

Attachment-1: We are Community

This new section of the Community Plan speaks of a vision for how we must work together as a united community. It also speaks about the importance of building the relationships and trust necessary for the sustained effort required to eradicate the racism and colonialism embedded in our structural systems. We developed this evolution of the Community Plan through more than 18 months of intentional learning and unlearning as a community.

The Community Plan acknowledges that racism and exclusion exist in many forms including but not limited to: Anti-Black racism, Anti-Indigenous racism, Anti-Asian racism, Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, Anti-2SLGBTQIA+, ageism, ableism, and sizism.

The many conversations that have led to the creation and continued evolution of the Community Plan were conducted on the land originally home to the Attawandaron peoples of the Iroquois Nation and is the Ancestral and Treaty Land of the Michizaagiig of the Ojibwe, Aanishinaabek Nation now known as the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

The “We are Community” section of the Community Plan has eight (8) guiding principles, explained in detail below. These principles are:

- Understanding community
- Relationship driven
- Truth and reconciliation
- Working across systems
- Pace and urgency
- Safe spaces
- Data and story sovereignty
- Shared language and understanding

Understanding Community

- The Community Plan is clarifying the meaning of “community” in a way that is more inclusive. This community includes everyone—those who found their way here, those who work and learn here, and those who have and continue to call it home.
- Individual communities are as diverse as the community surrounding them. Every person deserves to be treated fairly and equitably. We recognize there are differences in experience, in hardships and in joys within communities. These differences present opportunities for learning and mutual aid and/or support and the potential for growth.
- We acknowledge that colonial practices intentionally create and magnify divisions within and across equity-deserving and rights-bearing communities.

Relationship Driven

- Building relationships is foundational to building community.

- The community has expressed the importance of intentionally taking the time to grow relationships and heal as we move forward together. Stronger relationships with equity-deserving communities and community members is central towards creating sustained change.
- Trust develops over time, and we must all recognize that every conversation with all community groups is connected. Community institutions and partners must commit to these relationships and work together to make a stronger impact.
- The knowledge and wisdom of the community needs to be sought, valued and centred in this work.
- There is a learning process for organizations working to address systemic racism and mistakes will be made. We must look at those mistakes as moments of learning and opportunities to strengthen relationships. And when harm happens, we must acknowledge both the harm and the reasons behind it, apologize and work to repair the harm(s) and restore the relationship(s).

Truth and Reconciliation

- Community institutions must understand and take actions aligned with the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action (2015), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), and the Call to Justice as outlined in the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Report (2019), which includes justice for 2SLGBTQIA+ persons.
- We need to address the intergenerational trauma, historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism on the Original Nations and Peoples, First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities due to the attempted genocide¹ of their peoples.
- Community institutions need to improve continuous engagement with and uphold the inherent rights under Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution of First Nations, Métis and Inuit community members.
- We must be mindful of the land rights of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.
- We have more to learn about the history of this land and the people who lived here before Guelph was founded including the Michizaagiig, Huron-Wendat, Attawandaron and the Haudenosaunee peoples.
- Community institutions need to engage with the many First Nation, Inuit, Métis and mixed Indigenous ancestry individuals who continue to make this land their home today, and to engage Indigenous organizations (both formal and informal) and governments in order to embed Indigenous voices and ways of knowing into decision making structures.
- The community must better understand Indigenous governance structures and implement free, prior, informed consultation and consent with Indigenous communities as we work to build a better place for their grandchildren.
- We have more work to do to understand and appreciate the difference between equity and reconciliation.

Working Within and Across Systems

- Institutions need to take responsibility for transforming the systems they contribute to rather than relying on the communities that are negatively impacted.

- In collaboration with community expertise, we all need to review and revise our practices, services, policies and governance structures to co-develop solutions that transform systems and eliminate barriers to access.
- We acknowledge the challenges and restraints that come from addressing systemic issues from within the very systems that need to transform.
- We should take a holistic view and consider systems (e.g., health, education, economic) as inter-connected because that is how they are experienced by community members.

Pace and Urgency

- Building trust and relationships moves at its own speed and is a central part of this work. We are in "...the urgency of now," as said by Martin Luther King Jr. There is a tension between the need for immediate, past due action and the length of time it will take to rid systems and structures of racism and discrimination.
- Let us recognize the existing capacity within the community to heal itself and support the growth and sustainability of community organizations working to eliminate systemic racism.

Safe Spaces

- Indoor and outdoor physical spaces for community conversations, dialogue, ceremony, sports, and healing are needed by many of Guelph's communities.
- Space isn't just physical. Institutional partners must work with community members and groups to co-create safe spaces for processing and conversations about systemic racism that are fully open, accessible and free of judgment—this includes space for relationship building and reflection that isn't project specific or based on the needs of institutions.

Data and Story Sovereignty

- Consent for the use of a community member's data and stories has only been granted when it is freely given, reversible, informed, enthusiastic, and specific.²
- Community members who share stories and data should control how their information can be used.
- Community members and organizations should be fairly recognized for their time, data, stories and contributions.
- Understand the limitations of research due to the presence of systemic racism in data collection, analysis, dissemination and access. Data has often been used against contributing communities.
- Communities should neither be counted or discounted based solely on their size.
- Institutions should take an intersectional trauma informed and harm-reduction approach when collecting data and engaging the community about systemic racism.
- Institutions undertaking data collection and community engagement need to have a plan for participants requiring or requesting mental health support.

Shared Language and Understanding

- Community institutions have a responsibility to share what they learn so that others may have the opportunity to benefit from their collective knowledge, understanding and opportunities for growth.
- Recognize that words and phrases we use carry different meanings and can be harmful.
- Continually seek clarity to make sure the right language is used in communication and engagement.
- Community organizations should prioritize accessibility in communication and engagement, which can include translation, plain language and making information available in appropriate formats so that everyone can fully participate.³

References and additional information:

1. Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (Page 8)
2. The FRIES acronym for consent was developed by Planned Parenthood but can pertain to many different circumstances. With respect to consent, FRIES stands for:
 - Freely given
 - Reversible
 - Informed
 - Enthusiastic
 - Specific
3. When communicating and engaging, consider how to include everyone, for example, written material is in plain language, Heading Styles are used and fonts are Ariel or Verdana, 11 point or larger and the colour is easy to see. Include the contact information to request an accessible format of the material. Presentations that include a virtual option have captions available, all slide information is spoken and allow for different ways for the audience to communicate, such as speaking or in the chat, raise hand in the software or physically raise hand. Accommodate a person to fully participate as they request.