



Council on Inclusive Work Environments

The Language of Inclusion – Winter Roundtable Series

Agenda

Wednesday, January 26, 2022 – Virtual

Approaches to Pronouns and the Development of Standards of Practice

Overview

Words have power in the workplace, especially when endeavoring to foster inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility (IDEA).¹ To ensure that every employee can succeed in their job free from discriminatory language, organizations need to adapt to sometimes rapidly shifting norms and nomenclature. This roundtable series seeks to explore best practices, challenges and opportunities in developing policies and standards that organizations can implement around inclusive language, both externally and internally.

The first roundtable of the series will focus on pronouns. Research has demonstrated that creating an environment in which pronouns are transparently communicated creates an important “identity safety-cue” for LGBTQ2S+ talent.² Specifically, companies that normalize disclosing pronouns signal “positive organizational attitudes” and the prioritization of employment equity and fairness towards gender diverse employees.³ Yet developing standards of practice for the safe disclosure of and respect for pronouns is complex, especially within bilingual work environments. As the French language tends to be highly gendered, for instance, communicating pronouns that align with one’s gender identity can be difficult and even controversial as was evident in the debates that ensued after the French language dictionary *Le Robert* added “iel” to its list of pronouns within the

¹ Christina Brodzik, “The Power of Language: Building Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace” Deloitte (29 June 2021). <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/blog/human-capital-blog/2021/inclusive-workplace-language.html>

² India R. Johnson, Evava S. Pietre, David M. Buck, Roua Daas, “What’s in a pronoun: Exploring gender pronouns as an organizational identity-safety cue among sexual and gender minorities,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 97 (November 2021):104-194.

³ Ibid.

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online edition this past November.⁴ This roundtable seeks to determine how organizations can be responsive to such discussions while continuing to attract diverse talent and ensure employees feel safe to bring their authentic selves to the workplace.

Meeting Objectives

- Discuss the benefits and challenges of respecting and disclosing pronouns in the workplace;
- Identify best practices for creating company cultures in which disclosing pronouns is safe and normalized;
- Explore strategies by which to approach and discuss pronouns within a bilingual work environment;
- Learn how to effectively support francophone and anglophone employees in communicating their pronouns without fear of discrimination.

Wednesday, January 26th, 2022

1:00 p.m. Welcome Remarks
Beth Robertson, PhD (she/they), The Conference Board of Canada

1:05 p.m. Moderated Panel Discussion

Jade Pichette (they/ them), Manager of Programs, Pride at Work Canada

Dr. H el ene Frohard-Dourlent (they/them/she/her), Educational Strategist, Equity and Diversity Office, University of British Columbia

Eliot Newton (they/them), Education Coordinator (Comprehensive Sexual Health Education), Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity

2:10 p.m. Q&A

2:25 p.m. Closing Remarks

⁴ Geert de Clercq, "French dictionary sparks debate with non-binary 'iel' pronoun," *Reuters* (17 November 2021)



Speaker Biographies

Jade Pichette (they/them)

Manager of Programs, Pride at Work Canada

Jade Pichette (they/them) is an inclusion, and diversity professional based in Tkaranto/Toronto. Currently Jade serves as the Manager of Programs at [Pride at Work Canada](#) where they work with over 150 large employers across Canada around sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression inclusion. Previously Jade served as the Volunteer and Community Outreach Coordinator at [the ArQuives](#), the Education Programs Coordinator at [Kind Space](#), and they continue to run an independent [inclusion and diversity consulting business](#). They were one of the authors of the [Transitioning Employers: A survey of policies and practices for trans inclusive workplaces](#). Jade is also a Ásatrú Gythia (priestess) of Vindisir Kindred. They have been involved in many interfaith, and anti-discrimination initiatives including being the first trans-feminine person to present at the Parliament of World Religions in 2018.

Hélène Frohard-Dourlent (they/them/she/her)

Educational Strategist, Equity and Diversity Office, University of British Columbia

In partnership with the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology, Hélène supports helps develop leading pedagogical strategies, educational modules, and learning tools to support equity, diversity and inclusion in teaching and learning spaces. Hélène has over 10 years of experience leading educational initiatives focused on equity and inclusion, and teaching on these topics. Hélène also supports organizational change initiatives at UBC to shift the way that information systems and policies can reinforce inequities and exclusionary practices in the classroom and beyond. Given their research background in this area, Hélène's work has focused on initiatives related to SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity).

Hélène holds a Master's and PhD from UBC's Department of Sociology, and a BA from Paris 3-Sorbonne-Nouvelle.

Eliot Newton (they/them)

Education Coordinator (Comprehensive Sexual Health Education), Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity

Eliot Newton (they/them) is the Education Coordinator (Comprehensive Sexual Health Education) for the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity. They have worked in the queer community for more than eight years. In the 2SLGBTQ+ education world, they have trained more than a thousand health care professionals as well as hundreds of teachers and thousands of students and youth. Eliot prides themselves on having trained many demographics from kindergarteners to CEOs, including such clients as the Green Party of Canada, Scotiabank Group, and various departments within the Government of Canada. They are passionate about explaining the relevance of gender and sexuality outside the context of health courses. In their non-professional life, Eliot can usually be found at home with their partner Michael and their two cats, drinking a fancy coffee and listening to their latest true crime binge.