



**STAFF REPORT  
INFORMATION ONLY**

**Communications Report**

**Date:** February 27, 2023

**To:** Toronto Public Library Board

**From:** City Librarian

It is recommended that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. receives Communication (a) from Sue Graham-Nutter, Chair, Toronto Public Library Board to Councillor Moise, dated February 7, 2023, regarding a meeting that was held to discuss Toronto Public Library's Intellectual Freedom Statement and Equity Statement, for information.

**SIGNATURE**

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Vickery Bowles  
City Librarian

February 7, 2023

Dear Councillor Moise,

Thank you for the meeting to discuss your concerns about Toronto Public Library's Intellectual Freedom and Equity Statements, and its 2019 decision to allow a third party rental at the Palmerston branch by a radical feminist group. The meeting was a good opportunity to discuss the issues, and express and listen to concerns. I am hoping that this dialogue can continue.

In the meantime, I thought you might be interested in the initiatives TPL has launched to amplify the voices of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, provide services to meet the community's needs, and support TPL staff. These efforts are reinforced by TPL's Board approved Equity and Intellectual Freedom Statements. Attached is TPL's service sheet outlining 2SLGBTQ+ initiatives at TPL (Attachment 1). Here is an overview of this work –

- In January 2020, TPL initiated the development of the 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion strategy. Key components included the development of an extensive 2SLGBTQ+ Service Plan, hiring a Senior Services Specialist (2SLGBTQ+ Community Connections & Partnerships), and forming a new 2SLGBTQ+ Services Committee. The Service Plan goal is for all members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community to feel welcome and represented in library spaces and by library programs, services, collections and staff.

The Service Plan has resulted in:

- The development of programming to inform, educate and support 2SLGBTQ+ communities in areas such as social supports and trans and non-binary health and wellness;
- Implementation of year-round online and in-person 2SLGBTQ+ programming for all ages, presented in collaboration with local 2SLGBTQ+ community organizations and agencies, to reflect and celebrate the community through an intersectional lens. Drag Queen Story time is an example of a popular ongoing program offered at TPL (Attachment 2);

## Library Board

### Chair

Sue Graham-Nutter

Councillor Paul Ainslie

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### Vice Chair

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Andrea Geddes Poole

Councillor Amber Morley

### City Librarian

Vickery Bowles

- Continuing the work to celebrate Pride month annually with a full slate of programs, videos and podcasts delivered by TPL staff and featuring 2SLGBTQ+ community members, Pride reading lists for all ages, and branches designing and hosting Pride displays;
- Continuing to build the Pride Collection — the largest circulating collection in Canada — and expanding the Pride Collection to include 2SLGBTQ+ book club sets;
- Highlighting 2SLGBTQ+ authors and voices through programming and also by creating reading lists for all ages and showcasing relevant, engaging content in our collections
- In January 2021, work on a TPL [Inclusive Washrooms Policy](#) began. The policy included extensive consultation and was approved by the Library Board at its December 5, 2022 meeting. The policy advances TPL's mission of offering a welcoming and supportive environment for all with a focus on equity so everyone feels welcome and has equal opportunity to use and benefit from TPL's public space.
- In March 2023, TPL will establish Rainbow presence signage in each of its 102 locations to offer a welcoming message to the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

### **Library Staff**

- Since 2012, TPL's staff resource group Pride Alliance continues to be an important forum for staff. Pride Alliance also continues to strengthen a positive connection with the City's Toronto Public Service (TPS) Pride Network, co-hosting a staff event for International Day of Transgender Visibility on March 31, 2022 attended by 70 staff.
- In 2014, Pride Alliance began a voluntary Positive Spaces training delivered in partnership with The 519. In April 2021, TPL made Positive Spaces training mandatory for all staff, prioritizing managers and supervisors. The training seeks to equip all staff with the information and tools they need to interact with other staff and provide excellent, respectful and welcoming customer service to the 2SLGBTQ+ community. To date, 2/3 of all management staff, and 1/3 of supervisors have been trained, and feedback on the program has been overwhelmingly positive. We also added training modules from the City to our list of available training for TPL staff: *Understanding Gender & Sexual Orientation* and *Human Rights 101*.
- Pride Alliance also promotes a number of national days of recognition, including: Pride; International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia; International Transgender Day of Visibility; Spirit Day; and International Transgender Day of Remembrance.

