The Neighbourhood Group Community Services
Equity Audit

FALL 2021

INCLUSIVE LEADERS

TNG
Community Services

Introduction

Inclusive Leaders and PD consulting are equity, and diversity consulting firms based in Toronto, Canada who have come together to conduct TNG's Equity Audit. Over the last three years, we have offered organizations a wide range of services and expert facilitators, who provide strategic guidance and training on how to build workplaces and organizations that reflect and celebrate the diversities of the communities they serve. We believe that it takes leadership to create spaces that truly embrace anti-oppressive principles. We have worked to support equity and inclusion initiatives for various labour unions, public sector agencies, not-for-profit organizations, universities, and school boards. Our approach is consultative, principled, and rooted in anti-oppressive practices.

Our facilitators for this project come with extensive lived and professional experience in combating institutional anti-Black racism, Islamophobia, and other systems of oppression across Canada.

Our approach centres community care principles. Specifically, we provide trauma-informed support which prioritizes those most vulnerable and harmed by the organization. Our goal is to cultivate space for unearthing and understanding challenges faced by both staff and service users that belong to equity-seeking groups. This means, understanding that we are all operating within systems of oppression and that dismantling these systems involves naming the ways in which people face overt and subtle forms of discrimination, along with creating opportunities for healing and reparation.

This equity audit and report is due in thanks to the contributions of:

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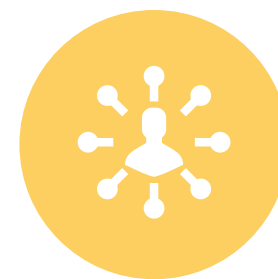Pascale Diverlus, PD Consulting - Co-Lead

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We provide strategic guidance and training on how to celebrate the diversities of their communities.

We provide trauma-informed support the most vulnerable and harmed by the organization.

We create opportunities for healing and reparation within the system.

Definitions

Ableism - The discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities.

Anti-Black Racism - A term first expressed by Dr. Akua Benjamin, anti-Black racism refers to policies and practices that mirror and reinforce prejudice, stereotyping, and/or discrimination towards people of Black-African descent to the extent that it is normalised or rendered invisible to society at large.

Anti-Oppression Framework - Actions, ideas, policies, procedures and practices that challenge oppressive systems. It is a framework that seeks actively to dismantle power structures while acknowledging that society is built around ideas that devalue and marginalise difference.

Equity -The fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to name and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.*

Equity Seeking Groups - Groups and individuals that face systemic barriers and discrimination because they belong to an identity that society has historically marginalised (People who identify as women, 2SLGBTQ+, people of colour, Black, First Nations, Inuit, Metis, people with disabilities etc).

Human Rights - Rights that everyone is entitled to by existing as human beings. These universal rights are inherent to us all, regardless of nationality, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. In Canada, Human Rights are backed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms alongside Provincial Human Rights codes.**

Normative Groups - Groups with characteristics that are favoured and normalised by society, also referred to as Privileged Group.

Systems of Oppression - Oppression refers to the domination of certain individuals or groups by others through the use of physical, psychological, social, cultural or economic force. Systems of oppression are a result of this domination being intricately woven into the greater society which allows for the perpetuation of policies and practices that disadvantage marginalised groups.

Racism - Ideas, practices, and/or policies that establish, maintain or perpetuate racial superiority or dominance of one group over another. Canada has a long history of racist practices, including the enslavement of African peoples, Indian Residential Schools, Japanese Internment Camps, Chinese Head Tax, and Carding

Whiteness - A dominant cultural space with enormous political significance, with the purpose to keep others on the margin. For example, racism is enacted against Black, Indigenous, and people of color in order to uphold whiteness by normalizing that people who are "White" are the dominant keepers of power, culture, and systems.

Background

For years the organizations that comprise The Neighbourhood Group (TNG), have engaged in difficult conversations about the organization's commitment to anti-racism and anti-oppression. The organizations have critically analyzed how to enact anti-oppressive practices including: anti-oppression training and the creation of an anti-oppression committee; anti-racism and microaggression training; a Truth and Reconciliation Committee; a hiring task force; and anti-racism programming with service users.

In June 2020, staff were moved by continued conversations about police brutality and anti-Black racism in light of the murder of George Floyd. They felt an urgency for deeper conversations and reflection about TNG's existing role in dismantling oppression and anti-Black racism amongst its staff, service users, and as leaders in the social service sector.

After a series of meetings and town halls with staff and service users, the TNG Board of Directors made a commitment to combat anti-Black racism and oppression; they put out a Request for Proposal (RFP) for an external equity consultant to conduct an organizational equity audit with internal and external supports that would result in a sustainable action plan.

The original RFP stated that the goal of the equity audit was to:

"Support The Neighborhood Group in ensuring that the principles of equity, anti-racism, anti-colonialism are integrated across the organization and within our policies and practices."
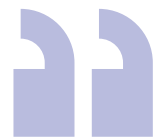
Important Considerations
It is important to note that there have been multiple factors operating in the backdrop of the TNG equity audit.

TNG's Recent Merger

Before the commencement of the equity audit, in April 2020 TNG finalized its merger between The Neighbourhood Group (itself a merger of Central Neighbourhood House and Neighbourhood Link Support Services) with St. Stephen's Community House. The amalgamation of these three organizations also meant the amalgamation of hundreds of staff, management and governing bodies. The reality of conducting this equity audit in the midst of this merger meant we had to consider how to create space for many factors:

TNG staff to unpack unresolved issues that occurred prior to the merger

The difficulties of the merger itself

Cultivating space for staff and service users to imagine potential roadmaps to what an equitable future could look like for TNG.

The Covid-19 Pandemic

Alongside the merger, the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on the lives of staff, volunteers, and service users must be mentioned as an additional context we were working within. Undoubtedly, the pandemic has impacted how everybody works and accesses services. While some TNG programs have shifted online with staff working from home, other programs have continued to operate on an in-person basis. This has meant that some staff have continued to work on the front line offering in-person services to vulnerable members of the community.

The realities of working and living in a pandemic have amplified personal challenges. The political, social, and economic inequities that have long existed left some TNG staff and service users especially exposed to further marginalisation. It has been clear that while conversations about anti-Black racism and police brutality sparked this project, there was an underlying need to also better understand the equity-based impacts of COVID-19 on staffs' mental health and wellbeing.

Additionally, we had to consider the distinct ways the pandemic would impact the participation of staff, volunteers, and services users in the overall equity audit process. We recognized a number of limitations to participation such as access to viable internet and related technology (eg. wifi, mobile data), and an additional lockdown imposed on family responsibilities. As a result, Inclusive Leaders and PD Consulting used a number of mitigation strategies which included additional focus groups with varied meeting times, and both a digital survey as well as a paper survey. We also shared our email widely for those who preferred one-to-one sessions.

Our Process

Data Collection

In a period of five months, from March to August 2021, we collected data using multiple approaches. We collected anonymous surveys from staff, volunteers and service users, and conducted a series of focus groups and interviews with TNG staff, volunteers, and service users to help us better understand their collective experiences.

Participants were assured that all information collected would remain confidential and was being collected with the goal to understand recurring themes.

