

### Departmental Commitments

Throughout its thirty-five-year history, the Department of Gender Studies at Queen's University has demonstrated a longstanding and steadfast commitment to social justice work both at and outside of the university across local, national, and international scales. Providing a curriculum described as "one of the most theoretically innovative and advanced of equivalent departments anywhere in the world" (CPR External Review Team Report, 2015), the department has a reputation as a vital hub for social justice work on-campus and in the community at-large. Centering the importance of challenging and addressing interlocking systems of power and how they manifest across structures and relationships, Gender Studies is committed to interdisciplinary and intersectional knowledge production which provides students with critical thinking skills, experiential learning opportunities devoted to community-based activism, and tools for future leadership. As a department, Gender Studies demonstrates an ongoing commitment to activist work, has made intersectional approaches to race and gender central to both its curriculum and hiring processes, and plays a core leadership role on campus and in the local community by initiating much-needed conversations among faculty and students.

As noted in the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigeneity 2019-2020 Annual Report issued by Queen's, "BIPOC members of our community, as well as 2SLGBTQ+ communities, people with disabilities and others, continue to be at the forefront of movements for institutional inclusion and, as a result, will disproportionately feel the burden of reaction against the changes to which as a university we have committed ourselves." Centering these unique power relationships, the Department of Gender Studies is distinguished by a departmental commitment to center race and colonialisms across curriculum and focus on *applications* of gender studies within work for social change. Advancing knowledge regarding and demonstrating an ongoing commitment to activist work and social change, the department notes in its 2019-2022 Strategic Plan that,

The Department of Gender Studies practices **interdisciplinary** and multidisciplinary research, teaching, and programming that **advance our commitment to social justice and social change.**

**We embrace an approach to gender that explores and challenges racism, capitalism, colonialism, (hetero)sexism, ableism, and other manifestations of power.**

**Our scholarship, activism and community work** centre marginalized, alternative, and relational knowledges, **span local and global contexts**, and engage historical and contemporary perspectives. Together **we foster an accessible, culturally diverse, and transformative learning environment.**

A dedication to EDII is thus inherent to Gender Studies and all work that the department conducts. Central departmental values noted in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan include:

- **Justice and Transformation:** We challenge power and privilege, support activism and advocacy, and build relationships and solidarity within and beyond Queen's.
- **Multiple Ways of Knowing:** We honour diverse forms of knowledge and practice. Our pedagogies are flexible and extend beyond the classroom.

- **Care and Collaboration:** We practice empathy, integrity, collectivism and generosity. We value and celebrate the contributions of students, staff and faculty.
- **Reflection and Dialogue:** We model critical and open reflection, dialogue, and responsiveness to our students and communities as we work towards justice.

As noted in the Queen’s Academic Plan, “a pro-diversity approach to teaching and learning goes beyond curriculum” and necessitates increasing accessibility, improving conditions of the campus environment, and consciousness-raising across the university community. Keeping these core values in mind, it is fitting that Gender Studies partakes in consistent social justice work both inside and outside of the classroom that is not always documented in official forms; this driving force behind the department is deeply embedded across pedagogical commitments. Aligning with the third pillar of the Queen’s Academic Plan, *Reaching Beyond: Globalism, Diversity and Inclusion at Queen’s*, Gender Studies courses are unique in their emphasis on exploring effective ways to pursue social change and understand formative historical processes contributing to power, privilege, and oppression both at and beyond the university. As noted in the Queen’s Academic Plan that, “A Queen’s education should impart to students an understanding of their place in a culturally, economically, and politically everchanging world and empower them to participate in it in an informed and responsible manner,” Queen’s places an emphasis on empowering informed participation and promoting students’ awareness of collective responsibilities and individual rights, both of which are fundamental aspects of a Gender Studies degree and the work of the department writ-large.

#### Campus and Local Relationships

A core departmental commitment outlined in the current Gender Studies Strategic Plan is a dedication to strengthen connections between and among research, teaching, and community work by:

- i. Sustaining and developing our role as **a vital hub for social justice work** on campus.
- ii. Sustaining and developing our **relationships** with the Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre, the Ban Righ Centre, the Levana Gender Advocacy Centre, the Queen’s Black Academic Society, the Queen’s Positive Space Program, the Sexual Health Resource Centre, Reelout, and HARS (HIV/AIDS Regional Services).

