

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI) POLICY

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1 INTRODUCTION

At the heart of Grand River Friendship Society's mission is an unwavering commitment to cultivating a community characterized by diversity, equity, and inclusion. This foundational principle is an aspiration and a guiding philosophy that shapes every facet of our organization. As we embark on the journey outlined in this policy, we recognize that community vitality emerges when individuals from various backgrounds with distinct experiences and identities unite in a spirit of unity.

The inclusive ethos encapsulated in this policy resonates with the values espoused by the higher values of humanity, signalling a shared commitment to rebuilding and empowering communities. Canadian values' emphasis on a recovery-oriented approach aligns seamlessly with our vision of an inclusive environment that rebounds from challenges and emerges more robust and resilient. By aligning our goals with the broader best practices of nonprofit organizations, we acknowledge that fostering diversity is a moral and strategic imperative.

This commitment extends beyond token gestures; it is woven into the fabric of GRFS's identity. It represents a collective pledge to create an environment where everyone feels a genuine sense of belonging, regardless of background. As we embark on this journey, we understand that promoting equity requires a conscious effort to dismantle systemic barriers, ensuring that opportunities and resources are distributed justly.

Moreover, this commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is a beacon guiding our operations, programs, and engagements. It inspires us to adopt innovative approaches, ensuring that our initiatives funded through Canadian society and government are not only accessible but also responsive to the nuanced needs of our diverse community. In essence, this policy lays the foundation for a community where differences are celebrated, every voice is heard, and individuals are empowered to contribute their unique strengths to the collective tapestry of GRFS.

Furthermore, in its activities and operations, GRFS considers the policy of representing the four primary employment equity designated groups (women, Indigenous peoples, members of visible minorities and persons with disabilities) of Canada's core public administration.

2 TERMS

Aboriginal (Indigenous Communities)

Collectively, it refers to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, denoting the descendants of the land's original inhabitants. The term is widely used in Canada, and 'Indigenous' is gaining popularity, especially in academic and governmental settings.

Indigenous Peoples (Original Inhabitants Collective)

Collectively, it refers to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis as the original inhabitants of Canada. Similar to 'Aboriginal peoples,' asking individuals how they wish to be named is essential.

Mainstream (Dominant Cultural Norms)

The center or in-group setting norms for a group, organization, or society. The mainstream provides leadership and may need to be aware of its higher status.

Structural Inequality (Embedded Bias Overview)

Occurs when organizations, institutions, or social networks embed bias, providing advantages for some and disadvantaging others. Involves unequal access to resources and opportunities.

Transgender/Trans (Gender Identity Spectrum)

An umbrella term for individuals crossing the socially constructed line of masculinity or femininity. Includes diverse groups of people with atypical appearances or characteristics.

Underrepresented (Disproportionately Low Numbers)

Having numbers lower than the average population, often due to barriers to representation. Indicates potential marginalization.

Women (Structural Inequality Dynamics)

People identifying as women, regardless of biological sex. Despite being half the population, women have historically faced structural inequality worldwide.

Youth (Aged 15 to 30 Overview)

Individuals aged 15 to 30. Represents a specific age demographic.

3 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3.1 Diversity

Celebrating diversity is more than a mere acknowledgment of differences; it is a proactive embrace of the unique perspectives, talents, and contributions that individuals from various backgrounds bring to our community. GRFS recognizes that diversity is not only an inherent strength but a source of resilience and innovation. Our celebration of diversity extends beyond symbolic gestures to intentional efforts that amplify underrepresented voices, ensuring that the mosaic of our community is vibrant and reflective of the broader world. By valuing the richness that different backgrounds contribute, GRFS aims to create a community where diversity is not only accepted but actively integrated into the fabric of our collective identity. This commitment to diversity is not static; it propels us to continually explore ways to foster an environment where individuals from all walks of life thrive and contribute meaningfully to the flourishing of our community.

