analysis workshop, along with representation from community partner organizations.

Honoraria:

At each stage of participation, an honorarium was provided to participants. Participants received the honorarium via e-transfer from LEAF.

Qualitative Interview	$100.00
Transcript Review	$50.00
Participatory Analysis Workshop	$100.00

Study Limitations:

While our project makes an important contribution to developing knowledge on the experiences of trans women working within feminist organizations, there are several limitations that are important to note and reflect on:

Despite our best efforts to include representation from every province and territory, we fell short of this goal. **We particularly note the lack of representation of participants from Eastern and Northern Canada.**

While only half of our participants identified as White (10/20), we had limited engagement from Indigenous trans and Two-Spirit women, with **only 2 of our 20 participants identifying as Indigenous.**

This study lacked participation from trans women who had long histories of working within feminist organizations. Many of the participants who shared their stories with us were relatively new to working within feminist organizations and this contributed to a lack of data that depicted the ways trans inclusion in feminist organizations has changed and shifted overtime.

While our study was open to including the perspectives of women who were seeking employment in the feminist sector, as well as those employed within it, **we only spoke to one woman who was seeking employment in the feminist sector but who, at the time of the research, had yet to find employment.** Hearing the perspectives of women who had not been able to gain employment in the feminist sector would have added important nuance and stories to this project.

Upon reflection, **we also believe our virtual participatory analysis workshop would have been strengthened if it was longer and allowed for more time for engagement and dialogue.**

About the Women who Participated:

The following section shares information about the twenty women who participated in the **Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workplaces Project.**

Given the relatively small community of trans women working in feminist organizations, the demographic data is presented in an aggregated form to further protect the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. This means that some data points (geographical location and role in feminist workplaces) are presented separately from other demographic data to ensure participants are not identifiable.

All of the women who participated in this project identified as trans women and were either working in, or had worked in feminist non-profit organizations. One participant had not yet been able to find formal employment. However, she had a long history of volunteer work and community organizing in the feminist sector.

Demographic Information:

Pseudonym:	Age:	Ethnicity:	First time working in feminist workplaces:
Hunter	46 years old	Métis	2020
Jelena	30 years old	White	2016
Laura	41 years old	Chinese	2008
Port	31 years old	White	2017
Lo	30 years old	White	2019
Mango	26 years old	White	2024
Tina	34 years old	White	2014
Sarah	39 years old	White	2014
Liza	33 years old	Hispanic	2021
Olivia	28 years old	White	2021
Gessie	48 years old	White	2022
Kiki	21 years old	Black African	2023
Belle	36 years old	Mixed race	2021
Zoey	Twenty's	South East Asian	2021
Lena	29 years old	Arabic	2017
QT	44 years old	First Nations	2003
Galactor	38 years old	White	2022
Beatrice	29 years old	Black (Jamaican)	2022
Izabella	32 years old	Black African	2020
Stephanie	42 years old	White	Seeking employment

Geographical Location of Participants:

While we have explicitly chosen not to include the cities that participants lived in, it is important to note that we had representation from both urban and rural settings.

British Columbia	7
Ontario	4
Quebec	2
Prince Edward Island	2
Manitoba	2
Yukon Territories	2
Alberta	1

Workplace Roles & Responsibilities:

To further protect participant confidentiality, we will not be listing the roles of participants alongside their pseudonym or demographic data. However, it is of critical importance to note the breadth of roles that the participants in this study had relating to their involvement in feminist workplaces.

❀ Consultant

❀ Community-based Researcher

❀ Clinical Researcher

❀ Clinical Social Worker

❀ Executive Director of feminist non-profit organization

❀ Policy Advocate

❀ Gender Based Violence Counselor

❀ Gender Based Shelter Worker

❀ Harm Reduction Worker

❀ Community Health Centre - Peer Worker

❀ Arts Based Programming Coordinator

❀ Peer Support Worker

❀ Community Health Navigator

❀ Child Care Advocate

❀ Lawyer

Key Findings: Trans Women's Experiences in Feminist Workplaces

The findings section is organized around ten key findings that emerged throughout the interviews about the experiences of trans women navigating feminist workplaces. While the interviews covered a range of topics, experiences, and tensions, these ten findings were the most recurring throughout the interviews.

Within each section, you will find narratives from trans women about their experiences navigating feminist workplaces as well as pragmatic actions that organizations can take to create more trans inclusive feminist workplaces, generated from lived experience perspectives.

The ten findings explored include:

1. Seeking an Alignment of Values between Feminist Work and Trans Identities

2. Recognizing Women's Intersecting Identities

3. Contending with Tenuous Inclusion

4. Working Without Other Trans Women

5. Negotiating the Extra Labour of Being Trans in Feminist Workspaces

6. Limited Opportunities for Promotion and Career Advancement

7. Transmisogyny in Feminist Workspaces

8. Trans Stigma from Co-Workers

9. Navigating Transphobia from Service Users

10. The Importance of Finding Solidarity and Networks

1. Seeking an Alignment of Values between Feminist Work and Trans Identities:

"Being able to work within an organization that was somewhat compatible with my values"

We began each interview by asking participants about what led them to seek employment in the feminist sector. **Most participants were drawn to seeking employment within feminist organizations because of a perceived alignment between their personal values and the organizational mission.**

These stories included wanting to find ways of working towards gender equity (including bringing trans feminine perspectives into services and spaces historically designed for cis women), participating in advocacy, supporting the communities they are a part of and building meaningful pathways for care and mutual aid. For some participants, it was of vital importance to work in spaces that did not include cis men because of negative past experiences.

What emerged, however, throughout the interviews was that, for many participants, as they became engaged with the work - they noticed a deep disconnect between their own values and the work of feminist organizations.

For example, Belle shared that she got involved in feminist work because of her own experience of injustice and her belief that these organizations were working to combat social injustice:

> "I got started working in gender-based violence work by joining the board of (Sexual Assault Centre), because of some of my own personal experiences. What got me into doing the work is it was kind of like a combination of self-preservation and also being appalled at the injustice of the situation."

However, when reflecting on the work, Belle shared challenges with being the only trans woman employed within her organization and navigating working in an organizational culture that felt 'isolating.'

For some participants, including Sarah, the idea that feminist organizations were working towards social justice in their work was what originally drew her to the work.

> "It's just like finding those commonalities and being like, 'Hey, our oppression, it's all connected'. It's all rooted in the same crap. It's all rooted in white supremacy at the end of the day, and we need to work on that collectively as, so I would say community and just trying to just help build community is probably the thing that helps give me strength to do this work."

Throughout Sarah's interview, she reflected on the importance of finding solidarity among social justice movements and making connections between struggles for social justice. And yet, Sarah also described moments where her inclusion in feminist

spaces was contested and where she experienced transmisogyny and exclusion from the people she was working alongside in the movement.

Both Port and Zoey described working in feminist workspaces because as young, trans women, these organizations were the ones that were open to hiring them. For example, Zoey shared:

> "Well, for me initially it was just practical survival and being able to work within, well, just being able to work with something that A.) was compatible with my values and B.) would allow me to flee my parents' home. So typical trans, risk of homelessness story."

Building on this idea, Port shared:

> "I think in a practical sense, those were the groups that were willing to employ me when I got my start working."

Reflecting on her own journey to the feminist sector, Olivia shares that she has identified as a feminist for many years, and seeking employment within this sector aligned with her own desires of working in ways that promoted gender equity:

> "I've considered myself a feminist for many years, including before I came out as trans. But I think when I came out as trans, it was in some ways kind of self-serving. I wanted to promote gender equity in order to make social circumstances better for myself. I also thought and still think that feminist workspaces are more likely to be trans inclusive than maybe other spaces. So it seemed like a good sector of particularly the legal industry, which is where I'm primarily involved in, to be a part of. And I just find the work exciting. It's interesting."

Throughout the interviews, all of the participants shared their unique pathways to employment in feminist workplaces and many of these stories were underscored by a perceived values-based alignment. However, as the interviews continued, participants shared candidly and openly about the breadth of negative experiences that they were subjected to in workplaces that they originally felt aligned with their values.

Calls to Action: Practical Steps for Advancing Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workspaces

- ✿ Be connected to, and listen to the communities you are serving.
- ✿ Move past theorizing about inclusivity, and put it into practice.
- ✿ Build solidarity and connections across social justice movements.
- ✿ Within your own organization, find solidarity in a shared purpose and goal.

2. Recognizing Women's Intersecting Identities:

"It's not only about my gender, what about my disabilities or my status as a refugee?"

The opening question in the interview was asking participants to tell us a bit about who they are, and the work they do in the community. **Every interview began with participants sharing their multi-layered and intersecting identities and the cool, complicated and vitally important work they are leading in the communities they are a part of.**

At the same time, we heard that participants were deeply troubled about the ways that feminist organizations heavily weighted and centred participants' work around their trans identity, in ways that both reduce the trans experience to a monolith and limit participants' ability to share the other lenses and analytical frameworks that inform their work within feminist organizations.

Participants in this study identified as Indigenous women and elders, Refugees and newcomers, Black, Latina and Asian women, disabled women, parents, sex workers and harm reductionists, among other identities. Sharing these identities and other interesting parts of their life has troubled the ways that feminist organizations have 'pigeonholed' them into one monolithic identity, erasing the vastness of the trans feminine experience, and silencing these women from bringing their other identities into the workplace.

Throughout the interviews with participants, it became clear that there was a desire to be able to use their intersecting identities in their work - but often felt that their identity and lived experience was reduced to their gender identity.

For example, Belle shares the ways her multiple identities impact the lens she brings to her daily work in feminist workplaces, describing her multiple and intersecting identities as her "superpower" by sharing:

> "I'm a mixed race, neurodiverse, trans woman, diagnosed with a learning disability. So generally I think I just kind of live between worlds because yeah, with most of my identities, they're always kind of pegged as being somewhere in between, even though I don't necessarily see it that way. And so I have worked my whole life probably harder than others, but also I don't view it as a weakness or a crutch. I view it as a superpower."

When Litza reflected on her intersecting identities as a refugee, Spanish speaker, and trans woman, she shared the discrimination she has faced within the workplace and in her daily life because of occupying multiple marginalized identities:

"It's not only in terms of gender, I've been discriminated against because of disabilities or my status as well as a refugee. I've been denied healthcare services because of my status or in some cases because they don't feel comfortable to treat me as a transgender fellow."

Building on this, Kiki reflected on feeling isolated in her identity as both a Black woman, and a trans woman in the small town that she lives in:

"I feel like as a Black person doing this work that you wouldn't find a lot of people doing, it really kind of helps take space in a way. And then there's also the intersection of being trans. So far I'm the only trans Black woman I know in [her City], which is crazy. And that's a very heavy identity to hold given the history of queer and the marginalized identities in North America. So simply existing is doing a lot."

