



Adoptive Families  
Association of BC



**Supporting LGBTQ2S+ youth  
in adoption and foster care**

## Supporting LGBTQ2S+ Youth in Adoption and Foster Care

Copyright 2019 by the Adoptive Families Association of BC

Content author: Brianna Brash-Nyberg  
Layout and editing: Andrea Driedger

The Adoptive Families Association of BC is a charitable, accredited, non-profit organization offering adoption support, information, and education. Find out more about AFABC at [www.bcadopt.com](http://www.bcadopt.com).

This guide was made possible in part by a grant from the Adoption and Permanency Fund of BC. We are grateful for their support.

### Adoptive Families Association of BC

#200-7342 Winston Street  
Burnaby, British Columbia V5A 2H1  
Canada

[info@bcadoption.com](mailto:info@bcadoption.com)  
1-604-320-7330

*All rights reserved. No part of this manual may be photocopied or reproduced without written permission from the publisher. No part of this publication can be stored in a retrieval systems by any means, recorded or otherwise, without written permission from the publisher. Printed in Canada.*

# CONTENTS

**CONTENTS** ..... **3**

**INTRODUCTION** ..... **4**

**KEYS TO SUPPORT** ..... **6**

**TERMINOLOGY** ..... **12**

**RESOURCES** ..... **13**





# introduction

## THE BASICS

Approximately 20 percent of high school students today identify as LGBTQ2S+. Among youth in foster care, the numbers are even higher. Since most adoptions in BC are from foster care, it makes sense that many adopted kids and teens also identify as LGBTQ2S+.

Adolescence is tough for everyone, but these young people are especially vulnerable. Developing a healthy sense of self as an adopted or fostered LGBTQ2S+ young person is often complicated by early trauma, racism, disability, attachment difficulties, identity issues, and other challenges. LGBTQ2S+ kids who are in foster care because their families couldn't accept their **gender** or **sexual orientation** may be extra scared to trust another family.

The good news is that support and acceptance can make all the difference, and adoptive and foster parents have a head start. We've spent decades learning how to talk about identity through the lenses of race, culture, and different types of family, such as those formed through open adoption or foster care. We can use these frameworks to understand gender and sexual orientation, too.

### A NOTE ON TERMS

As you read this guide, you'll notice that some words are **bolded**. That means there's a definition of that word in the Terminology section on pages 14-15. Flip back and forth as needed, and check out the Resources section on pages 16-17 for even more info.

### WHAT DOES LGBTQ2S+ MEAN?

LGBTQ2S+ stands for "**Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer** (or **Questioning**), **Two-Spirit**, Plus." There are lots of variations on this acronym. We chose to use LGBTQ2S+ because it's widely used, and because of the inclusivity and open-endedness of the "+" symbol. People describe their **gender** and **sexual orientation** in so many ways that it's impossible to represent all of them in a single term.

Another common version is LGBTQIA, where the IA stands for "**intersex, asexual**."

## DID YOU KNOW?

**11%**

of youth in care identified as **lesbian, gay, or bisexual**, compared to 4% of youth not in care\*

**6%**

of youth in care identified as **transgender**, compared to 1% of youth not in care\*

**13%**

of Indigenous youth in care identified as **Two-spirit**, compared to 5% of Indigenous youth not in care\*

*\* According to the McCreary Centre Society's 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey, which was completed by over 1,000 youth who were or had been in government care*

“

**Just like any child, these kids are looking for a permanent, loving family. They're looking for someone to love them unconditionally, love them permanently.**

**[Being LGBTQ2S+] is not a lifestyle, it's who they are, the same way they have brown hair, or blue eyes, or the language that they speak—you can't change what they were born with. –Sam**





# keys to support

There's very little research on the specific needs of adopted LGBTQ2S+ children and youth, so we turned to members of our community to learn more about what adoptive parents and caregivers can do help LGBTQ2S+ young people feel safe and supported. Each page in this section discusses one of the key elements of support support they identified.

## SETTING THE STAGE: TERRA'S STORY

My son identifies as not heteronormative. He doesn't have a label for himself, though. He still uses male gender and pronouns and seems to be fine with it, but will also say things like "there's lots of parts of me that identify with being female."

We have very openly **gay** and **lesbian** people in our lives so he's seen that modelled. He struggles because he has crushes on people based on who they are, regardless of gender. He's not making any declarations about being gay, or being only or mostly attracted to other males. He's not there. Finding resources is a huge a challenge, because most of them are very **binary**.

