

The Story of Sacred Gender

Sacred Gender by Margaret August

The College of Health and Care Professionals of British Columbia (CHCPBC) is proud to present *Sacred Gender*, created by Two-Spirit visual artist Margaret August of the shíshálh (Sechelt) Nation. shíshálh Nation territory is unceded and sits within the larger Coast Salish territory, which is made up of diverse First Nations communities and their ancestral lands. Some of these lands are now also home to various Métis Chartered Communities. This special part of the West Coast has been home to the shíshálh people since time immemorial. The lands and waters of the Coast Salish territory, including the shíshálh Nation, include incredible coastlines with beaches, islands, fjords, lush vegetation, forests, animal life, and creatures, beauty, and gifts of the Salish Sea and Pacific Ocean. Elements of the lands and waters, as well as other important concepts, have been codified and communicated through Coast Salish visual arts since the beginning of human life here. This important first method of visual commemoration and communication is current and essential today.



Sacred Gender depicts the face of a person who embodies energies of both masculine and feminine gender identities—in a harmonious and perfect balance. To be neither masculine nor feminine, yet both at the same time, is a sacred honour of some special Indigenous peoples who self-identify as Two-Spirit. Many Indigenous communities across what is now commonly called Canada have always recognized multiple gender identities, including Two-Spirit and transgender identities.

Two-Spirit is an umbrella term created in the English language to reflect many complex Indigenous understandings of gender and sexuality and the long history of sexual and gender diversity in Indigenous cultures. This term may refer to cross, multiple, and/or non-binary gender roles, non-heterosexual identities, and a range of cultural identities, roles, and practices embodied by Two-Spirit peoples. Often, being Two-Spirit is connected to specific roles and responsibilities within a community.

Colonization on these lands brought more recent European perspectives of gender as being binary, with only masculine or feminine identities being recognized as connected with a person's sex. This is one more way in which Europeans colonized Indigenous peoples, by attempting to erase and oppress Indigenous perspectives of gender which had always been observed and cherished on these lands for thousands of years prior to colonization. When we celebrate Indigenous gender identities, histories, and perspectives, we are in part making room for decolonization and Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing.

CHCPBC strives to recognize, celebrate, and protect people of all gender identities in our regulatory work. This includes supporting staff, board members and committee members in their learning and action journey to ensure our workplace is free from any form of gender oppression or discrimination.

At first glance, *Sacred Gender* may appear to be symmetrical. Upon closer inspection, one can see the perfect balance and harmonious asymmetry of this important piece. The symbols on and around each side of the face are slightly different and complement each other. This asymmetrical balance represents the sacred beauty of Two-Spirit gender identity and expression and the harmony they bring to our world.

The face displays two colors: purple on the right, and blue on the left. A masculine spirit, energy, and expression is represented in red and blue colours that have blended to create a purple. The blue embodies the feminine spirit, expression, and energies of protection and connection with waters and tides influenced by the moon.

We at CHCPBC look to the many meanings within *Sacred Gender* by Margaret August to guide our essential gender diversity access and safety initiatives and practices.





Policy Gender Diversity	Replaces former policy:
	<input type="checkbox"/> Title: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
	Date Effective: 2024-11-13
	Last Update: 2024-08-26
Contact: Strategy, Governance, Social Accountability Team	

