

Robert Service School – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Policy

A major focus of Robert Service School’s philosophy is to encourage the development of positive behaviours that are associated with ‘living in a good way’, known by Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in as Trë’hude. Fundamental to living in a good way and taking care of each other is the ability for each individual to feel safe, cared for, and respected. To this end, this SOGI policy will help to ensure the dignity and safety of LGBTQIA2S+ people at RSS.

Goals for SOGI Inclusive Education:

- 1. Visibility:** The diversity of sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions are recognized and valued.
- 2. Protection:** The safety, dignity and privacy of all people across the sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) spectra is intended to be preserved, as well as protected from harm.
- 3. Inclusion:** At Robert Service School, equitable treatment and inclusion for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions are priorities.

School Policy

Policies and procedures that explicitly reference SOGI have been proven to reduce discrimination, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts for all students. At Robert Service School, in partnership with Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in Education, School Council and Student Council, we are enacting these policies to promote a culture of safety, inclusion and belonging for all students. These policies are informed by current research as effective in promoting learning environments that are welcoming and inclusive for all members of the school community.

*For the purpose of this policy, we are using the acronym SOGI to represent sexual orientation and gender identity and LGBTQIA2S+ to represent lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, two spirit, and all other people with diverse gender identities who may be present in the school or during school activities. Sexual orientation and gender identity terms are changing fluidly as we learn and understand more about ourselves. We are using the most updated terminology available at the time of writing, this document will need to be revisited as this language changes.

1. School Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Educators consistently identify a lack of training and resources as being one of the biggest barriers to implementing SOGI education. Effective training incorporates implementation of policy and procedures to create inclusive environments and enables educators to integrate SOGI into the curriculum at all grade levels.

Every person plays an important role and has a responsibility to model respect, understanding, and support for diversity in the working and learning environment. In the Yukon, Bill 304 amends the Education Act to:

Ensure that all schools in the Yukon have safe spaces for LGBTQ2S+ students in the form of student activities or organizations.

Schools are responsible for:

- Ensuring that there are initiatives in the school that promote equality and non-discrimination at the beginning of each school year.
 - which must include student activities in relation to gender, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation, and
 - which may include, without limitation, student organizations promoting equality and non-discrimination, such as gender and sexuality alliance.
- Designating a staff member or responsible adult to lead initiatives, under Section 169(w) of the Education Act, in the school that promotes equality and non-discrimination.
- Providing staff with professional learning opportunities to develop a broader understanding of SOGI and the impact on students. Training should allow staff to appropriately deliver the curriculum, handle discrimination, and support individual needs.

Staff are responsible for:

- being familiar with and knowing where to access the SOGI policy and procedures;
- educating themselves about gender-inclusive school practices using research-based materials;
- develop appropriate communication strategies to interact with LGBTQIA2S+ individuals and their families;
- fully understand the concepts of protection of privacy for individuals and their families;
- respecting the rights of all students in regard to their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression;
- modelling and teaching inclusive practices that honour and promote human rights;
- ensuring the safety of all students by making expectations for language and behaviour explicit, and directly addressing discrimination and harassment;
- utilizing meaningful and culturally-inclusive classroom curriculum and resources that positively and accurately represent LGBTQIA2S+, nonconforming people, and improve understanding of diverse gender identities and gender expressions. Heteronormality must be balanced by students seeing their realities reflected in their learning opportunities.

2. Common language

At RSS, all parties will be well-informed of and equipped with appropriate and respectful language to refer to LGBTQIA2S+ people. Introducing common language through policy and procedures is important to establish clarity. Using respectful SOGI terminology can foster shared understanding among students, educators and parents, and support greater collaboration in creating SOGI inclusive school environments.

Community organizations are a helpful source of information and support for identifying inclusive language. Any set of terms should acknowledge that language is ever evolving and that the individual is always the expert on how they may identify and on what language or terms they consider respectful and inclusive of themselves.

For clarification of terms, please refer to Glossary and links to community organizations.

3. Safety/Anti-Harassment

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to SOGI-inclusive policies. At RSS, we are establishing SOGI policies necessary to keep LGBTQIA2S+ people safe, respected and included at school.

- A. Homophobic and transphobic comments, discrimination, and bullying are demeaning to all students, students' families and guardians, and employees regardless of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. These forms of harassment and discrimination are prohibited under the Yukon Safe and Caring Schools Policy.
- B. All employees have an obligation to intervene in any interaction involving the use of homophobic or transphobic comments and behaviours, regardless of the speaker's intentions, and to convey that such comments are against school policy and will not be tolerated in the educational community.
- C. Proactive safety measures are a priority at RSS, and our school is committed to a comprehensive and effective education program on SOGI issues following the BC Curriculum.