For Kiki, her experience of transphobia and misogyny were compounded by her experiences of anti-Black racism.

When Port was asked to consider the organizational culture she worked in, she questioned the ways an intersectional feminist perspective rarely influences the day-to-day work and organizational culture by sharing:

"I guess I expected the focus on an intersectional approach to identity to also translate into how we conducted ourselves interpersonally, and was often kind of disappointed by that not being the case."

Tina reflected on the harm that feminist organizations do to trans communities when they "treat trans identities as if they are a monolith." Building on this idea, she troubles the current practices of feminist and other social justice organizations who seek to reduce communities' intersecting identities to a set of identity markers by sharing:

"If I was setting up an organizational structure or something, I feel like I wouldn't want to use dedicated workshop time on these things…. these inclusion workshops (*trans inclusion, anti-racism*) treat all these different identity markers as a monolith, and that's not a reality. So I am talking from a bit of a place of privilege here but not thinking of transness as a monolith, not even thinking about trans women as a monolith, but seeing us as people."

While participants in this study brought a wealth of experiences to their work within feminist organizations, and a range of intersecting identities, they often felt constrained by the organizations' focus on
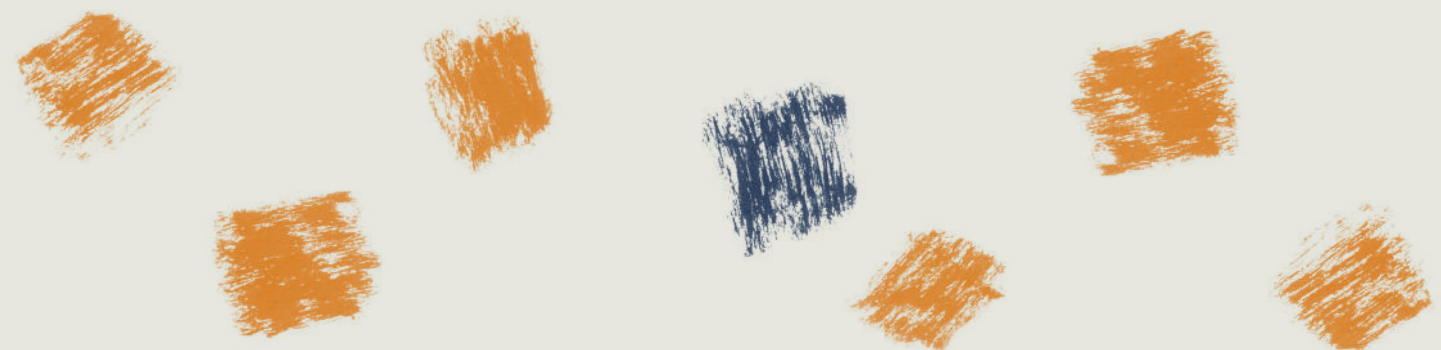
their trans identity. For many participants in this study, the organization's tendency to center their trans identity above all else limited their ability to integrate their multifaceted experiences and identities in the work they were doing in feminist organizations.

Calls to Action: Practical Steps for Advancing Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workspaces

- ✿ Put intersectional feminist theory into practice by responding to workers' intersecting identities.

- ✿ Incorporate Black feminist perspectives into feminist advocacy.

- ✿ Ensure that the work that you are suggesting your trans fem employee or co-worker take on is not only and always work pertaining to trans people.

3. Contending with Tenuous Inclusion:

"I feel like my acceptance within feminist spaces is much more tenuous than it would be in other places."

While almost all of the participants (17/20) reported currently enjoying their work and working in workspaces that were relatively inclusive, their experiences in past workplaces, and an increasingly hostile socio-political climate towards trans feminine women reminded them that their inclusion in feminist organizations was unstable and not guaranteed.

Participants described a feeling of relative inclusion, whereby they were working in organizations that were generally accepting of trans women, but not designed for or by trans women - and this led to their feelings of inclusion being described as fleeting, tenuous and not guaranteed.

For example, when reflecting on her acceptance within feminist spaces, Laura shared the ways that trans feminine acceptance felt tenuous and unstable within the feminist organizations she worked within:

> "I feel like my acceptance within feminist spaces is much more tenuous than it would be in other places. It really does seem like it's just a matter of who's there, which is not, it does not evoke stability."

It is important to recognize that women in this study were aware that changes in leadership (including Boards of Directors) and shifts towards trans exclusionary feminism more broadly could have a direct impact on their employment.

When considering her own experiences of inclusion, Belle shared the ways today's increasingly hostile political climate towards trans women and the distinct lack of trans women in leadership positions lead to feelings of unstable inclusion by sharing:

> "In today's world, even within feminist spaces, it is not a guarantee for anyone who's a trans woman to be seen as a woman. And on the island, there's still a distinct lack of trans women in any kind of leadership capacity, any kind of leadership spaces."
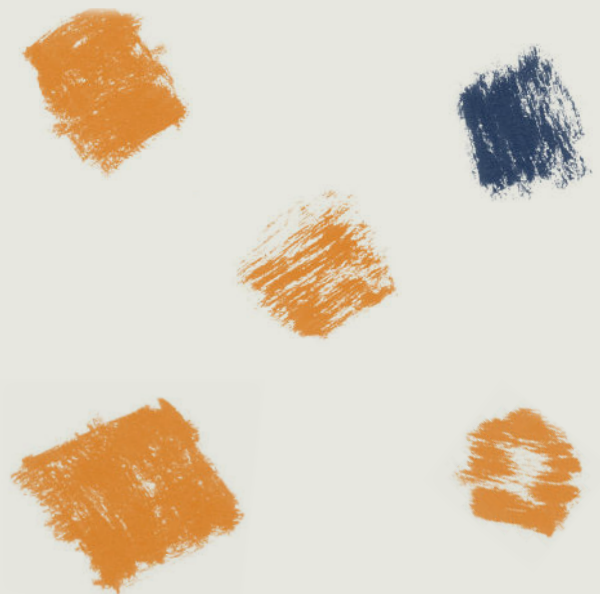
While Lena shared that, on a surface level she felt somewhat included in her organization, she reflected on the ways that the organization's definition of feminism failed to incorporate meaningful policies and practices to improve her lived reality:

"I found it surprising how not feminist they are, but just because my definition of feminism has to do more with, again, just a flexible work environment that allows you to take time off when you're sick, have healthcare. I've never had healthcare in any of the organizations I worked with. That's not very feminist to me."

Building on this idea, Lo also troubled the ways in which feminist organizations failed to consider and include gender affirming health care as a part of the health and benefits package. This was another tangible way that participants felt that their inclusion was surface level, and not meaningfully integrated into the organizational culture:

"I requested gender affirming care because a lot of those feminist organizations will have coverage for reproductive healthcare, which is very important, but nothing about gender affirming healthcare. So I also made a request. I was like, oh, we need training and we need healthcare. And I think it shouldn't be just for feminist organizations, for any organization that's going to fundraise on progress of being progressive, you should include that care."

Port describes that in her experience, trans inclusion in feminist organizations is often connected to a fear of being canceled or called out for not being inclusive. As a result, Port felt that efforts made to promote trans inclusion within the organization frequently felt performative and disingenuous:

"I think because the inclusion has also been so wrapped up in this looming threat of inclusion or else inclusion or cancellation backlash, people, organizations who are risk averse to begin with, seem to be more inclined to just choose the least, the most neutral, the most milk toast, the most flattened way of including trans people without engaging who is actually there."

Throughout the interviews, participants shared stories and examples of the ways in which their inclusion in feminist organizations felt tenuous, surface level, and unstable. Some participants reflected on how changes to the broader socio-political climate and changes in organizational leadership could impact their inclusion and employment within the sector.

Importantly, several participants also reflected on the ways that the organizational commitments to a 'feminist workspace' did not reflect the realities and daily needs of trans women (including ensuring that healthcare and gender affirming care were included in their benefits packages). As Port notes, the inclusion of trans women in feminist organizations often felt like "the most neutral, the most milk toast, the most flattened way of including trans people without engaging who is actually there."

Calls to Action: Practical Steps for Advancing Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workspaces

✿ Move past theorizing about inclusivity, and put it into practice.

✿ Embed your commitment to trans inclusion into your organization's activities so that the commitment is more difficult to retract should there be a change in leadership.

✿ Take trans women seriously and sustain meaningful trans inclusion by giving trans women options and choices, and by prioritizing trans leadership in organizations.

✿ Ensure that feminist principles extend to the material realities of staff – among other things, by including gender-affirming care in extended healthcare benefits.

4. Working Without Other Trans Women:

"I tend to have an expectation that I will be the only person working there that is a trans woman."

The majority of participants (85%) had worked in feminist organizations where they were the only trans feminine person employed. This had a significant impact on their experience of work and oftentimes led to experiences of feeling isolated within their workspace and being tokenized within the organization.

For the few participants that did work with trans women as co-workers and in leadership positions, this had a direct impact on how they perceived the organizational culture.

For example, Kiki shared: "One of our bosses is a trans woman…. so the culture is safe, the culture is safe." Similarly, Mango shared the experience of working with a trans woman in a leadership position by sharing:

> "Our executive director is a trans woman, so we kind of share a similar experience. I think having a fellow trans woman as the executive director has been very helpful. I have felt really supported there."

However, the majority of participants described workplaces where they were working without other trans women, and this had an impact on the work. For example, Laura, who had been employed in feminist organizations since 2008, shared:

> "I've never had a trans woman that's a coworker in a place like that (feminist organization). I help supervise a number of social work students and social service worker students. None of them were trans women. So when I worked in LGBT work, there would be other trans women that I would connect with and draw strength from. But in feminist spaces, it feels really isolated. There's not a lot of folks that I know of."

The feeling of being isolated because of a lack of trans women working within the organization was a prominent and recurring theme within the interviews. Belle, who currently works in a gender equity focused organization shared her experience of feeling alone and isolated in the work because of a lack of fellow trans feminine women within the organization:

"I was the only trans woman on staff. I was the only person that was touching the trans profile. So there was other things happening at our organization, but I was living in Siberia by myself. As much as I love my colleague that I work with right now, he's great. He's cis and he doesn't know anything about a trans experience. And so I'm still very much alone at work. And so the big takeaway would be like, yeah, as a trans woman, I'm alone at work."

The idea of being 'alone at work' often meant that women in this study were contending with organizational change work focused on trans inclusion in ways that felt incredibly isolating and disconnected from other trans women.