Policy Statement

1. Staff are required to complete gender diversity access and safety training as part of their orientation and to refresh their learning at least once every three years. Appropriate gender diversity learning experiences will be developed by staff and relevant consultants and reviewed at least every three years.
2. Board and committee members will be encouraged to engage in gender diversity and safety learning as part of their orientation to the College and on a regular basis, honouring the College’s commitment to recognize, uphold, and defend human rights respecting gender identity and expression in regulation.
3. Healthcare benefit plans provided to staff will not discriminate against nor create any barriers for staff and/or their family members of any sex and gender, including gender diverse people.
4. Workplace dress codes will include express support for diversity in gender expression and clear direction on reporting any discrimination or barriers related to expression of gender identity.
5. At least once every five years, beginning in 2025, the College will complete the relevant sections of the *Trans Care BC Organizational Assessment Tool*. An action plan based on the results of this assessment will be developed, with implementation to be initiated within one year.
6. Staff members will have the option to indicate their personal pronouns and/or name they go by in their email signature block. Staff members are encouraged and supported in sharing their personal pronouns in signatures, introductions at meetings, and wherever else they may feel appropriate.
7. Staff members will respect the personal pronouns of other staff, Board members, committee members, registrants, volunteers, rightsholders and partners. When a personal pronoun is indicated, staff must make every effort to use a person’s personal pronoun.
8. Staff will use (Board members and committee members will be encouraged to use) gender-neutral language and pronouns in all communications where a person’s pronouns have not been confirmed (e.g., invited guests or friends and colleagues instead of ladies and gentlemen; spouse or partner instead of husband or wife; child



instead of son or daughter.)

9. Staff will use (Board members and committee members will be encouraged to use) neutral pronouns such as “they/them/their” when referring to a person whose pronouns have not been confirmed.
10. Staff will not make assumptions (Board members and committee members will be encouraged not to make assumptions) about the pronouns or gender identity of any person. In the course of operations, people will be given the option to share their pronouns or to indicate they use their name and no pronouns.
11. When written materials including policies are created, reviewed or revised, gender-neutral language will be used to refer to generic or unknown individuals (i.e., avoid “he/she” and replace with “they”).
12. Fields will be available at the time of application and registration renewal and in the registry database to allow applicants and registrants to indicate
 - the name they go by if different than legal name (optional)
 - gender identity (optional) (*open text box*)
 - pronouns (optional)
13. Fields will be available at the time of complaint submission to allow complainants to indicate:
 - the name they go by if different than legal name (optional)
 - pronouns (optional)

See [Appendix 1](#) for proposed language to display for applicants, registrants and complainants regarding purpose of collection, and proposed use and disclosure.

Reporting functions from database system(s) should accurately reflect any gender and pronoun data collected. The College understands that data regarding gender identity is not necessary for regulatory functions and is therefore not required to be collected.

1. Policy Rationale and Purpose

Gender identity and gender expression are protected from discrimination in any form in the 2017 amendments to the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, in the *Criminal Code*, in Sections 7-14 of the *BC Human Rights Code* and in the *Constitution Act, 1982 Part 1: Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

The College is committed to recognizing, upholding, and defending human rights respecting gender identity and expression in regulation. This involves identifying and dismantling barriers to access and safety related to sex and gender, while maintaining regulatory systems, spaces, and services that are accessible, relevant, and safer for sex and gender diverse people.

The College is also dedicated to Indigenous anti-racism, which is incomplete without gender diversity access and safety. The gender binary has been enforced - often through violence - on these lands by way of European colonization. Within many First Nations,



Inuit and Metis communities, gender identities and sexual orientation exist in ways that differ from colonial norms. Terms like Indigiqueer and Two-Spirit reflect some of this diversity today. Addressing barriers and biases as they relate to gender is one way to create space for Indigenous ways of knowing and expressing gender and will improve accessibility of services. The College will continuously seek to understand and to address the unique barriers experienced by people who are impacted by multiple forms of oppression, such as when both Indigenous-specific racism and gender discrimination intersect to create more complex barriers to access and safety.

Maintaining systems, spaces, and services that reflect only the gender binary sends a message that European perspectives are superior, which is racist and colonial. One part of decolonizing and preventing further colonization, systemic racism, and assimilation of Indigenous peoples is to ensure that gender diversity access and safety is a key part of regulatory operations.

2. Policy Scope

This policy applies to all College staff, members of the Board and members of committees.

