

BGC Ottawa

# Equity Policy

2022 - 2024

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## Policy Statement

BGC Ottawa is committed to promoting equity through welcoming and celebrating diversity, creating inclusive access and opportunities for our children and youth, families, staff and volunteers.

BGCO is dedicated to nurturing and advancing an organizational culture that intentionally and actively values difference. We recognize the valuable insights and enrichment brought on by individuals from various backgrounds, abilities and experiences.

BGCO is aware of systematic and institutionalized racism and oppressions that impact our Members, staff, volunteers and communities we serve. Thereby, we are taking action to enhance our knowledge, build internal capacity and collaborate with partners that assist in this journey to be more equitable in all areas of our work.

BGCO is committed to the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which defines the individual and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples and the practice and enjoyment of their cultures and customs, languages, religions, and to the development and strengthening of their economies, social and political institutions. BGCO is dedicated to consulting with Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers when necessary and will provide learning opportunities for our organization in our journey to better incorporate respect and equity for the First Peoples of Turtle Island.

BGCO acknowledges that Ottawa is built on un-ceded Algonquin Anishinaabe territory. The Peoples of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation have lived on this territory for millennia. Their culture and presence have nurtured and continue to nurture this Land. BGC Ottawa honours the Peoples and Land of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation. BGC Ottawa honours all First Nations, Inuit and Métis and all Indigenous Peoples and their valuable past and present contributions to this Land known as Turtle Island.

The United Nations General Assembly, in its Resolution 68/237, proclaimed 2015-2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent (UNDPAD) with the theme of "Recognition, Justice and Development." The Decade aims to strengthen actions to ensure the full realization and benefit of economic, cultural, social, civil and political rights of People of African ancestry with their full and equal participation in society.

BGCO serves many children, youth and families of African descent and is committed to adopting this Decade to address and dismantle racism, prejudice and racial discrimination that continues to impact African descent families. All with the recognition and commitment that this work must precede the timeline set by the Decade. BGCO recognizes and respects the diverse heritage, culture and contributions of People of African descent and is dedicated to promoting respect, protection and fulfilment of their human rights.

## Guiding Principles

This document highlights a framework for how all work relating to BGC Ottawa will be carried out. It acts as a guide and should be read by all staff at all levels in the organization. It should guide our partnerships and collaborations with individuals, groups and organizations. BGC Ottawa is being intentional in its focus on equity for all, including being cognizant and proactive on issues concerning anti-Indigenous, anti-Black, anti-Asian racism and issues of sexism, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, misogynoir, Islamophobia, antisemitism, ableism, ageism, socio-economic status, marital status and other oppressions.

These systems of oppression occur in many forms; individual, institutional and societal. They have a long and deeply rooted history in Canadian society and culture.

We all carry multiple social identities that intersect (intersectionality) and place us in varying steps of a hierarchical ladder, whether we are aware of it or not. This creates a social status of dominant and non-dominant groups. Dominant groups can bestow benefits and opportunities to those they recognize as “normal” and limit opportunities, minimize, or dismiss experiences for those that are placed in the non-dominant category.

This act of oppression derives mainly from unconscious biases and when not aware of, checked and unlearned, can cause harm to individuals and groups who experience them. As a result, those in the dominant group benefit from systems of oppressions as they continue to benefit from power and privilege while others continue to meet roadblocks.

We must question how our worldviews, ways of knowing, acting and our assumptions contribute to the support and/or broadening of historical and continuous systems of oppression. This act of self-reflexivity is critical in our journey to be consciously intentional about disrupting the status quo (dominant/popular ways of doing) and acting on equity and inclusivity.

## Equity Commitments

As an organization, BGC Ottawa is committed to embracing diversity and promoting equity and inclusion to create a welcoming, bias-free environment for all. This process is a journey as we open our minds and grow our knowledge in servitude that is mindful, anti-racist, anti-oppressive and inclusive of all. We are motivated by the passion to provide a safe, welcoming, and enriching space where the children and youth we serve can learn and flourish.

BGC Ottawa's commitment through its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan is a clear statement and intention to do better for our children, youth, families, staff and community. We strive to create an organizational culture that is safe, accepting and inclusive, in which individuals are treated with respect and dignity, regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status or disabilities.

These commitments will be ensured by:

1. Ongoing implementation of the BGCO Equity Policy within all levels of the organization.
2. Utilizing the Board DEI committee and staff Equity Working Group (EWG) and to support the implementation of tangible actions that support these commitments.
3. Consult, collaborate and assess activities with children, youth, families, staff, volunteers, partners and community members on topics relating to DEI within child and youth work.
4. Updating the BGCO Equity Policy annually or as often as necessary.

