

What We Heard:

Equity Audit Tool for Recreation and Sport Spaces

November 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Ensuring equity in public facilities is a key concern for The City of Calgary. As sports and recreation is an integral part of the social fabric, creating and championing equitable facilities is an ongoing commitment for The City. Through this project, The City is working to address the significant gaps in inequitable participation in sports and recreation facilities by undertaking a review of best practices and hearing from diverse equity-deserving groups (EDGs) to transform spaces, policies, procedures, services, training and cultures within these recreation spaces.

The project was undertaken in three distinct parts: Phase 1 involved a thorough review of equity best practices from literature from Canada and other select countries who are currently leaders in equity. Phase 2 documents what we heard through dialogues with diverse EDGs, and observations from sports and recreation site visits across Calgary. Phase 3 will result in the development of an Equity Audit tool based on the best practices identified through the first two phases.

This document presents the results from the second phase of the three-part project. Discussions and observations resulted in redefining our key principles in the sports and recreation context in the following way:

Accessibility: Accessibility is not just the ability for everyone to participate in services and programming in the physical space. It is also in being aware of what a facility does; being able to get to the facility; costs associated with the use of a facility; addressing language and communication barriers etc.

Welcoming, Inclusive & Belonging: Being welcoming and inclusive is more than visible artifacts in a facility (Land acknowledgement signage; pride flags, signage in different languages etc.). It includes equity representation in staff; staff trained in equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and anti-racism issues; consistent EDI policy implementation across all aspects of a facility; community partnerships etc.

Sustainability: Sustainability goes beyond environmental sustainability (energy efficiency; reduce-reuse-recycle culture etc.). It involves long-term sustainability of programming; developing increased community participation and loyalty; championing and leading causes significant to the community etc.

ReconciliAction: Reconciliation is a long-term, relational goal that requires intentional capacity building of sports and recreation facilities, including sensitivity training for staff. Meaningful long term ReconciliAction cannot be achieved only through low cost/no cost solutions.

METHODS

To understand the contexts and environment of equity in sports and recreation facilities in Calgary, the Consultant team engaged with diverse EDGs through working group sessions; and conducting sports and recreation site visits with volunteer participants. Specific focus of engagement was on representation from Indigenous, ethnocultural/newcomer, 2SLGBTQ+ and diverse (physical, neurological/intellectual) abilities groups. 36 individuals participated in working groups sessions, and 8 participants took part in site visits. In-person site visits were conducted across four facilities, with specialized focus on our EDGs of interest (Genesis Centre, Vivo, Vecova and Bob Bahan Centre).

RESULTS

Integral findings from participant discussions and site observations are summarized in the following table. The themes highlight key areas of interest, best practices, areas of continued improvement and future recommendations.

Key Themes	Sub Themes
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Physical and structural barriers ● Concerns of affordability ● Procedural barriers ● Language barriers ● Other communication barriers ● Policy implementation & accountability
Welcoming, Inclusive & Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Equity embedded in strategic planning ● Inclusive & welcoming spaces ● EDI practices should not be tokenistic ● Intentional diversity in programming & services ● Intentional diversity and sensitivity in staffing
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Environmental sustainability ● Social sustainability ● Sustainability in service and programming
ReconciliAction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meaningful representation in service & programming is a step in the right direction ● Building trusting relationships and accountability ● Lack of continuity in ReconciliAction measures ● Checklists and tools may not be relevant for Indigenous communities ● Disparity between equity-deserving groups ● Continued experiences of discrimination

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tokenistic representation• Cultural & emotional safety
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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), Amskaapipiikani (Om-Skaa-bee-bee-Gun-nee) and Kainai (G-ai-nah) First Nations; the Îlethka Nakoda Wîcastabi (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.

INTRODUCTION

Sports and recreation are an integral part of the social fabric of all Calgarians. However, not all sports and recreation facilities are equitable to the same extent. The City of Calgary is working to address the significant gaps by undertaking a review of best or wise practices and hearing from diverse equity-deserving groups (EDGs) to transform spaces, policies, procedures, services, training and cultures (among other aspects) within these recreation facilities. Equity, unlike the notion of equality, is not about sameness of treatment. To achieve equitable outcomes often requires differential treatment and resource redistribution, recognizing and addressing barriers to provide opportunity for all individuals and communities to thrive (McGill University, 2023). The City recognizes that equity has to be both an intentional process and an outcome.

In July 2023, The City of Calgary commissioned Habitus Consulting Collective to support this work. This project was undertaken over three distinct phases.

- Best Practices Review: In the first phase, the consulting team conducted 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.
- What we heard report: The second phase of the project included collecting primary data. It synthesizes what we heard from community and system partners, as well as includes observations from site visits to sports and recreation facilities across Calgary. The current report includes the key themes and findings from this phase of the project.
- Audit tool: Based on the results of the first two phases, the third phase would involve development of an equity audit tool which would aim to increase awareness and create inclusive and welcoming spaces across City owned recreation facilities to transform the landscape for equity deserving groups. The intention is that this tool will be utilized by Complex Coordinators, Facility Operators and their staff to make changes to increase equity. To read more about this read the Sports and Recreation Audit tool available with The City.

PRINCIPLES LED APPROACH

This equity project was grounded in key principles that were jointly identified by the consultants and The City team through a review of best practices. Adopting a principles-based approach ensured that the project and insights gathered in this work remain grounded in evidence-informed and well-researched practices. Each of these

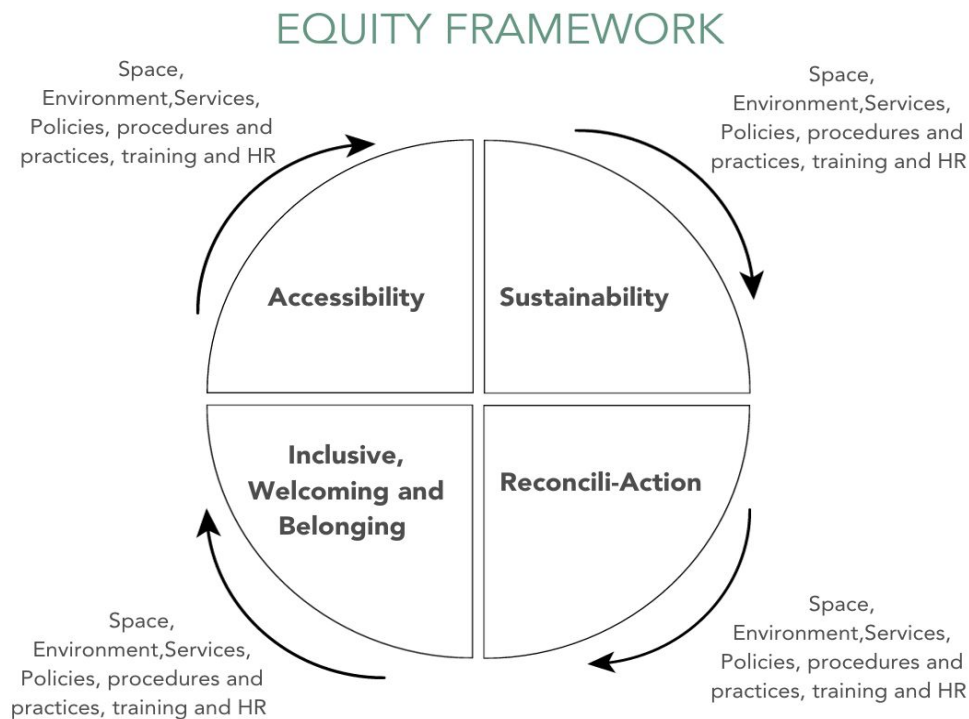
principles are integrally tied to each other and can best be understood as nested within each other.

