

City of Calgary's Sports and Recreation Equity Audit Tool

Background Overview



Note on Terminology

Terminology can be used to empower, reclaim, and redefine identities. In this document, the term “Indigenous communities” is used to describe individuals and collectives who consider themselves as related to and/or having historical continuity with “First Peoples”. This includes all those whose civilizations flourished in what is now known as Canada, the United States, the Americas, the Pacific Islands, New Zealand, Australia, Asia, and Africa prior to European colonization. There is an incredibly rich diversity of Indigenous communities here in Calgary and this document has attempted to ensure that they are represented in the text wherever possible.

Exceptions to our use of the term Indigenous have been made of necessity when we are citing resources that use different terms. This report has capitalized the terms Indigenous, Black, Racialized, and White to respect and signal an understanding of the history and racial identity of these groups. Capitalizing White reflects our understanding that not naming White as a Racialized category risks perpetuating the assumption of White as raceless, superior, neutral, and standard.

Acknowledgements



We want to acknowledge and thank all organizations and community members who supported us in our goal to strengthen equity within The City’s sports and recreational facilities. A special note of appreciation to The City of Calgary Equity Program as the funder of this project and our City of Calgary Advisory Committee for guidance and development support.

Territorial Acknowledgement

The Sports and Recreation Equity Audit project recognizes and acknowledges that we are gathered on the ancestral and traditional territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy, made up of the Siksika (Seeg-see-kah), Piikani (Bee-gun-nee), Amskaapiikani (Om-Skaa-bee-bee-Gun-nee) and Kainai (G-ai-nah) First Nations; the Îethka Nakoda Wicastabi (ee-YETH'-kah nah-COH'-dah WHISK'-ah-tah-bay) First Nations, comprised of the Chiniki (Chin-ick-ee), Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations; and the Tsuut'ina First Nation. The city of Calgary is also homeland to the historic Northwest Métis and to the Otipemisiwak (Oti-pe-mes-se-wa) Métis Government, Métis Nation Battle River Territory (Nose Hill Métis District 5 and Elbow Métis District 6). We acknowledge all Indigenous people who have made Calgary their home.

To create an equitable city, it requires the foundational acknowledgement of the colonial history that began over 500 years ago through the Doctrine of Discovery which gave explorers the right to claim “vacant land” in the name of their Sovereign. This land theft was formalized through the Treaty agreements with control asserted through the Indian Act (1876). Indigenous communities did not only lose their land but faced genocide and irreparable damage to their social and cultural fabric. Colonialism was bound to notions of White Supremacy - the idea that the white race is superior to others which to this day remains entrenched in our systems including political, bureaucratic, legal, and economic. As a result, there is continued injustice and inequity faced by our Indigenous communities (De Leeuw, 2016). This is the starting point for our work on equity which presents unique challenges faced by Indigenous communities. We recognize that the fundamental root causes of inequity impact many groups and by centering those principles we can begin to address these historical injustices.

The City of Calgary in 2017 adopted the Indigenous Policy and through the Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee (CAUAC) has been working towards actioning the calls for action outlined in the White Goose Flying report (2016). This Equity Audit tool takes an initial step towards building a framework that can actively provide guidance to sports and recreation facility managers towards reconciliation while recognizing that this is only a part of the broader context of actions that The City is undertaking.

Background

The City of Calgary is committed to creating sports and recreational facilities that are equitable for communities from diverse backgrounds, identities and contexts. The City worked in partnership with Habitus Consulting Collective and 44 community experts, organizations and individuals with lived and living experiences to create an Equity Audit Tool (referred to as the Audit Tool). This Audit Tool is created for sports and recreation facility managers to plan, identify specific actions or processes and review their facilities to create an environment which is designed for universal participation and engagement.

Equity is not about sameness of treatment. To ensure that equity is achieved requires designing for and addressing diverse needs. It may require differential treatment and resource redistribution, recognizing and addressing barriers to provide opportunity for all individuals and communities to thrive (McGill University, 2023). Equity is therefore both an intentional process and an outcome.

Equity is a crucial concern at The City of Calgary and multiple initiatives, policies, and strategies have been developed to achieve equitable outcomes, including the development of the [City of Calgary's Anti-Racism Strategy \(2023\)](#), Calgary Police Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Development (2020), [Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy \(2019\)](#), [Social Wellbeing Policy \(2019\)](#), [Healthy Workplace Strategy](#), [Resilient Calgary Strategy \(2019\)](#), [Business Unit Gender Initiatives \(2019\)](#), [Diversity and inclusion in the workplace framework and action plan](#), [Indigenous Policy \(2017\)](#), [Digital Equity Strategy](#) and the [White Goose Flying Report \(2016\)](#), the Equity in Service Delivery Fund¹ and Diversity & Inclusion Framework (2011). Additionally, The City recognizes the frameworks set forth by the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Alberta Human Rights Act. The City of Calgary is also a member of the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities (formerly known as Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination).

