Inclusive and Affirming Language Tips

Pronouns and names are not the only parts of language marked by gender. Our everyday language is often gendered. By shifting this language to be more inclusive, we can respect and acknowledge the gender identities of all people. Always be mindful of your assumptions and consider gender-neutral ways of communicating the same phrases. These tips are especially important in instances where you are referring to a general audience or don't know the gender of the people you are speaking to.

Here are some examples of language you can use:

Inclusive Language

DO	DON'T
"Can I get you folks something?"	"Can I get you ladies something?"
"We don't know who they were."	"We don't know who he/she was."
Dear Mx. _____ or Dear "Full Name"	Dear Ms. or Mr.
Partner/spouse/ significant other	Husband/wife, boyfriend/girlfriend
"There's a visitor/person here to see you."	"There's a woman here to see you."
Esteemed guests	Ladies and gentlemen

Affirming Language

DO	DON'T
Trans(gender) Person	Transgendered
Transgender is a noun, not a verb.	
Gay men	The gays
Person-centred language avoids dehumanizing people.	
LGBTQI2S	Homosexual
Use the labels and categories that individuals and communities have self-identified.	
"He is a man/was assigned female at birth"	"They used to be a female/ want to be a man"
Recognize that a person's gender is real and enduring, and avoid confounding gender with a point-in-time event or longing.	
"They transitioned"	"They had a sex change"
Living as one's true gender is a process, not a point-in-time event. Further, "switching genders" implies that the individual "opted" to change who they are.	