- **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, 2SLGBTQ+, sexuality, race, religion, ages, and body types to ensure that they are able to fully engage and participate in sports and recreation.
- **Sustainability:** Create spaces, programs, services and systems that seek to positively impact social, economic and environmental spheres for future generations not just for individuals but communities, and the environment.
- **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).

These principles are operationally seen in different aspects of the sports and recreation facilities that include:

- **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.
- **Environment:** This refers to the ways in which the environment of the facility supports inclusiveness and equity. It includes the intangible ways in which people feel supported, equitable and welcomed.

- Services: This refers to how services meet the needs of diverse populations within the facility.
- Policies, procedures and practices: This addresses how the facility includes policies, procedures and practices to increase access, safety, usability, welcoming and inclusiveness for equity deserving groups.
- 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.



METHODOLOGY

To support this work, Habitus employed a multi-pronged approach to gather data that included working group sessions, group interviews and site visits. This section will provide a brief overview of the steps taken in these methods.

WORKING GROUP SESSIONS & GROUP INTERVIEWS

Goals: The aim of the working group session was to better understand the opportunities, strengths and challenges in creating an equitable and inclusive environment within City of Calgary's sports and recreation facilities, from the perspectives of different equity-deserving voices. The specific goals of these working session were:

- Explore the current state of barriers and challenges faced by equity deserving groups.
- Discuss the best practice ideas for creating equitable sports and recreation spaces- especially low or no cost options.
- Identify key indicators that can be added to the audit tool currently being created by Habitus Consulting for The City of Calgary.

Sample and recruitment:

- From background research and consultations with The City, specific EDGs were identified to include in the primary data collection phase. An intersectional approach was employed to ensure representation from women/girls, aging population and varied socioeconomic status. These include: Indigenous, ethnocultural/newcomers, 2SLGBTQ+ and those with physical, intellectual and/or neurological disabilities (referred to as individuals with diverse disabilities in this report) (Appendix A).
- To recruit participants the consulting team reached out to partners across Calgary who have lived/living or professional experience with specific EDGs. Respondents were recruited from academic institutions, community organizations and people with lived or living experience. All participants were provided an honorarium for their participation.
- A total of 70 partners were contacted for recruitment (newcomers: n=16; 2SLGBTQ+: n=20; disabilities: n=22; Indigenous: n=12). 36 individuals agreed to participate (newcomers: n=11; 2SLGBTQ+: n=9; disabilities: n=9; Indigenous: n=7).
- Participants represented diverse professional backgrounds. These included non-profit organizations (11), Settlement (6), Academia (5), Sports (5), Policy (4),

Health & clinical services (e.g nurse, therapist etc.) (5), Education (1), Advocacy group (1)

- All participants were provided an honorarium for their participation.

Design:

- Working session: Newcomer/ethnocultural, 2SLGBTQ+ and diverse disabilities communities were engaged through working group sessions. Consent to participate was obtained and a pre-read orientation document about the project was shared with all participants beforehand. The sessions took place over zoom and lasted for an hour to an hour and a half. Working group sessions had one facilitator and one notetaker, and the sessions were recorded for later transcription. Each session was divided into four sections: introductions, consent and Land Acknowledgement; background and need of the study; discussion and brainstorming of what is working well and what can be improved. The last two sections of the discussion were guided by four key principles of equity that form the backbone of this research: Accessibility, Welcoming Inclusive and Belonging; Sustainability and ReconciliAction. Participants shared their thoughts verbally, through Zoom chat and through Jamboards. The Jamboards were later shared with participants to validate and expand upon what they heard.
- Group Interviews: The consultants worked with the Urban Society of Aboriginal Youth (USAY) in Calgary to conduct the Indigenous engagements. USAY has strong relationships in the community and were seen as a trusted intermediary who could ensure these conversations were conducted in a culturally responsive and safe manner. Due to logistical reasons the Indigenous working sessions were changed into several small group interviews to accommodate participants' schedules. These interviews had a similar set of questions as the working sessions but structured in a conversational/story-telling format to adapt to the context.

SITE VISITS

Goals: The aim of the site visit was to understand the contexts and environment of sports and recreation facilities in Calgary to better understand the opportunities, strengths and challenges in creating equitable and inclusive environments. The purpose was to learn from examples and experiences of what is currently working well within facilities, identify areas for improvement and make actionable recommendations for The City and partners to implement as short-term and long-term solutions. The specific goals of the site visits were:

- Explore the site, services and facilities to understand the key ways in which clients/consumers experience and use the service.
- Gain insights into how the facilities make decisions about equity related policies, services and practices.
- Identify some practical areas that can be added to the audit tool currently being created by Habitus Consulting for The City of Calgary.

Sample: Four sites were selected across Calgary, each with a specific equity-deserving group as focus of interest. Consultants worked with teams of community participants with lived experience at each site to best understand the environment and the lived context of the space.

- The Genesis Centre: Focused programming/services for newcomers/ ethnocultural communities
- Vecova: Focused programming/services for individuals and families with disabilities
- Bob Bahan Aquatic & Fitness Centre: Focused programming/services for youth, Indigenous and low income community members
- Vivo: Inclusive programming/services for diverse equity-deserving groups

Site visit participant recruitment:

- In order to provide a wide range of input into the experience of these sites, the consultants recruited site visit participants, who reflected diverse intersectional identities- Indigenous (n=2), immigrant (n=1), refugee (n=1), individuals with disabilities/caregivers of a person with disabilities (n=2) and 2SLGBTQ+ (n=2) (Appendix A).
- Observers were recruited through collaborations with community organizations and professional networks across Calgary.
- Each site was visited by a team of three observers - one facilitator from Habitus Consulting and two observers, all of whom signed consent and confidentiality forms. All observers were provided an honorarium for their participation.

Design:

- A 30-minute project briefing was provided to participants before each visit to provide context to the work and discuss key areas of focus for the visit. Consultants and volunteer participants were provided a tour of the site by the Facility Managers. Length of tours ranged from 1-2 hours, where participants were provided an opportunity to observe various aspects of the facility. Some areas of focus included: services in action (especially the front desk, classes,

training or activities); different aspects of the physical space (indoors and outdoors); art and artifacts displayed.

- Participants interacted with facility managers, leadership and frontline staff to get some informal insights into running the facility with a focus on access for equity-deserving groups.
- After the visit participants had a chance to share their thoughts and observations with Habitus staff.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The working group sessions, group interviews with Indigenous partners and site visits resulted in rich data in the form of recorded videos, observational notes and feedback from participants. This data was analyzed in three steps.

1. Transcription: All video recordings were transcribed through Otter AI.
2. Thematized: Data from site visits (observational and feedback notes) was analyzed and themes related to equity were identified. A similar process was followed separately for transcribed data from the working sessions. Findings were divided into two broad categories: what we heard from participants' experiences, and what is working well/needs improvements at sports and recreation facilities.
3. Validation: To validate what was heard and observed from all activities, all participants will be brought together for a follow-up session where results will be shared and validated.

