



SOGI Summit Addresses Inclusivity and Safe Spaces for Students

By Scout Gray, SOGI 1 2 3 Lead, Arc Foundation



Earlier this fall, the [Ministry of Education announced funding](#) to help expand provincial K-12 Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) supports, including the annual SOGI 1 2 3 Educator Summit. This year's summit was led as a collaboration between the Ministry and the [ARC Foundation](#), a Vancouver-based organization committed to a world where children and youth live authentic lives, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Held on October 30 in Richmond, the 2019 SOGI 1 2 3 Educator Summit brought together educators from 48 B.C. school districts, 14 B.C. independent schools and 5 Alberta districts, as well as parents/caregivers and Indigenous partners, for a full day of professional development. This event provided participants with an opportunity to learn about new approaches and resources, share successes and challenges, and provide input to help inform provincial initiatives.

The morning of the Summit included a welcome by Rhiannon Bennett of Musqueam and breakout workshops on Intersectionality, Meaningful Youth Engagement and Two Spirit Identities and how they connect to SOGI 1 2 3. The Intersectionality workshop helped participants recognize how our identities and experiences are informed by systemic oppression and most importantly, how our allyship and social advocacy movements need to recognize this. The workshop was offered by Cicely Blaine Consulting and built skills among the attendees so they could return to their districts and continue the conversation around how our many identities impact our interactions with SOGI.



Attendees of the Meaningful Youth Engagement workshop, offered by Check Your Head, took a closer look at how they interact with youth and learned about different models of engagement to support youth voice. Whether planning a SOGI event or doing longer-term youth engagement while promoting SOGI inclusive school environments, we need to ensure that youth have a say in the decisions that affect them.

The Two Spirit Identities workshop, led by Jeremy Jones from the Indian Residential Schools Survivors Society, enhanced participants' understanding of Two Spirit and other Queer Indigenous identities, and discussed how to incorporate Indigenous perspectives of SOGI into school programming.

Based on a post-event survey, where 52 attendees provided feedback on their experience at the summit, the breakout workshops were overwhelmingly positive, 90% were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the overall experience. In fact, many participants wished they could've attended more of the workshops as opposed to having to select just one.



K-12 Collaborative Members of the Provincial K-12 SOGI Collaborative, including representatives from ARC Foundation, BC Association of School Business Officials, BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, BC Principals and Vice-Principals Association, BC School Superintendents Association, BC School Trustees Association, BC Teachers Federation, Canadian Union of Public Employees, First Nations Education Steering Committee, Federation of Independent School Associations and Ministry of Education

The morning Summit session concluded with a Parent Panel, where five parents shared personal stories of seeing SOGI inclusive education in action (or missing from) their school community and provided input on how educators might better engage with parents.

In the afternoon, attendees had the opportunity to share experiences in round-table discussions on a variety of topics such as People Leadership and best practices to engage a group, SOGI in Elementary Schools, Bringing SOGI Policies to Life, and SOGI Event Planning.

Those who participated in the Summit felt the day's events benefited their understanding of SOGI Inclusive education. 74% of survey respondents reported that their SOGI knowledge increased as a result of attending the Summit. Those who didn't report an increase already had a fairly high (7 out of 10 or higher) rating of their own SOGI knowledge. Participants also found the Summit provided a great opportunity to network and connect with others and to hear from a variety of members of the community.



Several participants had suggestions for next year's Summit, including more concrete resources, activities and actions that can be done in districts, more student voices and a panel with parents who aren't queer themselves or who don't have queer children to gain new perspectives on SOGI 1 2 3 Inclusive education.

Many thanks to those of you who attended this year's SOGI 1 2 3 Educator Summit and participated in such a meaningful way. We appreciate the feedback you have provided and are already looking forward to next year's event!

Learn More

- › [SOGI 1 2 3](#) provides educational resources and support for teachers and other educators who want to create SOGI-inclusive schools where students can live authentic lives, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- › Read the [news release](#) to learn more about the SOGI Educator Summit.