Despite the will of many to move towards a more equitable and inclusive society, this movement often follows a “two steps forward, one step back” trajectory. Each advancement is often met by resistance, leading to increased barriers being put in place. When it comes to equity for LGBTQ people, this is definitely the case.

We see this in the recent decision by the Trump administration to remove regulations protecting the rights of transgender students in public schools. We also see this in our own province through the negative response of some groups about school board decisions to adopt LGBTQ policies. One recent example is in Richmond, where a parents’ group protested against the school board’s “exclusionary” decision to follow the Ministry of Education’s requirement that all school districts include explicit reference to sexual orientation and gender identity in their code of conduct.

But there is hope for continued movement forward. As 2017 Annual General Meeting International Solidarity Award recipient Mariluz Arriaga so eloquently stated, “The walls they build won’t hold us back because we have wings to fly.” However, LGBTQ people often face many more and much higher walls than other members of society. Equity and inclusion involves providing supports to those who need them so that they are able to soar over these walls.

These supports include raising awareness among non-LGBTQ people so that they make the conscious decision to alter their language, attitudes, and behaviours. It also involves providing potential allies with tools to facilitate the creation of safe and inclusive spaces. However, the ultimate step in equity and inclusion involves dismantling these walls so that supports are no longer needed.

The delegates to the 2017 BCTF AGM began work on dismantling two of these walls by supporting the resolution to provide gender-neutral washrooms at all BCTF events and by approving the recommendation to use gender-neutral language in the BCTF Members’ Guide. However, there is still work to be done to ensure full inclusion for LGBTQ members. For example, many AGM delegates expressed a degree of discomfort—often associated with a fear of making mistakes—around the use of gender-neutral language.
The path to equity and inclusion of LGBTQ people will not come without effort, but the final goal of, an inclusive society where barriers to inclusion no longer exist is well worth this effort. A BCTF AGM delegate made this clear when she urged fellow delegates to “sit with this discomfort for a little bit.” She reminded us that the pain of exclusion that people from marginalized groups live with every day far outweighs any discomfort we may feel in adapting our language and behaviours to create more inclusive spaces.

This edition of *Seeds of Social Justice* provides resources to support teachers and students in contributing to a more inclusive society for LGBTQ people.

**BC Social Justice Program Calendar of Events**

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<th>April</th>
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<td>Refugee Rights Day</td>
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<td>17–21</td>
<td>Prevention of Violence Against Women Week</td>
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<td>Day of Silence (against LGBTQ name calling)</td>
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<td>National Day of Mourning</td>
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April 4 is Refugee Rights Day, commemorating the Supreme Court decision that refugees are protected under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Visit the [Refugee Resources](#) page on the BCTF Peace and Global Education web pages for resources and lesson plans addressing refugee issues. The [Refugee Rights Day](#) page on the Canadian Council for Refugees website provides resources, including the [Refugees Welcome Here Toolkit](#), to help teachers advocate for refugee rights in Canada.

You are encouraged to wear red on Equal Pay Day, on April 11, to raise awareness of inequities between men’s and women’s salaries. This is roughly the day on which women’s earnings accumulated since January 1, 2016 finally reach the total amount that men earned last year. Visit the [Ontario Equal Pay Coalition Equal Pay Day](#) web page for recommended actions and resources.

April 12 is the International Day of Pink. Encourage students and staff in your school to wear pink on this day to make a statement against homophobic and transphobic bullying and to celebrate diversity. The [elementary](#), [secondary](#), and [French](#) Day of Pink posters feature lesson plans and resources to help develop inclusive and respectful attitudes around diversity in sexual orientation and gender expression. Visit the LGBTQ Action Group’s [Day of Pink](#) web page for more resources and activities.

Prevention of Violence against Women Week takes place from April 17–21. The [Status of Women](#) web pages contain resources and lesson plans to use in your classroom.
The Day of Silence against LGBTQ Name Calling is on April 21. To register your student to take a vow of silence and to access resources, visit the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network’s Day of Silence web page.

The theme of this year’s Earth Day, on April 22, is EarthPLAY for Earth Day. Visit the Earth Day Canada website to register your school for an EarthPLAY school celebration. The CASJ Environmental Justice Action Group pages feature lesson plans and resources to use on this date.

April 28 is the National Day of Mourning, when we remember the hundreds of workers killed on the job each year. Help raise awareness of the need for safe workspaces by registering for the Day of Mourning BC Schools Project.

Resources

Consider posting the new Just be You poster in your elementary classroom to celebrate how children, regardless of gender identity, have diverse ways of being and playing.

Teachers and students are encouraged to use the Reach Out Speak Out poster to identify themselves as allies for LGBTQ students. Three formats are available, including a locker-size version.