Findings and recommendations reflected in this report were shaped by feedback from interviews, surveys, focus groups (Fig. 1). Further insights into organizational challenges and opportunities were gleaned from synchronous educational anti-oppression workshops with members of TNG's Anti-Oppression Committee and Board of Directors.

Throughout the process, we felt the full participation and cooperation of management. They shared relevant documents, provided insights into organizational structures, actively promoted surveys and focus groups to their staff, volunteers and services users and engaged in the process with an openness that signalled their own understanding of the importance of a process like this.

Methods for Collecting Data

Survey

A survey was offered to all staff, volunteers, and service users. The survey consisted of 16 questions as an initial probe into the perceptions of The Neighbourhood Group by its staff, volunteers and service users when it came to the themes of equity and inclusion.

In total, there were 150 unique respondents who answered the survey. The breakdown of respondents is as follows:

84 Non-management, unionized staff

13 Non-management, non-unionized staff

35 Management, non-unionized staff

12 Volunteers

In addition to the digital survey paper copies of surveys were made available and distributed to those working in-person such as personal support workers (PSWs) and childcare workers, as well as those who may not have had reliable access to technology, internet and/or data services.

Focus Groups

Virtual focus groups were conducted on Zoom video-conferencing software. Our method included 1-2 facilitators and a note-taker. For larger sessions, we included an active listener who facilitated a breathing exercise at the end of each of the focus groups. This was done to support participants in debriefing and decompressing any triggers arising from our facilitated conversations.

A total of 24 focus groups were conducted with the following groups:

Service Users (Multiple Groups)
Staff non-Management
Staff Management
Anti-Oppression Committee
Volunteer Committee
Racialised Staff
2SLGBTQ+ Staff
Staff with Disabilities
Human Resources Group
Labour Partners

} **24 focus groups**

Focus groups were complementary to the survey and designed to gather further detail on information and themes identified through the survey tool.

Focus groups with service users were facilitated through pre-existing programs and meeting time slots. For example, Youth Programs staff identified opportunities for Inclusive Leaders and PD Consulting to speak with their program participants for 30-60 minutes. Program staff would introduce Inclusive Leaders and then excuse themselves for the duration of the focus group. This was done to honour confidentiality.

We found that focus groups dedicated to staff were the best attended. This is not unusual because often the impetus to participate is driven by the need to address issues related to organizational culture, unfair treatment or discrimination in the workplace and/or other unmet work-related needs. Staff were also instructed to include any time spent in a focus group as time worked.

Focus groups were useful in that they helped in adding context to much of what was revealed in the survey results. The focus groups allowed for a better understanding of recurring themes and allowed participants to elaborate on ideas in ways that sometimes the surveys did not permit.

On average, there were 10-15 participants per session, with some groups hosting up to 25 participants. In total, we reached approximately 350 participants.

Although sample sizes of some populations were small, we are confident 350 participants is sufficient to verify overall directions and recommendations.

10-15 participants per session | **350 participants total**

Evaluation Process

As part of our process, we reviewed the organization's policies and procedures as well as the findings from interviews, surveys, and focus groups through the lens of our Anti-Oppression Evaluation Scale (Fig 2).

Our analysis of the data was also guided by the following questions:

1. How do policies ensure that vulnerable populations are protected by addressing barriers to equity through power, privilege and the disruption of the dominant narrative?

2. How does the organization allow for policies to be enacted in accordance with equity principles?

3. How is equity featured in the organization's overall language, tone, values of all policy documents?

4. What are the barriers to equity within each document?

5. How does the policy address Anti-Black racism either by exclusionary practices or omission?

6. How does the policy reinforce colonial practices/center whiteness?

These questions were to help further interrogate how policies on human resources and other overarching documents could still be inequitable, even if written without the intention of harm.

We examined the following documents in relation to the evaluation scale and the above questions:

- Policy Manual 2019
- Annual Report Draft
- Board of Directors Manual
- Bylaw #1
- Letter of Understanding between CUPE and SSCH
- 2017-2018 Collective Agreement
- Report Back on Staff Discussions on Anti-Black Racism
- Rethinking Community Safety
- Anti-Oppression Policy (Code of Conduct)
- Collective Agreement CUPE 7797
- Memorandum
- The Organizational Chart of TNG
- TNG Board Governance Policies
- TNG Human Resources Policy and Procedures Manual

Furthermore, our scale, which is modeled after the Towards a Global Evaluative Framework that was developed by Dr. Remi Warner, offers a framework for understanding where different areas of an organization are struggling or excelling when it comes to the implementation of anti-oppressive and human rights frameworks. The scale is as follows: *(next page)*

Anti-Oppression Evaluation Scale

| Components	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Systems/ Structures and Power Relations	Human rights and equity are not part of the organizational culture or core mandate. There is a lack of representation amongst the organization's leadership. Staff and those affiliated with the organization who belong to marginalised communities do not feel a sense of belonging.	Organization values equality but human rights and equity have not made their way into the core work of the organization. There is a lack of representation amongst the organization's leadership. Space is provided through committees and affinity groups for staff and members to celebrate and promote diversity.	Human rights and equity work are seen as an important part of the organization, but it is still relegated to a few areas of the organization. There is a demonstrated attempt to include marginalised identities within the leadership team. Staff and those affiliated with the organization who belong to marginalised communities feel some sense of belonging.	Human rights and equity are part of the organization's cultural norm. Staff and those affiliated with the organization see affirming and diverse representation amongst organizational leadership. Staff and those affiliated with the organization who belong to marginalised communities feel a strong sense of belonging.
Addressing and Identifying Barriers	Leadership lacks the competency to properly identify and intervene on issues of systemic discrimination.	Systemic barriers are only recognized when they are raised. While there are attempts to address these barriers, staff and those affiliated with the organization do not feel empowered to raise concerns, nor do they trust that barriers will be adequately addressed.	Systemic barriers are understood and addressed in a timely manner.	Systemic barriers are understood and addressed early and proactively.
Capacity Building	Leaders, staff and members of the organization do not have a clear under-standing of their human rights and equity rights and responsibilities.	Leaders, staff, and members of the organization have some understanding of their human rights and equity rights and responsibilities.	Leaders, staff, and members of the organization have a good understanding of how systems of oppression operate.	Leaders, staff, and members of the organization have regular learning opportunities about human rights and anti-oppression.
Individual and Organizational Accountability	There is erasure and suppression of human rights issues and concerns.	Human rights issues and concerns are addressed informally with little accountability.	There are policies and procedures that define human rights roles and responsibilities.	There are policies and procedures in place for staff to seek action in the event of an equity or human rights issue.
Community Partnerships	The organization does not have meaningful community partner-ships that represent the diversity that they serve.	The organization has some community partnerships. However, they are not included in decision-making or asked to offer input into the organization's programming and operations.	The organization has strong community partnerships that help to inform the organization's work.	The organization works effectively with community partners to address system-wide challenges faced by the members that they serve.

