# CO-POL-120

# Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

## Purpose

Creative Okanagan holds high the importance and value of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). We commit to ensuring our employees and volunteers have the information that they need to understand how to respect EDI principles when representing Creative Okanagan. This policy provides best practices and expectations of conduct in alignment with the organization's equity, diversity, and inclusion values.

## Introduction

This policy presents EDI best practices and expected behaviour for Creative Okanagan employees and volunteers. There are sections addressing:
Scope and applicability

- Inclusive meetings
- Inclusive presentations
- Inclusive language
- Use of pronouns,
- Land acknowledgement
- Reporting and Claim mechanism
- Enforcement and Accountability
- Policy Review Cycle

Links to additional resources are included in the appendix.

# Objective

The objective of this policy is to inform employees and volunteers about EDI initiatives with a desired outcome that all interactions with the Creative Okanagan organization are open and inviting to everyone regardless of their heritage, background, and life circumstances.

# Terminology And Definitions

**Equity:** create inclusive environments without barriers to participation.

**Diversity:** the variety of unique dimensions, qualities, and characteristics we each possess, be they physical, socially constructed, or a result of our beliefs, circumstances and experiences. Diversity is the inclusion of different types of people—different genders, sexual orientations, races, cultures, religions, physical, or mental ability.

**Inclusion:** is an environment or culture that strives for equity, and values and respects diversity.

# Scope and Applicability

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, Board of Directors, contractors, and representatives associated with Creative Okanagan. It governs all organizational activities, including internal meetings, workshops, public-facing events, digital communications, and daily operations.

# Inclusive meetings

The Chair or meeting facilitator is responsible for leading the meeting and has a critical role to play in creating and supporting an inclusive atmosphere. Meeting participants also have a role to play in supporting inclusive meetings by supporting the chair or meeting facilitator in taking action to create and contribute to inclusive meetings.

## As a Meeting Chair/Facilitator

Recognizing that different people have different comfort levels with engaging and talking while in a meeting, it is important to consider different approaches to seeking input prior to, during, and after the meeting to allow people to contribute in the ways that are most comfortable to them.

- Send out the agenda and meeting materials ahead of time.

- Consider different accommodations or inclusive design considerations that should be a part of the meeting, such as closed captioning for virtual meetings. You may not know what accommodations are required, so it is important to ask and provide an opportunity for individuals to respond in a way that is confidential.
- If organizing a hybrid meeting, develop a plan for how you will facilitate the meeting to engage virtual and in-person participants. Think about how to process the introductions, monitor the chat actively, and ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to participate. Consider asking someone to support you in managing some of these tasks, such as monitoring the chat.
- If organizing an in-person meeting, ensure there are enough seats and space to accommodate everyone in the meeting.
- If there is food at the meeting, ensure you have asked participants about dietary restrictions and plan accordingly.
- Greet everyone by name so they feel welcome to participate.
- Include a land acknowledgement at the start of your meeting.
- Include a recognition of your commitment to EDI and set expectations for inclusive behaviours at the beginning of the meeting. For example: “Creative Okanagan recognizes the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). I will be managing today’s meeting with an inclusive mindset. As Chair, I will be looking to ensure everyone’s voices are heard and respected during today’s meeting.”
- Ensure meeting procedures allow for equitable participation and inclusion. Inform participants you will be asking each of them to comment, even if their comment is to pass.
- Provide an opportunity for people to engage in the meeting in different ways depending on their level of comfort. This means offering participants the opportunity to share with the group verbally, over the chat, or potentially through the use of other facilitation tools, such as whiteboards and sticky notes (either virtual or in real life), that allow people to contribute in different ways.
- Watch closely for dominators and interrupters. If someone is dominating the conversation, interject politely and redirect the conversation back to the broader group. If someone is interrupting someone else, step in quickly to say “Wait a minute, I want to hear more about …”
- Follow up after the meeting with a thank you to participants, request their feedback, and invite them to share any new thoughts that have come up after the meeting.

## As a Participant

- During introductions, include your name, pronouns, and any other relevant information.
- Model the behaviors you expect to see from other participants.
- Interject if you observe behaviors such as bullying or harassment.

- Ensure other people's ideas are heard and recognized. Draw attention to points that appear to have been missed by the group.