As a parent, my biggest challenge is that I'm just afraid I'm going to screw up: say the wrong thing, do the wrong thing, not do enough. How do I converse with my kid in a way that's appropriate and respectful? One of the things he asked me to do was to just sit and look up labels and definitions with him. We're learning together.

For kids with trauma there's a constant need to be accepted and loved. Often they'll push away in order to avoid being rejected. So we've been proactive about saying things like "No matter who you love, Dad and I will love you." We were saying those things to our kids before any of them said anything to us [about being LGBTQ2S+]. I think that set the stage for our family to be a safe place for everyone to be who they really are.

---

“I have a nephew who is trans, and when he came out, this is what I told him: “I love you, no matter what. I love you, period. I will try my very best but when I make a mistake, please correct me. I will not take it as criticism. I’ll say thank you!” –Terra

---

# ACCEPTANCE

For adopted people, the realization that they're LGBTQ2S+ can feel like just one more thing that makes them stand out as different. It can also be scary, especially if they already struggle with fear of rejection, abandonment, or trauma (even children who are adopted at birth can struggle because of their early experience of separation and loss). The world is safer and more accepting than ever before, but LGBTQ2S+ people still experience more rejection, discrimination, and violence than non-LGBTQ2S+ people.

## TIPS

- Keep an open mind, especially if your child is still young. Most people assume their children are straight and will identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. If it turns out that your child falls elsewhere on the spectrum of gender and/or sexuality, it'll be easier for them to feel good about their identity if you've already normalized all **genders** and **sexual orientations** by talking about them openly.
- Talk about relationships and sex in inclusive ways. For example, you could say "Is there anyone you're interested in romantically?" instead of "Do you have a crush on any boys?" If you have rules about sleepovers or about doors staying open when friends are over, apply them to everyone rather than making different rules for different genders.
- Be proactive about telling your child that you accept, love, and support them. Look for ways to be specific you that your child knows your acceptance includes all genders and sexualities. "In this family..." language is one way to do this. Try statements like, "In this family, people can date whoever they want, as long as they're home by curfew," or "In this family, anyone can wear nail polish."

## FINDING THEIR IDENTITY: ATHENA'S STORY

I identify as a **non-binary** lesbian individual, and my pronouns are they/them/theirs. The first time I ever used they/them pronouns was at a retreat for youth from care. I'd been wondering for a while if I might be **genderqueer**, and that retreat provided a safe space for me to actually use they/them pronouns, so I just gave it a shot.

I thought at first that people might say something, but everyone was just like "Oh, okay, that's you, that's great" and moved on. I felt safe and accepted. Being genderqueer, or gender-diverse, it's really nice to not have to pretend to be someone that I'm not, and to not have to fit into a box. The youth in care community has been instrumental in supporting and helping me and in saying "Your gender is a legitimate thing and that's valid." Almost everyone I'm close with in the youth from care community is gender-diverse or **gay**-identifying.

It's really difficult for a youth to co-exist with a parent when they are genderqueer and when that directly clashes with their parent's values. You just want to be yourself, but you end up being closeted, and being closeted is a nightmare. If you're not closeted, sometimes you risk getting kicked out or experiencing a lot of trauma because of your identity, which is absolutely awful. It ends up turning a lot of folks over to the care system.

My advice to parents is to just to be open-minded. Try to learn. Especially with the Internet, [information] is so accessible. Try to see your kid for who they are without invalidating them and their experience. Big shifts start with individuals having uncomfortable conversations and being open to changing their minds.



## ACCEPTANCE IN ACTION

One thing I'd say to adoptive parents is 'Don't assume.' Don't make the assumption that your kid identifies as a specific gender or has crushes on a specific gender. Just don't make that assumption. Make sure that you're telling your kids regularly, just in casual family chats, that you welcome and affirm all diversity, no matter what you think your kid may or may not be.

This advice applies to all parents but, given the statistics, especially to adoptive parents. I think it should be part of pre-adoption education, actually, to have this information at your fingertips and to go into adoptive parenting without assumptions. –Terra

I used to hear more of the word "tolerance," and I've really stopped liking that word, because I do not want people to tolerate my kids. I really want people to accept our family. –Heather

## PARTICIPATION

Getting involved in the LGBTQ2S+ community alongside your child is a great way to show your support. It's also just happens to be a wonderful way to build attachment—always a good thing in adoptive families!

### TIPS

- Take your child to to events and attend alongside them.
- Watch movies and TV shows with characters that reflect your child's identity and talk about them together.
- Join a support group or advocacy organization.
- Follow your child's lead—like all young people, there are sure to be things they want to do without their parents or caregivers, too. It's all about balance.