At RSS, under our Positive Behaviour Policy #1902, all homophobic or transphobic behaviours or comments are defined as critical incidents (red form) and will be reported to administration for appropriate disciplinary and restorative practices.

“Destructive or abusive behaviour that causes harm to the well-being of self, others or their property. Includes illegal activity, the verbal or physical abuse of a peer, staff or community member or the abuse of property. There is zero tolerance for such behaviours. Changing the behaviour likely requires retribution, possibly suspension, and potentially counsellor support. Parent/ Caregiver contact and re-entry restorative action is required and behavior closely monitored through a Critical Report”

- From Positive Behaviour Policy #1902, p. 41, RSS School Handbook

4. Self-Identification and Confidentiality

LGBTQIA2S+ people have the right to self-identify their gender and sexuality, which includes the name by which they wish to be addressed and the pronouns that correspond to their gender identity. It is the decision of the individual as to what kind of information they choose to share publicly regarding their sexual orientation or gender identity. LGBTQIA2S+ people have the right to the confidentiality of their sex, gender, and name and to speak freely and share information about their sexual orientation or gender identity when they choose to. Staff will not expose sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression of students. While school records (including official reports) must contain the current legal name and gender of students, until such time as a student legally changes their identifiers, the common usage in the school will be the name and pronouns chosen by the student.

“Language to describe gender variant identities is continually changing and keeping track can be challenging. Gender variant youth self-identify in many ways and have constructed a language about their identities and experiences that is critical for other individuals to understand and respect. If you are not sure of how an individual self-identifies, don't make assumptions. Let them tell you how they are self-identifying. Admitting you are unaware is much more respectful than assuming and using the wrong language.” - Public Health Canada

Schools must balance the parents' or guardians' need to be informed about their child's school experiences with an individual's right to live freely in their self-identified gender and sexual

orientation. At RSS, in the event of a conflict between a student's self-identification and their family's choices, the school will honour the student's self-identification at school. Situations arising at school may make it difficult or impossible for the school to keep an individual's status from parents or guardians. We will, in consultation with the individual, work with trained support providers to communicate positively with parents or guardians in the relatively safe confines of the school.

5. Dress Guidelines

Students may express their gender identity or gender expression through what they wear to school. This includes students who may dress in a manner that is not consistent with societal expectations of gender. Students must dress in a manner that complies with RSS Dress Code.

6. Gender-Integrated and Inclusive Activities

At RSS, integrated and inclusive activities enable students to join teams and groups that they feel correspond with their gender identity. Where gender-segregated activities continue to exist, students will have the option to be included in the group that corresponds to their gender identity or, in the case of gender non-conforming students, the group they would like to participate in.

Students will be included and accommodated during all extra-curricular activities, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, including having support to set up a Gender-Sexuality Alliance (GSA).

During overnight trips away from the school, plans must provide accommodation for each student in a situation where they will feel safe and accepted. The student can decide where they would feel most comfortable if they are staying in shared accommodations with other students and/or families. However, as with all groups, the school staff reserve the right to determine groupings that are workable. The school administrator or teacher in charge of the event will make any needed adjustments to support the student. When staying with a billet family, discuss with the student or their parent or guardian whether the student requires the billet family to be informed of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Wherever possible, in a billet situation, a member of staff or parent should be billeted along with the student to further ensure their feelings of safety.

7. Inclusive Learning

Classroom materials and activities will contain positive images and accurate information about sexual and/or gender diversity, SOGI history and culture which reflects accomplishments and contributions of transgender and gender-nonconforming people.

Employees have an important role to play in teaching and modeling respect for gender diversity. It is expected that teachers will create classrooms that are safe, caring and discrimination-free environments. All students need to see that adults are striving to promote an understanding of sexual identity and gender diversity beyond heterosexual relationships or the binary of only two genders. This includes:

- actively teaching the sexual orientation and gender identity curriculum in meaningful and ongoing ways.

- addressing the class in non-gendered ways (using inclusive language);
- seating and lining up students in non-gendered groupings;
- creating mixed-gender groups/teams;
- re-examining and rethinking school materials and events through the lens of SOGI inclusion
- displaying signs, posters, safe place stickers, and books that depict a range of gender presentations;
- celebrating national and international days and events that raise awareness about sexual orientation and gender identity;
- teaching students how to be allies and advocates for each other;
- avoiding making assumptions during health and career education instruction regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

8. Facilities

All individuals have the right to safe and private washrooms and changing facilities that correspond to their gender identity. The individual's self-identification is the sole measure of the individual's gender. While the main school at RSS does still have separate washrooms, locker rooms and changing facilities for males and females, individuals can access them based on their gender identity. There are designated gender-neutral facilities designed for use by one person at a time accessible to all individuals, and new constructions or renovations are incorporating such single-use facilities. Any individual who is uncomfortable using a shared facility while attending an off-site school-sponsored activity will be provided with a safe and private alternative. Individuals will not be required to use facilities that are inconsistent with their gender identity or personal needs.