It is important to note that while Belle worked in a smaller organization, lack of trans representation was also true for larger organizations. For example, Hunter shared: "I was one of the only Two-Spirit staff members. They have over a hundred staff. And so there was this constant pull to sort of draw on me."

Beatrice, who also reported being the only trans woman employed within her current workplace, shared the work she had done to try and develop more inclusive policies and practices by stating:

"I have personally tried to implement a lot of inclusive policies because I was the first trans person in the office and that made it a lot more difficult for me to fit in. They saw me to be different from them and I have tried to advocate a lot of times and speak up."

Feeling alone at work for Beatrice was connected to being the only trans person working within the organization trying to shift policies.
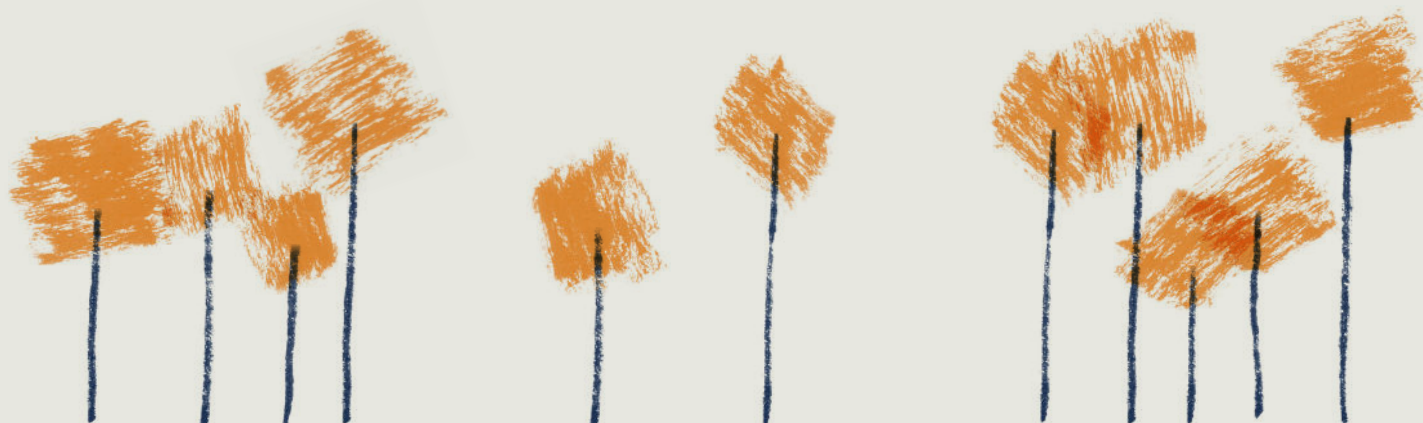
The impact of having trans women as co-workers and in leadership positions on the experiences of inclusion and a positive work environment cannot be overstated. For example, Izabelle, who worked in a large women-serving organization, talked about her support network as being a small group of other trans women working within the organization:

> "My other people that I identify with, people that have been there longer than me. So when I don't feel heard or I feel like, 'oh', I go to them, they tell me the experience, tell me to just let it be and hope that things get better. They're my good support system...I always go to them for support, advice when I feel down or when I feel like I'm not being heard or whatnot."

Throughout the interviews, we heard about the positive impact that working with other trans women had on participants' experiences of the work - as well as the negative impact of being the only trans women employed within the organization. A key recommendation that has emerged from the women who participated in this study is the need for feminist organizations to intentionally recruit, hire, and support trans women in feminist workplaces to create a less isolating work environment.

Calls to Action: Practical Steps for Advancing Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workspaces

- ✿ Be change makers, hire trans women.

- ✿ Ensure organizational staff and leadership are reflective of the communities you are serving.

- ✿ Create pathways for networking among trans women to increase solidarity and systems of support.

- ✿ For funders: Resource trans inclusion work in the gender equity and gender-based violence sectors.

5. Negotiating the Extra Labour of Being Trans in Feminist Workspaces:

"Opportunities are offered to me, but in ways that seem pretty unfulfilling or unspecified."

All participants (100%) described the 'extra ask' associated with being a trans woman working in a feminist organization. This was often connected to developing and facilitating organizational training, being the dedicated person on staff to provide support to trans clients, sitting on internal and external committees relating to issues of gender equity and trans inclusion, and providing 'micro education' about the trans experience to their co-workers.

When Port was asked to reflect on whether her identity as a trans woman impacts the work she is assigned in the organization she works for, she shared:

"I think opportunities are offered to me, but in ways that seem pretty unfulfilling or unspecified. I'd love to have you on this committee to represent whatever it is a lot of just like 'we need one of you here'. I've never been given authority to directly inform the creation of new policy or anything like that. I have been asked to give in June, I can do a lunch and learn about trans, whatever, but it seems to be more opportunities for them to demonstrate that they're socially affirming than to actually dig into what structurally could shift to make the organizations more inclusive."

Importantly, many participants echoed Port's sentiments around the 'extra asks' often being unfulfilling and tokenistic, and not directly related to informing new policy or creating the kind of transformative shifts that organizations desperately need.

For example, Lena shared that her identity often influenced the work she was assigned within her organization by sharing:

"I would definitely be the lead on any of the trans projects, the project that had to do with trans youth, for example, and then research projects, well, I would be assigned to interview other trans women."

Echoing this statement, Sarah shared that she often found she was working outside of her scope of practice and expertise because she was being assigned work that had to do with gender identity (including trans youth). Importantly, Sarah also reflected that even when this extra labour was not officially assigned to her by the organization, she was navigating an extra sense of responsibility in her work to speak up:

"Often I'm in conversations and people will be talking, and I am the only trans woman in a group of five or six people. And it's the kind of

thing that if I don't speak up, it's just not going to be at all tracked or the thing that needs to be said, it just won't get said because these people aren't thinking about it. They don't have the lived experience. They don't have all this knowledge. And so it's this weird thing of I often feel a need to get dragged into it, or I feel a need to say something where just because if I don't do it, I feel like I am letting my community down or people are going to get harmed because there's just not enough actual subject matter experts there on the thing."

For Sarah, the added layer of responsibility to not 'let her community down' and ensure 'people do not get harmed' created a work environment where she was not only navigating the work she was assigned to do, but also a lot of unrecognized invisible labour.

Laura shared that while she was often asked to do extra work, including trans specific organizational training by other departments, her manager was supportive in her setting boundaries around this - acknowledging it was outside the scope of her role.

"I was approached by a lot of people outside of our department to do that kind of work [trans specific training, committees etc]. And I have a background in it. I was certainly equipped to do it, but my manager was really supportive of me not doing that work. I think we were both just like, they're only asking me because I'm trans and they're not asking me based on knowing me."

These opportunities were often described by participants as being unfulfilling, tokenistic and largely performative in nature. At their worst, they were described as an extra layer of work that took a significant toll on the mental health and well-being of trans women, who were being tasked with extra labour in an already overworked and underpaid sector.

For example, Hunter reflected on her experience working in a large feminist organization and the impact that this extra labour had on her, ultimately leading to her needing to take a mental health leave:
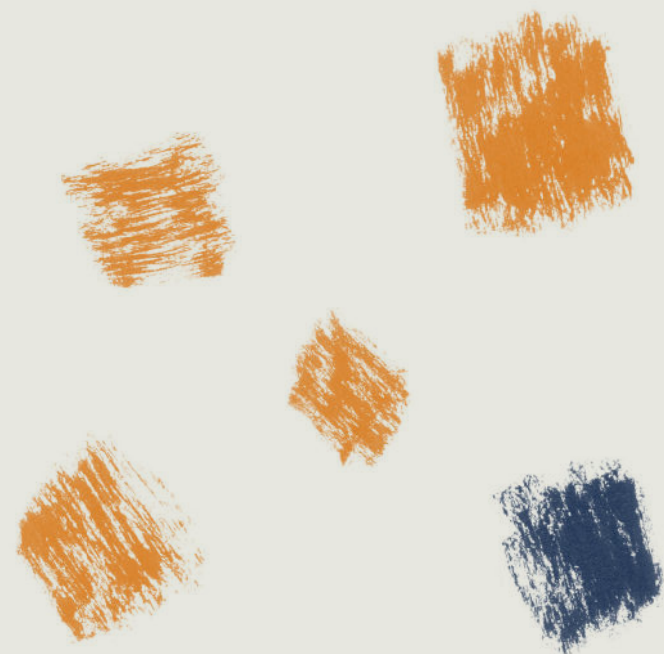
"They have over a hundred staff. And so there was this constant pull to sort of draw on me to facilitate everything and train everybody and design all the policies and design everything for them. And it was too much for me. And I eventually had to go on mental health leave just because it was too overwhelming the work that needed to be done and only by me."

When reflecting on the 'extra ask', Tina mentioned that sometimes, when these requests were based in relationships and a genuine valuing of her perspective, she felt more open to assisting with the extra work:

"I feel like there has been a few things where people have reached out to me from other orgs to be like, Hey, can you weigh in on this? I value your perspective and things... that has felt okay!"

The experiences shared by participants paint a clear picture of an "extra ask" disproportionately placed upon them within feminist organizations. While some participants found value in contributing their expertise when genuinely sought, other participants described navigating this extra labour as leading to burnout. There was an overarching and shared sentiment that these requests often felt tokenistic, and disconnected from opportunities to influence systemic change within the organizations they worked in.

Calls to Action: Practical Steps for Advancing Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workspaces

- ✿ Do not ask trans women to take on extra labour. Pay people for their work.

- ✿ Move past inclusion workshops and pronoun culture - invite people into opportunities to make transformative change.

- ✿ For co-workers: recognize the extra labour of trans women in feminist organizations.

6. Limited Opportunities for Promotion and Career Advancement:

"Don't just confine us to low level positions."

Only two of the twenty participants in this study were in leadership positions. All other participants were in frontline positions where they felt they had limited opportunity to influence the organizational context they worked within.

For example, Lo, Litza, Gessie and QT were all employed in 'peer positions' within their organization and felt that, without formal education and intentional mentorship, upward mobility in their organization was limited. For example, when reflecting on what led her to work in feminist organizations QT shared:

> "My experience with just my life experience being in the sex trade, living a marginalized lifestyle, wanting better for the community and wanting to be able to help others who were just to be able to help others, I should say is what led me to the work."

QT went on to share that she had not completed formal education but had completed a peer training course. When reflecting on the discrimination she faces in her work, she shared that she faces discrimination because of her identity, lived experience and positionality as a peer support worker in the organizations she works in: "I find that there is still a lot of discrimination met with the peer support side of things."