3.2 Equity

GRFS is dedicated to dismantling systemic barriers and fostering a culture of equity within our community. We recognize that promoting fairness is integral to ensuring that everyone has equal access to resources and opportunities. This commitment involves a conscientious effort to identify and address disparities, acknowledging that true equity requires proactive measures. By actively addressing systemic barriers, GRFS aims to create an environment where individuals, irrespective of their background, can participate fully and access the resources necessary for their personal and collective development. This commitment to equity not only reflects our moral stance but also aligns with the strategic imperative of fostering a community where every member has the opportunity to thrive.

3.3 Inclusivity

At the core of GRFS's guiding principles is a profound commitment to inclusivity, creating a space where every individual, regardless of their background, experiences a genuine sense of welcome and respect. We understand that true inclusivity goes beyond mere acceptance; it involves actively affirming the dignity and worth of each person within our community. By welcoming individuals of all backgrounds, experiences, and identities, GRFS endeavours to create an environment that tolerates differences and celebrates the rich tapestry they collectively weave. This commitment to inclusivity extends beyond our

internal operations, influencing the design and delivery of programs, events, and initiatives that reflect our community's diverse needs and aspirations.

4 OPERATING PRINCIPLES

4.1 Commitment to a DEI Culture

Grand River Friendship Society (GRFS) is unwavering in its commitment to fostering and sustaining a culture rooted in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). This commitment is not a static declaration but an ongoing, dynamic endeavour embedded in the organization's day-to-day operations, interactions, and decision-making processes.

4.2 Commitment to Progressive Action

Our pledge to DEI goes beyond rhetoric; it encompasses a commitment to progressive action. GRFS is dedicated to continually assessing, evolving, and expanding its DEI efforts. This involves regular evaluations, feedback loops, and a proactive stance to address emerging challenges and opportunities in pursuing an increasingly inclusive and equitable community.

4.3 Commitment to Creating a Safe Workplace

GRFS prioritizes creating a safe and welcoming workplace for all its members. This commitment extends beyond physical safety to include psychological safety, ensuring that individuals feel secure expressing their diverse perspectives, ideas, and concerns without fear of discrimination or reprisal.

4.4 Right to Terminate or Amend Policy

While we envision this policy as a guiding framework, GRFS reserves the right to terminate or amend it based on evolving organizational needs, legal considerations, or the broader context of societal changes. Any modifications will be made with careful consideration of preserving and enhancing the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

5 SCOPE

The scope of GRFS's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policy is expansive, embodying a holistic approach that permeates every facet of our organization. Extending far beyond a mere set of guidelines, this policy serves as a foundational framework that shapes the ethos and practices of GRFS.

5.1 Programs and Events

GRFS is dedicated to embedding DEI principles in the design and execution of all programs and events. From youth development initiatives to community-wide celebrations, our commitment to inclusivity ensures that every member of our diverse community feels represented and valued. The goal is to provide opportunities for participation and create experiences that resonate with the unique needs and aspirations of individuals from various backgrounds.

5.2 Hiring and Governance

Diversity, equity, and inclusion principles are integral to our approach to hiring and governance. We are committed to cultivating a workforce and leadership that mirrors the diversity of the community we serve. By ensuring diverse representation in decision-making bodies, GRFS aims to benefit from many perspectives, fostering innovation and strategic resilience.

5.3 Community Engagement

DEI is not confined within our organizational boundaries; it extends to every interaction within the broader community. Our engagement initiatives actively seek to understand community members' diverse needs, concerns, and aspirations by fostering open dialogues and collaborative decision-making processes. GRFS endeavours to be a responsive and inclusive community partner.

This comprehensive scope underscores our commitment to integrating DEI principles into the very DNA of GRFS. It is not merely a policy to adhere to; it is a living, breathing commitment to fostering a community where diversity is celebrated, equity is prioritized, and inclusion is the guiding principle in every endeavour we undertake. Through this expansive scope, GRFS aspires to be a beacon of positive change, influencing our immediate community and contributing to the broader landscape of inclusive and equitable practices within the nonprofit sector.

