

What is lesbian identity?

Lesbian identity might mean something different for each person who identifies that way. The easiest way to understand the word "lesbian" is as a term that generally refers to a woman who experiences only romantic or physical attraction to women.

REMEMBER:

Everybody has the right to self-identify! No matter what definition you've learned, each person may define themselves differently.

The term "lesbian" is generally used to describe any woman who is solely attracted to other women, and is often used instead of saying "homosexual woman".

If you want to learn about lesbian identity, here are some words to understand. Keep in mind that these are just the way we understand these words; each person who identifies this way might understand a term differently:

STRAIGHT WOMAN

a cisgender or transgender woman who is sexually or romantically attracted to men.

LESBIAN WOMAN

a cisgender or transgender woman who is sexually, or romantically attracted to women

QUEER WOMAN

a cisgender or transgender woman who is not straight and who identifies with this term

BUTCH

a term often used to describe queer women who are masculine in appearance

FEMME

a term often used to describe queer women who are feminine in appearance

Check us out online!

-  @rainbowcoalitionyk
-  @rainbowcoalitionyk
-  Rainbow Coalition of Yellowknife
-  www.rainbowcoalitionyk.org

Talk to us!

Rainbow Coalition of YK
867-444-RCYK (7295)
5112 52nd Street
Yellowknife, NT
X1A 1T6

Send us mail!

Rainbow Coalition of YK
P.O. Box 1751 Stn. Main
Yellowknife, NT
X1A 2P3



RAINBOW COALITION
OF
YELLOWKNIFE

LESBIAN
IDENTITY
and so much more!

•• www.rainbowcoalitionyk.org • 867-444-RCYK ••



Things to Know:

- Not all women who are attracted to other women are “lesbians”. Women who are attracted to other women can be bisexual, pansexual or other forms of polysexual.
- Not all lesbian women are the same; there’s stereotypes that lesbian women look really masculine, or that lesbian women dress a certain way. Lesbian women are really diverse, and it’s important to consider that!
- Some lesbians have had meaningful relationships with men that could have included sex, love or romance. Sexuality is fluid, and it’s important to remember that some lesbian women might not have always identified as lesbians.
- Both transgender women and cisgender women can be lesbians. Being a lesbian isn’t related to the body you have, but rather the gender that you identify with.
- Unfortunately, a lot of the spaces that exist for gay and queer men to meet each other are really focused on drinking, drugs, and partying. This is especially important to keep in mind when we consider that queer people experience higher rates of addictions and substance abuse.



Am I a lesbian?

The important thing to remember is that you don’t have to use certain words to describe yourself, just because that’s the “box” you fit into, but here are just some of the things that might apply to you if you’re a part of the lesbian community:

- first off, you identify as a woman and
 - you find yourself wanting to kiss, hug, touch or have sex with other women but never with men; or
 - you think about dating, marrying or spending your life with another woman, but never with a man.



Discrimination & Oppression:

Lesbian women tend to experience both homophobia and heterosexism.

Homophobia is the fear, hatred, or intolerance of gay or lesbian people.

Heterosexism is the systemic oppression of people who are not straight or heterosexual.

Because lesbians are also women, they experience both sexism and homophobia at the same time.



Homophobia is...

Homophobia is ways that individual people might act that imply that being lesbian or gay is a bad thing.

An example of homophobia is when two women are kicked out of a restaurant for kissing.

An example of the intersection of sexism and homophobia is when a lesbian woman is threatened with sexual violence so she can be “turned” straight.



Heterosexism is...

Heterosexism is ways that society has made being straight or heterosexual seem “normal”, and everything else seem “bad” or “weird”.

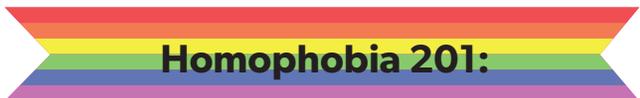
An example of heterosexism is when lesbian women aren’t allowed to get married to each other.

Another example is the lack of diversity or representation of lesbian women in television, in movies or in books.



RCYK 201:

“201” sections are meant to provide you with a bit extra. It’s helpful if you have a little background on queer and trans issues.



Homophobia 201:

It’s important to think about the way in which people experience homophobia differently depending on other aspects of their identity. For example, a Black lesbian woman is going to experience homophobia that is twisted up with racism and sexism too. This experience is going to look different.

It’s also worth discussing how lesbian women experience homophobia differently than gay men. The unique form of homophobia that queer women experience is called “sapphobia”, generally understood as the intersection of homophobia and sexism. This term comes from the ancient Greek poet Sappho, who many people believed was a woman who loved other women.



Support & Help

If you’re a lesbian woman, and you need some support, don’t hesitate to give us a shout.

We support all lesbian women, no matter the age, gender assigned at birth, race, or where they live in the NWT.

You can reach us by:

- calling us at 867-444-RCYK (7295)
- emailing us at info@rainbowcoalitionyk.org
- finding us online by searching “Rainbow Coalition of Yellowknife”
- visiting us in person at 5112 52nd Street in Yellowknife.