

## **Equity Policy**

### **Intent**

The Robert McLaughlin Gallery (RMG) believes diversity, equity, and inclusivity are essential in working towards a just society. The Equity Policy (Policy) supports equity principles and practices in all aspects of our governance and operations. It provides definitions, legislative context, and direction to the staff, Board of Directors, and volunteers in the strategic planning and program development, policy development and review, communications, and human resources practices.

The Policy is informed by the following legislation and human rights codes: Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), Employment Equity Act, and Ontario Human Rights Code. While the RMG has a dedicated Accessibility Policy, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) also informs the Equity Policy.

### **Responsibilities**

The CEO will develop, maintain, monitor, and implement the Policy with input from staff and the Board of Directors. The Governance and Nominations Committee will review the Policy and any future changes and amendments; the Policy will then go to the Board of Directors for final approval. The CEO works in collaboration with all staff to develop, maintain, monitor, and implement actions that support this Policy through the Strategic Operations Plan, and to ensure the principles of this Policy are being followed.

All staff, Board, and volunteers are required to uphold the Policy. Everyone has a role in maintaining individual and collective accountability .

### **Policy Statement**

The RMG recognizes that diversity, equity, and inclusion require a strategic process to eliminate barriers and implement change, and we are committed to acting as a positive force. We believe this can only be achieved with the active and meaningful involvement of people who reflect the diverse groups within our community.

The RMG recognizes that ideas, systems, and practices based on, or modeled after, norms of dominant culture or society result in exclusion and discrimination. We believe that certain people in our society face oppressive experiences because of individual and systemic unequal power related to identities including race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed (religion), sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, record of offences, marital status, family status, disability, socio-economic status, or the receipt of public assistance.<sup>1</sup>

The RMG recognizes that unequal power operates both at a personal level in interactions between individuals, and at a systemic level through rules, structures, and practices. The RMG recognizes the

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<sup>1</sup> CRRF, grounds from Ontario Human Rights Code to reflect RMG's Abuse, Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Discrimination and Violence in the Workplace Policy

need for broad change, and the need for combating oppression in and through our work, so that everyone who interacts with the RMG is treated with dignity and their rights are recognized and protected.

Understanding, acknowledging, and working to eliminate oppression is an ongoing and continuous learning process for us all. We recognize that different people can be at different stages in the learning process. We recognize that we all need to make the effort to learn, create opportunities for learning, and assist each other in the learning process.

## **Definitions**

The definitions in this Policy were primarily informed by the Canada Council for the Arts, Canada Race Relations Foundation (CRRF), Museums as Sites for Social (MASS) Action Toolkit, and Ontario Museums Association (OMA). They also reflect learnings from the Equity Workshop held with PROCESS Consultants in June and July 2021 and monthly staff equity discussions. This is a summary of definitions commonly used, it is by no means a comprehensive list as equity, diversity, and inclusion terms are ever expanding and changing. For further definitions, the CRRF Glossary of Terms provides an expansive listing of terms and definitions. Accessibility definitions are found in the Accessibility Policy.

Anti-oppression Strategies, theories, and actions that challenge social and historical inequalities/injustices that have become part of our systems and institutions and allow certain groups to dominate over others.<sup>2</sup>

Anti-racist An active and consistent process of change to eliminate individual, institutional, and systemic racism.<sup>3</sup>

Colonial institution An organization founded and/or created by colonial power or through colonial roots. Asserted dominance by extended control over people and/or areas.<sup>4</sup>

Equity Everyone in the community is treated fairly, respectfully, and justly. Everyone receives what they need through multiple points of access and elimination of barriers to participation<sup>5</sup>. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences.<sup>6</sup>

Decolonization The active resistance against Eurocentric colonial powers, and a shifting of power to a colonized nation's own Indigenous culture. The removal or undoing of colonial elements.<sup>7</sup>

Diversity The representation of various identities and differences. A term used to encompass the acceptance and respect of various dimensions including race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed (religion), sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender

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<sup>2</sup> CRRF

<sup>3</sup> CRRF

<sup>4</sup> Collins Dictionary

<sup>5</sup> MASS Action Toolkit

<sup>6</sup> Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF)

<sup>7</sup> Racial Equity Tools glossary

expression, age, record of offences, marital status, family status, disability, or the receipt of public assistance.<sup>8</sup>