### COMING OUT IN FOSTER CARE: SAM'S STORY

I came out in 1997, when I was 16. I was living in a group home at the time. I was super scared, even though I knew one of the caregivers was **gay**. Part of it was that I'd already had such a tough life. I didn't want one more thing to make my life tough. Being gay, especially in the 90s, was hard. Nobody talked about it. You still experienced a lot of violence if you were gay. I didn't want to admit it because I wanted it to go away.

I never came out in high school except for one person who was my best friend. When I was 12 I heard that gay people can go through a phase, and they'll get over it as a teenager. I learned that in school. Finally, at 15, I was like "I don't think this is a phase anymore. Three years is a long phase. Now what am I supposed to do?"

Flash forward to living in this group home. I knew that my caregivers were accepting because obviously one was gay. When I told her, she said "Well, there's this youth group downtown. Do you want to go to it?" She took me to the first one and I got to meet other gay youth and see that we were normal. I could talk to youth workers who were gay too. They even took me to Blockbuster where I could find movies with gay content.

I was very lucky to be in a home where their reaction was "OK, pass the salt, and what can we do for you?" They did everything they could do for me. They were able to help coach me through **coming out**, and it really helped build up the confidence of who I am.

Compared to even the early 2000s, we're more inclined as a society to accept the fact that gender is not **binary**, that there's a spectrum. It's beautiful to see young boys being able to feel OK about it, and young girls to be able to wear button-up shirts and bow ties and feel OK about it, and for it not to have to mean that they're gay or **bisexual**—it's just what they prefer to wear. It's the most beautiful thing for me to watch.

We're also seeing a younger generation coming out sooner, and that's because we're having conversations and being more open. People are able to be who they are, to be unique, and that's a wonderful place to live in. In the past there was such a lack of understanding, there was so much fear, there was so much violence around LGBTQ people. We still have a long ways to go. We still need to provide education to people who don't understand the change. But that's OK. Both can happen at the same time.



**“I didn't go to my first Pride parade until I was 18. [My foster caregivers] never actually came with me to anything. For them to have been immersed in the gay community, to find events they could take me to so we could learn together, it would have been amazing. It would show me they were 100% behind me. –Sam**



## EXPLORATION

Some kids know they're LGBTQ2S+ when they're as young as 3 or 4, while others don't understand or express their identity or orientation until they are teens or even adults.

Sometimes young people do recognize there's something different about their **gender** or **sexual orientation**, but need time and space to figure out what that means for them. They may explore several different identities and labels during this time.

### TIPS

- There's a lot of social pressure to "choose a side," but many young people who are **gender non-conforming** or bisexual will never fit neatly into a particular box or stereotype.
- Non-conforming children and teens may experience bullying. Young people do best when their families help them cope with those experiences while supporting and affirming them just as they are rather than pushing them to conform.
- While room for exploration and fluidity is important for many people, it doesn't mean that their overall LGBTQ2S+ identity is "just a phase."

### GENDER FLUIDITY: KT'S STORY

I identify as gender fluid. I was assigned female at birth and use female pronouns. Sometimes, though, I'm male. I've also been neutral. When I finally figured out that this is who I am, I was very proud of myself. I felt so relieved that I wasn't going crazy.

My next fear was **coming out** to my friends, family, and my partner. I haven't come out to most of my birth or foster family. My birth family is religious and I don't believe they would accept me. My foster family is not as religious, but they do like to joke about things. I've lost touch with both families, so I don't feel the need to tell them. Luckily for me, my friends and the people whom I consider family were very accepting of my identity. It took my partner a little time to understand what gender fluidity was, but now he accepts me as I am.

I haven't always been so lucky. I remember coming out to one of my partner's coworkers and she started to say things like "You're a girl, you can clearly see that," and "Are you sure you're not **bisexual** or just a tomboy?" If I were feeling more female at that time, it wouldn't have bugged me, but at that moment I was very male. Besides, these three aspects of a person's identity are completely different. Bisexuality is when a person of any **gender identity** is sexually attracted to more than one gender. A tomboy is a girl whose gender identity is female but who dresses like a boy. It's also difficult for me when I'm male but have to use the female washroom because I was assigned female at birth. Sometimes I don't feel like I should be in there.

In my day to day life, I notice that people react to the way I hold myself. When I'm a guy, and I'm hanging out with my partner and his friends, they treat me as one of the guys and laugh and joke with me. On the other hand, people who don't know me as well are sometimes confused or caught off guard when I show up looking either very feminine or very masculine. Over time, they're all adjusting. I'm proud to be who I am: an amazing and wonderful gender fluid young person.



