

Supporting Gender Diverse Folks

[Gender Diverse](#) is an umbrella term used to refer to various gender identities that are outside of the binary understanding of gender; this includes but is not limited to people who are Two-Spirit, transgender, and non-binary. Like all BCIT community members, gender-diverse folks are entitled to a learning and working environment where they feel physically and psychologically safe and are treated with respect and dignity.

[The Human Rights Code \(BC\)](#) prohibits discrimination and harassment in the learning and working environment on the basis of personal characteristics including gender expression and gender identity. Furthermore, BCIT's [Harassment and Discrimination Policy](#) and [Student Code of Conduct \(Non-academic\)](#) also prohibit such behaviour in addition to personal harassment and bullying.

BCIT recognizes however, that the mere absence of discrimination, harassment, and bullying is not enough on its own to create a truly inclusive environment. Rather, further education and work are required to ensure all community members feel a sense of belonging while being their true authentic selves.

BCIT has created online training called *Relearning Gender*. Employees can access it in the [Employee Learning Centre](#) and students (and anyone else) can access it for free as a [Massive Online Open Course](#). Also, as a "Proud Partner" of [Pride at Work Canada](#) BCIT Employees can attend their [webinars](#) at no cost. BCIT's Respect, Diversity, and Inclusion (RDI) Department can also provide presentations to staff and/or students on the topic of gender identity and pronoun usage, unconscious bias, and respectful behaviour. All BCIT community members are encouraged to connect with the [BCIT Pride Committee](#) to raise awareness and celebrate the 2S/LGBTQIA+ community, including those who are gender diverse.

While this document is intended to provide information to reduce barriers frequently encountered by gender-diverse folks we recognize that best practices and appropriate terminology continue to evolve. We also acknowledge the diversity of lived experiences and intersecting identities of those who identify as gender diverse. As such we wish to remind folks that the best way to determine how to support any individual is to start simply by asking them what they need. However, it is not the responsibility of gender diverse folks to take on the burden of educating others on this topic.

"We champion diversity of experiences, ideas, cultures, and perspectives, fostering a community permeated with equality and inclusivity."

-BCIT Strategic Plan

The British Columbia Institute of Technology acknowledges that our campuses are located on the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish Nations of [xwməθkwəy̓əm](#) (Musqueam), [Skwxwú7mesh](#) (Squamish), and [səlilwətaʔt](#) (Tseil-Waututh).

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Sharing pronouns

BCIT encourages, but does not require, all staff and students to share their pronouns with others, regardless of their gender. Pronouns are words that are used to refer to people without using their name. Examples of pronouns include they/them, ze/zir, she/her, and he/him, but there are many [other options](#) as well.

There are several ways staff and students may choose to share their pronouns:

- In an email signature.
- When introducing oneself verbally.
- Through a button or other indication on a name tag.
- In display name on a Zoom account.

Inclusive Language

Gender should not be assumed based on someone’s physical appearance, name, manner of dress, or way of speaking. As such, if someone has not shared their pronouns it is best practice to use “they/them” until they do share their pronouns. Likewise, it is best to use gender neutral terms to refer to roles or positions, e.g. “chairperson” instead of “chairman” or “firefighter” instead of “fireman”, “parents” instead of “mothers and fathers.”

When addressing groups of people gender neutral language should also be used. For example, instead of welcoming “ladies and gentlemen” at the start of a class or event use terms such as “everyone,” “folks,” or other non-gendered language.

Legal name v. preferred name

Everyone, including students and employees, have the right to be referred to by the name and gender they wish regardless of their legal name or sex-assigned-at-birth. Sometimes the use of a name other than one's legal name is referred to as a "preferred name." However, BCIT recognizes that for gender diverse folks the use of a name other than their legal name is not simply a matter of preference as in the use of a nickname but may be central to their identity.

Using the name and pronoun someone has requested is the respectful thing to do. People should not be asked to explain or justify why they wish to be referred to by a particular name or pronoun.

Misgendering

When someone's name or pronouns are misused, it can make them feel disrespected, invisible, and/or dismissed. Research shows that when the chosen name of young trans people is used consistently, it both affirms gender identity and reduces mental health risks. Inclusivity is an essential component of wellbeing and having a sense of belonging.

Referring to someone by the wrong pronoun or gender is called "misgendering." Although mistakes can occur, everyone is expected to make best efforts to avoid such errors. If an error is made, generally the best thing to do is to quickly apologize, provide a correction, and take steps such to avoid repeating the mistake.

If you notice someone else being referred to by the wrong name or pronoun you can speak with them privately to ask if and how they would like you to respond and provide a correction if it happens again.

