



Statement

May 15, 2020
For Immediate Release

Who could have imagined where we are today? As we mark the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia on Sunday, we find ourselves in the midst of a pandemic that has caused us to stay indoors for weeks, to self-isolate and even – to some degree – to fear exposure to others.

It has been a difficult and challenging time for everyone but, even as we grapple with how best to stay safe and at the same time preserve community, there is much wisdom and experience to draw from within LGBTQ2S+ communities. Those of us who are members of these communities, or who love people within them, know they possess immense and hard-won insights that can help everyone.

LGBTQ2S+ people have experienced levels of persecution that no one should ever have to endure. This day serves as a reminder to everyone that there is no place for homophobia, transphobia or biphobia in our society. Every one of us has the responsibility and obligation not to be a bystander, but to stand up and speak out if we witness any type of bullying or persecution. We need to make sure the world is a safe place for LGBTQ2S+ youth and, by extension, all members of these communities. We must be all-in on this. There is no other way.

This day should also serve as a reminder of the collective vision and acumen of these communities. I am continually humbled by the insights and strength of the people I know and love who are part of the LGBTQ2S+ community. The painful truth is that so many in the past have had to hide who they are, so the self-isolation brought on by COVID-19 is not necessarily unfamiliar. It is shameful that this should ever be or have been the case for anyone. The resulting wisdom, though, is profound. We need to listen to the members of these communities and to their life stories, because it is here that we will find the way forward to create a kinder and far more inclusive world. The valuable lessons to be learned can extend into other areas where society also sorely needs to make progress: disability rights, ageism and sexism, to name a few.

Recently, a family member of mine complimented a young person on their purple hair. They responded with, “I’m trying to be a little edgy to condition my mom, because after COVID, I’m going to come out to her.” With this one line, incredible complexity was revealed. On the one hand, what a profound lesson – this young person understood what is needed in their situation and how best to help their parent

to understand their position. On the other, the story also represents how far we still have to go as a society. Why should a young person have to go to the trouble of conditioning their parent, just to be able to be who they are? This is what we need to change. Acceptance must be instantaneous and unquestioned.

So many organizations are doing great work in this area. Trans Care BC has a number of resources for supporting children and youth, including support for parenting gender-creative children and youth, that can be found here:

<http://www.phsa.ca/transcarebc/child-youth>. In addition, QMUNITY, B.C.'s Queer, Trans and Two-Spirit Resource Centre offers a wealth of support, including youth services: <https://qmunity.ca/get-support/youth/>. And the 2-Spirit Collective at the Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA) also offers valuable resources for Indigenous young people and their families: <https://unya.bc.ca/programs/2-spirit-collective/>. I extend my deep gratitude to these organizations and others who are working to support LGBTQ2S+ communities.

To be on the receiving end of harmful or exclusive behaviours can feel devastating, especially as a young person. I would like to point out that RCY advocates are available for all young people and eager to help. We can provide support, an empathetic ear, and help you learn what your rights are and what your options are, whatever your situation. So please, call us at 1-800-476-3933, or email us at rcy@rcybc.ca. On the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, I want you to know that we see you, we are here for you, and you are so important to the entire community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J Charlesworth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jennifer Charlesworth
Representative for Children and Youth