# Inclusive Presentations

- Include a land acknowledgement at the start of your presentation.
- Be intentional about addressing diverse audiences with visible and invisible identities that may include all abilities, ethnicities, genders, geographies, nations, races, sexualities, and socio-economic statuses.
- Is the language inclusive?
- Are your images diverse?
- Are your materials easily readable for a wide range of audiences?
- Consider whether your presentation or workshop considers the lived experiences of people from equity seeking groups.
- Consider your own implicit biases.
- If you can choose the venue or presentation platform, pick one that has accessible features (live captioning, ramps, accessible washrooms, etc.).

# Inclusive Language

## Relating to Abilities/Disabilities

Ensure that the person comes first, not the disability. Be as positive as possible. Do not assume that you know who is and who isn't living with a disability based on their appearance.

| Do Not Use | Appropriate To Use |
|---|---|
| **Handicapped** | A person with a disability |
| **The disabled** | Employees with a disability |
| **Physically or mentally challenged** | A person with *insert specific description* (e.g., A person with cystic fibrosis) |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Crazy, mentally ill** | A person living with mental illness |
| **Normal behavior** | Usual behavior or typical behavior |

## Relating to Indigenous Peoples

Within Canada, Indigenous is an inclusive term referring to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. Indigenous can also include Indigenous people from outside of Canada. Although Indigenous is an inclusive term, if you are working with or referring to a particular group, it is best to be as specific as possible, rather than always using this umbrella term. If you are unsure about what is the most appropriate term to use, respectfully ask the person or group involved, learn what is in use in your field, or simply ask someone knowledgeable in this area.

There are terms which are used or were commonly used in the past that were appropriated from Indigenous culture and should not be used.

| **Do Not Use** | **Appropriate to Use** |
|---|---|
| Pow wow | Meeting, gathering, get together |
| Tribe | Group, team |
| Circle the wagons | Let's stand together on this, let's present a united front |
| Hold down the fort | Keep things running smoothly |
| They're on the warpath | They're laser focused or they're in a mood: you might want to consider connecting with them another time |

| | |
|---|---|
| Too many chiefs and not enough Indians | We need more people in support roles to get this project done |
| Low man on the totem pole | They have the least seniority |

## Relating to Gender

Phrase statements without using gender-specific terms.

| Do Not Use | Appropriate to Use |
|---|---|
| **Mankind** | Humankind |
| **Manning the office** | Staffing the office |
| **Man hours** | Staff hours or working hours |
| **Businessman** | Businessperson, Leader, Representative |
| **Middleman** | Go-between |
| **Spokesman** | Spokesperson, representative |
| **Forefathers** | Ancestors |
| **Manmade** | Artificial, synthetic, or constructed |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Guys (when used to refer to a group of people, such as “Hi guys” or “Guys listen up!”)** | Everyone, folks, team, colleagues, participants, friends (such as “Hi everyone” / “Hi folks” or “Participants listen up” / “Team listen up!”) |
| **Husband / wife** | Partner / spouse |
| **Chairman** | Chair |
| **Men and Women** | People |
| **Sweetie, Dear** | Nothing |

## Relating to Gender Expression and Identity

Gender expression and identity are inherent to a person’s identity and are not a preference or choice. You should not make assumptions about someone’s gender nor should you use pronouns based on how they look or sound. Consider sharing your pronouns with others as a way of encouraging someone to share their pronouns with you. This might look like saying “My name is _____. My pronouns are ___ / ___.”

When an individual shares their pronouns with you, make sure to use the correct pronouns moving forward.

## Relating to Race and Ethnicity

Respect diverse cultural backgrounds. Avoid identifying people by race, colour, or national origin, unless it is appropriate for context. Don’t assume that a person’s appearance defines their nationality or cultural background.

- Capitalize the proper names of nationalities, peoples, and races, such as, Indigenous, Métis, Cree, Inuit, Arab, French-Canadian, Jewish, Latin, or Asian.
- Do not draw attention to someone’s cultural attire or practices.

- Avoid singling out specific cultures or drawing undue attention to ethnic or racial background. When references are relevant and necessary, find the appropriate, accepted terminology and use the language preferred by the individual or group concerned.
- Avoid putting people on the spot by asking questions about sensitive issues or expecting them to respond on behalf of an entire group.
- Do not ask someone to deliver a presentation or represent the organization in a public-facing event solely because of their identity.
- Avoid asking invasive questions about someone's upbringing or making assumptions about someone's history, family, or identity.