**The first time my son asked me why he was a girl, he was 3. By 5, I knew he was somewhere on the [LGBTQ2S+] spectrum. He first came out in high school. He came out as gay, then as bi, then as a man. –Lois**

### TRANSITIONING

Many parents have concerns that their child or youth will want to express their identity by **transitioning** in an irreversible medical or surgical way, and that the child will have regrets later in life.

This is a complicated topic that is best discussed with knowledgeable professionals—and that's actually a required step in any medical or surgical transition. This quote from the National Centre for Trans Equality may be reassuring:

"People do not transition on a whim, and almost all **transgender** people have thought deeply about their gender for a long time before transitioning. As such, it is extremely rare for transgender people to change their minds or regret [medical or surgical] transition. Those who do so are almost exclusively upset not at their transition, but about rejection by family, friends, and sometimes the inability to get a job, as discrimination against transgender people is still very widespread."

Source: [transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/QuestionableQuestions.pdf](https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/QuestionableQuestions.pdf)

## MIRRORS

In adoption, a mirror is someone or something that embodies and reflects an important part of the adoptee. Mirrors help kids feel normal, connected, and empowered, and go a long way towards building a supportive environment.

Transracial adoptive families have known for a long time about the importance of providing mirrors for their children. You can bring mirrors into your LGBTQ2S+ child's life in the same way transracial adoptive parents do.

Many adopted or fostered LGBTQ2S+ kids stand out or feel different in other ways, too. Some common examples include early trauma, special needs, and transracial or transcultural adoption. All these factors will interact with each other and influence the young person's identity journey uniquely. It can be challenging to understand how to support your child holistically if there seem to be multiple issues competing for attention. Open communication with your child and a strong support network, especially one that includes other foster and adoptive families, can help a lot.

### TIPS

- Help your child connect in healthy ways with other LGBTQ2S+ young people.
- Build relationships with LGBTQ2S+ adults who can be mentors and role models.
- Choose LGBTQ2S+ professionals and service providers when possible.
- Include media—movies, music, books, YouTube videos—made by or featuring LGBTQ2S+ people in your family's everyday life.
- Attend fun groups, activities, events that celebrate LGBTQ2S+ people.
- Spend time in areas that have a significant population of LGBTQ2S+ people.

### FINDING MIRRORS: HEATHER'S STORY

The adoption community needs to be brought up to date about the different [LGBTQ2S+] identities, how they manifest themselves, how they develop. We need a lot more acceptance around fluidity. Identity development is tough for kids and teens today. When you have the added lenses of bio family, and foster care, and adoption, you have a lot more opportunity for **questioning** "Who am I? What is my place in this world? Where do I feel safe?"

I think a lot of us, as parents, would like things to be black and white. It's the first question we ask when a baby's born: is it a boy or a girl? We really like those parameters. They're safe for us. We need to recognize our baggage around gender and sexuality and [beliefs about] the moral implications of those things, and parent our children the way they need to be parented.

One of the things that struck me right off was that my daughter needed to have role models. I really wanted to educate myself, explore the local community, and look for other people who could be role models for her so that she could look up at them and go "Oh, yeah that's kind of more how I am." When I was looking for role models, I was looking for people that shared other things that my daughter likes. I was able to find an LGBTQ2S+ caregiver who also has a dog, and that was the connection point. My daughter didn't see this caregiver as "Oh, you're like me on this one issue." It was "Oh, we both like dogs!" It was important to me to give her that broader perspective.



# ADVOCACY AND ALLYSHIP

As adoptive parents, we need to show up for our children everywhere. Advocating for your child makes their world safer and builds the bonds of trust and attachment.

## TIPS

- Ask your child's schools, clubs, and community organizations how they're representing and standing up for LGBTQ2S+ people and offer to connect them with resources.
- Share information with your family about how they can show their support and love for your child.
- Advocate for your child's specific needs. For example, one adoptive mother worked with the school to ensure her genderfluid child could safely use the washroom of their choice at any time, including (but not limited to) the universal washroom.
- Recognize that other aspects your child's identity or adoption experience, such as race, trauma, or special needs, may impact their experience as an LGBTQ2S+ person. Try to seek out therapists and medical providers who are competent in all of these areas, or who are willing to learn. AFABC's adoption key workers can help you with this.