6 IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 Training and Awareness

GRFS's commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is not merely a statement but a continuous journey of learning and growth. Recognizing the pivotal role education plays in fostering understanding and empathy, GRFS strongly emphasizes ongoing training and awareness initiatives. Staff, volunteers, and board members will have access to comprehensive DEI training programs. These programs aim not only to build awareness of the challenges faced by diverse communities but also to cultivate a shared commitment to fostering an inclusive environment. By providing the tools and knowledge necessary to navigate the complexities of diversity, GRFS ensures that its team is equipped to contribute meaningfully to the organization's broader DEI goals.

6.2 Accessible Programs

Beyond mere accessibility, our commitment is to design programs that resonate with our community's diverse needs and perspectives. Whether through workshops, mentorship initiatives, or cultural events, GRFS will consider the unique challenges individuals from different backgrounds and abilities face. By tailoring programs to be responsive to diverse needs, we aim to increase participation and ensure that every community member feels a sense of belonging and relevance in the activities facilitated by GRFS.

6.3 Representation

GRFS recognizes the transformative power of representation. It is not merely a checkbox but a cornerstone in fostering an inclusive environment. Our commitment to diverse representation extends across all levels of the organization – from leadership roles to decision-making bodies and program development teams. This deliberate commitment to diversity ensures that various voices, perspectives, and experiences contribute to shaping the trajectory of GRFS. By actively seeking individuals from diverse backgrounds, we create an organizational culture that values and incorporates a rich tapestry of perspectives. This commitment is about rectifying historical imbalances and fostering an environment where every member, regardless of background, feels seen, heard, and empowered to contribute their unique strengths.

Implementing GRFS's DEI principles is a multifaceted approach that recognizes the interconnectedness of training, program design, and representation. Through these initiatives, GRFS aspires not only to meet the immediate needs of its community but also to proactively contribute to a society where diversity is celebrated, equity is a given, and inclusion is the guiding principle in every facet of community life.

7 ACCOUNTABILITY

7.1 Monitoring and Evaluation

Accountability lies at the core of GRFS's commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). We embrace a proactive approach to monitoring and evaluation to ensure that our initiatives translate into meaningful and lasting impact. Regular assessments will be conducted to gauge the effectiveness of our programs and initiatives in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within the community. These evaluations will encompass a range of quantitative and qualitative metrics, allowing us to measure participation rates, the depth of engagement, and the perceived impact on individuals. By collecting and analyzing data systematically, GRFS aims to identify patterns, successes, and areas for improvement, thereby refining our strategies and ensuring that our initiatives align with the evolving needs of our diverse community.

7.2 Reporting

Transparent communication is fundamental to our accountability framework. GRFS is committed to sharing regular, detailed reports on the progress of our DEI initiatives with all stakeholders. This includes, but is not limited to, board members, staff, volunteers, funders, and the broader community. Our reports will provide a comprehensive overview of the goals achieved, milestones reached, and challenges encountered in our DEI journey. Significantly, these reports will go beyond mere quantitative data, incorporating qualitative insights that reflect the lived experiences of individuals within our community. This transparent reporting mechanism is an act of accountability and a commitment to learning and growth. By openly acknowledging both achievements and areas for improvement, GRFS fosters a culture of continuous learning and adaptability, ensuring that our organization remains responsive and relevant in our pursuit of a more inclusive and equitable community.

In essence, accountability in the realm of DEI is not just about meeting benchmarks; it is about a commitment to ongoing reflection, learning, and improvement. Through robust monitoring, evaluation, and transparent reporting, GRFS ensures that its actions align with its intentions, creating a foundation of trust with stakeholders and fostering a culture of openness that permeates every aspect of the organization.