As demonstrated throughout this report, the Department of Gender Studies is devoted to upholding these commitments while promoting intersectional politics that connect across gender, sexuality, race, poverty, sexuality, dis/ability, and violence-related issues, and continuously works to deepen its social justice work at Queen’s alongside affiliated organizations.

Departmental pedagogy closely aligns with each subsection of the *Reaching Beyond: Globalism, Diversity and Inclusion at Queen’s* pillar of the Academic Plan: *Global Citizenship, Equity and Diversity, Internationalization at Home, Diversification of Curricula and Integration of Indigenous Knowledge*, and *Local Globalism*. While these commitments are outlined throughout this report, particular attention must be given to local globalism and the **strong linkages between the department and Queen’s, Kingston, and other communities in Ontario and Canada**.

**Campus centres and organizations that the department has worked closely with over the past ten years include:**

- Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre – a centre which offers support services, feasts, social activities, and cultural activities for Indigenous students, faculty, staff, and allies dedicated to Indigenous-related activities, initiatives, and knowledge
  - *The Department of Gender Studies* and Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre frequently co-sponsor symposiums, public talks, workshops, and events
  - *The Department of Gender Studies* has also recently administered a special EDII food security fund as a gesture of solidarity to support feasts for Indigenous students before monthly Full Moon Ceremonies
- Ban Righ Centre – a community space on the Queen’s campus serving women students across ages (especially mature students) through advising, work spaces, rest areas, meals, and financial assistance in order to uphold a dedication to diversity and inclusion through collaboration, connection, sharing, trust, and active listening
  - *The Department of Gender Studies* works closely with the Ban Righ Centre on issues relating to advocacy and student support services, especially based on the commitment of both to building community and collaboration across gender and other manifestations of social difference
  - *Several Gender Studies faculty members* have received the Ban Righ Centre’s annual Inspiring Women awards in acknowledgement of outstanding mentorship and knowledge sharing that aligns with the Centre’s core values and mission
- Levana Gender Advocacy Centre – a student organization available for anyone in the Kingston community which centers community-building and anti-oppressive practices in the fight for gender empowerment
  - *The Department of Gender Studies* and Levana Gender Advocacy Centre frequently co-sponsor symposiums, public talks, workshops, and events
- Queen’s Black Academic Society – a student organization dedicated to advancing Black academics on a whole through a focus on education, equity, wellness, and issues pertinent to the Black community
- Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights – a student organization advocating on a social justice platform to uphold the rights of Palestinian people both locally and internationally through awareness raising, advocacy work, non-violent direct actions, solidarity building, and the promotion of Palestinian identity, culture, and history
- Queen’s University Association for Queer Employees – a group for current and former LGBTQ-identified Queen’s staff, faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and their partners which provides opportunities to socialize, discuss relevant issues, raise the visibility of LGBTQ issues, and address barriers for queer employees
- The Other Kingston Project – a group co-sponsored with the Four Directions Indigenous Student Center that engages many of Kingston’s diverse communities, centering those which have been left out of predominant narratives that focus on whiteness, colonialism, European heritage, class privilege, or heteronormativity

Moreover, Gender Studies faculty and students frequently serve as staff, board members, participants, volunteers with local community organizations and community-based events in the

Kingston area, as well as run research projects associated with them. **Local community organizations closely affiliated with the department include:**

- Roots and Wings Kingston – a group offering diverse educational, empowering, and engaging programming on social justice topics for BIPOC girls, trans, and gender non-forming youth in Kingston
- Kingston Pride – a grassroots organization working to promote awareness and inclusion of the LGBTQ2S+ community in Kingston
  - *Recently, several GNDS faculty, staff, and students protested military and police presence in the Kingston Pride Parade*
- Dawn House – a local service group working to support and empower homeless, vulnerable housed, and marginalized women living in poverty while providing transitional and long-term supportive housing
- Kingston Interval House – an emergency shelter and second stage housing facility that provides essential, responsive, and empowering services to women, children, and youth who have experienced the impact of gender-based violence and other forms of oppression in Kingston
- Sexual Assault Centre Kingston – a not-for-profit organization which provides free, confidential, non-judgmental support for all survivors (12+) regardless of gender or identity of recent and/or historic sexual violence in the KFL&A region
- Trans Family Kingston – a grassroots social network aimed at combatting and navigating barriers and isolation often felt by trans people and allies in the Kingston area
- Chipped Off Performance Collective – a feminist and queer performance group that explores the possibilities of community collaboration while centering underrepresented and marginalized communities in Kingston
- Reelout Arts Project Inc. – a group that organizes a number of gender and sexual diversity media arts projects including an annual film festival, discussions in local schools, and a community lending film library centered around LGBT2QI communities both in and beyond Kingston
- *Other local community organizations which Gender Studies faculty works intimately with include: Kingston for Justice in Palestine-Israel, Vision for Kingston, Save the Memorial Centre, Prison for Women Memorial Collective, River First YGK and the AKA Autonomous Social Centre*

