

## **All-Gender, Multi-User Elementary School Washrooms**

With recent changes to the BC Human Rights Code, which now formalizes protection on the basis of gender identity, many schools are looking at various options for washrooms. Deborah Luporini, Principal at Gibsons Elementary School is thrilled that she and her district saw the rebuild of their school as an opportunity to design and install multi-user, all gender washrooms that would be safer and more welcoming for everyone.

She discussed how over the years the elementary schools in their district, like most places, have had trans and gender variant students, who have experienced discomfort and unease using single gender washrooms. Other students complained as well, because single gender washrooms are harder for staff to supervise and can therefore become a place of mischief. She had read about schools in Europe that had tried and experienced success with multi-user, all-gender washrooms, and thought it would work here too.

Some changes were required to convert the typical metal toilet stalls into enclosed rooms such as regular doors and walls to create greater privacy. This also required extra sprinklers to meet fire code and individual lighting and ventilation requirements. In each washroom area, there are two stalls with urinals, which are signed as such, and the six other stalls have disposal containers for menstrual products.



The hand-washing areas are shared by all users, with very large (8ft) wall openings to the hallways that allow for greater supervision, less misbehaviour, and less mess.

When the washrooms were opened, staff explained to students that these washrooms are for everyone, and that what's important is respectful and caring behaviour, as is expected in all parts of the school. Parents were curious, but once they saw the washrooms, there were no concerns. As a principal, Deborah reports that the new washrooms are a non-issue. They are much easier to supervise, more inclusive and more comfortable for students. She highly recommends the design to anyone who is reconfiguring or rebuilding school washrooms.

For other educational strategies and resources on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), have a look at the new BC based website [www.SOGIeducation.org](http://www.SOGIeducation.org)