This scale is adapting from Dr. Remi Warner's Towards a Global Evaluative Framework

Findings

Through this review, it is evident that TNG is an organization that is well respected and deeply entrenched within the communities it serves. TNG has built significant social capital and reputational goodwill which was bolstered by the organization's willingness and readiness to undertake this review. Staff expressed pride in working for an organization that is committed to advocating for and meeting the needs of the city's most marginalised populations while service users are overwhelmingly positive about the support they receive. Black staff, in particular, expressed both frustration and challenges with institutional anti-Black racism while at the same time showed clear appreciation at the steps TNG has taken to review and employ equitable practices to combat anti-Black racism. Respondents indicated feeling optimistic about the organization's future in being leaders in equity and inclusion.

Through the policy review process, it is clear that TNG has a robust policy framework that demonstrates a commitment to transparent governance. However, to make strides in its enactment of equity and inclusion, findings indicate that TNG must place focus on its internal operations. Frontline staff with long histories at TNG reported negative experiences related to their marginalisation. While many of these experiences predated TNG's merger, some respondents shared that feelings and experiences of discrimination still felt unresolved. While there is overwhelming trust in the current leadership to prioritize equity and inclusion, our findings revealed that there are still many gaps at other levels of the organization to adequately understand and address inequity.
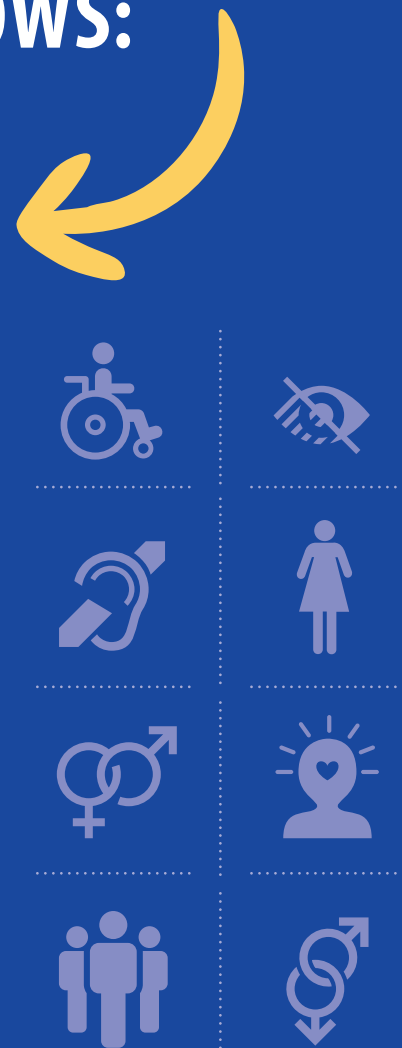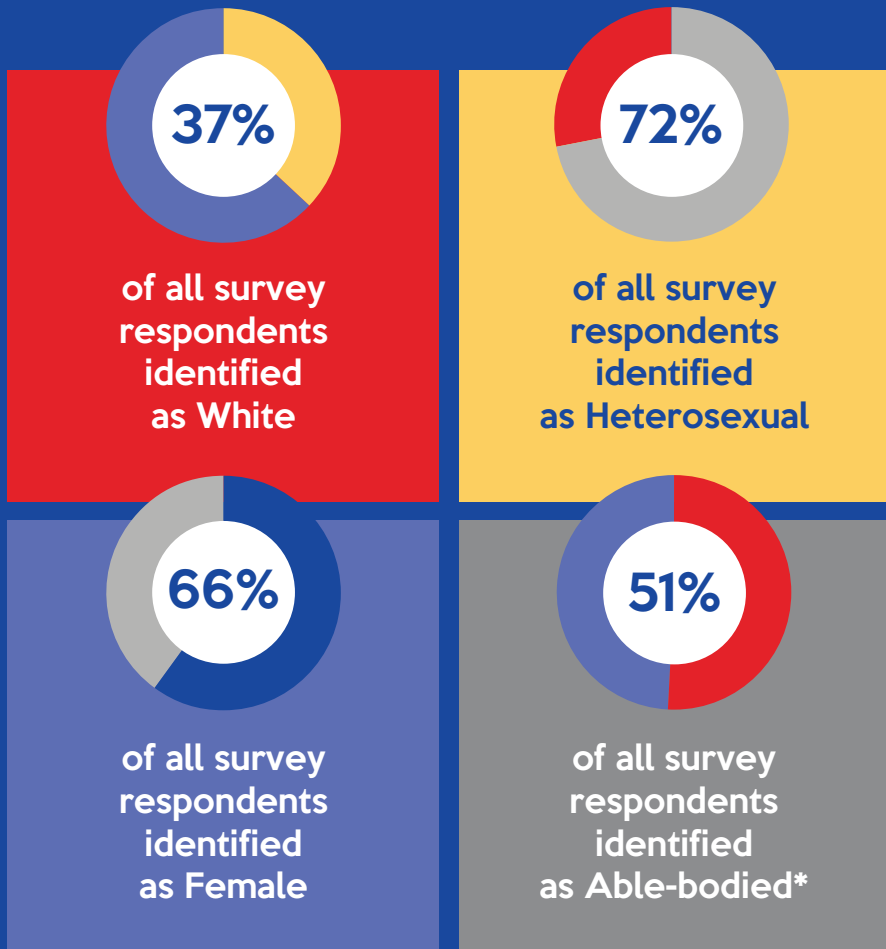
The following offers our findings in two ways. First, we provide a Survey Snapshot which offers quantitative data on diversity and inclusion at TNG. Second, we outline a series of key themes emerging from our analysis of the survey, interviews and focus groups.
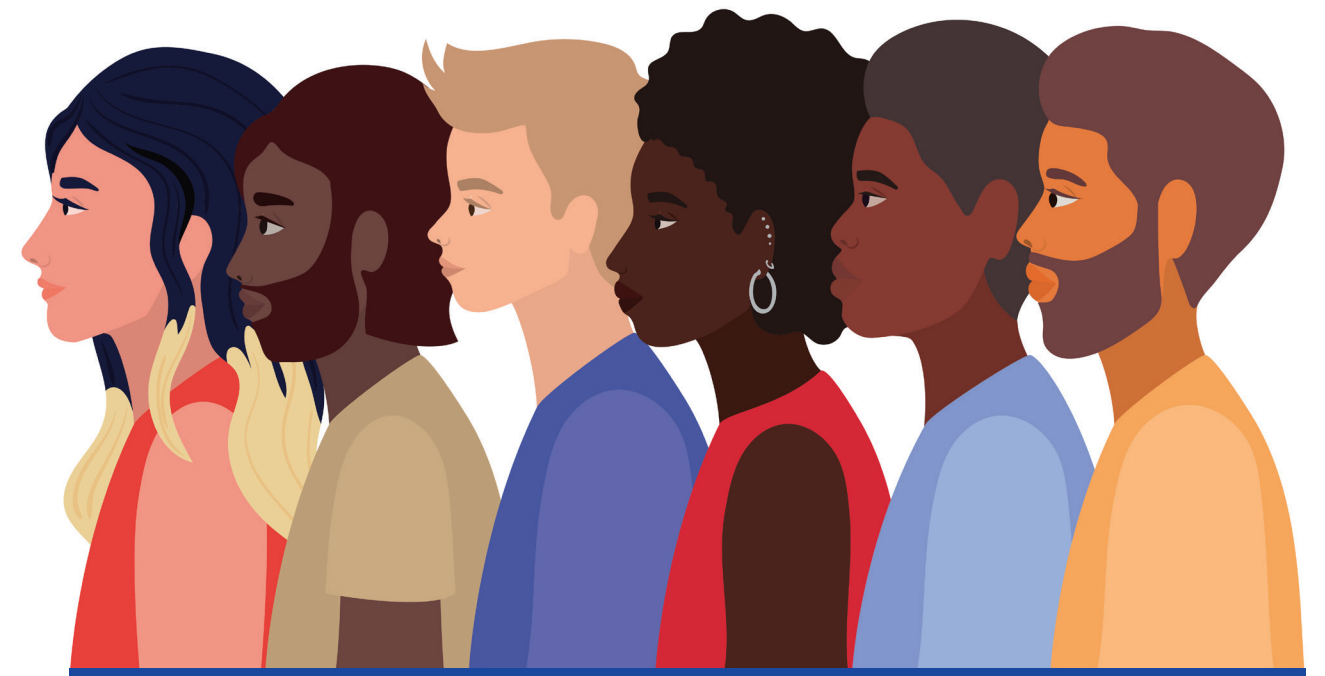
SURVEY SNAPSHOT: TNG BY THE NUMBERS