- In May 2020, TPL negotiated a new Trans-Affirming Care paid leave of absence provision in the last round of bargaining with CUPE local 4948. This leave provides up to 70 hours of paid time off to access physical or psychological trans-affirming care (including medical or non-medical procedures).
- In June 2022, TPL began offering gender affirmation coverage as a standard benefit through Green Shield's extended health benefits plan to support transitioning staff throughout their gender transition. This includes core surgeries and surgical enhancements. (Note: Coverage includes reimbursement for core surgeries not covered by provincial coverage including vocal surgery, breast construction, facial feminization, and laser hair removal. Surgical enhancement of individual features is also covered such as nose surgery, liposuction/lipofilling, face/eyelid lift, lip/cheek fillers, and hair transplant/implants.) A Transitioning at Work tip sheet was developed by Pride Alliance and endorsed by the senior leadership team.
- In 2022, the 2SLGBTQ+ Services Committee started the Branch Champions initiative, which nominated a staff member from each library district to promote, plan and advocate for 2SLGBTQ+ programs, collections and services in their area.
- TPS Pride Network also brings various city Agency Boards and Commission Pride groups together to share information on a regular basis. TPL Pride Alliance has attended TPS Pride Network meetings since 2013 and has offered to periodically co-host the meetings. Groups represented include TPL and many City divisions including TESS, PF&R, SDFA and Toronto Community Housing.
- The TPS Pride Network group spoke well of TPL's recent additions to its benefits package and said they would reference TPL's example to advocate for similar enhancements to benefits packages for City staff. Based on TPL's example, this effort to make the Green Shield gender affirming benefits package available for City staff was successfully advocated for by the City's Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Advisory Committee in 2022.
- Staff chosen names and pronouns are being integrated into TPL systems (e.g., Human Resources and email) and practices (e.g., meeting introductions) in recognition of a diverse workforce who may identify as non-binary or gender-diverse. A pronouns Tip Sheet has been developed by Pride Alliance and endorsed by the senior leadership team.

I hope you find this information helpful context as we move forward with future discussions. We look forward to ongoing discussions to continue to enhance programs and services for the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sue Graham-Nutter".

Sue Graham-Nutter  
Chair, Toronto Public Library Board

cc. Chezlie Alexander  
Alim Remtulla  
Vickery Bowles  
Moe Hosseini-Ara

## Attachment 1: New 2SLGBTQ+ Service Area Spotlight



Trans and Pride rainbow-wrapped pillars outside Yorkville Branch, home to TPL's Pride Collection.

## 2SLGBTQ+ initiatives

Toronto is home to the largest Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning (2SLGBTQ+) population in Canada and is one of the largest 2SLGBTQ+ communities in North America. TPL has developed an extensive service plan focused on the goal that all members of this community feel welcome and represented in our spaces and by our programs, services, collections and staff.

### Pride Alliance

Established in 2012, TPL's Pride Alliance is an employee resource group that helps to build an inclusive environment for 2SLGBTQ+ employees and allies. Members of this group serve as advocates and resources for TPL staff and services for 2SLGBTQ+-related issues.

## focus on. equity:

TPL is committed to ensuring that spaces, collections and services reach and reflect 2SLGBTQ+ communities to help engage and amplify queer voices.

*"I just love that TPL is making great efforts to embrace and share about 2SLGBTQAI+ lives."*

- 2SLGBTQ+ program attendee

### 2021 initiatives at a glance



**1300%**

increase in use  
of online and  
print 2SLGBTQ+  
collections



**187%**

increase in visits  
to the Pride  
Collection website



**3,477**

participants  
attended 32  
2SLGBTQ+  
online programs



Atmos Pierce reads to a group of children at Parkdale Branch as part of TPL's Drag Queen Storytime program.