*"I've found the deaf community [Heather's daughter is deaf] to be really welcoming because those people also have experienced that intersection of different types of barriers. When there's an intersection of a number of barriers, there's a lot more acceptance. We like to camp with another family that has five adopted kids and a plethora of labels. That's where we're the most comfortable: with other families that have similar lived experiences and that have a real framework of acceptance."—Heather*

## BEING DIFFERENT: LOIS'S STORY

Kids are about sameness and fitting in. My kid is internationally adopted, an identical twin, and **transgender**, and he struggles a lot with being different.

[My kids] really suffered trying to figure out their identities. It meant a lot of acting out. You feel like you're being a bad parent but at some point you have to accept that your child has a harder journey. They're different and they need to find their own way.

As much as electronics are an absolute curse, kids with alternative identities find communities online really fast, and it's their lifeline, which is both good and bad. Experts say they need to find kids like them because they feel like fish out of water, so let them use electronics to do it.

Most of the support we need isn't actually around being transgender, it's around mental health issues. The period between ages 13 and 23 can be pretty rocky for adoptive families. The kids realize they may never be like [their adoptive parents]. They will never be like their birth family. They're caught between worlds.

Throw out the rule book. The rule book will not apply. Whatever parenting rule book you thought existed will not apply to your child. Your only job is to make sure your kid feels loved and supported and to respond to their needs. Reassure them, love them, encourage them no matter what—because there may be a lot of "whats." That will make the difference to their self esteem, confidence, and development.

## BEING AN ALLY AT SCHOOL

When I was in school, in sex ed, everybody got to write a question for the teacher on a piece of paper. I remember asking how **lesbians** had safe sex. I remember the teacher opening it—I know it was my question because she'd opened all the others—and she just crumpled it up and put it back down on the table. Another time I asked if lesbians could get AIDS and she said "No, I don't think so." And, of course, that's wrong. But I don't think the teachers even knew that.

Parents, stand up and say that the curriculum should also be designed for LGBTQ2S+ students in the same way it's designed for **heterosexual** and **cisgender** students. Are there images of students who are **trans** or **gender-queer**? Are they teaching about safe sex for **queer** students? If your child says, "Ugh, I had sex ed today. It was so awkward. We had to put the condom on the cucumber," you can say something like, "Oh, how did they talk about safe sex? Did they talk about how you could cut [a condom] and make it into a dental dam if you're interested in having sex with women?"

Your child's response will tell you whether they're incorporating safe sex for same-**sex** people into the curriculum. It's also saying to your child, "I'm aware of some of this stuff and I'm somebody who's OK about talking about safe sex for same-sex individuals." That's a great way to show you're an **ally**, even if your child hasn't **come out** yet. —Sam

# terminology

**Ally:** A heterosexual and/or cisgender and/or cissexual person who supports and celebrates queer identities, interrupts and challenges queer-phobic and heterosexist remarks and actions of others, and willingly explores these biases within themselves.

**Asexual (ace):** Someone who does not experience sexual attraction for other individuals. Asexuality can be considered a spectrum, with some people experiencing desire for varying types of physical intimacy.

**Bisexual (bi):** An individual who is attracted to people of more than one gender. Some people define it as being attracted to men and women; others define it as being attracted to their own and other genders. A bi person may feel equally attracted to each gender, or may experience stronger attractions to one gender while still having feelings for another; this may vary over time.

**Cisgender (cis):** Identifying with the same gender that one was assigned at birth, or a gender identity that society considers to “match” the biological sex assigned at birth. The prefix cis- means “on this side of,” in reference to the gender binary model.

**Coming Out (or “coming out of the closet”):** The process of becoming aware of one’s gender and/or sexuality, accepting it, and telling others about it.



**Gay:** A person (often a man) who is mostly attracted to those of the same gender.

**Gender:** The social construction of concepts such as masculinity and femininity in a specific culture in time. One may identify as being a man, woman, or another gender. It involves gender assignment (the gender designation of someone at birth), gender roles (the expectations imposed on someone based on their gender), gender attribution (how others perceive someone’s gender), and gender identity (how someone defines their own gender). Fundamentally different from the sex one is assigned at birth.

**Gender Affirming:** A broadly applied term to describe any number of actions, behaviours or supports used in validating someone’s gender expression or identity. For example, a teacher who refers to a student by the pronouns they choose is using gender affirming language.

**Gender Affirming Garments:** Any number of garments and/or physical aides used in affirming someone’s gender. Most commonly, gender affirming garments might refer to binders, bras and breast forms, and may also be used to refer to wigs, gaffs, packers (penile prosthetics), etc.

**Gender Dysphoria:** A diagnostic term that replaces gender identity disorder (GID). Gender dysphoria refers to the internalized conflict and distress experienced by an individual whose assigned gender at birth, and the gender with which they identify, are different. Gender identity disorder is considered outdated and offensive (diagnosing a trans person with a disorder, simply for being trans); gender dysphoria is generally viewed as more appropriate.

