



Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging (DEIB) Executive Summary Report



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Land Acknowledgement

The YMCA of Greater Toronto is committed to establishing relationships, nourishing existing partnerships with Indigenous community members, and upholding our responsibilities on the journey to reconciliation. We acknowledge the Sewatokwa:tshera't (Dish With One Spoon) Treaty and that the YMCA of Greater Toronto occupies land currently known as Toronto, which the Williams Treaties and Treaty 13 cover. The YMCA of Greater Toronto recognizes the thoughtful care of these ancestral territories and is grateful for the guidance of the land's ancestral caretakers, the Anishinaabe Nations: the Mississaugas, the Potawatomi, the Odawa, the Ojibwe/Chippewa, the Algonquin, the Nbiising, and the Saulteaux, along with Haudenosaunee and the Huron Wendat, who have been the land's ancestral caretakers and continue to protect and care for the lands that the YMCA of Greater Toronto occupies. The YMCA of Greater Toronto also resides outside of the Greater Toronto Area for a number of operational needs on the lands of the Wahta Mohawk and the Petun/Tionontati.



Message on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging

I am pleased to present our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Progress Report. This report really shines a light on the work we have been doing to create a more diverse, inclusive and equitable community where everyone feels a true sense of belonging.

The YMCA of Greater Toronto is committed to broadening and deepening our work in this area. We plan to continue our work and do even more to support equitable outcomes with Indigenous communities and equity-deserving groups across the GTA. It is our aim to do this with an intersectional approach.

It's really important that DEIB efforts are felt across our charity and that all of our participants and employees embody and understand that DEIB is not just an acronym, but is part of the fabric of our charity.

The aspirations of our DEIB strategy align really well with our values and mission. I believe that the journey towards true equity and inclusion is a shared responsibility, one that requires the efforts of each member of our organization and community.

I want to extend a big thank you to the community organizations, volunteers, government bodies, public institutions, and donors who have supported us and made this work possible. Your contributions have been instrumental in driving the progress we celebrate today. We are also deeply thankful for the trust and patience of Indigenous and equity-deserving groups, who have graciously guided us as we learn and grow together on this journey.

While we take pride in the significant strides we have made, it's important to acknowledge that there is still a lot of work to do. Our commitment to DEIB is continuous, and one that requires persistent effort, reflection, and adaptation.

We promise to continue working from a position of transparency and accountability. We will do this by sharing our progress regularly. Together, we can shine even brighter, illuminating the path toward a more equitable and inclusive future for all.

Let's keep this momentum going!



Lesley Davidson
President & CEO
YMCA of Greater Toronto

Introduction & Background

DEIB Strategy

This is the YMCA of Greater Toronto's Diversity Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Strategy progress report. The **DEIB strategy** was launched in August of 2022 as part of implementing the 4th goal of Strategic Direction 1 in the **Ignite the Light Strategic Plan** to **Create more equitable outcomes for staff and participants through a renewed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan**. The strategy was created after consultations with YMCA employees and more than 250 community members, including YMCA leadership, employees, volunteers and members, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion professionals and Indigenous knowledge carriers and elders. It was also informed by the recommendations of the internal Anti-Black Racism review of the Y conducted in 2022.

The aspiration of the DEIB Strategy is to meaningfully reduce barriers and build a sense of belonging through targeted equity initiatives and inclusive partnerships with Indigenous Peoples and with equity-deserving communities by 2025.

The strategy focuses on four key areas; chosen because members of these groups — Indigenous Peoples and equity-deserving groups — are disproportionately and negatively affected by systems of oppression.

By focusing our efforts on these groups, we aim to have greater success in promoting more equitable outcomes. The strategy has four main focus areas:

- Anti-Colonialism and Indigenous Reconciliation
- Disability and Accessibility
- Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity
- Gender and Sexual Diversity

It's important to note that although our goals connect to identity groups in some respects, our underlying focus is not on identity but on barriers that result from systems of oppression.