Zoey shared that, in the feminist organizations she has worked within, she has noticed that trans women are often 'confined to low level positions' and called attention to the need for intentional effort and resources to be dedicated to ensuring that trans women have pathways to leadership positions:

> "Listen to trans women, treat them like employees, mold them to leadership positions if applicable. Don't just confine 'em to low level positions because in so many other organizations that's where trans women are at. Make sure they get professional development opportunities, and salaries and of course promotion, that's such a big deal within a community that's completely broke because of all this shared discrimination."

Zoey's contributions reflect some tangible and pragmatic actions that women-serving organizations can take to ensure that trans women have opportunities for upward mobility, including investing in professional development, mentoring trans women for leadership roles, and ensuring trans women are represented on staffing teams as salaried employees - not just in low-level front-line positions.

When reflecting on her own entry point into the work from a position of lived experience, Tina highlighted the very real barriers that trans women face as a result of academic credential requirements

and the need for higher education as a prerequisite to advancing in organizations:

> "I think the lower barrier of not having those academic requirements, which is hard, I get that, especially with government quite often, you can't even apply unless you have a bachelor's degree or a master's. And then for other, well-heeled big GBV orgs, the board has requirements for those degrees. And I think that's really, really hard. And I think that contributes to this trans women in advisory roles, trans women in frontline roles, but very few trans women in decision-making roles. So we all talk about lived experience, which is great, but it's always lived experience with a bachelor degree, and that's a pain in the ass. And also not recognizing the reality of those lived experiences at all."

Similarly to Tina, many women who participated in this study shared the ways their own lived experience was an entry point into the work. The tension point that Tina describes as 'lived experience with a Bachelor degree' prevents many women from achieving upward mobility in the organizations where they are employed.

Jelena shared that if organizations want to genuinely support trans women in obtaining the kind of upward mobility and promotions needed in organizations to contribute to leadership and shift organizational culture, they need to focus on ensuring they have opportunities to stay in those positions:

> "If we have an actual real goal of putting people who have been underserved basically into positions of power where they can then recover and determine for themselves what their future looks like, we need to be giving them the opportunity to remain in that role such that they can own that role. So that includes training, but it also includes maybe mistake forgiveness, like a little bit of grace."

Importantly, Izabelle reflected on her own experiences of working within a large-scale women-serving organization and brought up critical questions about why the trans women she worked with (including herself) were still confined to low-level positions. She brought up the critical consideration that many feminist organizations rely on donors, and it might be perceived as 'risky' to put a trans woman in a position of visible leadership given the tenuous climate of trans inclusion.

"I think they feel like when they have transfeminine leaders, a lot of people would stop coming in or they will not do sponsorship. There's that common stigma that comes with us. So putting us in such positions might see funding withdraw...., I didn't even notice it to be honest at first, but this is five years down the line, I expect I might not the leader, but at least some kind of promotion to the next level to something and then I'm looking around me and I'm seeing that every single trans person in the same organization with me have had no growth."

The majority of participants in this study occupied frontline positions within feminist organizations, highlighting a significant lack of trans women in leadership roles. This disparity is attributed to multiple factors, including a reliance on formal education as a prerequisite for advancement, which often creates barriers for individuals whose lived experience was their entry point into the work. Furthermore, confining trans women to lower-level roles not only limits their individual professional growth but also limits their ability to influence organizational culture and policy in meaningful ways.

Calls to Action: Practical Steps for Advancing Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workspaces

❀ Take trans women seriously and sustain meaningful trans inclusion by giving them options and choices, and by prioritizing trans leadership in organizations.

❀ Recognize and respond to the education disparity. Recognize diverse forms of knowledge and reflect that in hiring practices.

7. Transmisogyny in Feminist Workspaces:

"I've often felt like I'm being perceived as kind of an agitator, or I am kind of aggressive."

All of the participants in this project described, in varying ways, their experiences of transmisogyny, trans-stigma and transphobia within feminist workplaces.

It is important to note that these experiences included both overtly trans exclusionary behaviours and more covert microaggressions. Participants' stories about experiencing transmisogyny at work included repeatedly being misgendered; having their discontent with the organization, or with the advocacy work, consistently labelled as "aggressive"; there being a tremendous emphasis on trans women's ability to physically present as 'femme'; and being Othered by having their trans identity be made the focus of their work.

When Gessie reflects on her experience working in feminist spaces, she talks about the heavy emphasis placed on her looks, and on the importance of 'passing' by sharing:

> "Something I have noticed, specifically within women's spaces, there is something that I noticed specifically for trans women when we're tokenized in things like that, there's a heavy emphasis on our looks and passing. And that's a little crazy making. When I hear some of that stuff. I do get a lot of comments on the way I look."

Building on this, Jelena shared her own experiences of navigating feminist workspaces, where she also felt that there was an emphasis put on her physical appearance:

> "Let's talk about passing in feminist spaces. I wish I didn't have to live in a world where I'm conditioned to believe that my features weren't beautiful or feminine, such that I needed to spend my well-earned money to feel okay in my body and to feel okay in society and to feel okay. But here's the thing, as someone who looks cis, it is a trap. It's a prison and feminist workplaces are no different."

For Lo and several other participants in this study, transmisogyny showed up in feminist workspaces when they were perceived by co-workers and organizational leadership as aggressive for expressing dissent or disagreement with organizational policy:

"Every time I express dissent in any way or I disagree with someone, suddenly it's being a bully or I'm raising my voice or I'm angry, or it's not that. It's just I'm having different emotions than yours. And those were really hard for people to wrap their head around, which is [they] could be part of transphobia where [they] don't see me for the gender that I am. [They] see me for the gender I was assigned at birth. And no matter how many times you say, oh, trans-friendly, or I'm trans inclusive, your reaction to my emotions speak for themselves."

Kiki builds on this by sharing what it has meant for her navigating both transmisogyny and racism in feminist workplaces:

"I was wrestling with the whole angry black woman narrative recently and I was like, this is new because I'm a fairly sassy person. I make jokes, I also get in moods and stuff. So this has been me. I have been this person, but it's like the more fem I got and the more woman I presented, it's like now my attitude is wrong in a way... at work it has gotten to the point where I even had to have a sit down conversation because apparently it was more of along the lines of they were coming in to protect someone from me. It was not serious. I wasn't even angry when we had this conversation."

QT, who describes herself as one of the first trans women who has worked in feminist organizations in the geographical region where she lives, believes that slowly, things are getting better in terms of trans inclusion in feminist workplaces:

"The other thing is there was a lot of ignorance, if you could say at the beginning, because I was one of the first trans women that was actually allowed to access some of the all-women's organizations. And back then they really didn't know at first until I told them and they had a lot of questions. And the more that I answered the questions, the more that they were educated. And now it's getting better."

Throughout all of the interviews, experiences of transmisogyny, trans-stigma, and transphobia were reported. Stories like Kiki's highlight how transmisogyny is further compounded by racism and other systemic inequities. Some participants such as QT note that despite the pervasiveness of these experiences, feminist organizations have gradually improved over time.

Participants in this project described the experiences ranging from overt exclusionary behaviours to damaging microaggressions, including the emphasis on "passing," pathologizing their behavior and reactions as "aggressive," and the Othering that occurs when their trans identity becomes the primary lens through which they are seen and engaged with by the organizations at which they work.

Calls to Action: Practical Steps for Advancing Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workspaces

✿ Create pathways for networking among trans women to increase solidarity.

✿ Intentionally create pathways for communication and relationship building.

✿ Be okay with being challenged.

✿ Recognize the important role that trans women play in the fight for gender equality.

✿ Develop relationships with trans women in your communities to keep you accountable. If you have the resources, hire and pay those women to sit on consultative committees.

8. Trans Stigma from Co-Workers:

"I can sense that they're kind of tiptoeing around me and I'm like, I just want to bring everybody's shoulders down"

Almost all participants in this project reported experiencing trans stigma in some form from their co-workers within feminist organizations.

While the majority of women in this project reported that co-workers were generally well-intentioned, their efforts to be inclusionary often felt like stigmatizing interactions. Some participants described overtly transphobic interactions and exclusionary practices from co-workers that had a negative impact on their experiences of the workplace.

When reflecting on her experiences of interacting with her co-workers, Lo shared that the ways in which her co-workers sought to include her were representative of larger issues of internal and systemic transphobia within the organization:

> "Everyone was very welcoming. I think I would say maybe people were a little bit too welcoming and trying really a little bit too hard to make me feel like 'Welcome as a trans', 'We love trans' blah and all of those things. And eventually, I think, so the challenge was not to get employment, but the challenge was to keep employment with them and keep employment amidst internal and systemic transphobia within the organization."

Reflecting on her long history working within feminist organizations, QT noted that while things have slowly improved with time, some co-workers were still of the belief that trans women should not be served by women-serving organizations, and that trans women were not employed within these organizations:

> "These women would be talking about trans women accessing the workplace…,these were women's organizations and stuff and whatnot. And I had to tell 'em, I told them, I said, well, you know what? I said, they do hire trans women here. And they were like, no, they don't. And I had to tell them. I was like, well, first of all, there's myself, there's (name redacted). And they were quiet. It seems like the male to female community are more met with more, like you were talking about microaggression and these passive aggressive comments that are unnecessary."

Building off of this, Izabelle shared that while she had a network of trans women working within her organization who provided her with emotional support and solidarity, she also dealt with trans stigma and exclusion from other co-workers, and people in leadership. For Izabelle, the disdain from one particular leader in the organization was felt, despite

the leader trying to cover up how she felt about trans women. Izabelle shares:

> "The other person who interviewed me who brought me in, gave off totally negative energy. And I noticed that she doesn't speak up because she's holding a very high position here. I'm not even sure I'm supposed to be saying this, but it's obvious that she's not comfortable with many of us in this organization that do not identify from birth as women, but she being in the position that she's try to shade it or try to cover it up and act like she's okay with it, but we see the trolls, we see it when she's handpicking people for certain programs that fall under her office. We noticed repeatedly that she avoids us totally."

Hunter describes experiencing trans stigma within her organization from co-workers, and offers an analysis of how these kinds of stigmatizing interactions make visible the ways in which co-workers understood and approached their own feminist identities in varying ways. Hunter shares:

> "The woman who I shared an office with, she had worked for 20 years at a women's shelter in a small town in a small city. So I mean, she really had that old school feminist perception of what feminist work is. My introduction to feminism was through Audre Lorde and bell hooks and a lot more diverse backgrounds. And so we butted heads a few times regarding what is feminism and what doesn't count as feminism, and what does a feminist working in a feminist organization have to do to prove herself? And she had a really old school kind of in the trenches kind of approach to that work that showed up."