## spaces

- Making our spaces more inclusive and welcoming to 2SLGBTQ+ customers with displays and showing our pride and support during Pride Month
- Honouring Two-Spirit and Indigenous peoples first by adopting 2SLGBTQ+ as the new acronym for all relevant programs, services and collections

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- Create welcoming and inclusive spaces by developing and implementing a gender-inclusive washroom policy, which includes training for all staff; year-round 2SLGBTQ+ displays in library branches; and a distinctive look and feel for 2SLGBTQ+ services at TPL

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- Create welcoming and inclusive spaces by developing and implementing a gender-inclusive washroom policy, which includes training for all staff; year-round 2SLGBTQ+ displays in library branches; and a distinctive look and feel for 2SLGBTQ+ services at TPL

## here's a look at some of what we've done, and what we've got planned over the life of our 2020-2024 Strategic Plan

### programs

- Developing programming to educate and support 2SLGBTQ+ communities in areas such as social supports and trans and non-binary health and well-being
- Increasing programming online and in-person to reflect and celebrate the 2SLGBTQ+ community through an intersectional lens

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- Implement year-round online and in-person 2SLGBTQ+ programming for all ages, presented in collaboration with local 2SLGBTQ+ community organizations and agencies

### collections

- Continuing to build the Pride Collection — the largest circulating in Canada — and expanding our collection of 2SLGBTQ+ book club sets
- Highlight 2SLGBTQ+ authors and voices by creating reading lists for all ages and showcasing relevant, engaging content in our collections and online

#### what's planned

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- Improve cataloguing practices, including the review of subject headings, to ensure they are sensitive towards 2SLGBTQ+ communities, identities and issues



Staff at Maria A. Shchuka Branch show their support for the community during Pride Month with a dynamic window display.

## technology

- Identifying specific 2SLGBTQ+ customer experience issues or barriers in using TPL technology systems, including the TPL website, Digital Privacy initiatives and data collection and data use

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- Expand access to anonymous internet browsing software in more branches, which enables members within the 2SLGBTQ+ community to seek out information or resources without fear of judgment or reprisal

## staff

- Building staff skills to support the development and delivery of accessible and informed library services to 2SLGBTQ+ Torontonians, including mandatory Positive Spaces training for all staff

- Working with Pride Alliance to observe and celebrate days of significance with library staff

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- As part of the new Collective Agreement, introduced up to 70 hours of paid time off for transitioning staff; in 2021, began offering a Trans-Affirming Care benefit providing up to \$5,000/year to access physical or psychological trans-affirming care or medical procedures.

- Revise job postings to reflect gender-inclusive language; create staff brave spaces and conversation circles for National Coming Out Day; and introduce an annual staff 2SLGBTQ+ symposium with discussions, speakers, and staff-generated ideas for improving service delivery

## Attachment 2: 2SLGBTQ+ Programming

**Sample 2SLGBTQ+ program highlights that have featured trans, queer and non-binary presenters and/or topics include:**

- The **Queer Tech Panel** in June 2021 featured trans, non-binary, and Indigenous panelists from across the tech field in Canada, a couple of whom also identified as having disabilities. The panel was also predominantly female.
- **Peyton Thomas: Both Sides Now** in November 2021 featured local trans author Peyton Thomas.
- The **Raising Confident Kids** program in November 2021, presented in collaboration with The 519, featured a talk for parents and families on understanding gender expression and 2SLGBTQ+ communities and promoting inclusivity for all.
- NYT bestselling non-binary author **Casey McQuiston** joined TPL for a virtual author talk in June 2021 to discuss their novel *One Last Stop*. Casey joined TPL again in June 2022 to deliver an author talk about their new book, *I Kissed Shara Wheeler*, hosted by Peyton Thomas.
- **Emme Lund: The Boy with a Bird in His Chest** in March 2022 featured a 2SLGBTQ-themed novel by a breakout transgender author and queer advocate.
- **Kalynn Bayron: This Wicked Fate**: Kalynn appeared in conversation with Toronto Public Library to discuss her work, upcoming projects, and the importance of diverse stories, voices, and good ol' fashioned magic in queer YA fiction.
- **Juno Dawson: What's the T?**: Award-winning author Juno Dawson joined TPL all the way from her home in the UK to talk about all things gender and transitioning from her latest book, *What's the T? A Guide to All Things Trans and Non-Binary*.
- Pride Month 2022 also included a non-binary health and wellness program, refugee support programs with Rainbow Railroad, a queer disability panel, Drag Queen Story Hours at library branches across the city, as well as Rainbow Storytimes for children and 2SLGBTQ+ book clubs for adults and youth. A staff social, hosted by TPL's Pride Alliance and open to TPL staff, family and friends, was held on Saturday, June 18 at S. Walter Stewart branch.