In our survey, we asked respondents to share with us their identity markers. We asked this question to better understand the level of diversity within TNG. We asked about race, gender identity, sexuality, and (dis)ability. We define respondents as all staff, volunteers and service users who participated in the survey.
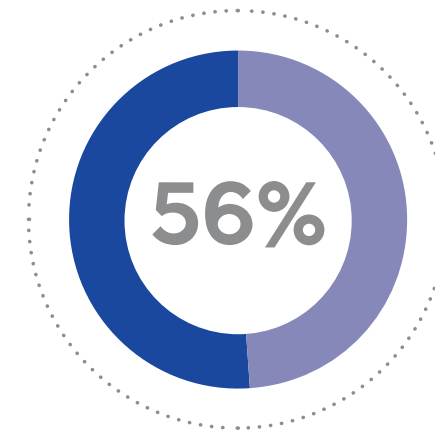
THE NUMBERS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

37% of all survey respondents identified as White

72% of all survey respondents identified as Heterosexual

66% of all survey respondents identified as Female

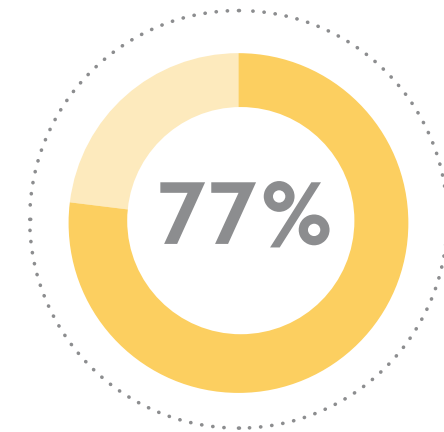**51%** of all survey respondents identified as Able-bodied*

*Based on survey respondents, once you combine respondents who identified as having a non-visible disability, a physical disability, being deaf or hard of hearing, having a mental illness and/or having a visual impairment, half of all respondents (74) identified as having a disability while the other half identified as able-bodied. 22 respondents chose not to respond.

## TNG MANAGEMENT TNG BY THE NUMBERS

To better understand how power and leadership is distributed within the organization we pulled out respondents who identified as Management based on race, gender identity, sexuality, and (dis)ability.
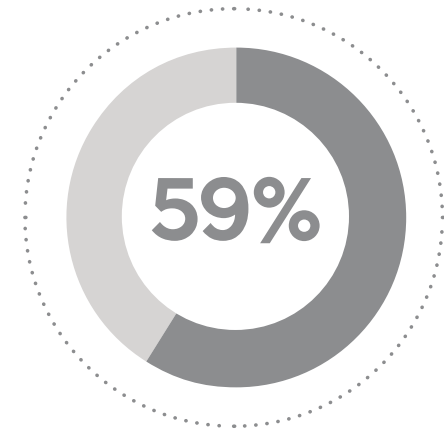
56% of all survey respondents identified as White

(there is no reported representation within leadership of folks who identified as Middle Eastern, Indigenous, or Latinx)

77% of all survey respondents identified as Heterosexual
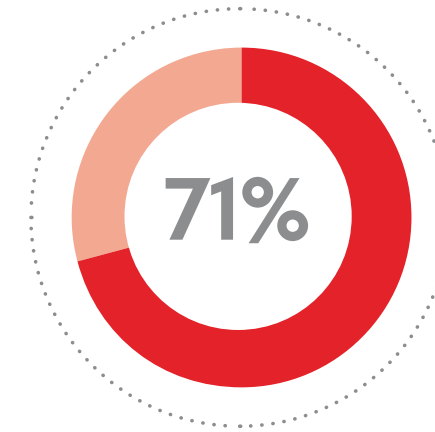
71% of all survey respondents identified as Cis[gender] Female

**59%** of all survey respondents identified as Able-bodied

Marginalisation and the Social Service Sector

Frontline workers within the non-profit social service sector often reflect similar identity markers and represent the marginalised communities they serve. Personal support workers, child care workers, and those who work as social service workers with marginalised communities are often women of colour, who themselves struggle with low pay and precarious work.

At TNG, survey results indicated that 65% of non-management staff identified as being marginalised with over 60% identifying as women of colour.

Survey Snapshot: Satisfaction with TNG

We asked respondents to share with us their satisfaction levels in a number of different areas to better understand how they perceived the organization's role in upholding equity and inclusion both internally and externally.
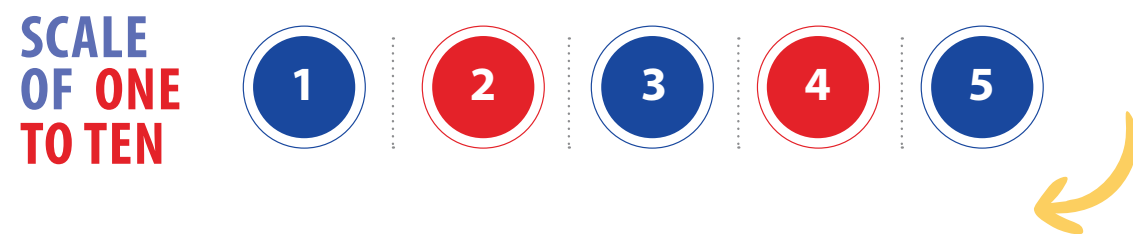
SCALE OF ONE TO TEN

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

We asked respondents:

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all satisfied and 5 being extremely satisfied, how satisfied are you with TNG's work to support the needs of marginalised communities in the following areas: Service Delivery; Community Outreach, and Support; Governance and Leadership Development and; Hiring and Employee Relations.

Respondents were most satisfied with TNG's work in service delivery, community outreach, and support, somewhat satisfied with TNG's governance and Leadership development structures and initiatives, and least satisfied with hiring practices and employee relations.