ORGANIZATION OF RESULTS

The next section summarizes significant highlights that emerged as a result of conversations with participants. Based on what we heard from stakeholders during working groups sessions and observations from site visits, insights are categorized into three sections.

- A. Key themes
- B. Promising practices from site visits
- C. What are recommendations for the future

THEMATIC SUMMARY OF DATA

Participants engaged in this project shed light on several key themes including physical, cultural, psychological or financial barriers that impact their ability to effectively access sports and recreation facilities across the city. They suggested both short-term and long-term solutions that can mitigate these issues.

Theme 1: Accessibility

This work and the definition being used in this engagement broadens The City's understanding of accessibility to include perspectives from Indigenous, newcomer and ethnocultural, 2SLGBTQ+ and physical, neurodiverse and cognitive disabilities groups by highlighting additional aspects of what accessibility means to them. Access was defined in terms of feeling safe, welcomed and represented; being aware of what a facility does; ability to get to the facility; costs associated with the use of a facility; addressing language and communication barriers.

Creating Accessible environments: All participants spoke about the importance of creating accessible environments, not just accessible spaces. Participants from all four groups felt that community members should be given priority when deciding what the environment looks like and what programs and services are available. Each group had specific ideas of what an accessible environment looks like for them. For instance,

- For Indigenous participants, programs and services that encourage cultural inclusion and peer participation (rather than individual participation) reduces hesitation and increases access for financially challenged Indigenous youth.
- For newcomers, culturally adaptive programming in multiple languages makes the facility more accessible (e.g women-only swim time for Muslim women).
- Participants with disabilities shared instances of discomfort and distress with bright lights, loud sounds, flow of people, insufficient spacing between objects, low visual contrasts as examples of inhospitable spaces. They suggested incorporating simple changes like having sensory time slots with a lesser number of people (quieter time slots for neurodiverse individuals); adaptive lighting; visual textures and contrasts; moving equipment around; and the ability to bring in aides as examples to make the facility more accessible.
- For the 2SLGBTQ+ group, universal design in signage and communication; and having safe spaces makes a facility more accessible.

Barriers for accessibility: The following sections describe specific challenges to access programs and services, and lists potential solutions as suggested by participants.

1. Concerns of affordability: The most common accessibility challenge cited by all groups concerned the costs related to accessing sports facility services and programs. Respondents identified the costs of transportation, equipment & accessories or any ancillary expenses such as costs of childminding while using the facility. These costs increased if enrolling multiple members of the family. Participants noted that they often can't prioritize paying for recreation with all their other bills, citing continually increasing costs of living in Calgary.

Suggested solutions by participants: Offering free community days; no-cost shuttle services to the facility few times a week; sport equipment rental or borrowing programs with a sliding fee scale and free child-minding services.

2. Procedural Barriers: Most participants expressed a need for reducing procedural and programming complexities across The City's facilities to encourage increased participation from community groups. For instance:

- For ethnocultural/newcomers participants some challenges that were noted included inconvenient class timings that were usually during working hours or weekdays; lack of diversity in languages both in terms of the information materials, registration or signage. Staff at recreation centers also often only spoke in English and did not understand the cultural and community context of ethnocultural and newcomer groups. Quite often the registration process is digitized or online and community members may not have access to technology or find it difficult to navigate due to language or digital literacy barriers.
- For individuals with diverse disabilities the online registration process is challenging as it requires capacity to operate technology devices or have access to appropriate technology. Usually, the information is not adapted to the needs of individuals with diverse disabilities such as the use of complex and complicated language; multi-step direction only provided in a written format; lack of visuals or not using universal design best practices.
- For 2SLGBTQ+ groups, lack of appropriate language such as use of relevant pronouns in forms or providing gender neutral groups or teams was seen as a procedural barrier.
- For persons with disabilities, multiple documents required to prove their disability and their need for aides were cited as procedural barriers.

Suggested solutions by participants: Suggestions on how to reduce barriers included: simplifying the process of verifying disability claims by increasing coordination between various City departments and partner facilities; offering flexible scheduling options; online registration in multiple languages; inclusive language/accounting for diverse disabilities in all registration forms; having a specific quota for available spaces accessible through physical registration as some individuals are unable to navigate the online format and may be unable to sign up before slots are filled. Participants also suggested creating partnerships between City sports facilities and immigrant services providers that facilitate newcomer registration in recreation services at immigrant service providers' location.

3. Language barriers: Respondents belonging to Indigenous and ethnocultural/newcomer groups stressed the importance of communicating and being understood by the staff at sports facilities. They also noted difficulties when all printed communication material and signage was in only English.

Suggested solutions by participants: They suggested that not only should materials and information be available in diverse languages but also staff need to be hired reflecting the diverse linguistic and cultural diversity of the community. Most participants acknowledged the difficulty in catering to every language; and suggested that staff should be trained in using language translation apps and other digital tools.

4. Other Communication Barriers: For individuals with disabilities, language/communication barriers extended to include people with communication disabilities - the Deaf and hard of hearing community; those with visual disparities; those with cognitive disabilities or neurodiverse individuals.

Suggested solutions: Participants suggested using augmented and alternative communication (AAC) methods in signage throughout facilities. Suggested solutions included signage with symbols, core boards, universal visuals etc.

5. Policy implementation & accountability: Conversations about best accessibility practices in sports and recreations contexts often centered around long-term policy change and implementation. Respondents from all groups acknowledged that The City facilities already operate under policy guidelines and standards, including policies for equity, diversity and inclusion. However, many participants felt that unless there is accountability in policy implementation, policy items can be reduced to 'mere checklist items'. For instance, according to 2SLGBTQ+ and Indigenous groups, when policy is not backed by accountability, instances of discrimination can go unchecked.

Suggested solutions: Pre-existing accessibility principles should be implemented as standard procedure for all facilities that go broader than just physical disabilities. Evaluation of EDI policy implementation should be a part of regular organizational/employee accountability measures.

Selected Quotes:

<p>Accessible Environments</p>	<p><i>I would argue that to be inclusive, accessible for the people that are using the space, that people should be able to define how they want to use it. So who's defining how? Who's designing the space? Who are they designing it for? Who's making those decisions? (Newcomers Group)</i></p> <p><i>Many changes are small - moving equipment around, adjusting sound and lighting, managing the flow of people. All it takes is an inclusive mindset (Disabilities group)</i></p>
<p>Concerns of Affordability</p>	<p><i>My son has to pay 2, 3 or 4 times his regular admission fee because his support staff are also charged admission. Since my son lives solely on his monthly AISH payment, these extra charges prevent him from visiting some of the City of Calgary sites... Some City employees have expressed disbelief that he requires so much support. He now carries a letter from his psychiatrist that explains his condition and requirements. Whenever our son visits [lists other facilities in Calgary], the support staff usually are not charged, but sometimes 1, 2 or all 3 must pay to accompany my son. (Disabilities - Individual Interview)</i></p> <p><i>There's low income passes for the city, but you need your tax assessment in order to get that. So it's like a whole process, then I think they make you like for the low subsidize, bus pass, or like any of that you have to stand in line, you have to go to their center stand in line. And on a weekday, so if you're going to work from nine to five, and you have to go stand in line from nine to five, that doesn't really make much sense. (Indigenous Group Interview)</i></p>
<p>Lack of consistency</p>	<p><i>If The City has rules in place, those at the admission booth are not aware of them. We have had to contact each City recreation site in advance and request an email from management that clarifies their rules. Since we often have to produce this email, my son cannot purchase tickets online. For every community outing that involves paying a City of Calgary admission, my son must carry his Access Card, Fair Entry card, photo ID, a letter from his psychiatrist, and a letter from the management that may or may not exempt all his support staff. (Individual Interview - Disabilities)</i></p>
<p>Language and communication</p>	<p><i>The spots [in programs] and those things are very limited. And so you have to be like, on it at the time of opening to get a spot to register. And when you have</i></p>