The Y made a commitment to be accountable for the DEIB strategy by being reflective and learning-oriented, formally tracking the progress of DEIB and Indigenous-focused initiatives, and being transparent in our reporting on intended and unintended outcomes. This report is a fulfillment of this commitment through a transparent reflection of the progress that has been made in implementing the outlined tactics and achieving the Key Performance Indicators of the strategy.

We made progress in all 10 tactics being pursued to advance the strategic goals in each of our four focus areas and to demonstrate the effectiveness of our DEIB efforts.

Tactic

1

DEIB Employee Positions

Create new DEIB employee positions to advance equity, under the leadership of the General Manager — Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging

DEIB Team

The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Diversity (DEIB) team supports DEIB efforts at the YMCA of Greater Toronto. They build capacity for this work across the charity by forming reciprocal learning partnerships focused on guidance, support and exchange through centralized initiatives, HR efforts and area-specific program development. The team expanded from one General Manager to also include two managers, one of whom is the Manager, Indigenous Relationships.



Tactic

2

Employee Training & Education

Deliver ongoing DEIB education, training and Indigenous-focused learning for YMCA employees and volunteers, as well as community members.

Education and training are important for building internal knowledge, and to ensure employees and volunteers are equipped to engage in the DEIB and Indigenous-focused activities needed for their work. Training for YMCA leadership is a priority — both to ensure DEIB learnings are applied in key decisions and to ensure that employees at other levels can approach leaders regarding equity issues without fear.

For DEIB trainings, we start with senior leaders, ensuring that they understand and can model DEIB competencies.

In alignment with this, we ensured that the First Nations University: 4 Seasons of Reconciliation course and the Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Training were first completed by Board Members, CEO Council, Vice Presidents and General Managers, before a wider rollout for all employees. Below is a complete list of Education & Training that has been offered and assigned to employees:

Formal Education offered through mYlearning:

- Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Training — required training for all employees
- First Nations University: 4 Seasons of Reconciliation — required training for all employees
- Gender 101
- Land Acknowledgement Bundle

DEIB has also been incorporated into orientation/onboarding activities to ensure that incoming employees and volunteers are equipped to champion DEIB in their roles.





Tactic

3

DEIB Embedded Across All Areas of Human Resources

Improve HR policies and practices to ensure that opportunities for advancement are equitably available to employees from equity-deserving and Indigenous communities, and to increase diversity at all levels of our organization.

The People Strategy is focused on ensuring the Y has a healthy, engaged and inclusive workforce. This strategy's aspiration is for the YMCA of Greater Toronto to have the right people with the right skills deployed at the right time – all working within an inclusive workplace that supports employees in bringing their full talents and energy to their work every day.

To support, align and motivate our employees through the years ahead, the People Strategy puts an emphasis on equity and well-being within the Y by fostering an inclusive culture and positive employee experiences that keep our team engaged, healthy and resilient.

DEIB has been embedded in numerous Human Resources & Organizational Development programs including compensation design, benefits updates, a guide on reporting concerns, recognition events, new employee orientation, updated training materials, access to professional development funding, metrics, employee communications and more.

In 2021 the YMCA of Greater Toronto underwent an internal anti-Black racism review and identified barriers and gaps to professional advancement, inclusion and a sense of belonging for Black employees. The Y made commitments in response to the recommendations that were outlined in the report. These commitments outlined below were incorporated into the goals and implementation of the People Strategy. A special town hall was held to address the findings and recommendations of the internal review. The report commitments and progress are available on our intranet for transparency among all employees.

Tactic

4

Building Financial Capacity

Build financial capacity for DEIB and Indigenous-focused initiatives into operational budgets across the YMCA every year.

Sustainability is one of the principles of the DEIB Strategy and building financial capacity for DEIB and Indigenous-focused initiatives into operational budgets is integral to achieving this. A highlight in achieving this is the Camping and Outdoor Education Program, making the Accessibility and Inclusion Program within their day camps programming available free of charge (within the program's enrollment capacity). This program is available for families in need of 1:1 support for their children, the majority of whom are disabled. The costs of this program are factored into the yearly budget and prioritized like all other operational costs.