We asked respondents:

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all satisfied and 5 being extremely satisfied, how satisfied are you with TNG's ability to support the needs of the following marginalised identities within the organization:

Those who identify as Black or of African Descent
Those who identify as Indigenous (First Nations, Metis & Inuit)
Those who identify as Non-Black People of Colour
Those who identify as Queer (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual)
Those who identify as Trans, non-binary, or are gender diverse
Those who identify as Disabled
Those who identify as Women
Those who are low income

The data reveals that respondents were most satisfied with TNG's ability to support those who identify as women, low-income and 2SLGBTQ+. Respondents were somewhat satisfied with TNG's ability to support folks who identified as Black, while they were least satisfied with the organization's support for Indigenous folks, trans folks, and people with disabilities.

We asked respondents:

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all satisfied and 5 being extremely satisfied, how satisfied are you with TNG's role as a community advocate? (A community advocate was described to respondents as a person or organization that is able to identify, support and defend community needs.)

The data revealed respondents were overall satisfied with TNG's role as an advocate. Those who identified as Black were somewhat satisfied with TNG's support for their communities and all respondents were least satisfied with TNG's support for Indigenous communities.

We asked respondents:

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree, how would you rate the following statement:

I feel confident that any issues I raise about discrimination to the organization's leadership will be addressed seriously and efficiently.

(Discrimination was described to respondents as patterns of behaviour, policies, or practices that are part of the structures of an organization, and which create or perpetuate disadvantage)

Overall, respondents were satisfied with TNG's ability to address incidents of racism. Black survey respondents had strong trust and satisfaction TNG could address incidents of discrimination, however, in the focus group, they indicated they were less satisfied. We presume the nature of focus groups allowed for folks to feel safer to divulge their experiences and perspectives with others with similar lived experiences.

Many survey respondents were not at all satisfied with TNG's ability to address discrimination for Indigenous communities and people with disabilities.

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK

SUBMIT
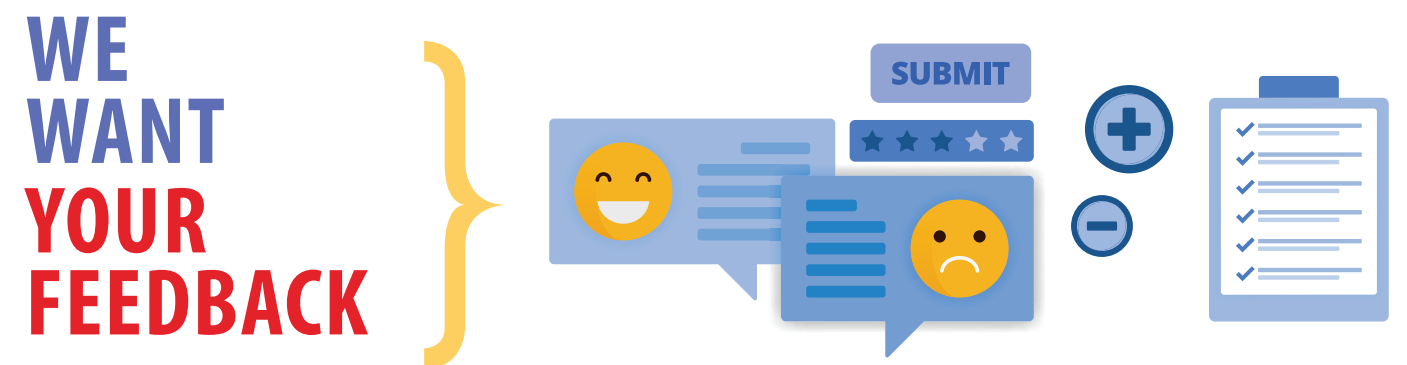
Key Themes

The key themes reflect the responses received through surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The themes are divided into two streams, *Governance and Structure* and *Improving Equity and Inclusion*, which are reflective of the current operating environment and lay the foundation for the recommendations outlined later in this report.

Governance & Structure

1 | Mistrust of organizational processes: Respondents expressed frustration with organizational human resource practices. Some staff expressed that they perceive the hiring processes to be inequitable. Staff expressed fear of being reprimanded for formalizing complaints and a lack of trust that complaints will be appropriately addressed. Comparatively, Black survey respondents did indicate they felt complaints were addressed promptly and fairly; this could be because of TNG's more recent work to address anti-Black racism. Overall, there is a general feeling that there are few initiatives to support the recruitment and advancement of people of colour and people with disabilities.

2 | Power dynamic negatively impacting management/staff relationships: Respondents felt there is a lack of process or structure to address power dynamics in management/staff relationships making it difficult to address issues of equity. Frontline staff feel unsupported; they have reported that management has a gap in understanding the reality of their work, and they feel excluded from offering input into decision-making. A significant pay discrepancy between upper management and frontline workers further deepens the power imbalances.

3 | Lack of clarity around new structure: Respondents expressed a lack of clarity around TNG's new structure, and how to communicate changes to program users. Many respondents shared that the lack of clarity around the new organizational structure is contributing to the feeling of disconnect between frontline staff and management.

Improving Equity & Inclusion

4 | Commitment to equity is performative and externally focused: Respondents perceive that the commitment to equity with clients and the community is inconsistent with how equity is reflected in relationships with staff. There is a lack of support for staff with lived marginalised experiences such as being low-income or with mental health needs. There is a general feeling that the organization is unaware of how to address and respond to incidents of discrimination experienced by frontline staff from service users.

5 | Lack of Representation: Respondents shared feelings that the leadership of the organization does not reflect the diversity of the communities served by TNG. While some respondents did acknowledge that there has been some shift when it comes to diverse representation in leadership, many felt that there is more the organization can do. Some respondents also expressed that there is a lack of diverse representation in materials provided to service users. Lack of representation is further reflected in inequitable decision-making structures including lack of frontline staff perspectives and a lack of community voices in organizational planning.

6 | Lack of targeted strategies for marginalised groups: There is a feeling that more work must be done to better understand the specific needs and perspectives of marginalised groups. Respondents expressed a desire to see a greater critical analysis when it comes to identifying and implementing practices that reflect a commitment to anti-oppression and anti-racism. Respondents also expressed internal issues are viewed from a privileged perspective by supervisors. Respondents shared feelings of frustration in a leadership that does not fully understand the lived realities of racialized and marginalised groups.

Anti-Oppression Evaluation Scorecard & Recommendations

Data gathered from survey responses, focus groups, and the policy document scan (audit) was analyzed alongside the identified Key Themes. TNG's performance related to equity and inclusion was evaluated using the Anti-Oppression Evaluation Framework which honed in on five focus areas. We believe a holistically, equitable organization must prioritize the following areas:

1. **Systems, structures, and power relations**
2. **Addressing and identifying barriers**
3. **Capacity building**
4   **Individual and organizational accountability**
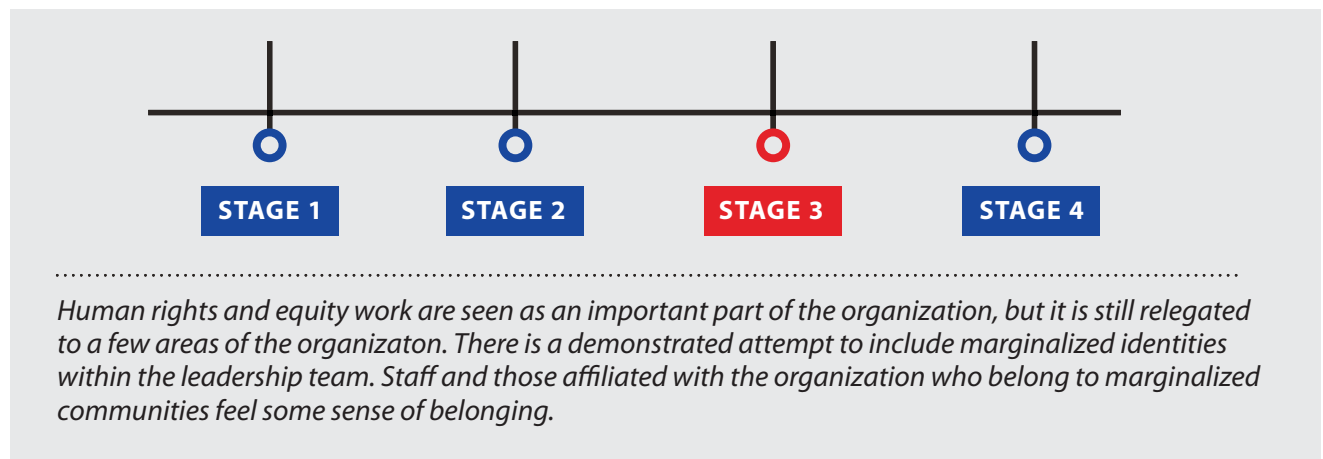5.   **Partnerships**

The following section will reflect on where TNG is positioned along the Anti-Oppression Evaluation Framework and offer recommendations and areas for improvement.

Scores and Recommendations

1 | Systems, Structures and Power Relations

➤ **CURRENT STATUS:**

Human rights and equity work are understood to be an important part of TNG's mandate. Staff respondents expressed their sense of belonging within the organization is driven by their own commitment and work to support the communities that TNG serves. All respondents indicated they can see the impact TNG's commitment to human rights and equity has in the community engagement, service delivery and advocacy work of the organization. While respondents acknowledged that there is a known desire from TNG to make human rights and equity work permeate throughout the organizational structures, staff respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of diverse representation amongst the organization's leadership and a lack of connection and understanding between leadership and frontline staff resulting in a lack of support for their own lived realities. In particular, part-time and casual staff expressed feelings of exclusion from channels of communication and both part-time and full-time, frontline staff indicated feeling excluded from participating in decision making that directly impacts their roles.

| STAGE 1 | STAGE 2 | STAGE 3 | STAGE 4 |

Human rights and equity work are seen as an important part of the organization, but it is still relegated to a few areas of the organizaton. There is a demonstrated attempt to include marginalized identities within the leadership team. Staff and those affiliated with the organization who belong to marginalized communities feel some sense of belonging.

Respondents further expressed feeling that there were limited opportunities for professional advancement within the organization. Many expressed frustration with levels of compensation in relation to their contribution to the organization. These sentiments were specifically heard from staff who identified as Black, Indigenous, Disabled and/or Trans.
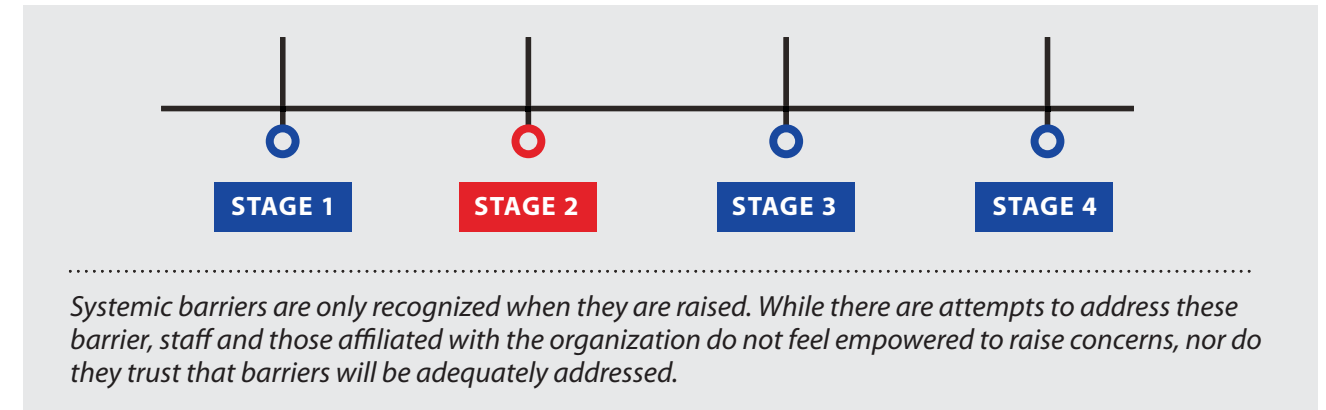
To progress towards a more equitable future for TNG in the area of Systems, Structures and Power Relations, principles and practices of equity and human rights must be inextricably woven into TNG's cultural norm. TNG needs to prioritize the steps needed to build a deeper culture of belonging where staff are intentionally included and valued.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1.1 TNG to gather race-based and identity-based data for all staff, volunteers and service users.

1.2 TNG to create DEI leadership positions across all departments.

1.3 An organizational-wide equity policy to be developed that details equity commitments and requires alignment from each new and existing organizational policy and practice.

1.4 TNG's bylaws and strategic plan be reviewed to reflect its commitment to equity and align with the organization's equity policy.

1.5 TNG must take actions to foster an organizational culture for staff to feel a sense of value, support, belonging and connectedness. This would include:

- Promoting opportunities for staff members belonging to marginalised groups to gather, share ideas and take action related to their area of interest, skill, and/or identity through the creation of affinity groups;

- Creating organizational opportunities for staff to contribute feedback, ideas and input to leadership on a consistent basis;

- Undertaking a staff engagement strategy to understand and better meet the needs of staff, giving attention to Indigenous staff, staff with disabilities and part-time casual staff;

- Prioritizing the learning and professional development of staff by continuing to provide opportunities to develop the leadership skills needed for career progression;

- Ensuring staff have the resources needed to participate fully in professional development opportunities including paid time off;

- Investing in opportunities for all staff including management to build social bonds to foster a sense of belonging; and

- TNG management to receive opportunities for capacity building specifically related to people management and relationship building.

1.6 TNG to work with labour partners to formalize a commitment to providing equitable wages for all employees.

1.7 TNG to work with labour partners to review compensation schedule, distribution of hours, and paid sick leave policies for personal support workers and other frontline positions:

- TNG to work with labour partners to ensure that all frontline staff, including part-time staff, be given appropriate paid sick leave with an established minimum standard that is applied to each position but not attached to the number of hours worked;

2 | Addressing and Identifying Barriers

► **CURRENT STATUS:**

STAGE 1   STAGE 2   STAGE 3   STAGE 4

Systemic barriers are only recognized when they are raised. While there are attempts to address these barrier, staff and those affiliated with the organization do not feel empowered to raise concerns, nor do they trust that barriers will be adequately addressed.

TNG has not yet demonstrated the ability to identify and address systemic barriers for marginalised staff. Respondents that identified as 2SLGBTQ+ and Indigenous in particular, felt that some TNG management staff contributed to the organizational barriers because of their lack of understanding and awareness related to issues faced by members of these communities. Respondents also indicated that they felt that TNG has a culture of erasure for staff with disabilities and their specific needs. This was especially highlighted by staff who identified as having an invisible disability.

