



Jewish Federation OF EDMONTON

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As a child who grew up in the 70s and 80s, there were few public role models for LGBTQ awareness and issues. They avoided the subject on TV, and there were a few movies that featured queer couples or issues. Being queer was very much in the closet, and as movies slowly dealt with the subject, so did mainstream society as well. We normalize gender fluidity and mixed pronouns among youth today, and I marvel at how they roll with it and move forward.

This month is Pride Month in Edmonton. We are co-hosting a Pride Shabbat dinner tonight with Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), at Congregation Beth Shalom. I look forward to a delicious Shabbat dinner, and to the kabbalat Shabbat service to be led by both Rabbi Gila Caine and Rabbi Steven Schwarzman. With honoured guests and new friends joining us, we will have a lovely evening.

When I began as CEO, the first thing I did was add a gender pronoun to my name. Right away, people asked why I did this, as a heterosexual woman. Was this necessary? The reason to incorporate she/her after my email signature and on my business card was not about me, but about creating an accepting space. It is a signal that we at the Federation accept all Jews for how they identify. I still have much to learn about pronoun use.

At our house, we started a tradition many years back of incorporating an orange on our Seder plate. This signifies that we welcome those into our home who are not typically included in traditional places. We at the Jewish Federation are seeking paths for all Jews to become active and contribute to the community. We wish we see the symbolic orange through our words and actions. Our aim is to make our events and programs warm and welcoming to all.

In one week, we have practically doubled the staff in the Federation offices, thanks to a Canada Summer Jobs grant from the federal government. Please join me in welcoming three summer students, Cas Allen, Elizabeth Antonio-Wood, and Ethan Buck. Respectively, they will work on communications, archives, and Holocaust education/PJ Library support. We look forward to mentoring them as they provide invaluable extra hands, and learning from them and their fresh perspectives, including the LGBTQ space.

Shabbat Shalom,

D. Lewitt

Stacey