<p>barriers</p>	<p><i>language barriers, and you don't have the information, and you don't have someone to help you, it's virtually impossible. Let alone when you actually get in [the program] having, you know, someone who looks like you, who speaks the same language to them, to support. So yeah, I think there's barriers at every step of those things. (Newcomers Group)</i></p> <p><i>Making sure that appropriate language is utilized when talking about disability. So whether that be person-first language, identity-first and making sure that euphemisms aren't utilized. Because a lot of times, like what happens is somebody says, "Oh, no, you know, you're not disabled, you just have special abilities like that." That just seems pretty patronizing for a lot of people... and I feel like you know, there needs to be an equitable amount of sensitivity training included. (Disabilities Group)</i></p>
<p>Policy implementation & accountability</p>	<p><i>Without a doubt, yes [there should be accountability structures to make sure guidelines are being used], especially since we don't have any provincial or federal framework, like how the United States has the ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] Act... we don't have those sorts of policies, at least they're not universal or widespread is in Canada. So there needs to be accountability. (Disabilities Group).</i></p> <p><i>The City of Calgary does have an Accessibility Standards Document. I think it's supposed to apply to new building projects, but these can still be applied to existing facilities and City of Calgary buildings as well... I sit on the Access Design Advisory Committee and we find that a lot of architects and design organizations, the different City departments... they don't refer to it [the Accessibility Standards Document], they either forget that the document exists or don't know that it exists. So it's something that the City of Calgary staff should be more aware of as well. (Disabilities Group)</i></p>
<p>Representative staffing at senior management</p>	<p><i>We need to start hiring people with disabilities in these situations. That we're not just relying on them for information, but that they're also co-leading and co-delivering. And, you know, there's more representation at that [higher] level. (Disabilities Group)</i></p> <p><i>We're talking about staffing and representation of staffing, but I just want to emphasize it has to be at the higher level- that level of influence... I'm talking about senior management, people with influence and power.</i></p>

Theme 2: Welcoming, Inclusive & Belonging

Creating welcoming and inclusive spaces foster a sense of belonging in diverse communities- to ensure all individuals irrespective of background, race, religion, ability, socio-economic status, 2SLGBTQ+ or sexual identity among other identities feel that they can participate and engage in sports and recreation. Participants from all groups (Indigenous, newcomers, diverse disabilities, 2SLGBTQ+) highlighted additional aspects of inclusivity such as cultural sensitivity, inclusion of diverse perspectives; equity representation in staff; staff trained in EDI and anti-racism issues; consistent EDI policy implementation across all aspects of a facility; community partnerships etc. as areas requiring continued improvement.

Building long-term inclusion strategies: Since participants talked about inclusion both as a value and as a set of activity measures, conversations centered around providing long-term policy and strategic recommendations.

1. Equity embedded in strategic planning: All participants discussed the importance of embedding equity and inclusion in the strategic planning and budgeting processes from inception. Participants expressed that if equity is not considered at the planning stage of projects, it can become a *'tacked-on set of activities as an after-thought'* and would not be sustainable. Participants shared that truly welcoming places have inclusion as part of their culture, and are normalized, rather than seen as exceptional or an add-on. The focus of EDI should be about fostering an organizational culture of inclusion.

Suggested recommendations:

- Create evaluation structures that measure equity and inclusion as part of strategic and program outcomes.
- EDI policy should be clearly articulated. Explicitly state anti-discrimination and harassment standings and procedures, rather than creating vague statements that can be difficult to create tangible action from.
- Inclusive policies should be consistently implemented.

2. EDI practices should not be tokenistic: Participants from the equity-deserving groups often spoke about how some visible inclusion practices can be tokenistic, unless they are backed by robust policy measures. These include measures like: displaying land acknowledgement; pride flags, signage in different languages, stickers and artwork. Participants felt that having artifacts as the primary measure of inclusivity becomes a *'tick-box activity'* and prevents facilities from adopting a deeper understanding of EDI barriers. Even though signage that is familiar to a group (e.g. posters in multiple

languages; pride flag) helps to create a welcoming environment, more than just signage is needed to create a sense of belonging.

Suggested recommendations: Participants shared that the only meaningful way to reduce tokenism is to inculcate EDI within the fabric of organizations. They suggested that equity practices can be deepened by:

- Ensuring that EDI is instated as an organizational value and key principle, instead of a short-term goal. If it is incorporated as an organizational value, it can consistently be referred back to modify facilities, as best practices change over time but key values remain the same.
- Hiring and training diverse staff members to foster an understanding of EDI.
- Implementing and evaluating robust policy measures to induce a cultural shift within the organization.

3. Intentional diversity in programming & services: Many participants across all groups expressed their concerns that a lot of EDI policies and practices that are currently in place are not actually need-based. Participants stressed the fact that EDI policies need to be tailored for different groups, and a one-size-fits-all approach to diversity is not ideal. Participants suggested specific best practices and measures that help foster diversity in organizations.

Suggested recommendations:

- *Try-for-free, inclusive sport & recreation programming:* Free, inclusive programs that do not require you to register beforehand allow people to try new sports and can be a key introduction for newcomer families to facilities and opportunities within their new community. Unfamiliarity with an event or activity may be the biggest barrier to getting community members to a facility, as they may be intimidated by the newness of the experience but may not necessarily be averse to coming to a facility.
- *Culturally specific programming:* Equally, sports and programs that are already familiar to different groups e.g. popular sports in other countries, such as soccer, cricket; Indigenous song and dance classes, like Metis jigging can also be more accessible and inclusive. Facility managers can regularly consider examining the statistics and demographics of the neighborhoods surrounding the facility to create programs that better cater to diverse groups.
- *Trial programs:* Participants gave the example of other accessible City programs that can be mirrored in sports and recreational facilities for introducing facility services and programming to community members with disabilities. For example, The City already has accessible outdoor playgrounds (e.g. North

Glenmore Park, Sandy Beach) that have core boards posted in playground areas for individuals with communication disabilities. There are also outdoor family splash parks that can be accessible by water wheelchairs. Those principles can similarly be applied to indoor sport and recreation facilities.

- *Community education:* Participants from the newcomer group shared that a lot of newcomers regard sports and recreation as an unnecessary activity that is time and resource intensive. They stressed the importance of educating community members about the short term and long term health and wellbeing benefits of participation in sport and recreation to encourage a shift in hesitant mindsets.

4. Intentional diversity and sensitivity in staffing

One common theme shared by members of diverse respondent groups referred to hesitation in accessing sports facilities where they “*can’t see anyone who looks like me. It is very intimidating.*” Staff members (including senior management) who are diverse, knowledgeable and able to advocate for equity-deserving groups (whether they personally are a part of the group or not) are key to creating accessible and inclusive facilities.