## Seven Areas of Focus

BGC Ottawa has made a commitment to be aware of, dismantle racism, and be inclusive and equitable through an intersectional lens within all areas and levels of the organization. This commitment was a call to action that led to the creation of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Anti-Black Racism Action Plan (known as the Equity Action Plan) with the support of an Independent Equity Consultant and the BGCO staff Equity Working Group.

This Action Plan is a living document that includes specific and in-depth tasks/activities to accomplish within the next 2 to 5 years. However, the Equity Policy will continue to be implemented, with the next 5 years acting as a period of organizational change and development.

Our organization is dedicated to implementing Social Equity within all areas of our work, as well as the organizational structure and culture. The seven main areas of focus are: Board, Management, People and Culture, Communications, Service Delivery, Community Engagement, and Quality, Standards and Accountabilities. These areas of focus are being championed by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and the Equity Working Group acting as the organization's advisor.

## Leadership Framework

As leaders our objective is to provide positive equitable environments where youth can thrive. At BGCO we aim to develop an equity consciousness that is an internal and external awareness of systemic oppression and its lasting effects specifically for our Members. Leaders within our organization strive to be clear examples of our core missions and values and should apply an equity lens throughout all levels of work.

In this organization, leadership competencies are needed to lead from a place of understanding and to help identify the diverse needs of our Members, communities and staff.

Leadership competencies are best identified as:

- Implementing organization-wide best practice.
- Aligning resources with priorities.
- Building community partnerships.
- Gathering and using data.
- Engaging in courageous conversations.
- Developing people.

Through this, we will move away from traditional power dynamics and structures, and approach challenges through a democratic and transformative mindset. We will strive to be a leading organization within our community by maintaining high quality programming, community engagement, anti-oppressive workplace culture and inclusive governance model.

## Communication and Advocacy Framework

This advocacy and communication framework applies to the organization's marketing strategies, internal and external communications, donations and gifts, Board and donor engagement, social media and all relevant proposals and policies within the BGCO community.

To have an effective framework, the Marketing and Communications Team will build upon their Communications Strategy to prioritize BGCO's Members and their families. This Communication Strategy Framework will be useful in applying organized information that also leads to action. It will inform on how the BGCO community will be able to be active participants in achieving our strategic goals.

The Advocacy and Communications Framework will identify new ways to engage with our Members, their families and those involved in the BGCO Community. Our direction will be at the advice and guidance of the youth, staff Equity Working Group, and communities we serve, as well as build upon our knowledge and capacity to better serve.

We will improve upon our communication platforms to streamline our information in a centralized way both externally and internally; and have already started to rebrand the Advocacy and Communications Department.

Overall, the framework is organized into six values to ensure BGCO's communications are:

- Accessible and inclusive
- Actionable
- Credible and trusted
- Community driven
- Timely
- Youth focused



## People and Culture Framework

BGCO has an obligation to reflect the demographic of the children and youth it serves. The People and Culture Strategy should support diversity through employment equity and build policies that strive to create a safe and healthy workplace environment that prioritizes the staff and our Members.

In this framework, employment equity is an integral part of our progress towards inclusivity in our employee relationships, and is an ongoing process that identifies, and mitigates barriers in employment policies, practices and procedures. The strategy should outline the short-term and long-term goals and measures to correct any under-representation of designated groups; and a practical timeframe for the implementation of each of the measures.

The People and Culture department should be known for its integrity throughout the organization. This department acts as a confidential body and resource hub for all staff. It is important that it highlights and sustains a strong equity lens that is committed towards understanding systemic oppression within employment and the barriers those made marginalized encounter.

To keep up with this commitment, BGCO plans to be leaders in increasing our employee experience by:

- Researching and identifying employment equity priorities and implementing strong policies.
- Defining levels of accountability for ensuring equitable hiring practices.
- Creating a clear, confidential and effective reporting process and make it easily accessible to all staff.
- Implementing continuous development training and safety, which includes a strong focus on equity-based topics (i.e., equity, diversity and inclusion, anti-oppression, anti-harassment, consent culture, positive leadership styles, conflict resolution, mental health first aid, active bystander, recognizing burnout, AODA, naloxone training, etc.).
- Reviewing staff positions at all levels (gain employee buy-in by creating an ad-hoc task force chaired by the People and Culture and Equity Department to ensure this process is reflective of current BGCO realities).
- Conducting Equity and Accessibility audits of all BGCO physical spaces.
- Reviewing employee compensation and benefits.
- Enabling effective flexible and remote working arrangements through a strengthened policy.
- Supporting and ensuring employees wellbeing (i.e., paid mental health/vacation days for all employees, staff appreciations at an organizational level, consistent initiatives to promote staff recognition, etc.).
- Improving employee communication through implementing centralized online platforms that include all staff (i.e., policies and protocols, timesheets, training modules, employee updates, newsletter, etc.).
- Increase employee engagement.
- Adopting new recruitment tactics.
- Promoting healthy leadership styles.
- Prioritizing Mental Health and Wellness supports.
- Building all staff initiatives, such as employee appreciations and retreats.