Having multiple and consistent sources of funding is integral to building a strong foundation for financial capacity. In addition to government funding and fee-for-service funds used by the YMCA to operate, grants and donors have and continue to supplement and support DEIB efforts.



Tactic

5

Equity & Indigenous-focused Initiatives

Develop a portfolio of targeted equity programs and initiatives designed to reduce barriers and enhance the sense of belonging among Indigenous communities and equity-deserving communities.

The YMCA of Greater Toronto has extensive experience in providing equity programs and initiatives. Some of the main innovative and pioneering programs include **YMCA Sprott House**, one of the first 2SLGBTQIA+ transitional housing programs for youth in Canada, **YMCA Academy**, a Ministry of Education–inspected, alternative school inspired and supported by the YMCA of Greater Toronto for students with mild learning disabilities or learning style differences and **YMCA Black Achievers Mentorship Program**, dedicated to the advancement of Black youth in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) by providing them with opportunities to develop socially and academically with the support of Black mentors and role models.

Tactic 5 of this strategy aims for the development of new and targeted equity initiatives that will complement, not replace, existing offerings designed to build strong community connections and inclusive environments.

Overall, **14 new equity and Indigenous focused programs** have been created since the launch of the DEIB Strategy in 2022. Additionally, **34 new initiatives** were launched including but not limited to policy and document reviews, employee trainings, program space environmental scans, hosting cultural events and grant proposals.

New DEIB Program Highlight

In 2023, the Camping and Outdoor Education program service area, guided by the principles and goals of the DEIB Strategy, developed and launched the [Open Outdoors program](#).

The YMCA Open Outdoors program provides free outdoor educator-ed skill building activities to empower equity deserving communities to be comfortable and gain a sense of belonging in camping and outdoor education spaces. This program was developed with the recognition that equity deserving communities including Black, racialized, 2SLGBTQIA+, and disabled communities have been historically under-resourced and under-represented in outdoor education. In addition to these groups, the program also aims to engage Indigenous youth and families, recognizing the specific historical colonial inequities tied to land access and the outdoors that has led to Indigenous underrepresentation in outdoor education.



Tactic

6

Partnerships

Build new relationships – and leverage existing ones – with equity-deserving and Indigenous communities and organizations when developing programs and initiatives.

The Y has a long tradition of working in partnership with community-led organizations, funders and other service providers. Tactic 6 is aimed at ensuring that we begin by centering and valuing the experiences and perspectives of the equity-deserving and Indigenous communities that we seek to provide services for, whenever we are developing programs and initiatives that impact them.

These partnerships are meant to be structured, formal relationships based on negotiated roles, responsibilities and contractual obligations. They involve a sharing of risks, rewards, resources, accountability, visions, ideas and decision making.

New Partnership Highlight:

In 2023, the YMCA of Greater Toronto developed a partnership with **ENAGB Indigenous Youth Agency**. This partnership was facilitated by the YMCA's Indigenous Relationships Manager. The following outcomes have emerged through this partnership:

Camping and Outdoor Education

- YMCA Cedar Glen provided free access to their space for an Indigenous Language Camp run by ENAGB Indigenous Youth Agency

Health & Fitness

- The YMCA provided free gym memberships for ENAGB members
- The YMCA provides free CPR, Babysitting and Bronze Cross training spots ENAGB members
- ENAGB Indigenous Youth Agency gifted the Indigenous name for the gymnasium at The Steve & Sally Stavro Family YMCA. The gym is named **'Mino Maadziying'** meaning **'Living a healthy life'** in Anishinaabemowin.



Tactic

7

Advocacy

Explore the development of an advocacy plan for the YMCA grounded in the framework of this DEIB strategy.