Suggested solutions: A few practical suggestions were shared, based on participants’ experiences of what has previously worked well:

- *Newcomers/Indigenous/2SLGBTQ+:* Staff should be aware of recent social/political events and how that affects equity-deserving groups and their sense of belonging and safety in a space. Participants acknowledged that it is not possible for staff members to be aware of all historical and political issues that may impact community relations. It was suggested that staff should be educated in key issues relevant to the demographics of the communities served by a facility.
- *Newcomers:* If historical/political conflicts are known, groups should have different access points and scheduling different time slots (e.g Eritrean & Ethiopian communities).

Selected Quotes:

<p>EDI practices should not be tokenistic</p>	<p><i>I think that for a newcomer or an immigrant person going into a new space, to feel welcome would be something that looks familiar. Like maybe something that would be signage in their own language or having something that would make them feel like I [staff] want them to be there... having diverse staff, like just stuff like that. Making the space also something that's welcoming to multi-generations, because I know that that's one thing at Genesis Centre that I just love. (Newcomers Group)</i></p>
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	<p><i>I saw some signs in a pool change room one time that were just very much just, "Mind your business and assume that people are making the right choice about what room they are in." And there was something to be said about the straightforward, no nonsense approach to engaging service users who probably aren't coming over policy. (LGBTQ2S+ Group)</i></p>
Intentional diversity in programming & services	<p><i>Having an event where everyone can come is great, but having an event that says, "The Eritrean community is invited to come out to this specific event at this specific place at a specific time", is also hugely beneficial. Because one thing that we've noticed with our programming is that people of different cultures when they're new to Canada and Calgary, they aren't necessarily willing to integrate with other cultures and make it a diverse gathering. They'd rather explore new things and new topics and hard stuff within their community exclusively. So that also might be another barrier to getting people to come out, is having this 'Everybody's Welcome' approach rather than doing specifically targeted events to the community.</i></p>
Intentional diversity in staffing	<p><i>"Your mom wears army boots." We [staff] didn't, none of us grew up around, you know, I'm a born and raised Albertan, we never grew up around a war or issues like that. But if you say that to a Middle Eastern male, you're gonna get a trigger response. And it will usually not be pleasant... it's being aware that it may not trigger something for us [staff], but it can trigger in their [clients'] background or their history. So that sensitivity to understanding, to not make our judgments on their reactions to a phrase. (Individual Interview - Newcomers)</i></p> <p><i>The staffing- I can't stress that enough, because I think that people who are compassionate and people who can advocate for these different challenges and different barriers, like accessibility, for example. If you don't have people that are part of your team that are actively advocating for that, there's never going to be change... the staff needs to be diverse enough to be able to say, "Hey, this isn't equitable." (Newcomers Group)</i></p>
Responsibility for advocacy	<p><i>"I think the community has to reduce barriers to access and make it convenient for the family and parent, as opposed to the parent kind of having to learn more and then advocate for the child themselves. It's like, we have to meet in the middle. It's not just, "The families have to do better for the child." (Newcomers Group)</i></p>
Policy should be clearly articulated	<p><i>It's great to say like, "Our staff are welcoming". What if another service user isn't? What is the policy? How does that get addressed? And how are we thinking about all of those touch points where people interact in our space and ensuring that those are being proactively named, addressed, and that people are then empowered to act on them?</i></p>
Creating meaningful	<p><i>That's a harder one [helping players after they've experienced race based discrimination/harassment in the program]. Honestly, we [the program] don't have</i></p>

<p>partnerships</p>	<p><i>a lot of good resources in that area... we would encourage them to look for other external resources. If it's an injury, like a physical, because we have connections to concussion resources we have, you know, rehab, but the whole mental health and post traumatic, we don't have good resources on that. (Individual Interview - Newcomers)</i></p>
<p>Community Education</p>	<p><i>I just think that a lot of those parents are weighing all of the things that are in front of them... they work very irregular hours and work in the evenings. And I know for a lot of the families that we work with, with at-risk youth, it's, "I came to Canada, so you can go to school"... they don't think recreation as physical activity, they think recreation is just messing around. And to them, it may not be worth their time to drive down and register.. (Newcomers Group)</i></p> <p><i>Small things like, you helped that old lady, here's a free swim pass. I saw you pick up garbage. Here's a free swim pass. Even giving them free swim passes for just dropping in. It doesn't cost anything and it gets them in. Makes them comfortable to use the facilities. Maybe bring friends over too. (Site visits).</i></p>

Theme 3. Sustainability

Conventional understanding of sustainability in sports and recreation facilities refers to environmental sustainability measures (energy efficiency; reduce-reuse-recycle culture etc.). Conversations with equity-deserving participants expanded the concept to include long-term sustainability of programming, developing increased community participation and loyalty and building community partnerships. Participants from newcomers, diverse disabilities and 2SLGBTQ+ groups agreed that fostering diversity, equity and inclusion within sports and recreation facilities can only be meaningful if it is a sustainable part of the organizational culture, policies and practices of facilities. The following sections describe three aspects of sustainability identified by participants: environmental sustainability, social sustainability & economic sustainability.

1. Environmental sustainability: Participants agreed that high resource investments are required in maintaining and implementing environmental sustainability. They expressed concern that adopting 'low cost/no cost' solutions would limit the scope of sustainability in policy and practice. Therefore, for long term actionable inclusivity within facilities, environmental sustainability needs to be a part of capital investments planning from the onset of facility building, renovation and expansion projects.

Suggested solutions: Although participants generally agreed that environmental sustainability measures require intensive capital investment, they suggested certain maintenance measures that can help with facility upkeep in the short-term. One such measure was to provide community members with incentives to maintain certain features of the site. These include: volunteering to maintain outdoor garden spaces; managing littering, garbage disposal and recycling; clean-up after events etc., in exchange for free facility program/services passes (swim, enrolment in particular classes etc.). They expressed that these actions could foster a sense of belonging and ownership among community members, so they can become partners in providing environmental solutions.

2. Social sustainability: Most participants agreed that building personal and individual relationships is a key component of building long term partnerships. This trust building involves creating and maintaining relationships with other organizations, equity-deserving communities, local leaders, as well as within facilities between senior management and staff. Respondents from all participating groups expressed that a facility's services and programming are most effective when they are tailored for the demographics of the communities it serves. Successful examples included Genesis Centre focusing on newcomer populations and Vecova focusing on individuals/families with disabilities. Respondents acknowledged that it is impractical for every facility to provide customized EDI solutions for all marginalized groups.

Suggested solutions: Recommendations for creating external partnerships with community organizations to leverage their expertise to fill specific service gaps. These include:

- Partnerships to fill service gaps that are outside of the typical demographic scope of a particular facility. Examples include partnering with Indigenous community organizations to co-create programs for Indigenous youth at a typically non-Indigenous demographic facility.
- Partnerships can also be created to fill gaps in providing augmented services like trauma care and other mental health support at sports and recreational facilities as well.
- Utilizing external community organizations to communicate, advertise and bring awareness to their own members about new inclusive programming at a sports and recreation facility.

3. Sustainability in service and programming: Programs and services become unsustainable when community participation decreases and people stop coming to facilities. Facilities need to foster the ability to be flexible in programming to meet the changing needs of different community groups, in order to align with diverse needs of communities to encourage sustained participation.