Both Tina and Port considered that oftentimes, trans stigma was felt in ways that stemmed from co-workers 'tiptoeing' around trans women in an effort to not 'do or say the wrong thing.' These interactions were described, by Port, as feeling both stigmatizing and othering:

> "I think that in a lot of ways that the cultural shift towards trans inclusion that we saw in the 2010s, it made people feel afraid to engage with the trans community in that distinctions-based way... you don't assume pronouns, you don't assume this, you don't assume that. It kind of made people feel like it's inappropriate to talk about how transfeminine people have different experiences than trans-masculine people. In my work, I often think, "Is this somebody who is actually looking at me as an individual or is this somebody who when we talk, they're constantly stressed out about, I'm talking to a trans person and I have to conduct myself in a certain way?"
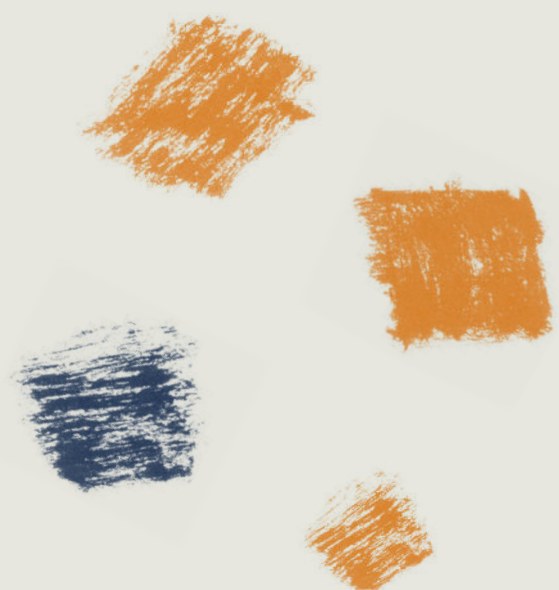
Building on this, Tina shares:

> "I feel like cis women who don't interact with trans women all that often, I can sense that they're kind of tiptoeing around me and I'm like, I just want to bring everybody's shoulders down. It's okay if you misspeak, I'll politely be like, "Hey, that didn't bother me, but that can bother other trans women. So just to make you aware of that kind of thing."

Experiences of trans stigma were pervasive, as nearly all participants shared experiencing this in some form, from their co-workers. This finding reveals a significant disconnect between the feminist values of these organizations and the ways co-workers interact with one another. While some instances involved overt transphobia and exclusionary practices, even well-intentioned but clumsy attempts at inclusion resulted in feelings of Othering, and reinforced difference.

The prevalence of these experiences throughout the interviews highlights the urgent need for feminist organizations to move past surface-level acceptance and begin truly addressing the many ways that transphobia is enacted among co-workers within feminist organizations.

Calls to Action: Practical Steps for Advancing Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workspaces

- ✿ Recognize and respond to the inequality that exists between cis and trans women in feminist workspaces.

- ✿ Stop trying to do damage control before it happens.

- ✿ Admit you do not know, and commit to learning.

- ✿ Interact with trans women as peers.

9. Navigating Transphobia from Service Users:

"They kind of make a big deal about it. And I feel bad because it's like, I don't want to make you feel unsafe or upset because of my presence. I'm just trying to do my job."

Participants in this project worked in a variety of settings, including front-line positions in feminist organizations such as gender-based violence shelters, childcare advocacy, and other housing programs. **All of the participants who worked directly with marginalized communities spoke about experiences of navigating transphobia directly from the clients and service users they were supporting in their work.**

Beatrice shared her fears prior to starting her work in a feminist organization and the ways this has shaped her own confidence in her ability to do this work:

"I'm not going to lie personally, while I was there, I had doubts at first when I was going in. I had my own doubts that will I really understand this women's pain? Will I be able to put myself out there and learn? Or is my own fear going to get in the way of me helping others? Or when I get slammed by someone who needs help? Am I going to refuse to help the person just because the person's not comfortable with me? I didn't think it was going to last a month to be honest."

During the interview, Beatrice shared that she loves the work that she does, but it has been a difficult journey to believe in her own abilities.

When reflecting on experiences of transphobia from service users and clients, Lo shares a powerful story about navigating her own identity while supporting a woman in crisis in a feminist organization:

"One time I had a participant that showed and she was in a crisis mode, and I was still very, I wasn't shaving at the time. I was very masculine presenting and I tried to help her. She was like, no, please call a real woman. And in that moment I was really obviously triggered and impacted, but now I'm like, I get it. I totally get it. I'm a six two very tall woman. And at the time I didn't shave, she was in crisis. She didn't want to talk to someone that looked like the person who had just assaulted her. And I hundred percent understand…that. I understand it in the context of the work I do in the community, I do the work in."

For Lo, the experience was triggering and impactful - however the ways she described the interaction demonstrates tremendous care and understanding for the complex realities of the community members

she is supporting in her work. Litza shared navigating similar instances in her own work (also supporting in a crisis-based feminist organization), where her presence was unwelcome by service users:

> "Some women have felt unsafe with me because I was the only transgender folk working in the space, and they kind of make a big deal about it. And I feel bad because it's like, I don't want to make you feel unsafe or upset because of my presence. I'm just trying to do my job, I'm just trying to help as much as I can. I'm not going to fight them or anything. But it was really hard to deal with the reality that sometimes even your own community that you support or you try to take care, they don't feel, they don't feel safe or they don't feel comfortable with you around."

While some participants shared that service users of feminist organizations felt 'uncomfortable', other participants reported the tremendous benefit that their trans identity had in making other trans folks feel welcomed and accepted within feminist organizations. For example, Kiki shares:

> "On a practical level, given that trans identities are still very few and far between, when participants who are trans come in and I'm the first place they see, or I'm going out of my way to make sure they feel comfortable, it really helps with building relationships and helping their support plans and meeting their support needs."

Kiki's reflections highlight the ways in which her trans identity has been instrumental in providing comfort, forming therapeutic relationships and developing support plans for trans clients accessing the organization she works within. Similarly, Olivia reflects on the ways she navigates her own trans identity with clients and service users by sharing:

> "My identity is part of how I connect with particularly trans clients and clientele. So there's kind of a rapport there. When I'm working in a public facing capacity, whether that was through (name of organization redacted) or whether that's now (name of organization redacted) there is a kind of sense in which I kind of understand what they're going through in a way that someone who's cisgender might not, so that we build that relationship that way and that helps my work."

Throughout the stories shared by participants in this project about navigating transphobia from clients and service users, it was evident that the women in this study were deeply committed to their work and the communities they serve, despite what they endure and experience. Experiences and stories were also shared about the ways that women in this study were able to build rapport, foster trust, and create a more welcoming environment for other trans women within feminist organizations.

Having to navigate transphobia, stigma, and outright hateful comments directly from clients and service users should never be a part of the work within feminist community-based organizations. This can take a significant toll, including internalized doubts about their own role, distress, and ultimately burnout.

Calls to Action: Practical Steps for Advancing Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workspaces

- ✿ Ensure organizational staff and leadership are reflective of the communities you are serving.

- ✿ Acknowledge the transmisogyny that your staff experience – both from within your organization and from clients and service users.

- ✿ Be okay with being challenged.

- ✿ For co-workers: Recognize the extra labour of trans women in feminist organizations.

10. The importance of Finding Solidarity and Networks:

"Trans femme individuals gather and connect for safety."

The importance of networks and solidarity with other trans women, who were also working within feminist organizations, was of central importance to all participants in this project. And yet, participants had varying degrees of this type of support in their lives.

Participants living in urban centres were more likely to have informal and meaningful support networks with other trans women working in the feminist sector. However, this was far less common for those living rurally. Consistently throughout the interviews, participants reflected on the importance of having other trans women in their lives. For example, Litza reflected on the centrality of these relationships as a source of support and solidarity:

> "I find support within the community. I find support as a trans woman within my sisters. Some of my best friends are trans women or women with a lived trans experience, and it's pretty diverse. So within that aspect, I'm always very grateful in having formed those friendships."

Kahl spoke about the role that organizations can play in fostering networks of solidarity for trans feminine inclusion. When considering why this was important, she shared:

> "Trans femme individuals gather and connect for safety."

Reflecting on her own work experience, Lena shared that while she did not work directly with any trans women, she valued opportunities to connect with trans women at work events that bring together community organizations:

> "If I am at a work event and I see another trans person, I'll go talk to them immediately, no questions asked. I'm just like, Hey, because I want to connect with other trans people. So I guess in that sense I am explicit about it."

When reflecting on her experiences of trying to connect with trans feminine networks, Sarah shared how she has become more isolated after the pandemic and expressed her desires to see a community of practice established that would create intentional networks among trans women working in feminist organizations:

> "It would be cool if there was sort of more of an actual dedicated network or it was a thing that I could know where to find more people, more trans fems, more trans women that are working in feminist organizations. It'd be cool if there was something, even a community of practice, just something that you could connect in because otherwise it is just like, oh, I have my friend who used to work here. She doesn't anymore. I know her through that. I know people

hodgepodge through activism that work in certain spaces... I was more connected to people before COVID, and I found that COVID really messed up all my networks. I don't see the same people."

The participants in this project overwhelmingly highlighted the critical importance of networks and solidarity among trans women working within feminist organizations. These connections serve as vital sources of support, safety, and shared under-standing, particularly in navigating the challenges faced within their work. Dedicating attention and resources to fostering solidarity will not only bene-fit the well-being of trans women in the sector but also has the potential to strengthen the collective capacity to advance trans inclusive feminist work.

Calls to Action: Practical Steps for Advancing Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workspaces

❀ Create pathways for networking among trans women to increase solidarity.

❀ Develop a virtual community of practice of trans women working within the feminist sector.

Concluding Reflections:

While many feminist organizations have made efforts to work to-wards trans feminine inclusion, the stories shared by the women who participated in this project highlight that there is still a lot of work to do. It is our hope that feminist organizations will work towards ac-tioning the recommendations put forward in this report and remain committed to creating organizational cultures where trans women can meaningfully contribute.

The Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workplaces Project is the first research project in Canada that sheds light on the experiences of trans women who work in feminist organizations.

The findings from this project reveal a significant gap between the stated values of feminist organizations and the daily realities faced by many trans feminine employees. While the participants in our study bring an unwavering commitment to social justice, as well as knowledge, expertise, and lived experience to their work, their work is complicated by the need to negotiate how their identity as trans women fits into the broader work of feminist organizations.

Trans women are not a monolith, and our research highlights how their experiences are shaped by intersecting identities, including race, disability, and class. By focusing on their trans identity alone, feminist organizations are missing the opportunity to benefit from the full scope of their expertise, knowledge, and experiences.