The YMCA of Greater Toronto is in the process of developing an advocacy plan grounded in the DEIB strategy. We plan on conducting consultations with key stakeholders and community partners who are undertaking anti-oppressive advocacy work. The Y is still actively engaged in community focused traditional advocacy that connects to the services and programs we provide in Child Care, Housing, Health and Fitness, Employment and Mental Health.

One of the main accomplishments the Y contributed to prominently through our advocacy and working with governments is the signing of the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (CWELCC) which was the first step toward \$10-a-day child care. We also urged the government to address a funding gap to ensure the program is sustainable and able to increase access to child care for all families. Our Y continues to advocate for a workforce strategy that addresses a sector-wide shortage of the educators who make child care possible. We are also encouraging the government to provide additional funding and support including to address the challenges faced by many families who have children with disabilities.





Tactic

8

Employee Engagement

Increase engagement with the YMCA's DEIB work and Indigenous-focused initiatives by changing how employees contribute to and connect with them.

In 2023-24, the **Employee Resource Group (ERG)** and **Equity Circle (EC)** frameworks were developed as integral foundations of implementing this tactic. These two employee engagement frameworks will become operational in 2024-2025.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are supportive, voluntary, employee-led groups that typically form around shared identities and/or experiences for those from equity deserving and Indigenous communities. These groups amplify YMCA's inclusive culture, and contribute to a sense of community and belonging for these employees. ERGs can form around different cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, sexualities, abilities, ages, and faiths, to name a few, in alignment with our Diversity, Equity Inclusion & Belonging Strategy. They also promote ally-ship and solidarity across groups and within the YMCA.

The YMCA of Greater Toronto currently has a committee/working group structure, that is shifting into the new ERG framework. Employees involved with these groups have been championing DEIB at the Y since 2018.

Equity Circles at the YMCA of Greater Toronto are a group of employees who regularly meet and work collectively to dismantle barriers related to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) within their specific operations area.

The Camping and Outdoor Education (COE) Department piloted the first DEIB focused community of practice at the Y in 2022 and their experience contributed to the development of the Equity Circle framework. The COE equity circle has accomplished many initiatives that have made camping and outdoor education at the Y more diverse, inclusive and equitable, these include:

- The implementation of all-gender cabins
- 1:1 Summer Day Camp support at no extra cost
- Creation of the Open Outdoors program



Tactic

9

DEIB in Communications

Build processes and skills to ensure all communications across every area of the YMCA (internal and external, across all media) are developed and reviewed from an equity and anti-colonial perspective before publication or release.

The Marketing & Communications team has been implementing the following:

- Reviewing all internal and external communications with a DEIB lens (anti-racism, anti-oppression and anti-colonial lens)
- Recognizing significant (Religious/Remembrance/Commemoration) dates in collaboration with the DEIB team
- Ensuring external and employee-focused messaging aligns with strategy; addressing community equity issues and amplifying work being done by community partners

A highlight under this tactic for 2023 was the commissioning of an original art piece from Indigenous artist Cody Houle to be used for communications and marketing during National Indigenous History, Pride, and Seniors month. This work was achieved through collaboration between the DEIB team and Marketing & Communications department.



June is Indigenous History Month, Pride, and Seniors Month

Cody presents a captivating digital banner that artfully captures the profound connection between Indigenous Elders and young Indigenous leaders and community figures. Skillfully portraying this intergenerational bond, one side of the artwork showcases the wisdom and experience of an esteemed Elder, while the other side represents Cody's friend, Kikki, a respected leader and creator based in Toronto.

In the banner piece I wanted to show the connection between Elders and young Indigenous leaders and community leaders.
— **Cody Houle**



Tactic

10

Growth & Impact

Be accountable for this strategy by being reflective and learning-oriented, formally tracking the progress of DEIB and Indigenous-focused initiatives, and being transparent in our reporting on intended and unintended outcomes.

After launching the strategy in 2022, we are now formally tracking our performance using these KPIs to measure our progress in relation to DEIB (our ABR initiatives included). This is the first time we're doing this intentionally and centrally as an organization vs. in specific program areas / services. In the fall of 2023, the YMCA collected across every internal department and operations area, what DEIB programs or initiatives each area is running - new ones, and ongoing ones – and in which ways do they align with YMCA's DEIB Strategy. This included DEIB-focused partnerships.