3. Legal Authority

This policy is linked to the following legislation and regulatory documents:

- *Canadian Human Rights Act*
- *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
- *Criminal Code*
- *BC Human Rights Code*
- *BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)*
- *Indigenous Cultural Safety, Humility, and Anti-Racism Practice Standard*
- *Board and Committee Code of Conduct*

4. Key Partnerships

Those groups which are impacted include gender diverse people living in B.C.

5. Definitions

Sex refers to the biological attributes and legal categories used to classify people as male, female, or intersex, primarily associated with physical and physiological features including chromosomes, genetic expression, hormone levels and function, and internal and external sexual anatomy.



Gender has various dimensions (both individual and societal) that interact and influence one another. This includes (but is not limited to) an individual's gender identity and gender expression, along with culturally specific gender norms, roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes. Gender norms may influence how people perceive the gender of others, along with how they react to what is perceived as gender non-conformity.

Gender binary is a view that there are only two genders (girls/women and boys/men), and that a person's gender is pre-determined by, and inseparable from, their sex. The gender binary is reinforced through many colonial institutions, for example, schools, laws, medicine, religion, and language, and is the source of many barriers relating to gender diversity.

Gender identity is a person's internal and individual sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or something entirely different (as described below). A person's gender identity may also be influenced by social, emotional, cultural, and/or spiritual elements of their life and can change over time. Examples of gender identities include:

Transgender or trans: When someone's gender identity differs, either fully or in part, from their assigned sex at birth. Trans is often used as an "umbrella term" to represent a wide range of gender identities and expressions. Trans people can express their gender in a wide variety of ways and may or may not engage in steps of physical or social transition.

Non-binary: When someone's gender identity exists beyond, between, outside of, or not exclusively within, the gender binary. Other terms to describe non-binary identities include: gender non-conforming, gender fluid, genderqueer, agender, and pangender, among others. Non-binary people can express their gender in a wide variety of ways and may or may not engage in steps of physical or social transition.

Cisgender or cis is when someone's gender identity corresponds with their assigned sex (e.g. a person whose assigned sex is female and identifies as a woman; a person whose assigned sex is male and identifies as a man); non-trans. Cis people also express their gender in a wide variety of ways.¹

Two-Spirit (2-Spirit or 2S) is a term used within some Indigenous communities, encompassing sexual, gender, cultural, and/or spiritual identity. Prior to European colonization, many Indigenous communities acknowledged more than two genders. Through the residential "school"/ facility system and other colonial practices, policies, and institutions (e.g. medicine, language, law, economy, religion, government, etc.) there was and exists still an attempted erasure of these gender roles and the language that describes them, and an enforcement of a European-based, patriarchal gender binary. This umbrella term was created in the English language to reflect complex Indigenous understandings of gender and sexuality and the long history of sexual and gender diversity in Indigenous cultures. This term may refer to cross, multiple, and/or non-binary

¹ The definitions for sex, gender, gender-binary, gender identity, transgender, non binary and cisgender were developed from information provided by Trans Care BC with support from Kingsley Strudwick of Ambit Gender Diversity Consulting (2024).



gender roles; non-heterosexual identities; and a range of cultural identities, roles, and practices embodied by Two-Spirit peoples. Often, being Two-Spirit is connected to specific roles and responsibilities within a community. While some Indigenous peoples who hold diverse sexual and gender identities consider themselves Two-Spirit, others may have terms in their own traditional languages, or identify themselves as 2SLGBTQIA+ and Indigenous, Indigiqueer, or use multiple terms.²

6. Process Check

The following documents have been consulted and applied to this policy.

- Board Policy Framework
- Safe Spaces Playbook
- In Plain Sight Report and Recommendations
- Other

7. Resources/References

Trans Care BC: Examples of free, online, and asynchronous gender diversity learning experiences at [Trans Care BC](#) (website).