Particularly intimate is the departmental affiliation with **Reelout** and its annual queer and trans film festival, which has credited the department with sustaining the festival based on the department making it a mandatory course requirement for hundreds of GNDS undergraduate students to attend annually in several large core courses.

Furthermore, **the department frequently organizes symposiums, talks, workshops, and teach-ins around the theme of social justice work and work for social change.** One of the many examples of this is the co-organization of “Justice for Colten, Justice for Tina: A Teach-In for Change” with the Cultural Studies Program and Office of Indigenous Initiatives, held on March 21, 2018 at the Mackintosh-Corry Cafeteria. Additionally, since the inception of the Gender Studies PhD program, the Department has organized the Gender Matters Speakers Series, funding and providing numerous public talks, panels, workshops, and trainings by scholars, artists, and activists from and outside of Queen’s. Typically including six events per

school year, Gender Matters Speaker Series topics have included: a strategy share in response to the TRC Task Force and PICRDI Report; the de/politicization of pronouns and transgender activism; a teaching workshop on fair, equitable, and proactive strategies for handling accommodations/extenuating circumstances; a naloxone distribution and training in response to the opioid crisis and its relation to Queen's/Kingston; and an artist talk by Tau Lewis, whose art was featured on-campus at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre.

The Department was also involved in the opening of a **gender-neutral accessible washroom** in Mackintosh-Corry Hall in 2019, providing more inclusive and gender-affirming options for those in the Queen's community.

The third pillar of the Queen's Academic Plan, *Health Wellness and Community*, is aptly served by the department's community focus within work for social change. The department provides courses which help students gain a keen awareness of the ways in which power affects health and wellness within communities, including within communities at Queen's, and students are able to learn and practice strategies for addressing and resolving inequity and oppression. As noted in the Queen's Academic Plan, "The first requisite for students to develop fundamental academic skills, disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, and a capacity for global citizenship is a safe, supportive, inclusive, and engaging community. Without an environment that fosters inclusive community values, students, staff, and faculty will never be able to perform to the best of their abilities, will not take proper advantage of the academic experiences available in the University, and cannot contribute their own unique perspectives and innovation to Queen's."

**This focus on a safe, supportive, inclusive, and engaging community is the core focus of the Gender Studies department and its attendant social justice work**, which meets each subsection of *Health Wellness and Community: Safety; Health & Support; Diversity, Inclusivity, and Social Justice*; and *Women Working in Academe*.

While Gender Studies serves each of these subsections through solidarity and community development work, **the gendered and racialized labor of mentorship is also essential to this process**. In the Queen's Academic Plan, the importance of "glue work" – noted in the document as "face-to-face collaboration in everyday workplace practices, much of it tacit and often informal, [which] involves skills of co-operation, facilitation and nurture, usually thought of as feminine" – often goes undervalued and underestimated, but is essential to community-building. The work of mentoring and counselling students moves across disciplines but is especially and disproportionately expected of Gender Studies faculty and staff due to the emotional and affective toll of course content and studies of power, privilege, and oppression. Unlearning oppressive epistemologies/ways of knowing and reliving histories and events of marginalization that relate to one's positionality open up alternative worlds and skills for developing more just futures, but also require complex navigations of power, privilege, and oppression that can be difficult to parse through on an individual basis. Due to the community focus of Gender Studies and in line with the third pillar of the Queen's Academic Plan, mentorship and counseling of students are frequent for Gender Studies faculty, staff, and teaching assistants, and must be critically accounted for within considerations of the labor being performed by the department. **As noted in the Queen's Academic Plan, the gendered labor of teaching and mentorship disproportionately impacts women and gender non-conforming people, with increased requirements for mentoring students and promoting inclusivity in the classroom, and**