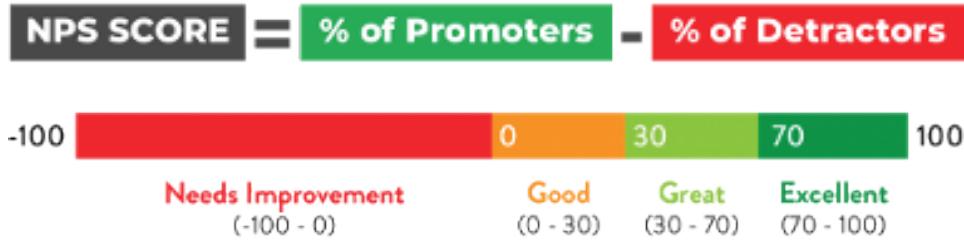
In December 2023, the YMCA's research department added questions to our yearly Participant Survey, to gather participants in equity programs' perspective on the Y's contribution to their sense of belonging to their local community.



Key Performance Indicators for 2022-23

Key Performance Indicator(KPI) data for the 2023-2024 fiscal year will be collected in winter 2024.

	Quantity	Quality
Effort	How much we did: 1. Number of DEIB initiatives Ongoing – 22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 programs • 10 initiatives New (launched after August 2022) - 48 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 programs • 34 initiatives 	How well we did: 2. Satisfaction/*Net Promoter Score (NPS) of employees, volunteers and participants in DEIB initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant Satisfaction: 8.2 (scale 1-10) • NPS from participants in DEIB Initiatives: 43 (great) • NPS from employees: 15 (good) • Healthy Workplace Score from employees: 79/100
Effects	What difference it made: 3. Increased employee confidence to engage DEIB in their work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More employee engagement with DEIB team: Requesting support, asking questions, raising concerns • More expressed interest in joining ERGs • Future survey question - On a scale of 1-10 How confident do you feel engaging DEIB in your work? 4. Participants in DEIB programs’ perception of Y’s contributions to their sense of belonging to their local community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact that YMCA programs and services have had on your sense of belonging to your local community (average rating on a 1-10 scale) - 7.2 • Impact that YMCA programs and services have had on your child or children’s sense of belonging to your local community (average rating on a 1-10 scale) - 7.7 	



***Net Promoter Score (NPS)** is a simple, yet effective metric that measures customer satisfaction and loyalty by asking one key question: *“How likely are you to recommend our company/product/service to a friend or colleague?”* Based on their responses, customers are grouped into Promoters, Passives and Detractors, with NPS being the difference between the percentage of Promoters (% of satisfied participants who will encourage others to be new participants) and Detractors (% of unsatisfied participants who will discourage future participants).

Ongoing DEIB-focused Initiatives in Research & Development

The Research and Development team is dedicated to incorporating DEIB into all of its practices, particularly in terms of program evaluation work. They have been working on:

- More authentically engaging communities and those with lived experience in research development
- Recognizing power dynamics at play when conducting research
- Decolonizing European/White knowledge systems and determining appropriate data collection methods underrepresentation in outdoor education.

The impact measurement and improvement system supports the design and evaluation of priority programs for Indigenous and equity deserving communities. Some of the work under this initiative includes:

- The development of a Theory of Change Toolkit that incorporates facilitation questions that are intended to help further articulate/understand DEIB perspectives in programs
- Reviewing and revising the demographic questions in the YMCA of Greater Toronto's surveys to ensure they are aligned with bodies like Statistics Canada while still being as inclusive as possible.
- Exploring the literature on intersectionality to understand how to incorporate it within research development — particularly in terms of analysis and reporting.



Special Thanks

We would like to give a special thanks to all YMCA employees, volunteers, participants, members, donors and champions who have supported the YMCA of Greater Toronto's DEIB efforts.