9. School Community Involvement

Robert Service School is committed to ongoing, constructive and open dialogue with LGBTQIA2S+ people and others who self-identify on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

The school will support community partnerships that would enhance the school's commitment to LGBTQ2S+ students, staff, teachers and families.

The school will encourage School Council to acknowledge and support the diversity of our school community. The school will acknowledge through communication to students, staff and the community that LGBTQ2S+ parents and family members are positively recognized and included as such.

Glossary

LGBTQ2S, LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTQA, TBLG are some of the acronyms that refer to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Queer, Questioning, Two-Spirit, Asexual and Ally. Although all of the different identities within “LGBT” are often lumped together (and share sexism as a common root of oppression), there are specific needs and concerns related to each individual identity.

A. Main Sexual Orientation Terms

Biphobia is an irrational fear toward bisexuality and bisexual people as a social group or as individuals.

Bisexual a person who has emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction for people of more than one gender.

Gay or Lesbian is a person who has emotional, romantic or sexual attraction for people of the same sex.

Heterosexism is a behaviour that grants preferential treatment to heterosexual people, reinforces the idea that heterosexuality is somehow better or more “right” than queerness, or ignores/doesn’t address queerness as existing.

Heterosexual is a person who is attracted to someone with the other gender (or, literally, biological sex) than they have; often referred to as “straight”.

Homophobia is an irrational fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, or discomfort with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer people.

Questioning is the process of exploring one’s own sexual orientation, investigating influences that may come from their family, religious upbringing, and internal motivations.

Sexual orientation is a person’s emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction to another person(s).

Same Gender Loving (SGL) is a phrase coined by the African American/Black queer communities used as an alternative for “gay” and “lesbian” by people who may see those as terms of the White queer community.

B. Main Gender Identity Terms

Binary Gender is a traditional and outdated view of gender, limiting possibilities to “man” and “woman”.

Binary Sex is a traditional and outdated view of sex, limiting possibilities to “female” or “male”.

Biological sex is the physical anatomy and gendered hormones one is born with, generally described as male, female, or intersex, and often confused with gender.

Cisgender/Cissexual is a person whose gender identity matches society’s expectations of someone with their physical sex characteristics.

Cis-man is a person who was assigned male at birth who ends up going through life identifying with male pronouns, and as a man.

Cis-woman is a person who was assigned female at birth who ends up going through life identifying with female pronouns, and as a woman.

Cissexism is a harmful belief that being cisgender (i.e. non-trans) is the only acceptable and “natural” form of gender expression.

Gender/Gender Identity is how we perceive our identity as male, female, both, neither, regardless of our physical bodies.

Gender Expression is the external display of gender, through a combination of dress, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors, generally measured on a scale of masculinity and femininity.

Genderqueer/Gender non-conforming is an umbrella term that describes a person whose gender identity does not fit into socially constructed gender norms associated with “male” or “female”. Used by some people to defy gender restrictions and/or to deconstruct gender norms. Gender neutral pronouns include: Ze, Hir, Hirs, They, and Them.

Intersex is an umbrella term used to describe a person whose physical sex characteristics or chromosomes don't fit traditional medical definitions of male or female.

Sex (biological sex) is a label we are given to describe our physical bodies and reproductive abilities. Characteristics of the body used to determine sex may include genitals, gonads, hormones, chromosomes, and secondary sex characteristics.

Third Gender (1) a person who does not identify with the traditional genders of “man” or “woman,” but identifies with another gender; (2) the gender category available in societies that recognize three or more genders.

Transgender (Trans) is an umbrella term for a person who identifies as a gender which is different from that assigned at birth. Please note that transgendered is not an acceptable term to use as it implies that something happened to the person to make them transgender.

Trans Man is a person who was assigned the female sex at birth, but identifies as male.

Trans Woman is a person who was assigned the male sex at birth, but identifies as female.

Transphobia is an irrational fear and/or hatred and/or intolerance of people who are trans, perceived to be trans, or who cross societal gender norms.

Transition is the process trans people go through to overcome physical, legal, and social barriers so they can express their self-identified gender.

Two-Spirit is a cultural identity used by some indigenous people who have both masculine and feminine spirits.

C. Related Terms

Advocate is a person who actively works to end intolerance, educate others, and support social equity for a group.

Ally is a straight person who supports queer and trans* people.

Androgyny (1) a gender expression that has elements of both masculinity and femininity; (2)

occasionally used in place of “intersex” to describe a person with both female and male anatomy.

Asexual is a person who generally does not experience sexual attraction (or very little) to any group of people.