The Gender Spectrum Glossary, which is available in English and French, supports teachers and students in developing an understanding of a variety of terms related to LGBTQ topics. Becoming familiar with these terms is one of the first steps involved in becoming a good ally.

Find these and other LGBTQ resources on the BCTF LGBTQ posters, bookmarks, booklets and brochures web page. To request hard copies of posters and booklets, email socialjustice@bctf.ca. Please include the name and quantity of each item, as well as a mailing address.

The BCTF Equity and Inclusion web pages have recently been launched on the Social Justice pages of the BCTF website. A section on each page is devoted to LGBTQ issues. Visit the Raising Awareness page for short videos and articles that help develop an understanding of barriers to inclusion of LGBTQ people and ways to overcome them. The Tools page offers resources to support inclusion. For an in-depth understanding of these issues, visit the Delving Deeper page.
The SOGI 1,2,3 website provides policies and procedures, supports for inclusive environments, and curriculum resources to support the creation of inclusive spaces for all individuals regardless of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI.) This initiative is the product of a collaboration between the BCTF, BC Ministry of Education, UBC Faculty of Education, Out in Schools, ARC Foundation, nine BC school districts, and LGBTQ community organizations.

Workshops LGBTQ

Creating a Gender-Inclusive School Culture

This workshop will help develop an understanding of the risks facing trans* students, as well as the protective factors. Participants will gain increased familiarity with the terminology used by the trans* communities and increased awareness of gender identity and gender expression. Best practices for supporting a student through gender transition within the school system will be covered. Although the focus is on trans* students, gender-inclusive schools help all students to feel safe.

Reach Out Speak Out!

This workshop focuses on how to be an ally for LGBTQ students and support LGBTQ youth within schools. There will be an opportunity to develop strategies to use as an ally and activities on how to integrate LGBTQ issues into the curriculum in an age-appropriate manner from K–12. This workshop is highly recommended for teachers wanting to create a school-wide action plan to reduce or prevent homophobia/transphobia from occurring and to create an LGBTQ-positive school climate for all students.

Sexual Health Education

New: This follow-up workshop to Part 1: One Size Fits All? addresses the what—as in the content—of teaching the sexual health curriculum in BC to students at all levels. It supports teachers in developing lessons that satisfy the curriculum, utilizing resources, and navigating the social and cultural context. It is sex-positive and aims to empower educators to create an inclusive and comprehensive sexual health education program.
For parents: Gender-inclusive schools help all students to feel safe. This parent presentation will show you how schools are working with trans* and other students on the gender spectrum. This workshop will help parents develop an understanding of the risks and protective factors these students face, gain increased familiarity with the terminology used by the trans* communities, and support an increased awareness of gender identity and gender expression.

To request these or other social justice workshops for a school-based, local or regional professional development day, or School Union Representative Training (SURT) day, click on the “Book this Workshop” link below the workshop description on the BCTF Social Justice and Global Education Workshops page.

Trans* is an umbrella term that can be used to describe people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differ from what they were assigned at birth.

The TeachBC website contains lesson plans for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Lessons addressing all areas of the curriculum can be found on this site and downloaded for free.

**Call Me a Tree**
This is a lesson plan for teachers who may be new to teaching about gender identity and are looking for a safe way to look at individuality as a starting point. This activity is about honouring diversity and showing that it is okay to be different.

**Red: A Crayon’s Story**
This lesson supports teachers who are looking for a safe way to explore the topic of gender identity in school. This lesson uses the story “Red: A Crayon’s Story” to talk about feelings and attitudes that people may experience in various situations.

We invite you to take a few minutes to explore these and other LGBTQ lesson plans on the TeachBC website, and to post some of the social justice lessons you are using in your classroom.

**Qmunity** is a non-profit organization based in Vancouver whose mission is to improve the lives of queer and trans people. This organization works towards this goal by offering support to LGBTQ individuals through counselling, information, referrals, and youth peer support. Qmunity hosts peer support groups, social groups, special events, and offers volunteer opportunities to help strengthen connections between members of the LGBTQ community. Resources and workshops are available to support groups in contributing to a more equitable society for LGBTQ people.

Visit QMunity’s Resources page to download resources such as a Queer Glossary and Gender-Neutral Language Sheet.
The BCTF Committee for Action on Social Justice (CASJ) has openings on its Antipoverty and Peace and Global Education Action Groups. Responsibilities of CASJ members include making recommendations to the BCTF Executive Committee on social justice issues, creating resources for teachers and locals, assisting locals and zones in developing general social justice programs and projects, and developing links with other unions and community groups. More information and application forms are available on the BCTF Committee/Facilitator Postings page. The application deadline is April 12.

BCTF members will have the opportunity to apply to be trained as Social Justice Workshop Facilitators at the Facilitator’s Institute Training this August. A call for applications will be sent out soon.

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