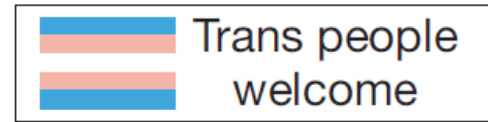


Burnaby Public Library: Washroom FAQ

Prepared by BPL's Trans-Inclusion Working Group, January 2020

Over the coming weeks, all BPL washrooms will have signs added to their doors that say “Trans people welcome” and feature the trans flag.



Why are we adding this sign to BPL's washrooms?

- Burnaby Public Library aims to be an inclusive and welcoming place for people of all genders including transgender people. One aspect of this is ensuring we respect the right of BPL patrons and staff to use a washroom that corresponds to their gender identity.
- Public washrooms can be extremely difficult for transgender people to access. Trans people often experience harassment and violence in public washrooms. According to the Public Service Alliance of Canada, “up to 70% of trans people have experienced some sort of negative reaction when accessing a public bathroom.”ⁱ Furthermore, the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey found that 40% of trans youth surveyed rarely or never felt safe in school washrooms.ⁱⁱ Transphobic graffiti has been found in our branches, including in washrooms, which highlights the potential for transphobic acts to occur in these unstaffed spaces.
- We have had requests for more gender-inclusive washrooms directly from community members. Universal washrooms (all-gender and wheelchair accessible) were considered essential by teens who participated in the recent Teen Advisory Group session on space design.
- Since we can't make our washrooms “universal” at the moment, we are using trans inclusive signage as a way to let trans patrons know that staff will support their right to use the washroom they choose.

What are the long-term plans for trans inclusive washrooms at BPL?

- The City of Burnaby is undertaking an inclusive signage program which will develop a plan to install functional rather than gender-specific washroom signage in city facilities. For example, washrooms might feature a picture of a toilet, change-table, or urinal instead of icon or words indicating a “women's” or “men's” washroom. These new signs will be used at BPL as well and will replace our short-term solution.
- The City has also completed research about ways to increase the number of universal single-user and multi-stall washrooms in city facilities, which will impact the washrooms in new and renovated BPL locations.

How can I explain this change to patrons?

- If patrons ask, feel free to let them know the following:
 - “Yes! We have updated our washroom signs to reflect the library's commitment to being a trans inclusive space. We want all library patrons to know that they are welcome to use the washroom where they feel most comfortable and safe. We are working towards offering more universal washrooms at all of our branches in the future.”

Frequently Asked Questions

- **How can I give directions to the washrooms in a more trans inclusive manner?**
 - We encourage staff to always provide patrons with all washroom options, rather than assuming which washroom a patron wants to use. This allows patrons to select the washroom that best fits their needs. For example: “Washrooms are located down the hallway to your left. We also have a universal, accessible washroom.”
- **Are BPL’s universal washrooms only for trans and gender nonconforming people?**
 - No. Universal washrooms are open to all patrons, including families, patrons with mobility aids, transgender people, and people who are more comfortable in a private washroom.
- **What washrooms should non-binary people use?**
 - Non-binary people are welcome to use the washrooms in which they feel most comfortable and safe.
- **What should I do if a patron complains that someone is in the wrong washroom?**
 - Thank the patron for coming to staff with their concern. We do not want patrons to confront one another as it often leads to conflicts escalating.
 - Let them know that we encourage all patrons to use the washroom in which they feel most comfortable and safe. We do not police people’s gender or tell people which washroom to use.
 - If they do not feel comfortable in the shared washroom with another person, encourage them to use the single-stall universal washroom in the branch.
- **What should I do if a patron complains that something unsafe is happening in the washroom?**
 - Thank the patron for coming to staff with their concern. We do not want patrons to confront one another as it often leads to conflicts escalating.
 - Ask them what is happening that is making them feel unsafe and encourage them to use the single-stall universal washroom in the branch while staff address the situation.
 - As appropriate, request help from a colleague or security guard, investigate the situation, and respond in line with the Disruptive Behaviours Procedures Manual.
- **What if a patron has further complaints about this policy?**
 - Refer them to a supervisor or offer them the option to fill out a comment card so that a branch manager can respond to their concerns.

Where can I learn more?

- Review the City of Burnaby’s plans for inclusive washrooms: <http://staffweb.bpl.bc.ca/node/19228>
- Learn how to bust myths with the National Center for Transgender Equality: <https://transequality.org/issues/resources/transgender-people-and-bathroom-access>
- Read about Inclusive Restroom Design in Library Journal: <https://www.libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=inclusive-restroom-design-library-design>
- Read this pamphlet on Gender-neutral Bathrooms in Libraries from ALA’s GLBTRT Resources Committee: <http://www.ala.org/rt/sites/ala.org/rt/files/content/professionaltools/bathrooms%20brochure%20for%20vi%20ewing.pdf>

ⁱ Public Service Alliance of Canada (2018). *Gender-Inclusive Washrooms in Your Workplace: A Guide for Employees and Managers*. http://psacunion.ca/sites/psac/files/attachments/pdfs/gender-inclusive-washroom-en-4page_0.pdf

ⁱⁱ Veale J, Saewyc E, Frohard-Dourlent H, Dobson S, Clark B & the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey Research Group (2015). *Being Safe, Being Me: Results of the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey*. Vancouver, BC: Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre, School of Nursing, University of British Columbia.