Action items resulting from the [Trans Care BC Organizational Assessment Tool](#) can be developed using the tools and resources from Trans Care BC at [Creating affirming services](#)

Primary resources in gender diversity information and education include:

- [Trans Care BC](#), a program of the Provincial Health Services Authority
- [QMUNITY](#) resource centre
- [Ambit Gender Diversity Consulting](#)
- [TransFocus Consulting](#) blog series and resources

[Trans Rights BC](#) disseminates human rights information that is accurate, accessible, and relevant to the safety and well-being of trans and gender-diverse individuals and their supportive allies across British Columbia.

[Gender Diversity resources](#) available on the University of British Columbia website.

²The definition for Two-Spirit was developed from information provided by Trans Care BC and their definition used with permission from Battered Women's Support Services. This definition was then further expanded for the legacy COBC with additions from the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, support from Kingsley Strudwick of Ambit Gender Diversity Consulting and support from Robin Adams, Cultural Safety Consultant of Exit 26 Consulting (2024).



Reviewed by the Board on:		Select date	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Reviewed by the Registrar/ Deputy Registrar on:		2024-08-26	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Date Approved 2024-08-26	Approved By <input type="checkbox"/> Board <input type="checkbox"/> Committee (<i>Name of Committee</i>) OR Name Dianne Millette Title Registrar/CEO		
Date Effective 2024-11-13	Revision history	Last Updated:	2024-08-26
Next Review 2026-11-13		Previous Update:	Select date
Drafted by: Name: Meagan Marsh		Title: Lead, Social Justice and Anti-Oppression	



Appendix 1: Fields to include in application, registration, complaints forms/platforms

Fields/messages to include within application and registration renewal platforms:

Note: These fields and messaging will be revised for each profession. Data from some professions are submitted to CIHI and messaging should reflect this as a purpose of collection, along with a link to CIHI's data governance resources.

Note: It should be clear in the messaging whether the information entered will be included or excluded from the publicly facing registrant profile.

Note: It is understood that not all databases currently used by CHCPBC can accommodate open text boxes at this time, and that it may not be until we have a harmonized database that these changes can be made.

1. Sex/Sex at Birth (required)

For professions whose data is submitted to CIHI, Sex at birth dropdown should include: Intersex, X, F, M

All other professions Sex dropdown should include: X, F, M

The field of [CIHI: Sex at birth] [non-CIHI: Sex] is required because it is part of identity verification for criminal records checks [*if applicable*: and is included in data that is sent to CIHI]. This information will not be displayed in your registrant profile used by the public to verify your license. [For more information about the collection and use of data by CIHI, [click here.](#)]

2. Gender identity (optional)

For professions whose data is submitted to CIHI, dropdowns should include: other gender (followed by open text box), man, woman, prefer not to answer

All other professions: offer only open text box

The field of Gender is optional. This information increases the College's awareness of the diversity of gender identities across the multiple professions we regulate and ensures we regulate the professions in an inclusive way. This information will not be displayed in your registrant profile used by the public to verify your license and it will not impact your eligibility for licensure in any way. [If completed, anonymized data in aggregate form is included in data that is sent to CIHI. For more information about the collection and use of data by CIHI [click here.](#)]

3. Name you go by, if different from legal name (optional) (open text box)

This field is optional. If completed, this name will be included in your registrant profile used by the public to verify your license.



4. Pronouns (*optional*) (*open text box*)

This field is optional. This information helps us understand how to address you. For example, type “she/her” if you’d like us to say, “She is a licensee of the College of Health and Care Professionals of BC,” when speaking about you. This information will not be displayed in your registrant profile used by the public to verify your license. and it will not impact your eligibility for licensure in any way.

Pronouns (*open text box*)

Use my name/no pronouns

Prefer not to answer

Fields/messages to include within complaint intake forms or processes:

1. Name you go by, if different from legal name (*optional*) (*open text box*)

This field is optional. This information helps us understand how to address you.

2. Pronouns (*optional*)

This field is optional. This information helps us understand how to address you. For example, type “she/her” if you’d like us to say, “She moved to Vancouver when she was five years old,” when speaking about you.

Pronouns (*open text box*)

Use my name/no pronouns

Prefer not to answer