Participants in this study had a shared feeling that their inclusion in feminist organizations was tenuous and conditional. This feeling was compounded by experiencing trans stigma, transmisogyny, and transphobia from the organizations they worked for, from their co-workers, and from the communities they served. Importantly, many participants reflected on the constant expectation of unpaid,

"extra labour" related to their trans feminine identity. Many of our participants were the only trans person on staff in the feminist organization they worked in, which led to feelings of isolation and added responsibility for advancing trans feminine inclusion in feminist organizations. The women we spoke to for this project also shared the importance of finding solidarity and support with other trans women, and their desire for building networks with trans women working in Canadian feminist non-profit organizations.

The women who participated in this project offered clear and useable recommendations for feminist organizations, their leadership, their co-workers, and for funders. These Calls to Action reveal a desire for systemic change rather than superficial gestures.

At the core of these Calls to Action is the need for organizations to value and compensate trans women for their expertise. This means dismantling the barriers that limit them to lower-level positions, such as rigid academic requirements, and instead creating intentional pathways for career advancement and leadership. Participants called for a shift from simply hiring trans women to actively investing in their leadership through mentorship programs and skill-building opportunities.

Women in our study urged organizational leaders to be open to being challenged, admit when they are wrong, and create intentional channels for communication that allow for feedback from trans feminine employees. They also emphasized that leaders should be deeply connected to the communities they serve, to ensure that organizational policies and practices are truly responsive to the needs of trans women. Participants' Calls to Action for Co-workers similarly focused on a desire for authentic connection and solidarity. They asked their cisgender colleagues to recognize the inherent inequality that exists between cis and trans women in the workplace and to acknowledge the extra emotional and physical labour that trans women often undertake in feminist organizations.

This project's findings provide a clear roadmap for organizations to move from advocating for trans rights to authentically embodying trans inclusive values in every aspect of their work.

The twenty women that we spoke to for this project shared a deep commitment to the mission of feminist organizations and embodied this through their work to end gender inequity and improve the lives of all women.

By listening to the voices and experiences of trans women working within feminist organizations and by implementing the Calls to Action in this report, we have an opportunity to build an environment where trans feminine employees can thrive and where their leadership skills are recognized. We have an opportunity to strengthen the feminist movement and the organizations across Canada who carry out this work. This project serves as a critical next step toward building a more equitable and inclusive future for trans women within the feminist sector.

Calls to Action:
A Path Towards Meaningful Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Organizations

At the end of each interview, participants were invited into a process of developing Calls to Action. Each participant was asked the same three final questions.

↳ What would your recommendations be for feminist organizations to action trans feminine inclusion?

↳ What would your recommendations be to leadership of feminist organizations relating to trans feminine inclusion?[16]

↳ What would your recommendations be to co-workers, working within feminist organizations about how to bring about trans feminine inclusion?

The following Calls to Action for feminist organizations, leadership, and co-workers have been developed directly from the voices of the women who participated in this study.

Calls to Action for Organizations and Leadership:

1. Accountability

↳ Develop relationships with trans women in your communities to keep you accountable. If you have the resources, hire and pay those women to sit on consultative committees:

> "I think that it's almost like you need a committee of trans women and trans friends from a variety of backgrounds and lived experiences and with commitment to not just the super privileged ones like myself, but a wide variety of folks. You just need a group of people to be there, hold you accountable to what your goals are in supporting trans women, and you got to pay them well to do it." – Sarah

↳ Be okay with being challenged:

> "Leadership needs to understand and also accept that people will challenge them. And that's okay. It's okay to be challenged. It's okay to be wrong. It's okay to be right. It's okay to be wrong. So [it's] okay to admit when you're wrong and say, Hey, you know what? I was wrong about this" – Lo

↳ Acknowledge the transmisogyny that your staff experience – both from within your organization and from clients and service users.

Ways to acknowledge the transmisogyny that your staff experience:

❀ Co-develop approaches for addressing transmisogyny within your organization. Speak with your trans staff to ask them how they would like to be supported.

❀ Ensure that your non-discrimination and anti-harassment policies explicitly include gender identity and expression, with systems for accountability and complaint resolution.

↪ Intentionally create pathways for communication and relationship building:

"I think that a lot of organizations have what's called a 'check-in', so I think that really gives a person the time to be able to explain what it is that they're going through in their everyday life. So I think that our voices are being heard now and it's not just directed towards trans- inclusion. It's an inclusion for everybody to make sure everybody is okay." – QT

Suggestions as to how create pathways for communication:

❀ Ask each of your staff members whether there are any individuals in leadership positions that they would feel comfortable reporting issues to. If so, ask them whether they would appreciate that person checking in with them on a regular basis regarding workplace issues. If they would like this type of check-in, how often would they like it?

↳ Ensure organizational staff and leadership are reflective of the communities you are serving.

❀ As many feminist organizations work to offer services to women and gender-diverse people, it is of critical importance that the identities of the staff and leadership team are reflective of the people served by the organization. This includes gender identity, as well as other important aspects of identity including race, age, ability, Indigeneity, and lived experience.

↳ Be connected to and listen to the communities you are serving:

"I feel like especially for this kind of job, I mean, it doesn't matter if you're a peer worker volunteer or you're the CEO or the head or the chief of the board members. I feel like everyone, especially in these communities, everyone must be in some level or in some point connected or engaging with these communities, especially the communities that they provide services, that they provide support, because otherwise it feels like hollow or it feels like it's not effective, or we are missing something that is really important. So I feel like my recommendation will be to take the time and be an active listener." – Litza

2. Meaningful Inclusion

↪ Move past theorizing about inclusivity, and put it into practice:

"That is a thing that these organizations, often they have all these flowers on the wall, but the roots are rotting. So we have to make sure that our inclusion isn't just performative. Don't just say the culture that you want to have. Be the culture that you want to have." – Belle

Suggestions for putting inclusivity into practice:

❀ Make it clear that your organization's values are inclusive of trans women. Be explicit in your organizational mission statement, vision, and values that your understanding of a feminist workplace includes and values trans women.

❀ Review your programming and communications to explore how or whether they are unconsciously excluding trans feminine people or are not aligned with trans inclusive values. Invite trusted trans feminine allies to provide feedback on this, or hire trans feminine consultants to do this work. In either case, pay the people that you are consulting.

❀ Spend time engaging in values-based work to ensure that the organization, leadership, and staff are approaching the work from a shared set of values. For example, if your organization doesn't already have core stated values, engage in a process to develop them. Once you have stated organizational values, put time aside to collectively reflect on those values and on how to implement them in your work, both externally and internally. Recognize that many people are drawn to feminist workplaces because of a perceived values alignment - use this as an opportunity to make workplace values explicit and build solidarity based on shared values.

✿ As part of paid work, attend an event centering trans women.

✿ Hold a lunch and learn at your workplace on an issue important to trans women that is relevant to your work.

↪ Embed your commitment to trans inclusion into your organization's activities so that the commitment is more difficult to retract should there be a change in leadership.

Effective strategies for embedding your commitment to trans inclusion into your organization's structure:

✿ Build out relationships with other organizations that will help hold your organization accountable to your commitments.

✿ Do work that expressly supports trans rights.

↪ Move past inclusion workshops and pronoun culture - invite people into opportunities to make transformative change:

"I also think that having somewhat of a critical relationship with those inclusion workshops, like I said, I am sure they have their place. And certainly I imagine in places that are more hostile to trans people overall, those inclusion workshops are probably better than not having 'em. I think if I'm fine-tuning an already somewhat accepting landscape of organizations here, I would say maybe we can chill on the inclusion workshops a little bit." – Tina

"It would be good to have more committees that are taken seriously too, because again, certain non-profits and specifically feminist spaces, it's hard to change, especially when you're stuck in second wave feminism and things like that, that you have to create space for people. You also have to learn to get out of the way and to recognize your biases and not double down or dig your heels in with things like that. So creating more spaces for trans people to bring their lived experience and finding ways to dismantle that stuff. Also, not tokenizing the community and actually paying them." - Gessie

Take the minimum steps, and then go further toward transformed workplaces:

❀ Ensure that the basics are in place: universal bathrooms and optional pronouns in signatures.

❀ Where resources permit, develop paid committees where trans women have power to influence organizational change.

❀ Pay trans women to provide a training for your staff, focusing on "what do you want leadership and co-workers in feminist organizations to know".

✿ When creating strategic plans and organizational plans, invite input from everyone on staff.

✿ When deciding on an important policy direction or change to the workplace, consider everyone who will be impacted and how some may be impacted disproportionately. Ask yourself whether you need input from everyone on staff, and how to best gather that input. For example, if you strike a committee to study the issue, you may wish to include a staff representative on the committee. Ensure that these types of processes have organizational influence and are not just tokenistic. To the best of your ability, manage expectations – be transparent regarding who will be making the ultimate decision(s) and name limitations for collaborative decision-making.

✿ Ensure staff involvement in key hiring decisions, including for senior positions. Ensure that the hiring process is widely accepted by staff. If there will be a hiring committee with staff representation, ensure that the selection of staff representatives is widely accepted by staff.

↪ Ensure that your feminist advocacy is firmly rooted in intersectional, Indigenous, and Black feminisms:

"I wish there was more conversation about anti-Blackness and anti-Blackness as it pertains to women. So 'misogynoir'. I've noticed (city name redacted) has a very huge interest in conversations about Indigenous racism, but anti-Black racism or anti-Black behaviours are kind of just more of an elective or a personal project as opposed to a thing that people need to know." – Kiki

↳ Be change makers, hire trans women:

"We can really tell the difference between tokenism and really genuine change. And that we can feel that we can feel the difference. And that if you want to be a change-maker, you just have to proactively make change instead of just trying to catch up to where you are supposed to be. So hire trans women, learn about intersectional feminism if your organization hasn't yet, but mainly hire the people you intend to be serving someday." – Hunter

The fine print of hiring trans women:

❀ Make it explicit that your organization will hire trans women. Some participants spoke about not applying to organizations because they were unsure if their identity as a trans woman would impact their ability to gain employment. It is important to be explicit that your organization will hire trans women - and that trans women are a vital part of your organizational culture and commitment to feminist work.

❀ Intentionally recruit and hire trans women to create a less isolating work environment for those trans women who already work in your organization.

❀ Develop hiring practices that reduce bias in hiring.

