

Burnaby Public Library: Pronoun Cheat Sheet

Prepared by BPL's Trans-Inclusion Working Group, August 2019

What are pronouns?

- Pronouns are words used to refer to someone in place of their name. Some examples are:
 - He/him/his,
 - She/her/hers, and
 - They/them/theirs (“they” is a gender-neutral pronoun, often used by people who do not identify as male or female).

Why are we talking about pronouns?

- Burnaby Public Library aims to be an inclusive and welcoming place for people of all genders including transgender people.
- Referring to someone with the correct pronouns demonstrates respect towards them.
- BPL staff are invited to share their pronouns if they choose to do so. If someone shares their pronouns, it establishes an understanding that others will respect and use the correct pronouns when referring to them.
- Sharing pronouns is always optional. There are many reasons why someone may choose not to share their pronouns. Choosing not to share pronouns does not mean that a person is against transgender rights.
- People’s gender identity and pronouns may change over time, or may not be what you expected. People may use a variety of pronouns, or none. Language around gender identities and pronouns is changing, and learning in this area will be ongoing.

How can I share my pronouns?

- Add your pronouns to your email signature. See the [Transgender Inclusion Working Group page](#) on the StaffWeb for a template.
- Add your pronouns to your directory page on StaffWeb. Beth’s profile demonstrates this feature →
- If you choose to do so, share your pronouns when you introduce yourself. For example: “Hi, I’m _____. I use he, him, and his as pronouns. Nice to meet you.”
- Include pronouns as an optional part of introductions in meetings.
 - “Before we begin, let’s go around the group and introduce ourselves. Please feel free to share your name, your role, and, if you choose to do so, your pronouns. Pronouns are words used to refer to someone in place of their name. Some examples are they/them/their, she/her/hers, and he/him/his.”
 - *[Note to meeting facilitators: this may require further discussion to ensure understanding around pronouns.]*



What should I do if...

- **I misgender (refer to someone as a gender that they do not identify with) or use the wrong pronouns for someone?**
 - Correct yourself (for example: “Sorry, I should have used he, not she”), and carry on with your conversation. Keep your correction brief. Making a big deal about a pronoun or gender mistake can be uncomfortable for the people involved.
 - This shows you realize your mistake and are working towards the correct language.
 - This also helps others learn the correct pronoun for someone.
 - By correcting yourself, you reduce the burden on the person who has been misgendered from having to correct you and others in that moment and in future.
- **I notice someone else misgender someone?**
 - Correct them (for example, “They use they/them pronouns”). Keep it simple.
 - This helps prevent future mistakes and demonstrates care and respect for the person who has been misgendered.
- **Someone corrects me for misgendering someone?**
 - Briefly apologize and/or thank them, as you see fit, and carry on with your conversation. For example, “Thank you for reminding me. Yes, I should have used they, not she.”
 - Do your best to use the correct pronoun in future and correct yourself if you make a mistake again (see above).
- **I am not sure of someone’s pronouns?**
 - Remember: sharing pronouns is optional. Someone may choose to share their pronouns with you or not, and either option is okay.
 - Until/unless you learn someone’s pronouns, you can refer to them by name, avoid using pronouns and other gendered language, or use gender-neutral pronouns and terms.
 - To learn someone’s pronouns you have a variety of options, including:
 - If the person is a BPL staff member, check to see if they have shared their pronouns on StaffWeb or in their email signature;
 - Ask someone who knows the person what pronouns they use;
 - Share your pronouns with them next time you meet, demonstrating an understanding of and respect for pronouns;
 - Ask them directly. For example, “I use they/them pronouns. I want to make sure I address you correctly. If you’re comfortable sharing, how do you like to be addressed?” It’s much more polite to ask this question to everyone than to single someone out.
- **I’m consistently making mistakes and would like to get better at this?**
 - Practice.
 - Use gender neutral pronouns when you think or talk about something in your life: your car, your phone, your pet, etc.
 - Read books, watch movies, or listen to podcasts featuring transgender and non-binary characters whose pronouns might change or challenge your habits. See the [StaffWeb](#) for recommendations!
 - Be patient and keep learning. It’s awesome that you care about this and are working on it and you will get there!
- **I want to learn more?**
 - Check out the resources on the [Trans-Inclusion Working Group page](#) on StaffWeb, and stay tuned for future in-person learning opportunities!