**“Queen’s needs adequate measures for assessing, recognizing, and rewarding this work.”**

As a student-centered and research-intensive university dedicated to learning and discovery – commitments outlined in Queen’s academic mission statement – Queen’s must value all aspects of this labor, including the invisible social justice work that often goes undervalued and unacknowledged, but which is vital to sustaining community at and around the university.

Solidarity

On a regular basis, the Department of Gender Studies writes and sends out (via email and online postings) **solidarity statements** related to campus, local, national, and international events. These statements are indispensable for promoting a dedication to social justice work and an inclusive and affirming space for students on-campus who are intricately affected by these events and their affective and emotional tolls.

During the 2020-2021 school year, solidarity announcements and statements formally sent out by the Department included: in solidarity with the families of the 751 Indigenous children and adults whose remains were revealed on the grounds of the Marieval Indian Residential “School” in SK (issued on June 25, 2021), a statement on Islamophobia in Canada after the mass murder of a Muslim family in London, ON (issued on June 8, 2021), a statement in solidarity with Four Directions and Indigenous Communities after the discovery of mass graves at Kamloops Indian Residential “School” (issued on May 31, 2021), in solidarity with the Palestinian Feminist Collective (issued on May 18, 2021), a statement in response to the verdict of Derek Chauvin in the murder of George Floyd (issued on April 22, 2021), and a statement on the mass murder of Asian American women in Atlanta and Sarah Everard in the UK (issued on March 18, 2021). Countless other statements have been made over the years, marking the department and Queen’s as at the forefront of emerging social justice issues.

In addition to releasing these statements, the department is frequently involved in **solidarity events on-campus and in the local Kingston community**. For example, faculty and students attended Four Directions after anti-Indigenous & homophobic graffiti was posted on-campus, were present at the Sir John A. McDonald statue removal, and attended the Idle No More protest outside Stauffer Library. Moreover, faculty, staff, and students have been deeply involved in the organization of and spoken at events such as Take Back the Night, December 6<sup>th</sup> Memorials, Indigenous women’s events, Black Lives Matter events, events against Third Crossing, and events against downtown development. Gender Studies faculty are called upon to organize and/or participate in teach-ins on and off campus including recent talks about colonialism, poverty, Basic Income, and fascism at the Kingston Senior’s Centre, the AKA Autonomous Social Centre, the Rideau Heights Community Centre, and City Hall.

Working across geographical contexts through this solidarity work, the department aligns with the themes of *International at Home* and *International Enrolment Management* found in the Queen’s Comprehensive International Plan, creating bridges between Canada and other regions of the world around intersectional issues. At the global level, the Department of Gender Studies is also involved with the *Journal of Critical Race Inquiry*, an open-access publication housed by the department that supports international inquiry into critical race issues.

EDII work

As noted in the EDII 2019-2020 Annual Report, “Queen’s Strategic Research Plan identifies EDII as a priority within the research enterprise.” Gender Studies faculty, staff, and students are frequently involved in **campus EDII work, committee service, and overlapping initiatives**. Three members of the department are serving on the FAS Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigeneity Implementation Committee. Others are instrumental in the launching of the Black Studies minor, which is the largest interdisciplinary program at Queen’s involving more than 25 academic units. While Gender Studies affiliates have participated in endless committee work over the years, **EDII principles are also inherently embedded across the continuous work of the department and are in fact fundamental to the discipline**. The themes mentioned in the Queen’s Strategic Research Plan – *Securing Successful and Just Societies through Scholarship, Governance and Policy*, and *Mobilizing Creativity and Enabling Cultures* – are present across Gender Studies courses and faculty/student research given that our curriculum is structured around diversity and inclusion. As the CPR External Review Team Report in 2015 noted: “[W]hereas many similar departments struggle with how to infuse racial justice in existing programs, this is already part of the framework of the department. Its entire curriculum at the undergraduate and graduate level is organized to realize this objective.”