Refusing to refer to someone by the name or pronouns they have asked to be used can be extremely harmful. Ongoing, repeated, or purposeful refusal to use someone's requested name or gender is not only disrespectful but may be considered harassment or discrimination. Anyone who observes or experiences this can seek support from a variety of BCIT resources (see below). In most cases the first step would be for BCIT to take an educational approach to address the harm and prevent future occurrences. However, if the situation is not corrected or resolved discipline may occur.

Changing preferred name in BCIT systems – Students

Currently for registration BCIT requires a student to use their legal name. However, the registration process does allow for a student to also provide a preferred name. Both the preferred name (if provided) and legal name are entered into Banner which is BCIT's main database.

BCIT uses several different applications for students which pull student information from Banner. Currently some applications do not automatically display a preferred name even when entered into Banner and will default to the legal name. BCIT is working to address these issues and is continuing to educate staff and faculty around the use of preferred names.

In the meantime, students have a few options:

- To change the display name in the Student Self Service and BCIT App Follow [these instructions](#): myBCIT account -> General Settings -> Student Self Service -> Update Personal Information.

- To change the displayed name in the Student Learning Hub & Bongo Complete this [preferred name form](#). **Note** that it typically takes 1-5 days to process and this name change will be overwritten if their account is synched with Banner data. This is an automated synchronization that cannot be prevented. A preferred name form will need to be resubmitted each time their data is synchronized. This typically happens a few times a semester for most students.
- Class lists do not contain pronouns. When accessed correctly class lists should contain only the student's preferred name, but sometimes they wrong name may show up instead. If students are concerned about being referred to by the wrong name or pronoun they may choose to reach out to their program head or instructor to advise of their preferred name and pronouns, or request that the RDI office do so on their behalf. Here's a sample email that can be used:

Hi [insert instructor's name],

I'm really excited to take your class this semester! I wanted to let you know that I use the pronouns [insert pronouns]. I have added my pronouns onto myBCIT account, and I was hoping that you would be able to support me in class by correcting students if they misgender me in classes/discussions/etc.

Thank you so much in advance for your help in creating a respectful environment.

[insert your name]

[insert your pronouns]

- Instead of taking the above steps a student may instead contact the Registrar to request they manually input the student's preferred name into the legal name filed in Banner so that all systems and class lists will pull the correct (preferred) name. However, the downside of this option is that a "hold" would need to be put on the account. This means that any registration, request for transcripts or other official documentation from BCIT would need to be made directly to the Registrar who can only issue official documentation under a person's legal name.

Legal name change – Students

If a student has changed their name legally for any reason they must fill out a [Change of Name form \[PDF\]](#) and submit the following documentation to [Student Records](#) in person, by mail, or [e-mail](#):

- A copy of legal name change document or marriage certificate, **and** a copy of government-issued ID (e.g. driver's license, passport, or provincial ID) that reflect the new name; or
- Two government-issued IDs which reflect the new name.

Changing names in BCIT systems – Employees

Although BCIT requires employees' legal names for payroll purposes employees can add a "preferred name" to the employee profile through the [employee dashboard](#). Preferred names will be visible in Outlook and Cherwell.

Legal name change – Employees

If an employee chooses to change their legal name for any reason, they can email their government issued ID (or a marriage certificate if the name change is due to marriage) to HR@bcit.ca.

Washroom access

Every individual at BCIT has the right to use whichever washroom or changeroom they are most comfortable with based on their gender identity, regardless of their sex-assigned-at-birth. This includes facilities designated as “male”, “female” and “all-gender” (sometimes identified with a picture of what is in the facility, e.g., toilet, instead of words or icons describing who the space is for). If questioned about your selection of facilities you are not required to justify yourself or defend your choice. You may choose to say, “I’m in the right place.”

In 2021 BCIT, through TransFocus Consulting, Inc. undertook an assessment of all-gender washroom facilities which resulted in this [2022 report](#). To further recommendations made in that report BCIT is actively working to increase the number of all-gender washroom facilities. Learn more about these efforts and access and view a map of [existing all-gender washroom locations](#) and planned upgrades.

Instructors are encouraged at the start of their course to tell all students where the closest, men’s, women’s, all-gender, and accessible washrooms are.

Transitioning or coming out at BCIT

Throughout one’s time at BCIT one’s gender identity or expression may change, or they may wish to share information about their previously undisclosed gender identity or expression such as a change in name, pronouns, or appearance. This is sometimes referred to as “coming out” or “social transitioning.” Everyone’s journey is different, and some folks may also decide to change their legal name and/or seek a medical transition, while others may not.

An employee who is transitioning or coming out at BCIT may choose to seek support from their manager, Human Resources Business Partner, union representative, or the RDI office. Likewise, a student may choose to seek support from their Program Head, a Student Advocate, Student Life Office, or RDI Office.