To progress towards a more equitable future for TNG in the area of Addressing and Identifying Barriers, TNG must create a clear and direct plan for understanding and addressing barriers faced by staff and service users who identify as 2SLGBTQ+, disabled and/or Indigenous.
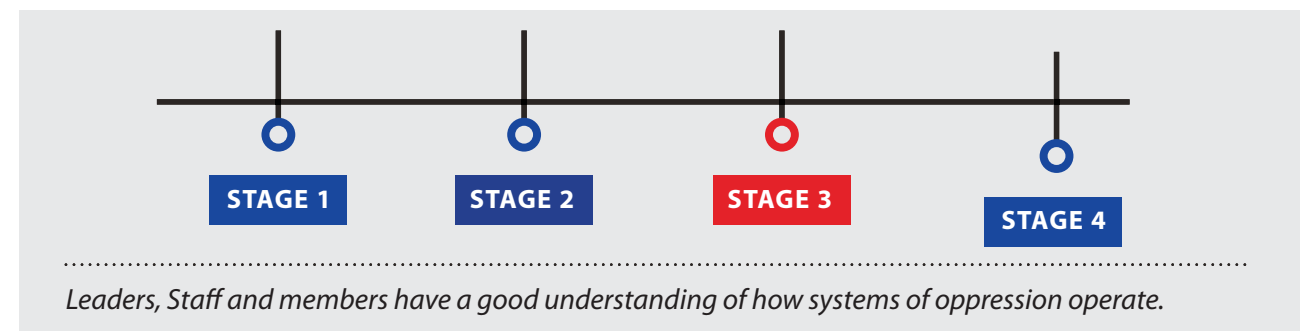
RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 TNG work with an external partner to conduct an accessibility audit to create a strategy for addressing inaccessible buildings and organizational practices.

2.2 TNG work with labour partners to strengthen processes for meeting obligations under the AODA, to better support staff with disabilities to access accommodations and/or reintegrate back into the workplace after a medical leave.

2.3 TNG to create 2SLGBTQ+, staff with disability, Black and Indigenous staff roundtables for self-identified staff to promote intercommunity dialogue and support; staff participation in such roundtables must be considered as time worked; Similar tables should be created for service users to inform programming.

2.4 TNG to work with labour partners to strengthen workplace support for staff that identify as trans.

2.5 TNG to work with labour partners and community groups to create staff outreach and recruitment strategies for disabled, 2SLGBTQ+, Black and Indigenous folks.

2.6 TNG to work with self-identified staff and service users to help inform the enhancement and creation of 2Spirit and Trans specific services for community members and staff.

2.4 TNG to create gender-neutral washrooms in each building.

2.5 TNG to work with external community groups to create and enact strategies to be a trans-positive workplace and service provider.

2.6 TNG to create a budget for the Truth and Reconciliation Committee and expand its mandate to be agency-wide.

2.7 TNG in collaboration with the Truth and Reconciliation Committee as well as external community partners to create an Indigenous elder's committee to support efforts related to decolonization and Indigenous-led initiatives.

2.8 TNG to create an Equity Hiring Task Force committee that includes labour partners; its role should be clearly defined and assigned to support the organization's HR team in applying an equity lens to operational practices including the hiring of all positions. A member of the TNG Board of directors should be assigned to support the committee and ensure accountability is in place.

3 | Capacity building related to equity

➤ **CURRENT STATUS:**

| STAGE 1 | STAGE 2 | STAGE 3 | STAGE 4 |

Leaders, Staff and members have a good understanding of how systems of oppression operate.

Service user and staff respondents described a significant dissonance in TNG's understanding of systems of oppression as it is applied to external programming versus its internal operations. While respondents felt that TNG holds a good understanding of how systems of oppression operate as it related to the advocacy for service users; 2SLGBTQ+ and disabled staff particularly expressed discomfort in sharing their identity openly within the workplace for fear of alienation or how it would impact their professional development. Staff respondents reported incidents of microaggressions without intervention. Respondents also indicated that practices that continue to perpetuate an environment of oppression and inequity are apparent within the human resources department related to hiring practices.

To progress towards a more equitable future for TNG in the area of Capacity Building Related to Equity, regular learning opportunities for all levels of staff need to be built into daily operations including training or resources that clearly describe how an equity lens can be applied to all policies and procedures.
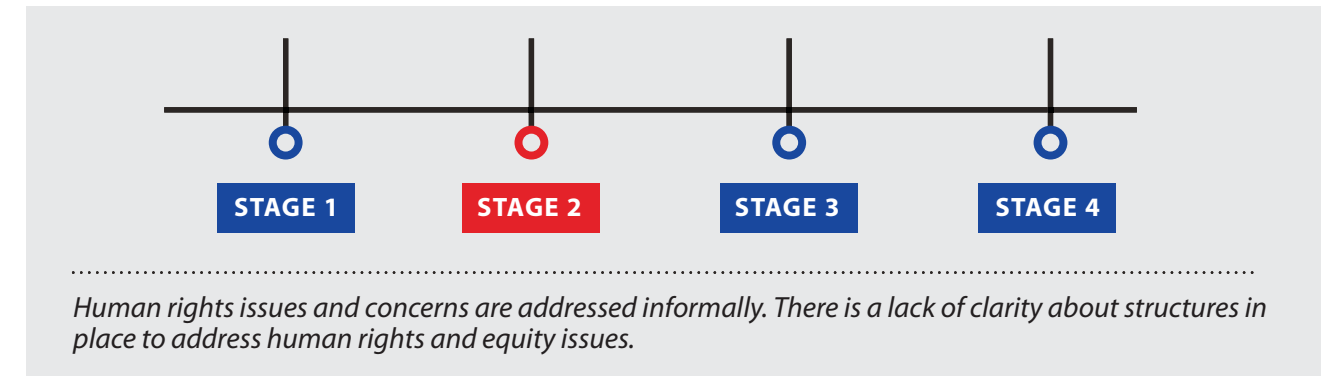
RECOMMENDATIONS:

3.1 TNG to enhance training on equity and inclusion within the new staff onboarding process and require regular compliance training related to human rights, equity, and inclusion for all employees:

- TNG to continue providing training to all staff on the TNG Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy and associated procedures.

3.2 TNG to strengthen job requirements for management positions to include a demonstrated understanding of equity issues:

- TNG to work with existing management and leadership staff to enhance their understanding of how to address and identify barriers.

3.3 TNG to work with community partners to deliver professional development at all levels related to disability, Indigeneity, and 2SLGBTQ+ identity.

3.4 Equity lens to be applied to health and safety policies, procedures and practices and that the health and safety committee receive appropriate equity training.

3.5 TNG to create an awareness campaign with plain language material about equity expectations for staff and service users.

4 | Individual and Organizational Accountability

➤ **CURRENT STATUS:**

| STAGE 1 | STAGE 2 | STAGE 3 | STAGE 4 |

Human rights issues and concerns are addressed informally. There is a lack of clarity about structures in place to address human rights and equity issues.