Bigender is a person who fluctuates between traditionally “woman” and “man” gender-based behavior and identities, identifying with both genders (and sometimes a third gender).

Closeted is a term to describe someone who is keeping their sexuality or gender identity a secret from many (or any) people, and has yet to “come out of the closet”.

Coming Out is the process of revealing your sexuality or gender identity to individuals in your life; often incorrectly thought to be a one-time event, this is a lifelong and sometimes daily process; not to be confused with “outing”.

Crossdresser is someone who occasionally dresses in the clothing of the “opposite” gender as part of their gender expression.

Cross-dressing is wearing clothing that does not conform to the traditional gender expression of your sex and gender identity (e.g., a man wearing a dress) for any one of many reasons, including relaxation, fun, and sexual gratification.

Drag Queen or Drag King is someone who dresses in the clothing of their “opposite” gender for performance.

Fluid(ity) is generally with another term attached, such as, gender-fluid or fluid-sexuality, fluid(ity). Describes an identity that is a fluctuating mix of the options available (e.g., man and woman, gay and straight); not to be confused with “transitioning”.

Genderless is a person who does not identify with any gender.

Outing is when someone reveals another person’s sexuality or gender identity to an individual or group, often without the person’s consent or approval; not to be confused with “coming out”.

Pansexual is a person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction for members of all gender identities/expressions.

Real life experience (Real Life Test) is the period in which a trans person is currently obligated to prove they can adapt to societal gender roles before being approved by publicly funded medical institutions for hormones or surgeries.

Queer is an umbrella term used by some people to defy gender or sexual restrictions. Not used by all. Can be considered offensive.

Standard of care is a medical treatment guideline that governs trans people’s equitable access to health care services.

Resources

SOGI 1 2 3

SOGI 1 2 3 shares proven SOGI-inclusive tools and resources in the areas of policy and procedures, inclusive environments and curriculum resources: www.sogieducation.org

BC Teachers Federation

The BCTF offers a variety of free workshops to teachers that aim to develop skills to interrupt, address, and challenge homophobia and transphobia within classrooms and school communities. <https://bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=17988> and <https://bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=6106>

Queer Yukon Society

Queen Yukon Society supports, promotes, and organizes events for the Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (2SLGBTQIA+) community and allies in the Yukon. www.queeryukon.com

QMUNITY – BC’s Queer Resource Centre

QMUNITY is a non-profit organization based in Vancouver, B.C. that works to improve queer and trans lives. They provide a safer space for LGBTQ/2S people and their allies to fully self-express while feeling welcome and included. <http://qmunity.ca/>

LGBTQ2S Toolkit

LSBTQ2S Toolkit is an online learning community for youth, families and adults who work with youth. <http://lgbtq2stoolkit.learningcommunity.ca/>

Egale Canada Human Rights Trust

Founded in 1995, Egale Canada Human Rights Trust is Canada’s only national charity promoting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) human rights through research, education and community engagement. <https://egale.ca/>

MyGSA

MyGSA.ca is Canada’s website for safer and inclusive schools for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) community. <https://egale.ca/portfolio/mygsa/>

Trans Care BC

The Trans Care BC program aims to enhance to coordination of trans health services and supports across the province, bringing gender-affirming care closer to home wherever possible.

<http://www.phsa.ca/our-services/programs-services/trans-care-bc>

The Gender and Sexuality Alliance Action Book

This action book was created by the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity. The Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity was established to support and empower work happening on a collaborative and/or collective level between and within territories, provinces, and nations of peoples such as Canadians, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis.

<https://ccgsd-ccdgs.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CCGSD-GSA-Book.pdf>

A Gender and Sexuality Alliance Manual

This manual was developed to enhance the resources available to LGBT2Q+ youth and supportive adults who are taking on leadership roles to create safer, more inclusive communities for LGBT2Q+ youth. <http://www.phsa.ca/transcarebc/Documents/Child-youth/So-you-wanna-start-a-gsa.pdf>

References

B.C. Ministry of Education SOGI Policy Guide.

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Public Health Agency of Canada. (2010}. Questions and answers: Gender identity in schools.

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/rp/gi-is/addres-eng.php>

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity 4 - 5. School District 71 (Comox Valley, BC) 2017.

SD83 SOGI Guidelines: Supporting Students with Diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Expressions. Vancouver, BC, 2020.

SOGI 1-2-3. <https://www.sogieducation.org> 2019. The ARC Foundation.

Yukon Safe and Caring Schools Policy. Government of Yukon, 2018

** COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

- RSS School Policy and Handbook should update all reference to his/her to their, including in all official reporting.
- Staff should be provided with training and time in order to assist in the development and implementation of these policies.
- Queer Yukon has informed our GSA that training workshops are currently being developed for YG Staff and schools - we recommend inviting them to present these workshops to our school.