## Trauma-Informed Practice Framework

Implementing a Trauma-Informed Practice Framework in BGC Ottawa's service planning, delivery and overall organizational culture is crucial in our journey to become more aware, mindful of the specificities of the many identities the children, youth, their families and the communities we serve encounter systematically, historically and contemporarily.

A trauma-informed model of practice allows BGCO and all its staff within all levels to actively participate in the process of Truth and Reconciliation, and its commitment to speak up against oppressive actions and inactions that impact Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island.

This practice model is an intentional process and starts with the realization that upstream measures impact downstream realities; the policies and procedures placed by institutions and governing bodies have great influence on how individuals and groups experience the world, whether positively or negatively.

BGCO is aware that systemic barriers are present in our society and many families we serve are grappling with these challenges that very much impact their physical and mental wellbeing. These stressors place families in difficult situations that can cause trauma and have created historic intergenerational trauma and trauma responses.

As an organization, we must do our part in being educated to avoid and be part of dismantling oppressive systems. BGC Ottawa is committed to providing programs and services that are trauma-informed and dedicated in our efforts to work with agencies that will enhance our capacity to advocate for and connect our Members to services that are healing-centered.

BGCO is dedicated to its Equity Policy and will create opportunities for all staff to attend continuous courageous conversations and training around several topics that will develop our internal capacity to be trauma-informed and healing-centered.

A Trauma-Informed Practice Framework will be attained by:

- Including the voices of youth through program evaluation and planning identity-specific initiatives.
- Utilizing a community empowerment, trauma-informed and healing-centered approach.
- Awareness of positive mental wellbeing.
- Implementing frequent staff training on trauma-informed care.
- Creating a safer space for Members, staff and volunteers that cultivates psychological safety and belonging.
- Building relationships and organizational connectedness.
- Integrating awareness/knowledge of trauma into policies, procedures and practices.
- Upholding transparency and accountability.
- Resisting re-traumatization of children and youth, staff and communities through consistent self and organizational reflexivity.

## Service Delivery Framework

BGC Ottawa is motivated and committed to providing programs and services that are rooted in community care, humility, compassion, empathy, transparency, accessibility, inclusivity and are bias-free.

All programs offered in our Clubhouses must be assessed with an equity lens, by the Chief Programs Officer and Senior Managers acting as advisors to ensure that services are in alignment with the Equity Action Plan.

Our organization is aware that population specific programming is important because representation matters for the building and enhancement of identities. The staff Equity Working Group will help advise BGCO on respectful and appropriate programming that is equitable for the children and youth we serve.

BGCO strives to build a Member registration process that is accessible and inclusive. Therefore, the collection of race-based and identity-based data is imperative to identify who our Members and families are, which influences how we can better serve them. This data will likewise identify what languages are most spoken by our families and will highlight how BGCO will revise the membership process to be more accessible.

An equitable service delivery framework:

- Strengthens resilience and protective factors.
- Is mindful and considerate of the planning and implementation of initiatives and programming.
- Includes youth voice and is youth centered.
- Is representative and respectful of Members' identities.
- Is trauma-informed, anti-oppressive and anti-racist.

## Collaboration and Partnership Framework

For BGC Ottawa to continue its journey in being more equitable, its collaborations and partnerships must be in alignment with the Equity Policy as listed in this document. This means that the work we do with others must be in alignment with our values through an anti-oppressive, intersectional and equity lens for the benefit of the children, youth, families and communities we serve.

Staff are strongly encouraged to engage in a habit of self-reflexivity to be aware of their values and ideologies, as well as the values of organizations, groups and individuals who have shown interest in partnering with BGCO within any capacity.

Partnerships must be for the benefit of our Members without perpetuating harm. We must question our motives and identify ways in which our intentions create a positive impact in the lives of those we serve before commencing on projects and initiatives. The Guiding Questions in this document will assist in this process.

BGC Ottawa will do better in engaging with youth, families, community members and community partners by participating in consultations with Indigenous Elders, ACB leaders, Muslim leaders, the Asian community, 2SLGBTQIA+ groups when necessary and the families we serve when making decisions that impact their realities.

BGC Ottawa recognizes that Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is not limited to one group, department or organizational priority, therefore there is a strong focus on collaboration with our children and youth, community members and various partners to raise awareness, share knowledge, collectively create and support programs and services, as well as implementing anti-oppressive and equitable practices that are population and culturally responsive.