8 COLLABORATION

8.1 Community Engagement

At the heart of GRFS's commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is a dedication to genuine collaboration with our community. Community engagement is not merely a checkbox on our organizational to-do list; it is a dynamic, ongoing dialogue that informs our initiatives and ensures they are responsive to the ever-evolving needs of our diverse community. GRFS actively seeks to understand community members' diverse needs, concerns, and aspirations through inclusive forums, surveys, and open dialogues. This active engagement ensures that our programs and initiatives are not conceived in isolation but are co-created with the invaluable input of those they aim to serve. By fostering this collaborative approach, GRFS acknowledges that the community is not a passive recipient but an active partner in our collective journey toward a more inclusive and equitable society.

8.2 Networking

Beyond the boundaries of our immediate community, GRFS places significant emphasis on building connections with diverse groups and organizations. This networking approach is not just about expanding our organizational reach; it is a deliberate strategy to foster partnerships that contribute to

the broader goal of an inclusive and equitable society. By actively seeking collaborations with organizations that share our commitment to DEI, GRFS creates a ripple effect of positive influence. These partnerships go beyond the exchange of resources; they are symbiotic relationships built on shared values and a collective vision for positive community impact. Whether it's through joint initiatives, resource-sharing, or cross-promotion, these collaborations amplify our collective ability to effect positive change. Through this networking, GRFS contributes not only to its own community but also to the broader landscape of organizations striving for a more just and inclusive world.

In summary, collaboration is not just a means to an end for GRFS; it is a core value that underpins our approach to DEI. Through active community engagement and purposeful networking, GRFS seeks to amplify its impact, ensuring that the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion resonate not only within our immediate community but reverberate outward, contributing to a broader cultural shift towards greater inclusivity and equity.

9 ROLES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

9.1 Employee Responsibilities

Every employee at GRFS is entrusted with the responsibility of upholding the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This includes actively contributing to an inclusive work environment, participating in DEI training initiatives, and reporting any incidents or concerns related to discrimination or harassment.

9.2 Manager Responsibilities

People leaders play a pivotal role in fostering a DEI culture within their teams. This involves leading by example, creating an environment where diverse perspectives are valued, and addressing any DEI-related concerns promptly and effectively. People leaders are also responsible for supporting the professional development of their team members, ensuring equitable growth opportunities.

9.3 DEI Network Member Responsibilities

Members of GRFS's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) network are ambassadors of our commitment to DEI. Their responsibilities include actively participating in DEI training, advocating for inclusive practices, and serving as conduits for feedback and suggestions related to DEI initiatives. DEI network members contribute to shaping and reinforcing the organization's commitment to fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community.

10 ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS SPECIFIC TO GRFS

10.1 Youth Development Programs

Youth are the torchbearers of our collective future, and GRFS is committed to investing in their holistic development. Our youth development programs will remain at the forefront of our initiatives, emphasizing social support, academic assistance, and skill-building opportunities. What sets these programs apart is our unwavering commitment to infuse the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion into every facet. Beyond conventional education, these programs will actively promote cultural awareness, celebrate differences, and provide a platform for young minds to engage with the broader social justice theme. By integrating DEI principles into youth development, GRFS aims to nurture a generation that excels academically and embodies the values of inclusivity and equity in their personal and professional lives.

10.2 Newcomer Support

The journey of newcomers to Canada can be challenging, and GRFS stands as a pillar of support. Our commitment to assisting newcomers goes beyond basic needs; it encompasses a holistic approach to integration. This includes not only finding homes and obtaining necessary items but also navigating the complexities of legal documentation. Importantly, our support is culturally sensitive, recognizing and respecting the unique challenges faced by newcomers. By extending a helping hand in these critical early stages, GRFS strives to create a welcoming and supportive environment that accelerates the integration of newcomers into the fabric of Canadian society.

10.3 Inter-Generational Connections

GRFS believes in the power of inter-generational connections as a catalyst for community-building. By bringing together the elderly and the youth, we foster an environment where shared experiences and mutual assistance flourish. This initiative aligns seamlessly with our broader goals of intercultural dialogue and community-building. Through structured programs and events, we facilitate meaningful interactions that transcend age barriers, ensuring that wisdom is shared and experiences are passed down. This deliberate effort to connect different generations is an enriching experience for individuals and a strategic approach to building a community that values the unique contributions of each age group.