Support can be provided in deciding what information (such as a new name), with whom, when, and how to share. You can also receive assistance in updating your information in BCIT systems. It is not the obligation of the person who is transitioning or coming out to educate others. Instead, resources or education sessions to classes or teams can also be provided by BCIT upon request.

It is always the individual’s choice to decide how much information, if any, and with whom they wish to share it. All staff and students are entitled to privacy. It is important to remember that just because someone has felt comfortable sharing personal information with you does not mean they necessarily want others to know. It is important to seek clarification from folks regarding what personal information they want shared and with whom.

Accessing medical and counselling support – Students

Most full-time students are automatically registered for the Extended Health and Dental Plan which also includes counselling benefits. The BCITSA Health Plan covers medications listed in the BC Fair PharmaCare Formulary, including most forms of hormone therapy (such as taking testosterone, estrogen, or androgen

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blockers). A special authorization form may be required. Visit the [BCIT Student Association website](#) for further information about your coverage.

BCIT has a team of physicians that offer medical appointments to students through MSP, similar to any community doctor's office. There is also an on-site psychiatrist that can be accessed by referral from one of the doctors, as well as a team of nurses who support triage of health concerns. Additional information can be found [here](#) for accessing on-campus health services.

BCIT also offers [free, confidential counselling](#) to all students. Counsellors can offer help in a range of areas. There are five counsellors at the Burnaby campus and one counsellor at the Downtown campus. Virtual (phone and video) counselling is available for students at all campuses.

All counsellors have been encouraged to take the [Trans Care BC online courses and Prism Transgender Inclusion 101](#), and to pursue ongoing professional development in working with gender and sexual diversity and creating gender affirming environments.

[Trans Care BC](#), part of the Provincial Health Services Authority, can also help with providing gender-affirming health and wellness support.

If you require time off school or other accommodations for mental or physical health needs the first step is to contact [Accessibility Services](#).

Student Housing

Housing has gender-inclusive living options in residence, along with gender binary options. It is important to note that BCIT residences are shared accommodations, which may be a barrier for some trans, gender diverse, or Two-Spirit students. All washrooms in gender inclusive suites are gender neutral. Students have the right to a safe, harassment-free living environment in housing. If students are experiencing discrimination or bullying, they should report it immediately.

Accessing medical and counselling support – Employees

Eligible employees have health and medical coverage through Manulife. Benefits vary depending on the type of employee group and status. You can find additional information about your coverage by review the applicable [benefits book](#). If you are unsure which benefit book applies to you contact your hr Coordinator at hr@bcit.ca

Employees also have access to [free confidential counselling services](#). [Trans Care BC](#), part of the Provincial Health Services Authority, can also help with providing gender-affirming health and wellness support.

If you require time off work or other accommodations for mental or physical health needs the first step is to contact your human resources business partner.

Harassment, bullying, & discrimination

BCIT is committed to maintaining and respecting human rights at every level of the institution. This means providing students, staff, and faculty with an environment dedicated to excellence, equity, respect, and free from discrimination, bullying, and harassment.

If you experience or observe harassment, bullying, or discrimination at BCIT, or encounter any barriers related to your gender identity or expression you are strongly encouraged to report the concern and seek support and assistance by connecting with any of the following:

If you are a student:

- Your Instructor, Program Head, or Associate Dean
- [The Student Life Office](#)
- [Student Wellness Advocate from the Student Association](#)
- [The Respect, Diversity, and Inclusion \(RDI\) Office](#)

If you are an employee:

- Your direct manager, or if that is the individual who is the subject of your concern, their manager
- [Human Resources](#)
- Your shop steward or union representative
- [The Respect, Diversity, and Inclusion \(RDI\) Office](#)

Resources

BCIT Resources

- [BCIT LGBTQ+ Student Club](#)
- [BCIT's Pride Committee](#)
- [BCITSA Advocacy](#)
- [Free Employee Counselling](#)
- [Free Student Counselling](#)
- [Student Health Services](#)
- [Respect, Diversity, and Inclusion](#)

Critical Need Resources

- [Here2Talk](#) confidential, free counselling and referral services by app, phone, or online chat for all registered post-secondary students. Available 24/7 through 877.857.3397.
- [KUU-US Crisis Response Service](#) call 800.588.8717 for culturally-aware crisis support for Indigenous peoples in BC.
- [Trans Lifeline](#) national trans-led organization dedicated to improving the quality of trans lives by responding to the critical needs of community with direct service, material support, advocacy, and education. 24/7 hotline: 877.565.8860.
- [WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre](#) support services for survivors of sexualized violence or gender marginalization: cis and trans women, Two-Spirit, trans and/or non-binary people.