Suggested solutions: According to some participants, creating a programming culture that sees proactive thinking and innovative change as positive encourages inclusion in sustainable ways. This can include: being proactive in designing programs/services that cater to changing community demographics (e.g recognizing the need for bilingual staff for newly arriving Ukrainian/Afghan refugees within a community); providing childminding/daycare services for parents who want to enroll in services.

Theme 4. ReconciliAction

In the context of sports and recreation, reconciliation is a long-term, relational goal that requires intentional capacity building within sports and recreation facilities, including sensitivity training for staff. Conversation with Indigenous stakeholders highlighted that meaningful ReconciliAction cannot be achieved through low cost/no cost solutions. Most participants agreed that meaningful reconciliation can only be possible through building relational trust, and that existing inclusion strategies have the tendency of appearing tokenistic when not backed by shared decision-making.

Meaningful ReconciliAction cannot be low cost/no cost

Indigenous participants were unanimous in expressing that meaningful ReconciliAction can only be achieved when inclusive strategies are built into policies governing sports and recreation facilities and are woven into practices. This includes reconciliation being a part of staff training, program and service, and physical space design. This necessitates substantial resource allocation, therefore, the notion of a low cost/no cost ReconciliAction effort is impractical.

Building trusting relationships and accountability

The most common theme that came from Indigenous participants centered around building relational trust. All participants agreed that building accountability into EDI or reconciliation policies would ensure that inclusive practices are not *'only skin deep'*. One participant explained this through the example of facilities with displayed Indigenous art. They expressed that installing a mural or painting without knowing the historical or cultural significance of the artwork or putting up tipis without respecting the customs and traditions that accompany reduces a meaningful measure into a *'checkbox'* activity. Indigenous partners suggested building in relational accountability components within the Equity Audit tool to ensure inclusive actions are not one-time activities but are sustainable. Like one participant stated, *'relationships aren't defined by a start and end date'*.

Lack of continuity in ReconciliAction measures

Some participants shared examples of previous work in reconciliation in sports and recreation facilities that was initiated but not brought to fruition. One such example was the Pimatswin Recreation Report which highlighted inequity issues in sports and recreation facilities faced by Indigenous communities and was published in 2007. The participant stressed that repeated inaction on published recommendations generates mistrust in the system by Indigenous partners and communities. As reference, the link for the report can be accessed [here](#).

Checklists and tools may not be relevant for Indigenous communities

A recurrent theme from conversations focused on the inappropriateness of using Western research methods to gain knowledge and information from and about Indigenous communities. A tool, like the Equity Audit tool, was considered insufficient for obtaining meaningful knowledge from Indigenous groups. Participants felt that the complex issues of historical and cultural relevance that are crucial for actionable reconciliation cannot be captured through checklist items.

Disparity between equity-deserving groups

On the subject of accessibility of sports and recreation facilities for diverse groups, many Indigenous participants expressed that inequities exist within different equity-deserving groups, which can encourage discrimination at a systemic level if not addressed. They acknowledged that The City has access to finite resources, and thus cannot be expected to meet all needs of every EDG. However, participants strongly felt the need for The City to diversify priorities to intentionally include Indigenous-specific programming in sports and recreation facilities. Specific examples included: expanding existing language classes offered at some facilities (e.g Genesis Centre) to include Cree; having Indigenous art classes; offering Metis jigging & other Indigenous dance classes as part of regular programming etc. This would help to dispel the notion that the relationship-building focus for The City is on short-term strategic goals to fulfill specific targets for Indigenous populations and would encourage long-term relational trust.

Continued experiences of discrimination

Another frequently expressed concern was continued instances of discrimination, despite having robust EDI policies governing The City's facilities. Participants shared experiences of being overtly or covertly surveilled while attending programmes; asked for additional documentation while registration; being regarded suspiciously; derogatory or condescending remarks; presumptions of being financially disadvantaged, or drug abuse by the staff. Participants suggested sensitivity training should be made mandatory for management and staff as the primary step towards ReconciliAction.

Tokenistic representation

While participants stressed upon the need for Indigenous representation within facility staff and management, they also stressed on the need for *meaningful* representation. They observed that most facilities employed one Indigenous staff member, and expected them to undertake a wide range of inclusive activities - from cultural representation; to conflict management; to engagements within and outside

Indigenous communities; to cultural marketing and communications; to community education etc. Participants pointed out the impracticality of one person performing tasks of whole departments, and suggested incorporating a culture of inclusion within facilities, where everyone could be the steward of inclusion, instead of one individual taking on the burden of many.

Cultural & emotional safety

Most respondents felt that they needed to be constantly apologetic or defensive when they displayed an aspect of their cultural identities inside sports and recreation facilities. This could vary from wearing visible Indigenous clothes and artifacts; to speaking Indigenous languages; to behavioral practices, like discomfort in exposing their bodies while changing or swimming. It also includes appreciating different cultural and social needs of Indigenous youth, who feel more comfortable in peer group, rather than individual, activities. Participants expressed the need to develop an organizational culture of acceptance and respect for differing practices that goes beyond a checklist, tool or policy statements, and designing services and programming accordingly.

Selected Quotes:

<p>No low cost/no cost solutions</p>	<p><i>When it comes to reconciliation, there's no 'no cost, low cost' way to do it. That's just not in my perspective, ethically right in itself. And if they're [The City] approaching it from that lens right off the hop, then they're not, it's not going to be meaningful at all. So that really needs to be highlighted in the report. Because you can't say that. So many, so many that come from that lens and you can't come from that lens. 'Vague reconciliation.' Like [other participant] is right, you know, it's going to cost money and this cost money. Rightfully so. (Indigenous Group Interview)</i></p> <p><i>I'd say if they [The City] don't want to do it [spend money on reconciliation], shut it down. Don't even bother. (Indigenous Group Interview)</i></p>
<p>Resource sovereignty</p>	<p><i>Part of the reasons that those facilities exist is because they stole resources, right, on stolen land or on stolen resources. They've been profitable from stolen Indigenous resources, so to not create resource sovereignty or to give resources back. It's not, that's not reconciliation. (Indigenous Group Interview)</i></p>
<p>Building trust & accountability structures</p>	<p><i>It builds in the process. I think like, [other participant] was saying, like, we [recreation facility] have [Indigenous] artwork, but did we learn the story of the artwork? Did we work with people from the community? Did we engage with Elders do we do like, and then there's like, kind of like subheadings of like, yes, your art, you have artwork that's maybe</i></p>