↪ Include gender affirming care in extended healthcare benefits:

"I think at least in being transfeminine, when you transition, in reality the employee or co-worker is kind of going through multiple steps. Sometimes one thing gets done earlier and then one thing is an ongoing thing, whatever, HRT is an ongoing thing, or certain surgeries with wait times and stuff. So I think that is important, and requires some sensitivity. I do think about stuff like gender affirming care. So I think that's fairly important to provide funding and time off for stuff like that. I think that's a topic I'd want leadership to pay attention to." – Mango

Further suggestions for ensuring that feminist principles extend to the material realities of staff:

❀ Ensure that the definition of "family" or "parenting" in your human resources policy is expansive and accounts for the many ways that queer and trans people (among others) define their families (e.g. for the purposes of bereavement leave, family caregiver leave, parental leave, or other family-oriented policies).

❀ Explicitly include mental health leave as a valid form of sick leave in human resources policy.

❀ Poll staff to get a sense of the policy changes and changes to the work environment that would assist them in feeling more materially supported at work.

3. Movement Solidarity

↪ Build solidarity and connections across social justice movements.

> ✿ Within the scope of mandate and capacity, recognize the shared struggles among those organizing for social justice (including trans women and other gender expansive communities) and work to intentionally build solidarity across social justice movements.

4. Respect and Recognition

↪ Put intersectional feminist theory into practice by responding to workers' intersecting identities:

"I would encourage people to move away from the idea that the transgender community is this cohesive unit and that you can provide services to, that you can provide policy that's broadly inclusive of all trans people, and instead to just look at who you actually have on your team and what they individually need to be included and supported." – Port

Suggestions for responding to workers' intersecting identities and supporting what they need:

❀ Shift from identity-centric silos to intersectional frameworks. Instead of solely focusing on individual identity, organizations should use explicit intersectional frameworks in their work. This involves rejecting the idea that any identity is a monolith and actively exploring how different axes of identity (gender, race, class, disability, etc.) intersect and create distinct experiences. For example, when conducting advocacy for trans women's rights, think about the specific right at issue, and which trans women are most impacted by the rights denial. Is it newcomer women from particular countries? Single mothers?

❀ Ask people if and how they want to draw on aspects of their identity and experience to inform their work, rather than assuming that they do. Normalize the concept that it is just as acceptable to not bring yourself into the work as it is to bring yourself in.

❀ No one is reduceable to a single aspect of themselves – when you catch yourself seeing someone as primarily one thing, try to pull yourself back and consider how you might be Othering that person and not seeing them as fully human. Remember that we are all complex individuals with multiple motivations and positionalities.

❀ Invite staff to identify events and initiatives centering cultural practices, social justice issues, or lived experiences that speak to them, and invite them to share those events and initiatives with the rest of the team.

❀ Consider providing training to all staff regarding how discrimination manifests differently for different people.

↪ Recognize the important role that trans women play in the fight for gender equality:

> "Stop seeing us as anything other than a sister and an ally. We're not a threat. We're not here to take over. We're not here to take spots. We're here to strengthen the cause. We're here to strengthen those rights. I mean, we're already going through our own unique hell. If anything, we have a lot of skin in the game too, and we want to see things better for everyone." – Stephanie

↪ Take trans women seriously and sustain meaningful trans inclusion by giving trans women options and choices, and by prioritizing trans leadership in organizations:

> "It feels like we're in the same kind of feeling from the sex work rights movement community, is that we're saying the same things for a ton of years, for decades, and it feels like it's into the abyss, into an echo chamber. And I would hope what the future of our community is, is that we're being included meaningfully. We're being put, not just invited to the table, but it's our table. So I would hope for our community that we can start getting jobs being taken seriously…I want a society where trans women have more options and that when they choose any option, they're respected in that choice." – Jelena

> "I think there needs to be mentorship for trans women in those spaces beyond just having a peer mentorship role. It's really difficult for trans women to access the kinds of education that are needed to being credentialed as social workers and whatnot. But that's something that the movement knows about." – Laura

Taking trans women seriously – investing in their leadership and ability to effect organizational change:

✿ Create explicit pathways for trans leadership, both on staff and on boards. Pathways must be created for trans women to move out of entry-level positions and into leadership positions. This could involve investing in specific training, capacity building initiatives, and leadership programs.

> *Many participants shared that inclusion felt tenuous and that trans perspectives were not well represented within the organization. One way participants suggested remedying this was ensuring that trans women had genuine decision-making power within the organization through leadership roles, Board of Director positions, or other meaningful and permanent opportunities to shift organizational culture.*

✿ Develop mentorship programs. Offer an honorarium to the mentor and invite staff to use work time to meet with their mentors. Make it clear to staff that this is a part of their paid work, and welcome staff to make it a priority.

✿ When trans women are in leadership positions and misstep, remember the systemic barriers to being in leadership in the first place. Rather than undermine their leadership, support them and invest in them further.

✿ Define and communicate clear advancement standards.

✿ Gather feedback from employees on experiences with promotions and leadership selection.

✿ Regularly monitor hiring, promotion, and compensation data by gender identity as well as by other relevant axes of identity, looking out for disparities. Use findings to improve your practices.

↪ Do not ask trans women to take on extra labour. Pay people for their work.

The practice of asking trans women to take on extra labour needs to end. Women who work in feminist organizations are often overworked and underpaid. The practice of assigning trans women extra labour is contributing to burnout within the feminist sector.

> ✿ Pay people for their work - many women in this study reported they were taking on extra labour that was often both invisible and unpaid. Trans women must be compensated for any additional labour they take on for the organization - even if they agree to do it.

> ✿ Support your trans employees in establishing boundaries regarding doing extra labour, if they do not want to do that work.

↪ Recognize and respond to the education disparity. Recognize diverse forms of knowledge and reflect that in hiring practices:

"I would say that recommendations are removing the requirement for post-secondary education. We need to take into consideration people's lived experiences and expertise. And beyond that, there are many transferable experiences and skills that trans people have, especially sex workers who often are operating small businesses, their own websites, marketing, advertising all at once. That should be taken. So I think there should be a policy about the way that hiring is done." – Jelena

Further thoughts on recognizing diverse forms of knowledge:

> ✿ We heard directly from participants that educational requirements, including having a university education, was a barrier for many women who approached this work from a place of lived experience knowledge. It is of critical importance that feminist organizations recognize who is being left out when formal education is a requirement for employment.

5. Create Support Structures

↪ Create pathways for networking among trans women to increase solidarity:

"I think the more that trans feminine networks are supported by organizations the better. Organizations can talk about growing (these networks) officially, and we can absolutely say that the more resources we have to connect the better. I think grounding ourselves in the fact that we have always been here for each other and will always be here for each other. But yeah, just organizations should play a role in fostering that community and recognizing that that community is an informal grassroots structure that has the more structural support that we have, the more community, the more rights we have in the organizations we work in." – Kahl

Suggestions for fostering community among trans women:

❀ If you have more than one trans feminine person on staff, invite your trans feminine staff to use work time to meet with each other (on a regular basis, if they wish) to discuss workplace issues specific to being trans feminine. Make it clear to staff that this is a part of their paid work, and welcome them to prioritize it.

❀ If you only have one trans feminine person on staff, invite her to reach out to another trans feminine person outside of your organization as a mentor. Provide your employee with research assistance as to who to reach out to if she would like that assistance, and offer that either you can reach out to the prospective mentor, or she can. Offer an honorarium to the mentor and invite your employee to use work time to meet with her mentor. Make it clear to her that this is a part of her paid work, and welcome her to prioritize it.

LEAF, West Coast LEAF, and CAEFS' Commitment:

↪ Develop a virtual community of practice of trans women working within the feminist sector

❀ Recognizing that geographic location creates disparities and isolation for trans women, we commit to assisting in the creation of a virtual community of practice led by a peer network of trans women working within feminist organizations across Canada.

Calls to Action for Co-Workers:

↪ **Stop trying to do damage control before it happens:**

> "I wish they would stop trying to do damage control before damage happens and let the people who are affected by those issues bring it up when it makes sense at the right time...again, and all this trying to fix things when there's nothing fixed and nothing to be fixed and also to chill, to really chill with the girls, chill, relax. It's okay."
> – Lena

↪ **Interact with your trans feminine co-workers as peers:**

> "The times when I felt most comfortable at work are times when I'm socially treated as just a woman, like any other woman. And there's not attention drawn to, 'oh my God, does Port need her own separate room on a trip where we might be sharing rooms?' Things like that. Yeah. I think that has had the most meaningful impact when people are just willing to interact with me as a peer, not as this 'trans elephant' in the room that needs to be navigated in a specific way." – Port

↪ **Find solidarity in a shared purpose and goal:**

> "I wish co-workers understood that we're all here to achieve the same thing. Yeah, everyone here has a purpose and that's the main goal. Not who I am, not what my name is, not what my favorite quote is. What really matters a lot is that we are here to do something. There's a goal we want to achieve. And the moment you begin to focus on that, it's going to bring a lot of closure. Rather

than focusing on who I am, that's just unnecessary to me. I find it very unnecessary. I'm not hurting you, I'm not stepping on your toes, I'm not trying to rub it in your face. So there's no need to do the same to me." – Beatrice

↪ Ensure that the work that you are suggesting your trans fem co-worker takes on is not only and always work pertaining to trans people.

↪ Recognize the extra labour of trans women in feminist organizations:

"Just know how much extra work it is just doing the same job as the person next to us. But we're also dealing with microaggressions and dealing with bathroom policies and dealing with questions from staff about, oh, my kid has a trans friend and question… question; and people asking questions that are really a little too personal… And it's just a lot of extra work. It's a large extra layer of work that we're doing on top of the same work that the people in the desk next to us are doing. And that it's tiring, it's exhausting. It's tiring. It just wears you out eventually. And I wish they would recognize all that extra work that we do." – Hunter

Further tips:

❋ Support your trans co-workers in establishing boundaries regarding doing extra labour, if they do not want to do that work.

❋ Acknowledge the transmisogyny that your co-workers experience - both from within your organization and from clients and service users. If appropriate, ask them how they would like to be supported.

↪ Recognize and respond to the inequality that exists between cis and trans women in feminist workspaces:

> "I wish they knew that we were not equal. Sometimes they just see things and you're like, I didn't see that as a problem. And I'm like, yeah, you won't see it as a problem. So I wish they could see clearer how certain things affect us. I feel like if they do see it from our perspective, they could voice out for us too." – Izabelle

↪ Admit it when you do not know, and commit to learning:

> "I wish that everyone just did a little more looking inward and acknowledging what they don't know. I think that that's the thing is everyone loves to talk about a big game, about what they know and their commitment to this and that and whatever. Just admit that you don't know anything about this thing. It just saves us all, a lot of pain and anguish at the end of the day. Just be like, I don't know shit about this topic. And commit to being better." – Sarah

Call to Action for Funders:

↪ Resource trans inclusion work in the gender equity and gender-based violence sectors.