**Gender Binary:** The view that there are only two totally distinct, opposite and static genders (masculine and feminine) to identify with and express.



**Gender Expression:** How one outwardly expresses gender; for example, through name and pronoun choice, style of dress, voice modulation, etc. How one expresses gender might not necessarily reflect one’s actual gender identity.

**Gender Identity:** One’s internal and psychological sense of oneself as man, woman, both, in between, neither, or another understanding of gender. People who question their gender identity may feel unsure of their gender or believe they are not of the same gender they were assigned at birth. There is new, emergent and evolving language to capture a growing understanding of diversity in gender identities, including cisgender, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, non-binary, trans, and many more.

**Gender Non-Conforming (GNC):** A term under the trans umbrella which refers to people who do not conform to society’s expectations for their gender roles or gender expression. Often used to describe people who may not yet have language to describe themselves (e.g. young children).

**Genderqueer:** A term under the trans umbrella which refers to people who identify outside of the male-female binary.

**Heterosexual:** A person who primarily feels attracted to people of the “opposite” gender; frequently referred to as “straight.”

**Intersex:** General term for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with reproductive or sexual anatomy, genetics, chromosomes, or hormonal levels that do not seem to fit the typical medical definitions of male or female. Replaces the term hermaphrodite, which is widely considered to be inaccurate and offensive. The terms intersex and trans are distinct and not interchangeable.

**Non-Binary (NB):** A continuum or spectrum of gender identities and expressions, often based on the rejection of the gender binary’s assumption that gender is strictly an either/or option of male/men or female/women, based on sex assigned at birth. Non-binary can be both a specific term of identification or an umbrella term.

**Outing Someone:** Accidentally or intentionally publicly revealing another person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, trans status and/or relationship status without their permission. This can cause social, physical, emotional, or economic danger for the person being outed.

**Pansexual:** An individual who is attracted to any or all genders.

**Queer:** A term becoming more widely used among LGBTQ2S+ communities because of its inclusiveness. “Queer” can be used to refer to the spectrum of non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgender people and provides convenient shorthand for “LGBTQ2S+.” Because this is a reclaimed term that was (and still is) used hatefully, some people feel uncomfortable with it.

**Questioning:** A term sometimes used by those in the process of exploring sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Sex:** Refers to the physical and physiological characteristics chosen to assign humans as male, female or intersex. It is determined by characteristics such as sexual and reproductive anatomy and genetic make-up.

**Sexual/Romantic Orientation:** Refers to a person’s experiences of sexual and romantic attraction to other people, or to no one. Many people become aware of these feelings during adolescence or even earlier, while some do not realize or acknowledge their attractions (especially same-gender attractions) until much later in life. Many people experience their orientation(s) fluidly, and feel attraction or degrees of attraction to different genders at different points in their lives. Orientations are defined by feelings of attraction rather than behaviour.



**SOGI:** An acronym that stands for Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities. Often used in institutional settings (such as health care or education) in place of LGBTQ2S+.

**Transgender (Trans):** Transgender, frequently abbreviated to “trans,” is an umbrella term for a wide range of experiences and identities for people whose gender does not match the gender they were assigned at birth. Identifying as

trans is something that can only be decided by an individual for themselves and does not depend on criteria such as surgery or hormone treatment status.

**Transition:** Refers to the process during which trans people may change their gender expression and/or bodies. There are many ways a person may go about a transition:

- Social transition (name and pronoun change, wardrobe or hairstyle, legal ID, etc.)
- Medical transition (including hormonal therapy)
- Surgical transition (including gender affirming surgeries)

There is no one right or complete way for someone to transition. Allies to people transitioning can practice generosity and openness by thinking of a transition as a unique personal journey rather than a transition to a pre-determined end-point.

**Two-Spirit:** A modern umbrella term created and used by Indigenous people to describe individuals with diverse gender identities, gender expressions, gender roles, and sexual orientations. While the word Two-Spirit is relatively new, many Two-Spirit identities have long histories and respected traditional roles in Indigenous nations. Two-Spirit identity is uniquely Indigenous and is not meant to be used to describe non-Indigenous people.