	<p><i>representative, but there's like a whole process piece that kind of has a, yeah, longitudinal kind of component and maybe an accountability component, like, have we respected it? Like, you know, you see a lot of times, like other organizations in the city, not The City, but like, they'll get like tipis or they'll get like, Do you know what I mean? Like there'll be gifted items like a bundle, and then they won't take care of it. So there's also got to be like an accountability like how are you going to honor this artwork that somebody gifted you? I think that's like another important piece. (Indigenous Group Interview)</i></p> <p><i>I think there needs to be some sort of relational accountability or component within the tool. Like it can't just be a list of like, things to have or things to like, that are like one time actions, there has to be a longitudinal relational piece where they're to be for it to move beyond like performative allyship, right? So finding a way to have something in there that requires them to develop a relationship with people or knowledge or like new ideas and have it be a longitudinal accountability, not just like a one time accountability? (Indigenous Group Interview)</i></p>
<p>Lack of continuity</p>	<p><i>I wrote a recreation report in 2007. About the City of Calgary and what they should do around recreation, I'll send it to you, I believe everything is still totally valid, because nothing changes. Right. So, and it actually was published and everything... it's just stuff like you know, Metis kids want to do jigging, and if we The City did stuff they want to do, I don't know how this work, but like Caber Tossing and axe throwing and like things that are culturally relevant, but are also create fitness. Right? There was thing about powwow and stuff, right? So it's all in there. I did in 2007. This is my point, right, It is like we've been saying this stuff for a long time.</i></p>
<p>Tools/checklists are performative</p>	<p><i>I worry that a simple checklist is performative and it doesn't force people to look at the history, understand the barriers, all that kind of stuff. I'm not attacking you, [interviewer]. I'm just attacking the wording because I'm just thinking the simple and no cost.</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes an audit tool can turn into a checklist. And if people [from facilities] are checking things off, they feel that they're doing a good job. When it's deeper than that. When it comes to truth and reconciliation right? It's understanding historical and contemporary context of why. And they take in the resources and demand, right, you know, part of reconciliation action is giving it back. So again, that donating the space, hiring Indigenous people, Indigenous people need to be representative.</i></p> <p><i>The City like flies in for surveys [from] the community, extracts a bunch of information and then flies out and does something with it. Obviously, since 2007, they've recognized there's an issue in recreation services, not really enacted any of those changes, right?</i></p>
<p>Inequity within inequities</p>	<p><i>In my perspective, like a lot of leisure centers, they've done an okay job of welcoming, like immigrant people and newcomers to Canada. There's a lot of newcomers at the leisure centers in different places, but not Indigenous people. So why is that? You know, why didn't you come here to feel welcome, but not Indigenous people? Right? You know, because obviously, they've put in an extensive effort to develop relationships with</i></p>

	<i>the newcomer community. And they have newcomers there. And they have newcomers programs and offices and this, that whatever, that they feel welcomed to there. That's not happening with Indigenous people, right?</i>
Cultural & emotional safety	<i>I would not feel comfortable walking into an unfamiliar space on my own. If I'm with a group of friends, sure, I would spend time here (Indigenous participant)</i>

WHAT'S WORKING WELL - FROM SITE VISIT OBSERVATIONS & WORKING GROUP SESSIONS (WGS)

These tables provide a high level overview of the promising practices more pragmatically

ACCESSIBILITY

Areas	Promising Practices
Mobility	<p>Mobility and access to spaces for individuals with physical disabilities was a key area where sites implemented several practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accessible equipment that can be used to support various mobilities. ● Universal change rooms with accessible washrooms, sensory wave access and egress, ramps, shower seats, shower railings, lifts, adjustable shower heads, wheelchairs to borrow, extra large accessible bathroom stalls,. ● Pathways between all equipment to meet accessibility standards of 1.1m. ● Raised exercise platform is available as an alternative to stretching on the floor for wheelchair users and other users with reduced mobility. <p>Examples from: Vivo; Vecova; WGS (disabilities)</p>
Sound and Visual	<p>Facilities adopted various sound, lighting and textural measures to suit diverse audiences, particularly those with physical/neurological/cognitive disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Variable sound and lighting levels to suit diverse audiences and could also help signal what is open and close. ● Use of appropriate colours throughout facility (light, fixtures; paint etc.) to cater to clients with vision impairments ● Different floor textures so people with visual impairment can know where they are in the facility ● Zero Entry Pool, with ramps for wheelchair access; Aquatic lift that can be used as a form of rehabilitation or exercise. ● Freestanding deck showers with timed push buttons at accessible heights allow easy maneuvering for rinsing off. ● Each space has a 1500mm turning radius and grab bars to facilitate transfer from wheelchair to a seating surfaces ● Visual and Tactile Signage through facility assisting individuals with language barriers and impaired visibility to navigate. ● Barrier free counters, parking stalls and security gates; Curb cuts and crosswalk ● Availability of sensory backpacks at reception

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Warm, salt water pool (34 deg C as compared to your typical 24-28 deg C). (increased blood circulation, relaxation of spasticity and tone, sensory stimulation, anxiety relief) ● Cushioned floor in strength & training area in beige colour to support depth perception for clients with dementia ● Sound proof sensory room (under construction) ● Access Calgary has a stop in front of facility <p>Examples from: Vivo; Vecova; Genesis</p>
<p>Outreach</p>	<p>Facilities adopted various communication and outreach measures to reach communities and increase attendance from different groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community bulletin boards has various ads, notices, etc. for a wide variety of equity-seeking groups: e.g. culturally specific events, disability friendly programming, women’s only events ● Better advertising & marketing options through Partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase community participation through informing/ advertising programs/events through local radio channels. ○ Different community facilities to use each others notice boards to promote their programs <p>Examples from: Genesis; Bob Bahan</p>
<p>Service/ programming</p>	<p>Facilities have put in certain inclusive measures to provide accessible services that complement their regular programming to make sure people with varying abilities can also access their services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exercise equipment has QR codes that guests can scan to track workouts, watch a video on how to use the equipment, and listen in people’s language of choice. ● Dedicated sensory sensitive time slots.(E.g less lights, quieter space, less bulky bright toys in swim time) ● Facility has medical wing for clients to access multiple medical needs at once (e.g. family physician, physiotherapist, mental health counseling, pharmacist). ● Complementary services on site: social worker/settlement services/public library/pre-school/language services/ ● ‘Try for Free’ inclusive sport & recreation programming; Cultural sports <p>Examples from: Vivo; Vecova; Genesis; WGS (newcomers)</p>