## Relating to Sexual Orientation or Gender

- Sex, gender, and sexual orientation are distinct concepts: sex is biological, gender is social and cultural, and sexual orientation is about attraction. These words are specific and shall not be used interchangeably.
- Make sure to respect preferences of individuals or groups.
- Understand and use the appropriate terms (for example, 2SLGBTQ+ – 2 Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and other (+) gender and sexual minorities).
- Avoid using umbrella terms such as gay or homosexual to describe everyone.
- Avoid making assumptions about individuals' relationships based on identities (such as assuming a man colleague with children has a woman partner).

# Use of Pronouns

Personal pronouns are an important part of our identity. They are the words that we want others to use when talking to or about us, such as he/him, she/her or gender-neutral pronouns like they/them. Knowing and using a person's correct pronouns makes people feel respected and valued.

You may choose to share your pronouns. Sharing your pronouns is completely optional and up to your discretion whether you choose to do so or not.

If members in your group choose to share their pronouns, take note of the person's name and the pronouns they've shared with you and use those pronouns when you refer to that individual.

If you use the wrong pronoun, correct yourself and move on, don't over-apologize. If someone corrects you, say "thank you," correct yourself, and move on.

# Land Acknowledgement

Much of the land that we live, work, and play on is traditional, unceded territory of Inuit, Metis, and Indigenous peoples in Canada. Land acknowledgements, often delivered at the start of a meeting or workshop, are a way to recognize Indigenous communities. They are a key element of inclusive presentations and are intended to show respect for the Indigenous communities' connection to the land where the meeting or presentation is occurring.

## When to do a Land Acknowledgement

You are encouraged to include a land acknowledgement whenever you are hosting a meeting or event.

## Land Acknowledgement Structure

There are several different ways that you can structure a respectful land acknowledgement. Raven Trust has a comprehensive guideline available. Some recommendations from that guide:

- Confirm the pronunciation of each Indigenous group referenced in your land acknowledgement.
- Highly recommended is  adding a personalization as a component to your land acknowledgement. The more personal and researched a land acknowledgement is, the better.

Suggested wording:

Before going further, I wish to acknowledge the ancestral, traditional and unceded territories of the _____ (i.e. sylix Okanagan) Peoples, and in particular, the _____(name of First Nations, ex. the Westbank First Nation, Squamish, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations in Vancouver) on whose territory we work (or: on whose territory we stand).

# Reporting and Complaint Mechanism

Creative Okanagan is committed to providing a safe, accessible process for reporting concerns related to discrimination, harassment, exclusion, or breaches of this policy.

- How to Report: Individuals who experience or witness a violation of this policy are encouraged to report the incident to the Executive Director or the Board Chair. Reports can be submitted verbally or in writing.
- Confidentiality: All reports will be handled with the utmost discretion and confidentiality, sharing information only on a strict need-to-know basis to facilitate a fair investigation.

### Non-Retaliation Clause

Creative Okanagan strictly prohibits retaliation of any kind against any individual who, in good faith, reports a suspected violation of this policy, participates in an investigation, or opposes discriminatory practices. Anyone found to have retaliated against a participant will be subject to disciplinary action.

## Enforcement and Accountability

Violations of this EDI policy are taken seriously and will be thoroughly investigated.

- For Employees and Contractors: Breaches may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or contract.
- For Volunteers and Board Members: Breaches may result in removal from committees, boards, or volunteer roles.
- Accountability for upholding these standards rests with leadership, facilitators, and all individual participants.

## Policy Review Cycle

To ensure this policy remains current, effective, and aligned with evolving EDI standards and community needs, it will be reviewed and updated annually by leadership in consultation with staff and volunteers.

## APPENDIX A: Additional Resources

### Inclusive Meetings

- Running More Inclusive Meetings – Knowledge Burst by Catalyst
- To Build an Inclusive Culture, Start with Inclusive Meetings – Harvard Business Review
- Inclusive Meetings – University of Waterloo
- Gender-Based Analysis Plus Course – Government of Canada
- Pronouns Matter

## Inclusive Presentations

- Inclusive Design For Accessible Presentations

## Inclusive Language

- Use these Culturally Offensive Phrases At Your Own Risk
- 10 Common Phrases (and a few extras) that No One Should Say at Work
- 23 Tips on What Not to Say or Do when Working with Indigenous Peoples (eBook)

## Pronouns

- Gender Diversity - UBC Equity & Inclusion Office

## Land Acknowledgements

- Native Land - Interactive map of different territories
- Raven Trust land acknowledgement guide
- Government of Canada Important Commemorative Dates