> ❀ The Calls to Action in this report need to be resourced to be meaningful. A feminist sector working toward trans inclusion needs the funding to be able to do that work. Trans inclusion must be a priority for funders in the gender equity and gender-based violence sectors. This would allow organizations to implement deeply intersectional work.

Trans Feminine Inclusion in Feminist Workplaces:
A self-guided audit tool

How to use this tool: The suggestions and tips we have provided below many of the Calls to Action are examples of how you can engage in trans feminine inclusion meaningfully. They are meant to be illustrations of what may be possible, rather than prescriptions of what must be done. They may not be suited to your workplace environment, or you may not have the resources to implement them. They may not align with employment and labour laws relevant to your jurisdiction and workplace environment (for example, intentionally hiring and recruiting trans women may not be permissible in all jurisdictions). *There is no one way to advance trans inclusion in feminist spaces. The below is both an ideal and a starting point – adapt these Calls to Action and supplementary suggestions for your workplace as appropriate.*

For organizations and leadership:

Accountability

Our workplace has...

○ Developed relationships, and continues to develop relationships, with trans women in our communities to keep us accountable. Resources permitting, we hire and pay those women to sit on consultative committees.

○ Leaders who are okay with being challenged.

○ Acknowledged the transmisogyny that our staff experience - both from within our organization and from clients and service users.

○ Relationships with other organizations that will help hold us accountable to your commitments.

○ Co-developed approaches for addressing transmisogyny within our organization. We have worked with trans feminine staff to do this, asking them how they would like to address the transmisogyny they are experiencing.

○ Nondiscrimination and antiharassment policies that explicitly include gender identity and expression, with systems for accountability and complaint resolution.

○ Intentionally created pathways for communication and relationship building.

○ Gathered information from staff members regarding (1) whether there are any individuals in leadership positions that they would feel comfortable reporting issues to, (2) if so, whether they would appreciate that person checking in with them on a regular basis regarding workplace issues, and (3) if they would like this type of check-in, how often they would like it.

○ Staff and leadership that are reflective of the communities we serve.

○ Connected and listened to the communities we serve, and established pathways for continuing to do so.

Meaningful Inclusion

Our workplace has...

○ The basics in place: universal bathrooms and optional pronouns in signatures.

○ Made it clear that our values are inclusive of trans women. We are explicit in our organizational mission statement, vision, and values that our understanding of a feminist workplace includes and values trans women.

○ Reviewed its programming and communications to explore how or whether they are unconsciously excluding trans feminine people or are not aligned with trans inclusive values. We have invited trusted trans feminine allies to provide feedback on this, or have hired trans feminine consultants to do this work.

○ Spent time engaging in values-based work to ensure that the organization, leadership, and staff are approaching the work from a shared set of values. [For example, engaging in a process to develop core organizational values if they don't yet exist, and then putting time aside to collectively reflect on those values and on how to implement them in organizational work, both externally and internally.] We recognize that many people are drawn to feminist workplaces because of a perceived values alignment, and we have used this as an opportunity to make workplace values explicit and build solidarity based on shared values.

○ Firmly rooted its feminist advocacy in intersectional, Indigenous, and Black feminisms (e.g. expressly addressing colonial violence and misogynoir in advocacy).

○ Attended an event centering trans women as part of paid work.

○ Held a lunch and learn on an issue important to trans women that is relevant to our work.

○ Embedded our commitment to trans inclusion into our activities so that the commitment is more difficult to retract should there be a change in leadership.

○ Engaged in work that expressly supports trans rights.

○ Moved past inclusion workshops and pronoun culture, and has invited people into opportunities to make transformative change.

○ Developed paid committees where trans women have power to influence organizational change (resources permitting).

○ Paid trans women to provide a training for our staff, focusing on "what do you want leadership and co-workers in feminist organizations to know".

○ When creating strategic plans and organizational plans, invited input from everyone on staff.

Movement Solidarity

Our organization has...

○ Built solidarity and connections across social justice movements.

Respect and Recognition

Our organization has...

○ Put intersectional feminist theory into practice by responding to workers' intersecting identities.

○ Shifted from identity-centric silos to intersectional frameworks. Instead of solely focusing on individual identity, we use explicit intersectional frameworks. This involves rejecting the idea that any identity is a monolith and actively exploring how different axes of identity (gender, race, class, disability, etc.) intersect and create distinct experiences. [For example, when conducting advocacy for trans women's rights, we would think about the specific right at issue, and which trans women are most impacted by the rights denial. Is it newcomer women from particular countries? Single mothers?]

○ Asked staff if and how they want to draw on aspects of their identity and experience to inform their work, rather than assuming that they do. We have normalized the concept that it is just as acceptable to not bring yourself into the work as it is to bring yourself in.

○ Understood and communicated to staff that no one is reduceable to a single aspect of themselves. We have explored the idea that no one is primarily one thing, and that thinking of someone in that way might be Othering that person and not seeing them as fully human.

○ Invited staff to identify events and initiatives centering cultural practices, social justice issues, or lived experiences that speak to them, and we have invited staff to share those events and initiatives with the rest of the team.

○ Considered providing training to all staff regarding how discrimination manifests differently for different people.

○ Recognized the important role that trans women play in the fight for gender equality.

○ Taken trans women seriously and sustained meaningful trans inclusion by giving trans women options and choices, and by prioritizing trans leadership in organizations.

○ Created explicit pathways for trans leadership, both on staff and on boards. Pathways must be created for trans women to move out of entry level positions and into leadership positions. This could involve investing in specific training, capacity building initiatives, and leadership programs.

○ Developed mentorship programs. We have offered an honorarium to the mentor and invited staff to use work time to meet with their mentors. We have made it clear to staff that this is a part of their paid work, and welcomed staff to make it a priority.

○ Invested in trans women leaders. [For instance, when trans women are in leadership positions and misstep, remember the systemic barriers to being in leadership in the first place. Rather than undermine their leadership, support them and invest in them further.]

○ Defined and communicated clear advancement standards.

○ Gathered feedback from employees on experiences with promotions and leadership selection.

○ Regularly monitored hiring, promotion, and compensation data by gender identity as well as by other relevant axes of identity, looking out for disparities. We have used these findings to improve our practices.

○ Supported trans employees in establishing boundaries regarding doing extra labour, if they do not want to do that work.

○ Paid people for their work. Trans women must be compensated for any additional labour they take on for the organization - even if they agree to do it.

○ Recognized and responded to the education disparity. We recognize diverse forms of knowledge and reflect that in hiring practices.

Create Support Structures

Our organization has...

○ Created pathways for networking among trans women to increase solidarity.

○ If more than one trans feminine person on staff: Invited trans feminine staff to use work time to meet with each other (on a regular basis, if they wish) to discuss workplace issues specific to being trans feminine. We have made it clear to staff that this is a part of their paid work, and welcomed staff to prioritize it.

○ If one trans feminine person on staff: Invited its trans feminine staff member to reach out to another trans feminine person outside of our organization as a mentor. We have provided our employee with research assistance as to who to reach out to if she would like that assistance, and offered that either she can reach out to the prospective mentor, or someone else from the organization can. We have offered an honorarium to the mentor and invited our employee to use work time to meet with her mentor. We have made it clear to her that this is a part of her paid work, and welcomed her to prioritize it.

For Co-Workers:

Meaningful Inclusion

As a co-worker, I ...

○ Don't try to do damage control before it happens.

○ Interact with my trans feminine co-workers as peers.

Movement Solidarity

As a co-worker, I...

○ Find solidarity with trans feminine co-workers in a shared purpose and goal.

Respect and Recognition

As a co-worker, I...

○ Ensure that the work that I suggest my trans feminine co-worker take on is not only and always work pertaining to trans people.

○ Recognize the extra labour of trans women in feminist organizations.

○ Support my trans co-workers in establishing boundaries regarding doing extra labour, if they do not want to do that work.

○ Acknowledge the transmisogyny that my co-workers experience - both from within our organization and from clients and service users. If appropriate, I have asked them how they would like to be supported.

○ Recognize and respond to the inequality that exists between cis and trans women in feminist workspaces.

○ Admit it when I do not know, and commit to learning.

For Funders:

As a funder, I...

○ Prioritize trans inclusion in funding. I know that a feminist sector working toward trans inclusion needs the funding to be able to do that work.

Endnotes

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6   In Canada: See e.g. The Education (Parents' Bill of Rights) Amendment Act, SS 2023, c 46 [Saskatchewan], amending The Education Act, 1995, SS 1995, c E-0.2, ss 197.2, 197.4 (this amendment requires parental consent for school personnel to use gender-related names or pronouns for students under 16 years of age); Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (No. 2), SA 2024, c 16, amending The Health Professions Act, RSA 2000, c H-7, ss 1.91, 1.92 [Alberta] (this amendment prohibits gender affirming surgeries for minors and also prohibits prescribing certain medications for gender-affirming care, such as those used for hormone therapy, to minors); The Education Amendment Act, 2024, SA 2024, c 14, amending The Education Act, SA 2012 c E-0.3, ss 58.11, 58.12, 33.2 [Alberta] (this amendment requires school staff to notify parents and obtain parental consent to use a student's new pronouns or name when the student is under 16.

Schools are also required to provide notice and consent when providing educational instruction on gender identity, sexual orientation or human sexuality); Fairness and Safety in Sport Act, SA 2024, c F-2.5 (through this law, Alberta now requires women and girls playing in women and girls-only sports leagues to be cisgender). Internationally: See e.g. For Women Scotland Ltd v Scottish Ministers [2025] UKSC 16; United States v Skrmetti, 145 S CT 1816 (2025); US, HB 72, Protecting Privacy in Public Spaces Act, 68 Leg Sess, Wyo, 2025 (enacted).

7   Women and Gender Equality Canada, "2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan Survey- Quick Stats" (last modified 9 May 2023), online: Government of Canada <**https://www.canada.ca/en/women-gender-equality/free-to-be-me/federal-2slgbtqi-plus-action-plan/survey-findings/quick-stats.html**> [**perma.cc/X7EQ-QQYN**].

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14   Rossella Ciccia & Conny Roggeband, "Unpacking intersectional solidarity: dimensions of power in coalitions" (2021): 4:2 European Journal of Politics & Gender 181.

15   Patricia Hill Collins & Sirma Bilge, Intersectionality (Malden: Polity Press, 2016) at 3.

16   The researchers were considering the following actors as being part of leadership: senior management, executive directors, CEOs, and Boards.

LEAF FAEJ

LEAF is a national charitable organization that works towards ensuring the law guarantees substantive equality for all women, girls, trans, and non-binary people through litigation, law reform, and public legal education. Since 1985, LEAF has intervened in more than 130 cases that have helped shape the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.*

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