10.4 Collaboration With Indigenous Communities

Recognizing the profound importance of Indigenous perspectives, GRFS is committed to actively seeking collaboration with Indigenous communities. This collaboration goes beyond token acknowledgment; it is a genuine commitment to co-create initiatives that honour and integrate Indigenous cultural practices. By actively involving Indigenous communities in our programs and events, GRFS aims to contribute to the preservation and celebration of Indigenous heritage. This collaboration is rooted in respect, reciprocity, and a shared commitment to building a more inclusive society that values the diversity of cultural practices and traditions. Through this initiative, GRFS endeavours not only to be an ally to Indigenous communities but also to be a platform that amplifies Indigenous voices and contributes to a more holistic understanding of Canadian identity.

11 CONCLUSION

In concluding this comprehensive exploration of Grand River Friendship Society's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policy, we reaffirm our unwavering dedication to realizing the vision set forth in the light of universal human rights, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Canadian values and multiculturalism, and embracing the broader best practices of nonprofit organizations. This policy is more than a set of guidelines; it is a living commitment that breathes life into the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion within our organization and community.

Championing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion isn't just a strategic choice; it is a profound commitment to shaping a community where every individual is welcomed, valued, included, and empowered. It is a commitment to recognizing and celebrating the unique contributions that individuals from diverse backgrounds bring to the collective tapestry of the Grand River Friendship Society.

This policy, therefore, stands as a guiding framework, illuminating the path toward a community that reflects the ideals of multiculturalism. We envision a society where differences are celebrated, systemic barriers are dismantled, and opportunities are accessible to all. By fostering an environment where

diversity isn't just accepted but actively integrated into the fabric of our community, we aim to contribute to the enrichment of Canadian society and, by extension, the broader nonprofit sector.

We carry the torch of inclusivity, equity, and understanding as we move forward. We understand that this journey is not a destination but a continuous evolution, a commitment to learning, adapting, and growing. Through the implementation of this policy, we aspire to be not only a beacon for our immediate community but a model for nonprofit organizations striving to create positive and lasting social impact. In embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion, Grand River Friendship Society looks to the future with optimism, confident that the seeds we sow today will blossom into a more vibrant, just, and inclusive community tomorrow.

12 AREAS OF FOCUS FOR SELF-EVALUATION

Grand River Friendship Society (GRFS) is committed to integrating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) elements into ten areas.

Board

- **Diversity:** Ensure representation from diverse backgrounds, including gender, ethnicity, age, and expertise. Aim for a board that reflects the broader community.
- Equity: Implement policies that address any existing disparities in board roles, responsibilities, and decision-making. Ensure that opportunities for leadership development are accessible to all board members.
- Inclusion: Foster an inclusive board culture where all members feel heard, valued, and able to contribute. Implement inclusive decision-making processes.

Staff

- **Diversity:** Implement hiring practices that actively seek diverse candidates. Regularly assess and address any biases in recruitment processes.
- **Equity:** Regularly review and address pay gaps and ensure equitable opportunities for advancement. Provide training and resources to eliminate bias in performance evaluations.
- Inclusion: Cultivate an inclusive workplace where everyone feels a sense of belonging. Implement mentorship programs and support networks to ensure that every staff member has an opportunity to thrive.

Volunteers

- **Diversity:** Develop volunteer recruitment strategies that reach a diverse audience. Ensure that volunteer opportunities are accessible to all.
- **Equity:** Train volunteers to ensure they understand and respect diverse perspectives. Recognize and address any disparities in volunteer recognition or growth opportunities.
- Inclusion: Create an inclusive volunteer environment where individuals of all backgrounds feel valued and appreciated.

Organizational Roles (Hierarchical Levels)

- **Diversity:** Ensure diversity at all levels of the organization, from entry-level positions to leadership roles. Implement mentorship programs to encourage upward mobility.
- **Equity:** Regularly assess and address any disparities in promotion rates, access to training, and other opportunities for career advancement.