*Thank you to QMUNITY, BC’s Queer, Trans & Two-Spirit Resource, for permission to use their comprehensive “Queer Definitions” guide as the basis for these definitions. Wondering about a word we didn’t include? You can probably find it here: [www.qmunity.ca/resources/queer-glossary](http://www.qmunity.ca/resources/queer-glossary).*

# resources

## ORGANIZATIONS

### **2-Spirit Collective** (Vancouver)

[unya.bc.ca/programs/2-spirit-collective](http://unya.bc.ca/programs/2-spirit-collective)

The Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA)'s 2-Spirit Collective provides support, resources, and programming for Indigenous youth, ages 15 to 30, who identify as 2-spirit or LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, gender non-conforming, along with many other identities), and for those who are questioning their sexual or gender identities.

### **Catherine White Holman Wellness Centre** (Vancouver)

[www.cwhwc.com](http://www.cwhwc.com)

The Catherine White Holman Wellness Centre provides low-barrier wellness services to transgender and gender non-conforming people, respecting and celebrating their clients' identity and self-expression.

### **Dancing to Eagle Spirit Society**

(Vancouver)

[dancingtoeaglespiritsociety.org](http://dancingtoeaglespiritsociety.org)

This society is dedicated to the healing and empowerment of two-spirit individuals and their friends and their allies by providing emotional support and spiritual needs using traditional Indigenous ways and culture.

### **Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks** (BC-wide)

[fbcyicn.ca](http://fbcyicn.ca)

FBCYICN is a youth-driven, provincial, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of young people in and from government care in BC (not LGBTQ2S+-specific but very inclusive).

### **Foundry** (BC-wide)

[foundrybc.ca](http://foundrybc.ca)

Foundry offers online and community-based health and wellness supports for youth. Its centres in Abbotsford, Campbell River, Kelowna, North & West Vancouver, Prince George, Vancouver, and Victoria all have programming for queer youth, and counsellors and peer support workers who are trained to support queer young people.

### **Out in Schools** (Vancouver)

[outinschools.com](http://outinschools.com)

An award-winning program that brings LGBT2QS films into classrooms to inspire youth and to promote safe and inclusive learning environments free from homophobia, transphobia, and bullying.

### **PFLAG** (Canada-wide)

[pflagcanada.ca](http://pflagcanada.ca)

PFLAG Canada is a national charitable organization, founded by parents who wished to help themselves and their family members understand and accept their LGBTQ2S+ children.

### **QMUNITY** (Vancouver)

[qmunity.ca/get-support/youth](http://qmunity.ca/get-support/youth)

QMUNITY is BC's leading queer resource centre and a hub for Vancouver's lesbian, gay, trans, bi, and queer community. Their youth services include drop-in groups, special events, and one-to-one support.

## GROUPS

### **CampOUT** (BC-wide)

[campout.ubc.ca](http://campout.ubc.ca)

An outdoor summer camping experience for queer, trans, and allied youth aged 14 to 21 from across BC. Offers the opportunity to make friends, access resources, engage in imaginative and critical workshops as well as participate in traditional camp activities like canoeing and arts and crafts.

### **Fraser Valley Youth Society** (Abbotsford, Mission, Chilliwack)

[fvys.ca](http://fvys.ca)

Weekly drop-ins for LGBTQ2S+ and allied youth in the Fraser Valley, plus education and awareness presentations.

### **Generation Out** (Ridge Meadows, Tri-Cities)

[genout.blogspot.com](http://genout.blogspot.com)

The Generation Out drop-in group is a safe, fun environment for LGBTQ2S+ youth. Offers peer support, movie and game nights, guest speakers and other planned group activities.

### **Generation Q** (Nanaimo)

[bgccvi.com/programs/south-side-teen-centre](http://bgccvi.com/programs/south-side-teen-centre)

A fun, safe, supportive, and inclusive space that allows youth to connect, and openly express their concerns regarding issues impacting their lives and the LGBTQ2S+ community.

### **Trans Youth & Parents Program** (Burnaby/New Westminster)

[burnabyyouthhub.org/other-programs-services](http://burnabyyouthhub.org/other-programs-services)

The Trans Support Group is an opportunity for discussion, information sharing, and support for both trans youth (25 years old and under) and the parents and caregivers of trans youth.

### **Whatever** (West Vancouver)

[westvancouver.ca/parks-recreation/youth-centres/activities/whatever](http://westvancouver.ca/parks-recreation/youth-centres/activities/whatever)

A safe, fun West Vancouver drop-in for LGBTQ2S+ youth, allies, and friends. Join them every Thursday for activities, events, information, resources, and referrals.

## BOOKS & INFO

### **2018 LGBTQ Youth Report**

[hrc.org/resources/2018-lgbtq-youth-report](http://hrc.org/resources/2018-lgbtq-youth-report)

HRC Foundation and the University of Connecticut released the largest-of-its-kind survey of more than 12,000 LGBTQ2S+ teenagers across the United States.