Effective and sustainable partnerships will be achieved through:

- Mutual values, respect and dignity of all.
- Commitment to anti-oppressive practices, Equity and Inclusion.
- Knowledge building around topics of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
- Awareness and collective capacity building.
- Community consultation with Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers when necessary.
- Community consultation, when necessary, with racialized and minoritized leaders.
- Empowering the participation and voices of children, youth, their families and staff.

## Quality, Standards and Accountabilities

BGC Ottawa recognizes that population and identity-based data collection is imperative in achieving programming and services that are culturally responsive, respectful and enriching for the enhancement of our Members identities and feelings of safety and belonging.

The membership form will undergo yearly revision to reflect BGCO's Equity goals to be accessible and inclusive. This form will provide equitable access to families whose first language is not English by embedding a translatable function through the digital form to include the identified four priority languages: French, Arabic, Somali and Chinese.

BGCO is committed to doing better with an equity and intersectional lens, therefore policies and programming will be reviewed and revised by the appropriate team. This will be done in a timely manner as indicated in the operations procedure and supported by BGCO's Equity team.

Regular program evaluation will be conducted by the evaluation committee and supported by the Equity team. Member and staff surveys will be in accordance with an equity lens to capture important variables usually missed with generic indicators.

BGC Ottawa's progress in accomplishing its Equity goals will be shared with the public through the Equity section on our website. An internal annual Town Hall will be held to share our progress, limitations and future development goals.

Mandatory and ongoing introduction to Equity and anti-Black Racism training and other important workshops will be developed and facilitated by the Equity team and support staff to increase and enhance our internal capacity. All staff will engage in the Self-Assessment of Growth in Equity tool to aid in critical self-reflection that enriches the promotion and efficacy in anti-oppressive and trauma-aware programs and services.

The Executive Leadership Team is responsible for engaging teams in the Equity Indicators tool to enable the organization in identifying the progress and gaps towards Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and decolonization.

Quality standards and accountability will be achieved through:

- Transparency.
- Timeliness.
- Frequent reassessment and evaluation of programs and services.
- Collective collaboration with children, youth, families and youth-serving organization partners.
- Respectful engagement with partners, Elders, Knowledge Keepers and community leaders.
- Participation in community conversations relating to children, youth and family work.
- Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP), Anti-Black Racism (ABR), and Trauma-Informed Care (TIC)/mental health awareness trainings for new staff.
- AOP, ABR and TIC training refreshers for all staff.
- Knowledge building and appropriate engagement with 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.
- Program evaluation training for members of the Evaluation Committee.
- Introduction to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) workshop for all staff.

## Guiding Questions

The purpose of this exercise is to ensure the following questions are being asked for all strategic planning, program development, recruitment and employee initiatives, policies, promising practice and advocacy work.

- Are members of minoritized/racialized groups represented in this committee/group?
- How have we questioned bias norms and practices within this process?
- Will the individuals engaged in this process be able to identify systemic barriers and biases?
- Who should we be consulting about this initiative?
- What forms of outreach/consultation methods have we committed to executing and/or have organized to ensure we are hearing from potential impacted communities?
- Is our key messaging accessible, both in access and content? Is our language inclusive?
- Does this best serve the interest of our Members and community or financial/political partners?
- How will bias be monitored, mitigated and recorded?
- Does the proposal consider the different forms of support required (e.g., financial, logistical, cultural, linguistic) to ensure that the individuals or communities involved in the proposal are able to meaningfully participate in it?
- Which communities are being represented at the Board level?
- Whose voices are not being heard/addressed within our current Membership? Whose voices are we trying to capture?
- Have we made our recruitment accessible to racialized/impacted communities?
- What are our top priorities as a Board and organization each year and how can our new Members, staff and volunteers help us achieve that in the best interest of our children, youth and families?
- Is our Board composition a proper reflection of the communities we serve?
- Which communities hold power at the Board level, and which are not reflected enough?
- How can we ensure we are not tokenizing people within this process?
- Have we conducted a risk assessment?
- Have we identified any conflicts of interest?
- How are we keeping ourselves accountable throughout this process?

## Inclusive and Person-First Language

As an organization, BGC Ottawa is committed to disrupting systems of oppression and being intentional to work towards an equitable organizational culture that will translate to a better inclusive environment for all staff and the children, youth, families and community partners we work with. One simple way to carry out this commitment is by being mindful and aware of the language we use to avoid using a deficit framework.

We must do better and avoid using language that dehumanizes all people. Instead, using a person-first language is a humanizing and best practice approach. Describing people as having a condition instead of being the condition is a person-first approach.

We must avoid assuming people's pronouns while using dominant binaries such as he/him and she/her. Instead, introducing oneself with our pronouns encourages others to do the same. Likewise, adding one's pronouns beside names in virtual spaces and email signatures is a respectful and validating practice to normalize. When in doubt, use a they/them pronoun until certain of how others identify themselves.