

## **POLICY ON ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA AND ANTI-HETEROSEXISM**

### **July 2004 – Annual General Meeting**

(see also Policy 1.2, 3.1.3.1, 3.2.1.2, 3.4.2.1, 3.5.1.3, 3.5.3, 3.5.4.5, 5.2.3.3, 5.5.1, 5.5.2, 5.5.5.1, and 5.9.5.2) (see also Action Resolution 14.6)

#### Definitions

**BGLTT:** Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Transgender and Two-Spirited.

**Bisexual:** an individual who is emotionally/romantically and physically attracted to persons of either sex.

**Gay:** a person who is emotionally/romantically and physically attracted to persons of the same sex. Gay usually refers to males, but it is also used to include females. Gay can be used interchangeably with homosexual. Gay is most often the term preferred by the gay and lesbian community when referring to homosexual males.

**Gender Identity:** characteristics linked to an individual's intrinsic sense of self as a man or as a woman, which may not be the same identity as one's biological sex.

**Homophobia:** the fear, and/or hatred, and/or repulsion of homosexuality in oneself or in others, often exhibited by self-hatred, prejudice, discrimination, bullying or acts of violence.

**Heterosexism:** the assumption that everyone is or should be heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior. Heterosexism can exist on a personal, interpersonal, institutional or cultural level.

**Lesbian:** a female who is emotionally/romantically and physically attracted to other females. Lesbian can be used interchangeably with homosexual and gay when referring to females. Lesbian is usually the term preferred by the gay and lesbian community when referring to gay/homosexual females.

**Sexual Orientation:** the emotional/romantic and physical attraction felt by an individual towards members of the same sex, the other sex or either sex.

**Transgender:** a person whose gender identity (feeling of being either male or female) does not match their physical/anatomical sex. Some describe it as being born into the wrong body.

**Two-Spirited:** a member of the Aboriginal community who is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

1. CTF advocates for educational systems that are safe, welcoming, inclusive, and affirming for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.
2. CTF believes:
  - a) that the role of educators is critical in creating positive societal change to address the realities of BGLTT issues for students, parents and teachers;

- b) that an assumption of heterosexuality as being the only sexual orientation throughout the school system denies BGLTT students and same-gender parented families affirmation and accommodation;
- c) that BGLTT students, staff and same-gender-parented families have the right to:
  - be free from harassment, discrimination and violence;
  - be treated fairly, equitably and with dignity;
  - self identification and freedom of expression;
  - be included and to be represented and affirmed in a positive and respectful manner;
  - have avenues of recourse (without fear of reprisal) available to them when they are victims of harassment, discrimination and violence;
  - have their cultures and communities valued and affirmed.
- d) that efforts must be made to ensure that education prepares young people to develop open, pluralistic and democratic societies, free of discrimination or aggression based on sexual orientation and gender identity;

3.1 Anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism education seeks to promote equity through practising the principles of inclusion, affirming the identity of individuals and groups, seeking the elimination of homophobia and heterosexism in all its forms, and initiating comprehensive school programs supporting equity.

3.2 Anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism education is an integral goal of education permeating curriculum, materials, pedagogy, policies, practices and programs.

4. For Anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism education to become effective:

4.1 educators must accept their responsibility to educate themselves and to reflect upon their own attitudes and behaviours in modeling respect, understanding and affirmation of diversity;

4.2 educators have a responsibility for the elimination of homophobia and heterosexism in the working and learning environment;

4.3 curriculum must include positive images and accurate information about history and culture which reflects the accomplishments and contributions of BGLTT people;

4.4 educators must take actions to make schools safe for BGLTT staff, students and parents, and those who are perceived to be so, by:

- treating everyone with respect and acceptance;
- using language that affirms all sexual orientation and not using disparaging remarks or language that implies one sexual orientation is superior to another;
- challenging staff, students and parents who continue to display prejudice on the basis of sexual orientation
- developing an action plan to use in the event of an incident of discrimination or harassment and/or violence;
- never making assumptions in the matter of sexual orientation;
- making a commitment to confidentiality in the event of a disclosure of sexual orientation or gender identity;
- not assuming the superiority of heterosexuality.

- 4.5 schools and school systems must adopt anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism policies and recognizing that homophobia plays an integral role in bullying and harassment in school;
- 4.6 BGLTT students must have the right to counseling that is supportive, affirming and free from efforts on the part of counsellors to change their sexual orientation and / or identity through the use of or the referral to aversion, reparative, or conversion therapies;
- 4.7 teacher preparation programs must include:
  - knowledge, awareness and affirmation of those who identify as BGLTT;
  - strategies, lesson plans and curriculum that assist teachers in addressing BGLTT issues in classrooms and schools;
- 4.8 educators must have access to professional development programs, which provide assistance in addressing BGLTT issues in classrooms and schools.
5. Ministries of Education must become visible advocates of anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism education through the provision of:
  - 5.1 curriculum documents, training and directives which incorporate anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism perspectives;
  - 5.2 sufficient resources to enable school systems to effect change.
6. The Canadian Teachers' Federation declares itself to be an anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism organizations, which:
  - 6.1 promotes equity and inclusiveness for all individuals in the workplace;
  - 6.2 recognizes student and teacher diversity and the goals of anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism in the selection of its priorities and programs; and
  - 6.3 promotes anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism education.
7. CTF encourages Member organizations to:
  - 7.1 review and revise policy consistent with CTF's policy concerning BGLTT issues;
  - 7.2 to develop public awareness programs about BGLTT issues and the effects of heterosexism and homophobia on the learning environment.

THAT CTF affirm and publically declare and support the right of same-sex couples to marry legally.

**Rationale**

The CTF mission includes advocating changes in public policy (1.2.2.4) and it takes a stand in support of human rights and equity (1.2.3). It also affirms policy that defines marital status for pension purposes to include relationships between members of the same gender (2.5.11). In addition, the Federation has other policies that identify sexual orientation as an area needing support and protection.

Courts in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec have judged the Common Law definition of marriage as “the legal union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others” to be unconstitutional and must be changed to read “the legal union of two persons to be exclusion of all others”. The courts have declared that the Common Law definition violates Section 1, 2, and 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and, therefore, must be struck down.

In anticipation of a favourable response by the Supreme Court of Canada to the Federal Government’s reference (due some time in the Spring of 2004), the CTF can send a strong message that it fully supports the equality and freedom of expression rights of same-sex couples who wish to have their relationships recognized in law through the institution of marriage.

Teachers and the parents of the children they teach have formed same-sex relationships and families that fully deserve to be treated with equality, dignity, and respect. The CTF has a responsibility to affirm its belief in the equal treatment of such relationships and families and to declare publically its support for the right of same-sex couples to be legally married.