WELCOMING, INCLUSIVE & BELONGING

Areas	Best Practices
<p>Inclusive and safe spaces</p>	<p>Facilities provided examples of how they have made spaces feel welcoming and inclusive for different communities, they realized that different people have varying needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Informal social gathering space prior to entering the studio. ● Dedicated community meeting spaces to host their own activities as well as the ability to access the facility. ● Appropriate signs in the facility have statements that affirm welcoming and safe environment for people of all life experiences, races, religions, sexualities, 2SLGBTQ+ identities, (dis)abilities, etc. ● Multiple signs, art and advertisements for programming around the building include photos of people both with and without disabilities; different ethno-cultural identities ● Prominently displayed land acknowledgement ● Facility has blinds and drapes to accommodate private events (e.g women only; family/friends only) ● Staff members can have their preferred name on their name tag, and not just their legal name. ● Basketball court and other outdoor spaces have murals painted by local youth - increased a sense of belonging and ownership; decreased incidents of vandalism ● Cultural Inclusivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community participation in site beautification: murals and paintings done by local youth. Brings about a sense of ownership and belonging to the community. Instances of vandalism/graffiti have decreased since murals by community youth were put up. (Partnerships with local organizations; City of Calgary) <p>Examples from: Vivo; Bob Bahan; Genesis; Vecova; WSG (newcomers; disabilities; 2SLGBTQ+)</p>
<p>Services/ Programming</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wide variety of programs for children and families with disabilities. ● Youth Ambassador Program-(2024) a free learning opportunity for youth from underrepresented populations to secure future employment. ● Educational opportunities to support underrepresented community ● Muslim prayer time is offered in the community gym, with 2 separate gyms for men & women ● Large community focused wing for clients to hold meetings, community gatherings, etc. Spaces are available for rent, but alternate arrangements are available as well. (e.g volunteering instead of monetary fee)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special programs: A special food bank program for kids (e.g. when kids are off school, such as for the weekend or winter break, they can come to this food program and receive enough food for all of the days where they will not be at school), and a community fridge to help community members experiencing food insecurity. • Staff speak a wide breadth of languages; staff name tags include language spoken • Example of a sensitive inclusive sign: “This is a safe space that respects “all aspects of people, including race, ethnicity, 2SLGBTQ+ expression, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, age, religion & ability.” • Many art pieces decorate the facility that are made by and for diverse folks in the community (e.g. Indigenous art, culturally specific art) • Food ads around the facility include halal options (e.g. Boston Pizza ad in the event centre specifies halal options) • Tailor services to get peer groups in the facility together, rather than focusing on individual attendees. • Affordable/no cost programs: After school care program gets youth in the facility. Youth and younger siblings. Facility provides snacks. Good opportunity to just hang out, use space for basketball, indoor games. • Disabilities caregivers are not charged a fee <p>Examples from: Vecova; Genesis; Vivo; Bob Bahan</p>
Partnerships & relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive Play Ground- a community led project with Parks Foundation; Community-Led Play Hubs; Place Matters: A North Calgary Project- an community driven initiative with the Parks Foundation and citizens to improve and enhance outdoor public spaces; Partnerships with City of Calgary • Sponsors can buy large ads to place around the walls of the gyms, event centres, etc. The ads currently displayed during the site visit included multiple members of the South Asian community, and culturally relevant resources • Involve local schools. Make announcements over the PA system in the morning, for example, <i>'to enjoy a free hotdog with your friends at Bob Bahan after school'</i>. • Partnering with local police. Giving out free swim passes for good conduct, community service. • Building relationships: Members of police/security forces are included in community events as guests/participants to encourage informal interactions between law enforcement and community youth to reduce fear and apprehension. Helps see police as partners/helpers rather than an antagonist force. • Allow community organizations to hold cultural activities <p>Examples from: Vivo; Genesis; Bob Bahan</p>

<p>Policy Practice &</p>	<p>Facilities adopted some key policy measures that ensure that EDI becomes a long-term part of organizational culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment support and mental health supports for people with disabilities and/or their caregivers. • Fee assistance for their programs through a variety of government disability supports (e.g. AISH, PDD). • Active and intentional recruitment of disabled employees • Uniforms are intentionally created to support a wide variety of needs. For example, they have long sleeved options for religious reasons, they have simple uniforms that generally don't cause sensory issues. • Cultural specific practices: E.g events during Eid, non-Muslim female staff are offered to wear hijabs during the event to be more respectful. Non-Muslim staff take on extra shifts these days so Muslim staff can take Eid off <p>Examples from: Genesis; Vivo; Vecova; Bob Bahan; WGS (disabilities)</p>
<p>Training/HR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff is coached and trained to be sensitive, to reduce immediate reactions of refusing service to 'troublemakers'. Staff members receive training on working with different folks with disabilities, EDI, etc. • Staff has ready access to resources (e.g. lists for contacts/helplines for mental health, trauma, police, different health services; social services etc.) • Rotating staff between City's facilities means staff can introduce these best practices to other places they work. • Acceptability: <i>'We mostly let kids be kids, even when they fight. It's better they are doing it in here rather than out there'</i> • 'Recreation Inclusion Facilitators': Coach program leaders to make programs/activities more inclusive <p>Examples from: Bob Bahan; Genesis; WGS (disabilities)</p>

SUSTAINABILITY

<p>Environmental</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real and mobile trees and plants for biodiversity and local plant species to weather drought and 222 additional trees planted to add to NC Calgary's tree canopy. • Place Matters: A North Calgary Project- a community driven initiative with the Parks Foundation and citizens to improve and enhance outdoor public spaces. • Dedicated outdoor for outdoor learning, gatherings, programs, events and experiences. • 366 solar panels that will power 27% of the energy to operate the facility.
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	Examples from: Vivo
Social/ Mindfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated quiet, rejuvenation and relaxation spaces and experiences like Yoga, Pilates, Tai Chi and Chi Gong. • Integrated nature, wood and sensor diffuser elements to calm and relax the mind, body and soul. • Accessible and adaptable in-door park space catering to social/rec needs of the community in all seasons • Building trusting relationships with communities to sustain programming and facility attendance <p>Examples from: Vivo; Bob Bahan; WGS(newcomers)</p>

RECONCILIATION

Areas	What's Important
Resource Allocation & Responsibility	<p>Indigenous partners from group interviews and site visits highlighted that focus should be on building long-term solutions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ReconciliAction is a long term goal. There can be no no-cost/low-cost solutions • Meaningful change is only possible when the responsibility lies with the government (City, Provincial, Federal) • Upkeep/maintenance of facilities around Indigenous communities • Hiring one person to do the job of a whole Indigenous engagement department is not fair. Specialized representation for specialized functions is needed. <p>Insights from: Indigenous group interviews</p>
Relational Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relational accountability needs to be built into the audit tool; not just checklists • Lack of action taken on previous Indigenous sports & rec equity initiatives leads to lack of trust in new initiatives by The City • Checklists and tools are performative, unless they specifically address the history and barriers behind issues. • There is more representation of newcomers than Indigenous people in facilities because extensive effort has been put in by governments to develop relationships with the newcomer community. (e.g specific programs for newcomers; language training for staff, visual representation in art) <p>Insights from: Indigenous group interviews</p>
HR/Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff trained in trauma-informed approaches to care • Visible representation in staff

	<p>Insights from: Indigenous group interviews; Bob Bahan</p>
Service & Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural representation in programming • Low cost/no cost access to facility, programs and services • Need for adaptable programming to suit different needs, e.g flexible timings for single working moms <p>Insights from: Indigenous group interviews; Bob Bahan</p>
Cultural Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show sensitivity when visibly increasing security in facilities on Indigenous events, as that fosters discrimination • Ability to change/shower in privacy • Use sports as a way to heal; promote mental health <p>Insights from: Indigenous group interviews; Bob Bahan</p>
What's working well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-discrimination, sensitivity training • Community involvement (e.g murals painted by Indigenous community youth) • Community Medicine garden (Medicine Wheel) on facility grounds (Bob Bahan) • Reducing stigma: Working to ensure this is seen as a safe space. That means training our staff, and also getting the word out there that they can come here, they are welcome here • Hosting events like powwows • Inviting Elders for leading social/community programs • Clients can smudge at the centre. (e.g in Genesis, stop by front desk to receive supplies, and then can smudge in designated room that is ventilated) • Community space set up catering to Indigenous cultural preferences (seating in a circle; Indigenous art around space; accommodation for Smudging) <p>Examples from: Indigenous group interviews; Bob Bahan; Genesis</p>

CONCLUSION

The results and discourse presented in this document summarize what we heard from community members with lived/living and professional experiences from Indigenous communities, newcomer/ethnocultural communities, individuals with diverse abilities, and 2SLGBTQ+ groups. It also catalogs observations of best practices from four sports and recreation facilities across Calgary (Genesis Centre, Vivo, Vecova & Bob Bahan Aquatic Centre), and suggests areas for continued improvement. These findings, along with the literature search results of best practices from the Best Practices document will inform and shape the Equity Audit Tool in the third and final phase of this study.