Frontline staff and managers who participated indicated that they experience challenges with addressing human rights and equity issues when they arise internally with some respondents indicating that incidents are acknowledged but left inadequately addressed particularly when it comes to incidents involving service users.

To progress towards a more equitable future in the area of Individual and Organizational Accountability, TNG needs to ensure the policy environment is clear, accessible, and infused with equity principles. Through the policy analysis process, it is evident that TNG's policy framework is extensive. TNG is at risk of falling prey to the challenges that can arise when there are too many policies in places such as conflicting process recommendations that may provide confusion in how to address incidents or challenges, and policies and procedures that are unclear to staff who may be seeking support.
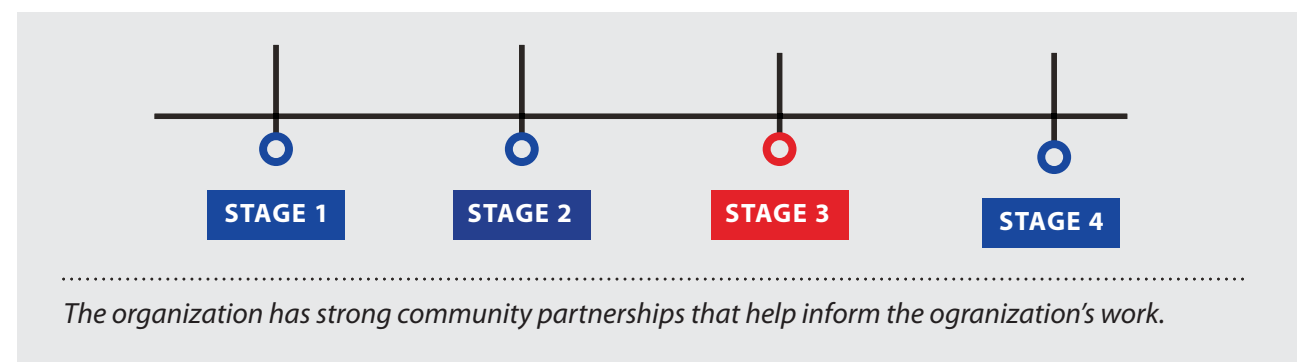
RECOMMENDATIONS:

4.1 TNG to create a Healing Justice Taskforce as a restorative practice approach to resolving internal conflicts, complaints or issues related to discrimination, harassment or unfair treatment.

4.2 TNG to create a plain language awareness campaign on how to report or formalize complaints with communication materials posted in visible areas within TNG sites.

4.3 TNG to amend the existing formal complaint processes to include an escalation process for workplace conflict, with clear expectations for management intervention or interruption. Input from labour partners and members of marginalised groups to be included.

4.4 TNG to create a system for managers to document and report on complaints or issues related to discrimination, harassment or unfair treatment identified by staff or service users and actions taken to address said issues.

4.5 TNG to work with community groups to create culturally responsive and restorative alternatives to address conflict involving or impacting service users.

4.6 TNG to work collaboratively with the health and safety committee to receive training on how to support all staff (unionized and non-unionized) when they face incidents of discrimination during programming. Plain-language posters/signage outlining the steps staff can take to report and respond to incidents be placed around workplaces.

4.7 TNG should develop a policy companion guide in clear, accessible language for front-line staff that clearly describes how and when staff can formalize a complaint or report incidents of harassment or discrimination. All staff should receive procedural training to ensure consistent application of related processes and training should be included in new staff onboarding processes.

5 | Community Partnerships

► **CURRENT STATUS:**

STAGE 1 STAGE 2 STAGE 3 STAGE 4

The organization has strong community partnerships that help inform the ogranization's work.

TNG is deeply embedded within the communities it serves and with strong partnerships in community development. TNG is recognized as a community advocate by the provision of crucial and life-affirming services that bridge the gap for marginalised communities as well as the campaigns the organization supports for equity-seeking communities.

As such, TNG has the opportunity to serve as a leader in the field of equitable service delivery and should leverage partnerships to explore innovative methods for identifying and meeting the needs of marginalised program users.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

5.1 An equity partnership accountability framework be developed to guide effective partnerships that are grounded in equity-based principles.

5.2 TNG to continue working with community partners to identify the needs and culturally-specific methods of service delivery for service users that identify as Indigenous, Black and/or people of colour.

5.3 TNG continues its work with agencies and labour partners to establish practices that protect the rights of frontline workers including personal support workers.

5.4 TNG to enhance current work with disability justice community partners and organizations that support people with disabilities to establish best practices for supporting staff with disabilities.

5.5 TNG to enhance its work with 2SLGBTQ+ community partners and organizations to better support the needs of employees and services users from the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

5.6 TNG continues to seek out community partners to support its work in combating anti-black racism within the organization and in the communities it serves.

5.7 TNG to support local, provincial, and national campaigns from community groups that support marginalised identities and challenge structures that lead to discrimination.

Immediate Next Steps ⟩⟩⟩⟩⟩⟩⟩⟩⟩⟩

► **1 | Create a Dedicated Team and Budget -** TNG should establish a dedicated team to support the implementation of recommendations coming out of this report in collaboration with Inclusive Leaders and PD Consulting. The team must include members of TNG's leadership team and Board of Directors to ensure accountability and action. TNG should allocate sufficient financial resources to ensure that the work of implementing change related to equity improvements remains a priority and is moved forward with intentionality.

► **2 | Repurpose Anti-Oppression Committee** - Redefine and rename the Anti-Oppression Committee to engage TNG in understanding what equity success looks like, review report recommendations, and determine key performance indicators for the organization.

► **3 | Develop an Action Plan and Timeline** - The equity team should develop a clear action plan that identifies how each recommendation will be addressed, timelines for completion, who will be accountable, and metrics for evaluating impact.

► **4 | Identify and Engage Key Stakeholders** - The equity team should develop a strategy to engage TNG leadership and affiliates in a collaborative process.

Optimistic and Ready for Change

There is strong evidence TNG is composed of staff that are passionate and committed to providing excellent service and support to service users. Respondents expressed pride in working for an organization that is committed to advocating for and meeting the needs of the city's most marginalized populations. Staff view their coworkers as a supportive community, and they believe that inclusivity matters to the organization and its leadership. Black staff, in particular, expressed appreciation at the steps TNG has taken to review and employ equitable practices to combat anti-Black Racism and expressed cautious optimism as they await how the organization continues to build on its current momentum.

When it comes to holistic and meaningful integration of equity and inclusion into organizational culture, TNG has demonstrated that it has the potential to be a leader in the social service sector. The way forward requires participation and commitment from every level of the organization. While this is a final report, it is in no way meant to be the end of a process; rather, the beginning of new opportunities and challenges to grow TNG into an organization where all staff, volunteers, and service users feel a deep sense of pride and belonging. Equity and inclusion require leadership from all corners of the organization that must be ready to disrupt the challenges as they currently are and as they may emerge. The level of change that will occur will depend on the importance placed and priority given. TNG staff, management and service users are ready and eager for progressive change.

INCLUSIVE LEADERS

pascale diverlus

TNG
Community Services

cnh
Central Neighbourhood House
Since 1911

NEIGHBOURHOOD LINK
SUPPORT SERVICES

St. Stephen's
Community House