## **Additional 2022 2SLGBTQ+ programs featuring Black and Indigenous presenters included:**

- **Pride Month 2SLGBTQ+ Filmmaker Talks:** Alison Duke featured a queer Black producer and director who has focused much of her work on Black joy and resistance at Pride, with an emphasis on the trans community.
- **Pride Month 2SLGBTQ+ Filmmaker Talks:** Thirza Cuthand featured an Indigiqueer filmmaker who explores sexuality and gender in her work.
- **Black and Queer Artist Talks:** Stewart McKensy featured a queer Black singer and Broadway performer.
- A summer 2022 screening and talk of the film ***Rahyne***, an animated Afro-Indigenous short by BSAM Canada in partnership with filmmaker Kahstoserakwathe Paulette Moore, part of Earthseeds: Space of the Living, the Inaugural Toronto Waterfront Artist Residency.

## **Book lists featured on TPL's Pride Celebration webpage include:**

- [Reading with Pride](#) reading lists for Kids & Families including lists on: 2SLGBTQ+ Families; Gender Identity; 2SLGBTQ+ History; Rainbow Stories; and more
- A [Full Spectrum](#) Young Adult reading list to reflect a cross-section of 2SLGBTQ+ experiences
- A [2SLGBTQ+](#) reading list for Adults of recent and notable titles.
- [Mois de la Fierté : la littérature 2SLGBTQ+](#) a list of materials in French.
- The [Gender-Affirming Parenting Resources list](#) features books for parents of transgender, non-binary, questioning or gender-creative children and youth. All titles are endorsed by organizations that support 2SLGBTQ+ families and communities.
- In fall 2020, TPL developed a Covid-19 [2SLGBTQ+ Community Resources](#) guide to online resources available from organizations supporting the 2SLGBTQ+ community.
- Blog posts with material recommendations for [Trans Day of Visibility](#), [International Pronouns Day](#), [Trans Day of Remembrance](#) and [Disability Pride Month](#).

**2023 2SLGBTQ+ programs will feature:**

- A local 2SLGBTQ+ “Speed Friending” program series at Parkdale branch, modelled after Vaughan Public Library’s “Over the Rainbow: Pride Speed Friending” program.
- More rainbow and drag queen storytimes offered in branches in the east and west end areas of the city.
- A panel discussion featuring 2SLGBTQ+ members from QueerTech, hosted at Toronto Reference Library in the Fall.
- Workshops for 2SLGBTQ+ newcomers in the area of workplace development, through partnership with the 519 Community Centre.
- A staff-facing 2SLGBTQ+ Service Exchange to help foster an understanding of how to create localized programs to engage diverse 2SLGBTQ communities. Guest speakers will include 2-Spirit residential school survivors, the 519 Community Centre, Drag Queen Gila Munster and more.

**Blogposts and booklists in 2023 will feature:**

- An array of a range of topics to highlight the diversity of 2SLGBTQ+ communities reflected in our collections and program offerings. For example, in February two blog posts were published by the 2SLGBTQ+ Service Committee including: a Black History Month post about combatting transmisogynoir and a post about Aromantic Awareness Week.