The department is particularly well-suited to promote an environment of inclusion on campus, as it brings an important but often overlooked historical relevance to current conversations at Queen’s about equity and how best to challenge the historically present racism and sexism that continue to shape campus life. Indeed, education in Gender Studies does more than expose students at Queen’s to formative historical processes: it provides them with the tools required to analyze how the worlds they experience and build are profoundly shaped by social formations such as race and gender, and to explore effective ways to pursue social change. By encouraging an appreciation for diversity, Gender Studies helps foster a climate of inclusion on campus and diversify faculty, as explicitly noted in the PICRDI report. The focus on equity at the very core of the department also addresses recommendation sixteen of the PICRDI report by exposing students across the University to the rich histories of marginalized groups and endowing students with an understanding of processes of marginalization. Moreover, the department regularly recruits underrepresented faculty members, offers new curricula offerings, and enhances research capacity, all in line with Queen’s goals and mission.

#### Graduate and Undergraduate Programs

As noted in the Academic Plan and *Imagining the Future*, there are calls for greater attempts to link service and learning both on- and off-campus. One of the departmental commitments outlined in the Strategic Plan is a dedication to raising the profile of Gender Studies both within and outside of Queen’s by emphasizing **the innovative and unique character of our graduate programs, which allow students to both undertake advanced research and apply it to social justice work**. Each doctoral student is required to partake in a practicum, initiating applications of their project within work for social change while fostering unique and dedicated collaborative relationships with local and global social justice initiatives in and beyond Kingston. Within the practicum (GNDS 950), students may visit a research site and/or seek and initiate relationships with research partners, collaborators, and/or participants – drawn from communities involved in the study, scholars, activists, or cultural workers (among other contexts) – that enable specific applications of the project within work for social change. MA students are also offered credit for developing relationships with local organizations through an optional practicum (GNDS 850)

around similar parameters. Examples of organizations affiliated with the program as of late include Roots and Wings Kingston (a group offering diverse educational, empowering, and engaging programming on social justice topics for BIPOC girls, trans, and gender non-forming youth in Kingston) and the Reelout Arts Project (associated with the yearly queer film and video festival in Kingston).

Moreover, the GNDS 903 course “Applications of Gender Studies”, which is mandatory for all doctoral students in the department, is aimed at applications of gender studies research within work for social change and address themes of: power in research and representation, researcher responsibilities, academic and nonacademic research, research careers, and community-based research.

At the undergraduate level, fourth year students are able to partake in activist experiential learning by participating in GNDS 440, a practicum that offers the opportunity to develop real-world, collaborative skills in community-based activism.

Likewise, Gender Studies curriculum fully supports the University’s academic and strategic mission and responds directly to the recommendations of the PICRDI report and TRCTF. The first pillar of the Academic Plan, and a central component of the Strategic Framework, is the *Student Learning Experience*. Gender Studies enhances student learning by diversifying curriculum and promoting critical thinking and critical reading skills, especially surrounding power structures and dominant narratives. The department places a strong emphasis on writing and communication, skills that are singled out in the Academic Plan as especially important for Queen’s graduates to garner. Additionally, the department aligns with this core pillar by facilitating inquiry, critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective collaboration, all of which are noted as being core academic skills fundamental to an inquiry-based learning process and fundamental outcomes of a Queen’s degree. Fostering the link between communication and learning through developing critical reading and listening skills, Gender Studies courses are invaluable to this component of the Academic Plan.

Moreover, the department’s inherent nurturing of interdisciplinary approaches aptly aligns with the second pillar of the Academic Plan, *Disciplinary and Interdisciplinarity*, providing students with a range of approaches and perspectives that can be translated to a variety of careers and fields.

#### Faculty

Gender Studies has retained outstanding faculty over the years, most of whom hold external research grants, are editors of leading journals, publish books at major presses and in high-impact journals, and serve as keynote speakers across North America, as well as internationally. All tenure-stream faculty members have been awarded multi-year external research grants. The department is home to two Canada Research Chairs, two Royal Society of Canada inductees, an international honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, an Indspire Laureate Award winner, an Arts & Science Faculty Senator, and numerous teaching award winners. These distinctions and awards move across Gender Studies work and commitments – not just reflecting our faculty’s teaching and research, but also their deep community involvement.