“When I was younger, I learned about the genderqueer community through Tumblr. I feel like that’s a very common [way] for young people to learn that they’re some sort of gay. –Athena

### The Every Body tool

[teachingsexualhealth.ca/parents/resources/gender-identity-learning-tool](http://teachingsexualhealth.ca/parents/resources/gender-identity-learning-tool)

An easy-to-interactive tool that explains biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation.

### Gender Creative Kids

[gendercreativekids.ca](http://gendercreativekids.ca)

This website provides resources for supporting and affirming gender creative kids within their families, schools, and communities.

### Gender Identity

[caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/gender-identity](http://caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/gender-identity)

A clear, brief handout that discusses how gender identity typically develops and how parents and caregivers can promote healthy gender development in children.

### Librarians Recommend: 10 Books That Deal with Gender Identity or Sexuality

[cbc.ca/parents/learning/view/librarians-recommend-ten-books-that-deal-with-gender-identity-or-sexuality](http://cbc.ca/parents/learning/view/librarians-recommend-ten-books-that-deal-with-gender-identity-or-sexuality)

A recent list of children’s books compiled by Canadian librarians.

### The Pride Guide: A Guide to Sexual and Social Health for LGBTQ Youth

by Jo Langford  
*The Pride Guide* is written explicitly for teenagers who identify as gay, lesbian,

bisexual, trans, or any of the unique identities that are not heterosexual/cisgender. Explores sex, dating, relationships, puberty, and both physical and online safety.

### Queer Books for Teens

[queerbooksforteens.com](http://queerbooksforteens.com)

A comprehensive list of all LGBTQIAP+ YA titles published between 2000 and 2017.

### Queer Issues (LGBTQ2+) guide from Capilano University library

[libguides.capilanou.ca/queer](http://libguides.capilanou.ca/queer)

Includes book and movie lists, online resources, and more.

### Qmunity’s Queer Terminology Guide

[qmunity.ca/resources/queer-glossary](http://qmunity.ca/resources/queer-glossary)

A comprehensive guide to LGBTQ2S+ language and terminology.

### *Sex is a Funny Word*, by Cory Silverberg

A comic book for kids that includes children and families of all makeups, orientations, and gender identities, *Sex is a Funny Word* is an essential resource about bodies, gender, and sexuality for children ages 8 to 10.

### *The Trans Generation: How Trans Kids (and Their Parents) Are Creating a Gender Revolution*, by Ann Travers

Written by an adoptee and trans activist, this book is based on five years of research and interviews with transgender kids and their parents in the US and Canada.

## SERVICES

### AFABC Adoption Key Workers (BC-wide)

Key workers provide free community-based and one-to-one support, workshops, and family events for adoptive and waiting parents and people considering adoption.

### Big Brother’s Barber Shop (Vancouver)

[bigbrosbarbershop.com](http://bigbrosbarbershop.com)  
Vancouver’s beauty and resource centre for the LGBTQ2S+ community and beyond. Offers half-price haircuts every Tuesday; **gender affirming garments** also available.



### Housing First (Lower Mainland)

[raincityhousing.org/hf-p-into-p](http://raincityhousing.org/hf-p-into-p)  
Raincity’s Housing First program is specifically for LGBTQ2S+ youth (ages 18-24) who are or at risk of becoming homeless.

### LGBT Youthline (Canada-wide)

[youthline.ca](http://youthline.ca) | (1-800) 268-9688  
Confidential, informed, non-judgemental peer support through telephone, text, and chat services.

### Transgender Health Information Program (BC-wide)

[transhealth.phsa.ca](http://transhealth.phsa.ca) | (1-866) 999-1514  
The VCH Transgender Health Information Program (THiP) is a BC-wide information hub providing access to information about gender affirming care and supports.

### What’s On Queer BC (BC-wide)

[whatsonqueerbc.com/lgbtq-calendar](http://whatsonqueerbc.com/lgbtq-calendar)  
Online calendar of LGBTQ2S+ events in BC. Many are adult-focused but youth events are also included.

### Your Open Closet (Vancouver)

[youropencloset.com](http://youropencloset.com)  
Store specializing in body-positive undergarments, binders, and other gender-diverse and **gender affirming garments**.



**Adoptive Families Association of BC**

#200-7342 Winston Street  
Burnaby, British Columbia V5A 2H1  
Canada

[info@bcadoption.com](mailto:info@bcadoption.com)  
1-604-320-7330