
USE OF GENDER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE AND PRONOUNS

1. PURPOSE

The intent of this policy is to promote gender equality by communicating in a gender-neutral way. Using gender-neutral language makes everyone feel welcome, no matter their identity, and it sets an example for Council, employees, volunteers, and agents of the Municipality that gender-neutral language is the norm and that no one should assume anything about someone without asking first.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to North Cowichan Council, employees, volunteers (Council appointed committee members), and agents of the Municipality who are engaged in drafting documents (e.g., advertisements, bylaws, policies, strategies, studies, reports, letters, memos, etc.), content for the municipal website and social media sites, and any other written communications distributed through a North Cowichan communication medium, such as emails, text messages, instant messaging, social media posts, and live chats.

3. POLICY

Gender-neutral language must be used by all members of Council, employees, volunteers and agents of the Municipality when drafting correspondence or a document on behalf of the Municipality of North Cowichan.

3.1. Using gender-neutral language means writing in a way that:

- Does not discriminate against any gender or gender identity
- Does not perpetuate or reinforce gender stereotypes
- Promotes gender equality
- Puts an end to gender bias

3.2. Avoid gender-biased expressions or expressions that reinforce gender stereotypes by replacing gendered language with more neutral language, even in contexts where many readers strongly expect the gendered noun. Do not use gender specific nouns (e.g., fireman, husband, girl, man-made, etc.). Avoid use of pronouns in correspondence unless you know the person's personal pronouns. If a person's name is not addressed as "Dr." you can use "Mx." as a gender-neutral title of courtesy in your writing.

3.3. Prior to distributing your correspondence or document, review your writing and consider the following questions:

- (1) Have you used "man" or "men" or words containing them to refer to people who may not be men?
- (2) Have you used "she," "her," or "herself" to refer to people who may not be women?
- (3) If you have mentioned someone's sex or gender, was it necessary to do so?
- (4) Do you use any occupational (or other) stereotypes?
- (5) Do you provide the same kinds of information and descriptions when writing about people of different genders?

RELATED POLICIES & PROCEDURES

- Council Advisory Body Policy
- Inclusive Language Tip Sheet

APPROVAL HISTORY

WRITTEN BY: Michelle Martineau, Manager, Legislative Services	APPROVED BY: Council	DATE: May 17, 2023
--	----------------------	--------------------