Within The City of Calgary there are several initiatives, policies and programs that address equity within sports and recreation. These include: [Access and inclusion information - Recreation](#); [Inclusive Play Spaces Implementation Plan](#) (Jan. 2018); [Access Design Standards \(2016\)](#); [Safe and Inclusive Access Bylaw \(2023\)](#); [Research and Policy - Recreation page](#); The [CoC Recreation Facility Development & Enhancement Study \(2016\)](#); The [CoC Recreation Master Plan \(2010\)](#); The [CoC Recreation Zero Based Review](#); [Calgary Recreation Strategic Foundation \(2018\)](#); The [Joint Use and Planning Agreement \(2022\)](#).

Audit Tool Development

This audit tool was developed through conducting a detailed background review of existing literature to identify and report best practices in sports and recreation for equity-deserving groups. To learn more read the Best Practices document available with The City of Calgary. The second phase of the project included collecting primary data. It synthesizes input from community and system partners, as well as includes observations from site visits to sports and recreation facilities across Calgary. The final phase of the project will involve validating the tool with facility managers and community partners.

For more information about equity best practices, and the lived and living experiences of equity-deserving groups (EDGs), please contact the Recreation and Sport Partnerships teams at The City to access relevant reports.

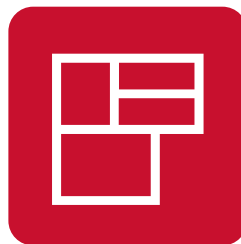
¹ The Equity Program team guides the Equity in Service Delivery Fund – a short-term funding model designed to encourage service lines to embed equity-based approaches in their service delivery. The intent is that successful innovations would later be integrated into regular operations and resourced through services' plans and budgets."

Key Considerations

- This audit is not designed to cover all aspects of equity equally. Through discussions with The City team, it was recommended that since current best practice already exists for accessible design standards on physical disabilities, the focus was to expand equity actions for other aspects of diversity, including intellectual disability, neurodiversity, aging, gender and sexuality, Indigeneity and ethnocultural and immigrant communities.
- It is key to understand that the audit tool is intended to provide facility managers an opportunity to collaborate with their teams to not only take perspective of where their facility is currently but also to identify opportunities to plan for the future. Additionally, it can act as a dashboard for measuring ongoing progress.
- The tool offers practical examples of how an action plan can be implemented and offers suggestions for change.
- There is recognition that not all facilities will have access to resources to make changes and this tool can be used to build a case for support, draw on best practices and identify resources to help achieve these equity goals.
- The tool can be used by any size of a facility. It guides participants through four key areas:



Policies, procedures
& practices



Spaces



Training & Human
Resources



Programs
& Services

- **Policies, procedures and practices:** These address how the facility includes policies, procedures and practices to increase access, safety, usability, welcoming and inclusiveness for equity deserving groups.
- **Spaces:** This refers to physical aspects of spaces, and includes how physical spaces are organized and designed; whether there are any special features or accommodations etc.
- **Training and HR:** This includes the ways in which the facility supports its staff to serve equity deserving groups. It also refers to how the hiring practices and policies have been adapted to better represent the community of diverse needs.
- **Programs & Services:** This refers to how services meet the needs of diverse populations within the facility.
- The outcome of the audit should be:
 - A better understanding of the Equity framework by staff of facilities.
 - Understanding of key gaps in the facility as it relates to equity considerations.

- A principles-based approach has been adopted to identify key indicators. These principles include:

Accessibility

Accessibility, as defined in The City’s Social Wellbeing Policy, means removing barriers to access, specifically for people with disabilities (which may include but is not exclusive to physical, sensory and cognitive disabilities) to participate in City Services. This project broadens this definition to include meeting the needs of communities with disabilities including non-obvious/invisible disabilities and/or chronic health conditions, as well as including the accessibility of diverse populations from different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, 2SLGBTQIA+, sexuality, race, religion, ages, and body types to ensure that they are able to fully engage and participate in sports and recreation.

Sustainability

Creating spaces, programs, services, and systems that seek to positively impact social, economic and environmental spheres for not just the current generation but also the future. Equity for communities cannot be fully achieved unless we consider the lived physical and social environments together for sustainable development. Often environmental sustainability and social sustainability are not considered as connected but they in fact are intrinsically linked as parts of physical and social wellbeing. Ensuring that communities and “societies can thrive and continue to exist in a healthy, fair, and equal way”. The goal is to improve “people’s quality of life, foster strong relationships, and ensure everyone has the chance to fulfill their potential.”²

Inclusive, Welcoming & Belonging

Ensuring all individuals irrespective of background, race, religion, ability, socio-economic status, gender or sexual identity among other identities feel that they can participate and engage in sports and recreation. There are cultural safety considerations made in the space. Belonging is a sense of security and support, when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group/ community.

Reconcili-Action

Taking active steps to respond to recommendations of Truth and Reconciliation Commission and ensure Indigenous principles and ways of knowing are embedded in all aspects of the work. Specifically, recognizing the unique differences between Indigenous communities and honoring their diverse traditions. To make systemic changes it is critical that the focus is on actions towards reconciliation (teachings from Elder Casey, provided in 2023 during the anti-racism engagements).

- An action plan that will assist with future alignment and implementation of equity goals and priorities.

² Social Sustainability definition and concept taken from: [Social Sustainability – Everything You need to know \[2024 DEI Resources\] | Diversity for Social Impact](#).