

# Full of Pride: A Space Where Everyone Belongs at George Brown

With Pride Month in full swing, learn how George Brown creates an environment where students and employees feel safe and accepted.

Stephanie Gilman



For post-secondary students in the 2SLGBTQ+ community, finding a school that promotes inclusivity and diversity can be a top concern when deciding where to study. Fortunately, George Brown College (GBC) provides a space that fits the bill. With Pride Month in full swing, the college is embracing the opportunity to highlight its commitment to creating a learning and working environment where students and employees feel safe and accepted, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

### A spirited kick-off to Pride 2022

George Brown began its Pride Month festivities on June 1, with its annual raising of the Pride flag, followed by a celebration with the school's community. Hosted by GBC graduate samantha bitty, the event included live music and performances by accomplished artists from Toronto's 2SLGBTQ+ community.

As he addressed the crowd gathered at the flag raising ceremony, Dr. Gervan Fearon, President of George Brown College, said, "We all stand together in celebration of Pride Month while recognizing that the spirit of Pride must be embedded in our actions, as well as our activities all year-round."

River King, a current GBC student,

**“There’s a lot of representation along the gender spectrum within the George Brown faculty, and they went above and beyond to make me feel comfortable.”**

praises the school for its culture of acceptance. "For a long time, throughout my transition and coming out, I

never felt like I was queer enough or trans enough," they say. "There's a lot of representation along the gender spectrum within the George Brown faculty, and they went above and beyond to make me feel comfortable."



Vivek Shraya: Hall of Justice Winner

The college's Office of Anti-Racism, Equity and Human Rights Services (OAREHRS) has a slate of events planned for the remainder of Pride Month, including employee training around terminology, concepts, and anti-oppression principles, and a yoga class organized by the Black Student Success Network (BSSN) for Black 2SLGBTQ+ students and Black student allies.

### A stitch in the fabric of Toronto

Referring to himself as "out and proud," Michael Herrera, Chief Financial Officer at George Brown College, feels honoured to hold a senior leadership role at an institution that stands behind its 2SLGBTQ+ students and employees.

Born and raised in Toronto, Herrera notes the significance of Pride to the college, with its inextricable link to the city it calls home. "George Brown is deeply rooted in the fabric of Toronto," says Herrera, "and we consider Pride

Month to be an important celebration not only for our entire city but for our student, employee, and alumni community."

While taking stock of the many strides GBC has made to support 2SLGBTQ+ initiatives, Herrera is hesitant to get complacent with their achievements. "We have so much to celebrate for Pride this year," he says, "but there's still much more work to be done."

### Inspiring social change through art and activism

John Caffery, a graduate of George Brown College and current professor in the college's Community Worker Program, has a long history of engaging youth in social change and inspiring creative responses to oppression. Caffery's Hall of Justice poster project seeks to raise awareness of 2SLGBTQ+ activism by featuring prominent activists from the community, including bell hooks, Vivek Shraya, and George Takei.

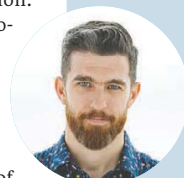
Upon learning of the lack of francophone 2SLGBTQ+ resources in Ontario, Caffery secured funding through George Brown's Ignite Fund to have the existing posters translated to French while adding more activists to the project.

"Students need to see their identities reflected on the walls of the places they frequent," says Caffery, noting that schools are often the site of homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic violence. "The posters symbolize that 2SLGBTQ+ communities belong at George Brown College."

A joint collaboration between Caffery and his students, Caffery plans to continue growing Hall of Justice through partnering with community groups and adding more 2SLGBTQ+ activists to the series. "I think it's inspirational to learn about how members of our communities have resisted injustice and thrived in the face of oppression," he says. ★



**Michael Herrera**  
Chief Financial Officer,  
George Brown College



**John Caffery**  
Professor & Activist,  
George Brown College

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