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# Women's Peer Group

## *Information Package*



# Information Package

CAN Women's Peer Group (WPG)

*A virtual group for Autistic women, gender non-conforming, and gender diverse adults (18+), in British Columbia.*

Thank you for your interest! This package details what to expect when attending a meeting.

## It includes:

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# Group Values and Purpose

Connect - Validate - Grow - Build Community



*A peer group is a gathering of people with similar lived experiences, who come together to connect, support, share power, and validate each other.*

The WPG is a virtual drop-in group that aims to provide a natural and fulfilling space for Autistic women, gender non-conforming, and gender diverse folks to:



Form meaningful connections



Share stories & strategies



Create a sense of belonging



Foster personal & collective growth



Provide an open & flexible space

Individuals may join for different reasons, that might include gaining knowledge, supporting others, or to make friends, in a non-transactional way.

# Meet the Team

## *Introducing your peer facilitators with lived experience, who support the culture of our space.*

Through continual collaboration with the group they offer topic and discussion themes for each meeting, and help guide conversations when needed. Together they aim to create a welcoming and comfortable space for everyone involved.



### **Kayla Tellier** (*any pronouns*)

**About me:** Kayla also works as a Support Worker, CAN Training Facilitator for CAN, is an Actor, and is involved in Autism Research. She also enjoys reading, sewing, and participating in her Special Olympics Sports (Basketball, Soccer, and Figure Skating)

**Special interests:** Film and all the processes of film making.

**Why I facilitate:** I have greatly benefited from making connections with other Autistic women and having people to talk to who understand what it is like to live as an Autistic woman. I'm excited to help facilitate a group where those connections can be made for others who haven't previously had the opportunity.

### **Kieran Thwaites**

**About me:** Kieran is learning and providing 1on1 support outside of CAN, facilitates some other peer groups, and does various queer and neurodivergent consulting. They thrive in community, and tend to find it in unusual places such as Twitch streaming nerdy card games, thru-hiking the Pacific Crest Trail, and messing around on the diving board every week at Trans Swim.

**Special Interests:** Biology, mental health, boardgames, travel

**Why I facilitate:** There is a severe lack of autistic community for adults, especially in-person, so I do this to be a part of it, and to help build and provide for others what I wish existed when I needed it. The facilitation side of it comes intuitively to me as a by-product from how I learned to communicate. Being a part of community that can see me is necessary for my existence, and deeply fulfilling to contribute to.

### **Rae Morris** (*she/hers*)

**About me:** Rae Morris provides clinical consultation to support the development, process, and evaluation of the WPG, including providing background clinical mentorship to the co-facilitators. Outside of WPG, Rae is an individual and family therapist and clinical social work educator and researcher. Most of the clients who choose to work with Rae are neurodivergent adults seeking to gain self-insight and dismantle internalized ableism.

**Special Interests:** Hiking, paddle boarding, and spending time with her family.

**Why I facilitate:** Every day in my practice, I see and hear a great need for people to feel connected to community and spaces where they feel heard/seen/valued for who they are. I know how deeply valuable and impactful it can be to hear another person say "hey, me too", and I am so grateful to CAN for offering and funding this group. I am honoured to be a part of something that has been created and shaped by the very people it was designed to bring together.

### *Curious about joining a meeting, but feeling unsure?*

If you would like a 1:1 chat with our facilitators to ask questions or learn more email: [youthandadults@canucksautism.ca](mailto:youthandadults@canucksautism.ca)



# Meeting Details & Structure



**6:30-8:00 PM**

*(optional extra 30 mins)*



Every 2nd & 4th

**Tuesday** of the month



Online via **Zoom**

## SCHEDULE



**6:30-7:00 PM**

Introducing the space, sharing norms, and introductions

**7:00-7:50 PM**

Topic introduction and open discussion

**7:55-8:00 PM**

Check in and wrap up

**8:00-8:30 PM**

Optional extra time

**8:30 PM**

Meeting closes

*\*Approximate schedule. Timing is subject to change.*



## Introductions

- Facilitators welcome everyone to the group, and share the group norms .
- Conversations may go back and forth between members when doing introductions.
- Facilitators will ensure there are opportunities for everyone to participate in the introductions .
- You are welcome to pass or type your introduction into the chat.