General Resources

- [Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity](#) provides support and programming in the areas of education, health, and advocacy.
- [Catherine White Holman Wellness Centre](#) volunteer-run Vancouver based clinic. Provides low-barrier wellness services to trans and gender diverse people, including professional counselling, legal advice, massage, and other services for trans and gender-diverse people.
- [Dragonstone Counselling](#) offers affordable counselling for LGBTQ+ clients facing significant financial barriers (unemployed, under-employed, marginalization). Call 604.738.7557 for information on waitlist, lower cost counselling.
- [Egale](#) Canada's leading organization for 2SLGBTQI people and issues. Improves and saves lives through research, education, awareness, and by advocating for human rights and equality in Canada and around the world.
- [Foundry Virtual](#): province-wide virtual services with counselling, peer support, family support, groups, and workshops for young people ages 12-24 and their caregivers. All services are free and confidential, and may be accessed through the Foundry BC app, chat, phone (833.308.6379) or video calls.
- [It Gets Better Canada](#) fulfills its mission to uplift, empower, and connect Two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (2SLGBTQ+) youth across Canada by storytelling and community building.
- [GLAAD](#) is a non-profit organization focused on LGBTQ advocacy and cultural change.
- [Kokoska](#) offers "pay-what-feels-fair" short-term psychotherapy.
- [PACE](#) one on one support, sliding scale counselling, drop-in services, peer outreach, and weekly group promoting safety and wellbeing for sex workers in Vancouver. Trans Supper Club provides weekly dinner every Tuesday for trans, Two-Spirit, and gender diverse people who have worked in sex work.
- [Pride at Work Canada](#) Through dialogue, education and thought leadership, Pride at Work Canada/Fierté au travail Canada empowers Canadian employers to build workplaces that celebrate all employees regardless of gender expression, gender identity, and sexual orientation.
- [QMUNITY](#) Responds to BC's queer, trans, and Two-Spirit communities' needs and helps them thrive.
- Transgathering: a drop-in for all variants of trans-identified and gender-variant folk with the opportunity to connect, share, discuss, and learn in a safe and supportive environment.
- Counselling Program: \$60-80/session; daytime only; 604.684.5307 ext 107
- [Rainbow Refugee](#) Rainbow Refugee promotes safe, equitable migration and communities of belonging for people fleeing persecution based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or HIV status.
- [The Trevor Project](#) works to provide support and services to LGBTQ youth through crisis services, education, research, and advocacy.
- [The Coalition Against Trans Antagonism \(CATA\)](#): group of trans women, trans femmes, nonbinary people, and cisgender women whose goal is to challenge oppressive ideologies and practices within organizations.
- [Trans Care BC Provincial Health Services Authority](#) supports the delivery of equitable and accessible care, surgical planning, and peer and community support for trans people across the province.
- [Trans Rights BC](#) this project aims to disseminate human rights information that is accurate, accessible, and relevant to the safety and well-being of trans and gender diverse individuals and their supportive allies across British Columbia.
- [Trans Student Educational Resources](#) youth-led organization dedicated to transforming the educational environment for trans and gender non-conforming students through advocacy and empowerment.

Two-Spirit Resources

- [CampOUT!](#) social justice summer camp for queer, trans, Two-Spirit, and allied youth from British Columbia and the Yukon ages 14-21. Takes place every July near Vancouver, leadership and camper applications begin in February.
- [Dancing to Eagle Spirit Society](#) trans positive and inclusive ceremonies led by Tsleil-Waututh, Two-Spirit and trans elder on Tsleil-Waututh Territory.
- [Lu'ma Medical Centre](#) culturally integrated primary health care that is accessible for families.
- [MMIWG2SLGBTQQIA+ National Action Plan](#) The National Action Plan is a response to the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the Métis Perspectives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and LGBTQ2S+ People and developed to drive transformative change to end systemic racism and violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, wherever they are.
- [Native Women's Association of Canada Action Plan: WAC's Action Plan to End the Attack Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and Gender-Diverse People](#)
- [The Urban Native Youth Association \(UNYA\)](#) aims to support and empower Indigenous youth. Within UNYA is their Two-Spirit Collective, which provides support for Indigenous youth (ages 15-30) who identify as Two-Spirit, 2SLGBTQIA+ or questioning.
- [Two Spirit Sweat Lodge](#) Sweat lodge held on Squamish Territory (North Vancouver) for Two-Spirit folks and allies.
- [Two Spirit Calls to Action](#) these Calls to Action highlight ongoing discrimination and marginalization based on gender identity, racialization, and/or sexuality, and they are framed as recommendations on how to address them.