• Inclusion: Foster an inclusive organizational culture where individuals at all levels feel comfortable contributing ideas and perspectives.

Community Services

- **Diversity:** Tailor community services to meet the diverse needs of the community. Ensure that services are accessible to individuals from all backgrounds.
- **Equity:** Regularly assess and address any disparities in the distribution of services. Implement feedback mechanisms to ensure continuous improvement.
- **Inclusion:** Actively involve community members in the design and evaluation of services. Create an environment where all community members feel welcome and valued.

Organizational Communication

- **Diversity:** Use diverse channels to communicate with staff, volunteers, and the community. Ensure that communication is culturally sensitive and inclusive.
- Equity: Monitor communication for any biases or exclusions. Provide regular training on inclusive communication.
- Inclusion: Create open channels for feedback. Ensure that all voices are heard and considered in decision-making processes.

Procurement

- **Diversity:** Implement inclusive procurement practices by engaging with a diverse range of suppliers. Avoid exclusivity and seek out minority-owned businesses.
- **Equity:** Regularly assess and address any disparities in procurement opportunities. Ensure fair and transparent processes.
- **Inclusion:** Actively seek input from diverse suppliers in the procurement process. Provide feedback and support to help suppliers improve and grow.

Partnership

- **Diversity:** Seek partnerships with organizations that reflect a diversity of perspectives and backgrounds. Encourage collaborative projects that bring together different communities.
- **Equity:** Ensure that partnerships are mutually beneficial and address any power imbalances. Advocate for equity in shared projects.
- **Inclusion:** Foster a collaborative and inclusive partnership culture. Ensure that all partners have a voice and are acknowledged for their contributions.

Social Media and Website

- **Diversity:** Represent diversity in social media and website content. Feature stories, images, and voices from various communities.
- Equity: Monitor social media engagement for any disparities in how different communities are represented or treated. Address any issues promptly.
- Inclusion: Encourage community engagement on social media. Create spaces for discussions that are inclusive and respectful of diverse perspectives.

Organizational Culture

• **Diversity:** Encourage diverse teams in project planning and execution, ensuring a broad range of viewpoints and experiences are considered in all aspects of the organization's operations..

- **Equity:** Address systemic organizational barriers that might hinder equitable participation and advancement.
- **Inclusion:** Foster a workplace environment that values inclusive discussions and collaborations, ensuring that all employees feel heard, valued, and able to contribute fully.

13 SELF ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Our organization will use the self-assessment tool annually to evaluate the DEI performance of GRFS in the Areas of Focus listed above.

Instructions: Please rate each area on a scale from F to A+ based on your perception of how well GRFS aligns with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles. Consider the provided criteria for each rating.

F Less Than 40 - Not Acceptable The organization's performance in the specified area is deemed unacceptable, indicating a substantial need for improvement.

E 40-49 - Needs Significant Improvement The organization's performance is below satisfactory levels and requires substantial improvement in the specified area.

D 50-59 - Needs Improvement While there may be some positive aspects, the organization's performance in the specified area needs improvement.

C 60-69 - Needs Minor Improvement The organization's performance in the specified area is generally acceptable but could benefit from minor improvements.

B 70-79 - Good The organization's performance in the specified area is good, indicating that it meets a satisfactory standard.

A 80-89 - Inclusive Organization The organization's performance is commendable, demonstrating a high level of inclusivity in the specified area.

A+ 90 And Above - Excellent The organization's performance is outstanding, reflecting an excellent level of inclusivity and achievement in the specified area.

APPENDIX DEI SELF EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Area					DEL	Level				
Board	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Comn	nents								
Staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Comn									
Volunteers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Comn	nents								
Organizational roles	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Comn									
Community services	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Comn	nents								
Organizational communication	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Comn	nents								
Procurement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Comn	nents								
Partnership	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Comments									
Socail media	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Comments									
Organizational culture	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Comn	nents								