## Topic Discussion

- Facilitators will introduce the topic and will lead with 1 or 2 discussion questions to get the conversation started
- Conversations will flow naturally. Anyone is welcome to join in at any time, and/or listen to the discussion.
- Conversations may diverge from the initial topic (that is okay!)
- Group facilitators may redirect discussions to ensure equal opportunities for engagement and to balance time.



## Wrap Up

- Towards the end of the meeting, we will begin wrapping up the conversation.
- This may include a check-out, sometimes with a show-n-tell time (e.g. introducing your pet to the group)
- Those with energy/enthusiasm to continue chatting are welcome to stay for an additional half hour until 8:30, when the call will end.

## Sharing Communication Styles

As a way to share our communication style or needs with each other, we invite you, if helpful, to include a letter **“tag”** before your name. You can change your tag at any point:

- (n) No social support needs
- (d) Directly initiate with me by name
- (t/nv) Text only, or not participating verbally today
- (o) Observer (please don't initiate interaction with me)

*\*The group may agree to add to, or change, these tags during the meeting*



# Group Norms

***Norms are based on the desired group culture of participating members. The facilitators are always open to hearing feedback and having discussions about group norms.***

## Some of our communication norms include:

- Most of us have some social challenges, it is okay to communicate "imperfectly."
- We are all doing our best and make an effort to be considerate.
- Be direct and speak up if you have a need.
- Silence doesn't have to be awkward; leaving moments of quiet enables those who need more internal processing time to join in.
- We understand that accidental interruptions happen, gentle interruptions to get context are also welcome.
- Two people may start talking at the same time, and that is okay. When this happens, default to the person who has shared less to speak first.



## Statement(s) of Care:

- The WPG is a community that values interacting with consideration and kindness.
- We do not have room for any form of discrimination. We ask that all participants are respectful of others to the best of their ability and receptive to feedback if ever necessary.
- We are a recreational drug and alcohol free environment.
- We aim to avoid directing raised voices, profanity, or targeted antagonizing towards individuals.
- We give each other the benefit of the doubt and assume positive intent.
- Individuals are responsible for their own well being. This means attending meetings in ways that feel good to you, stimming/moving/coming or leaving as needed, and addressing discomfort directly and kindly with individuals, or a facilitator.
- We maintain confidentiality within the group, we encourage you to take away ideas and feelings but refrain from sharing specific details outside of our meetings.



***If these agreements are not met, individuals may be asked to meet with one of the facilitators to collaboratively discuss how to best meet the needs of everyone involved. As a community we believe in learning and growth.***

# Additional Resources



[How to use Zoom](#)



[Mental Health &  
Employment Resources](#)



[WPG Website](#)



# Contact Information



## General questions and inquiries:

[youthandadults@canucksautism.ca](mailto:youthandadults@canucksautism.ca)\*

or call **604-334-5662 ext. 222**

*\*this is the email address from which you will receive our communications from, please add it your contact list to ensure our emails don't get sent to your spam folder*

## To get directly in touch with the WPG Facilitators:

[canautisticpeergroup@gmail.com](mailto:canautisticpeergroup@gmail.com)

*\*Note that this email will not be monitored daily. You can expect a response between 3-5 business days.*

*Interested in other CAN opportunities?*

## Stay connected!



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# Acknowledgements

The WPG group was inspired by Good Company – an Autistic Peer Support Group in Toronto, founded by Dori Zener and facilitated by Besa Shemovski Thomas. Canucks Autism Network greatly appreciates the support, expertise and resources provided by Dori Zener & Associates to offer this group for Autistic women and gender diverse adults in the Vancouver area.



## Canucks Autism Network would like to extend a huge thank you to:

- Rae Morris, Individual & Family Therapist and Clinical Social Worker, who's support, consultation, mentorship, and facilitation has been instrumental throughout the development of this group. Rae's exceptional skills and expertise in research and evaluation have not only helped secure ongoing funding but have also ensured continuous improvements to the group.
- The many Autistic individuals who provided invaluable contributions to the development of this group, through focus groups, evaluation surveys, consultations, and developing content.
- Kayla Tellier and Kieran Thwaites, whose insightful contributions as peer co-facilitators have played a pivotal role in building the group's culture and fostering a welcoming, supportive, comfortable and enjoyable community for all participants.
- Every individual who has participated in our meetings, provided valuable feedback, engaged in discussions, completed surveys, or in any way contributed to this initiative. Your active involvement is what truly builds this group and community, thank you for your ongoing support.