Gender Refers to the individual and/or social experience of being a man, a woman, or neither. Social norms, expectations and roles related to gender vary across time, space, culture, and individuals.<sup>9</sup> It varies from society to society and can change over time. It interacts with, but is different from sex, which references to the different biological and physiological characteristics of females, males, and intersex persons. Gender identity refers to a person's deeply felt, internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person's physiology or designated sex at birth.<sup>10</sup>

Genderqueer/Non-binary Individuals who do not follow gender stereotypes based on the sex they were assigned at birth. They may identify and express themselves as "feminine men" or "masculine women" or as androgynous, outside of the categories "boy/man" and "girl/woman." People who are non-binary may or may not identify as trans.<sup>11</sup>

IBPOC Indigenous, Black, and Person (People) of Colour.

Implicit Bias Negative associations that people unknowingly hold. They are expressed automatically, without conscious awareness. Implicit biases affect individuals' attitudes and actions, thus creating real-world implications, even though individuals may not even be aware that those biases exist within themselves. It may also be referred to as unconscious or hidden bias.<sup>12</sup>

Inclusion The extent to which diverse individuals or members of a group feel valued, respected, and accepted.<sup>13</sup>

Indigenization An intentional, culturally sensitive, and appropriate approach to adding Indigenous ways of knowing, ideas, concepts, and practices which is led by or done in consultation with Indigenous people.<sup>14</sup>

Intersectionality An analytical framework for understanding how aspects of a person's identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege. Examples of these aspects include race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and ability, among others.<sup>15</sup>

Institutionally Excluded Individuals or groups whose experience is different from that of the dominant/Western European culture and as a result have been excluded. This has been referred to in the past as underrepresented audiences, minorities, racialized individuals/groups, marginalized populations, or historically excluded.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> CRRF, identifiers from Ontario Human Rights Code to reflect RMG's Abuse, Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Discrimination and Violence in the Workplace Policy

<sup>9</sup> The 519 Glossary of Terms

<sup>10</sup> World Health Organization

<sup>11</sup> The 519 Glossary of Terms

<sup>12</sup> Racial Equity Tools

<sup>13</sup> CRRF and addition of accepted

<sup>14</sup> University of Saskatchewan

<sup>15</sup> Wikipedia + Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (feminist legal scholar, critical race theorist, civil rights advocate coined the term in 1989)

<sup>16</sup> MASS Action + Abigail Echo-Hawk(Pawnee) Director, Urban Indian Health Institute

Racism A belief that one group is superior to others performed through any individual action, or institutional practice which treats people differently because of their colour or ethnicity. This distinction is often used to justify discrimination. There are three types of racism: Institutional, Systemic, and Individual.<sup>17</sup>

Settler Colonialism Within the context of race relations, the term refers to the non-Indigenous population of a country. Settler colonialism functions through the replacement of Indigenous populations with an invasive settler society that, over time, develops a distinctive identity and sovereignty. In Canada and in other countries, the ascendancy of settler culture has resulted in the demotion and displacement of Indigenous communities, resulting in benefits that are unearned.<sup>18</sup>

Social Justice A concept premised upon the belief that each individual and group within society is to be given equal opportunity, fairness, civil liberties, and participation in the social, educational, economic, institutional and moral freedoms and responsibilities valued by the society.<sup>19</sup> It addresses systemic causes of inequity.

Trans An umbrella term referring to people whose gender identities differ from the sex they were assigned at birth. “Trans” can mean transcending beyond, existing between, or crossing over the gender spectrum. It includes but is not limited to people who identify as transgender, transsexual, non-binary or gender non-conforming (gender variant or genderqueer).<sup>20</sup>

## **Guidelines**

These guidelines inform the development and execution of the Strategic Operations Plan that encompasses equity related actions and supports the delivery of the Strategic Plan. They are central to our vision and mission, and critical to ensuring the well-being of our staff, Board of Directors, and the communities we serve.

- 1) To follow the principle of ‘nothing about us, without us’ the RMG will ensure that the community or audience is participating in planning and development for community-led or partnered programming. This will include working in partnership with the community to amplify institutionally excluded voices, stories, and perspectives. This audience may include internal and external stakeholders.
- 2) To be conscious of our role as an institution shaping Canadian art history through our actions.
- 3) To develop partnerships with communities that are not transactional; they will be meaningful for the community and reflect the RMG’s commitment to relationship building.
- 4) To measure our progress, the RMG will regularly and at least annually report on equity related actions through the Operations Plan reports to the Executive Committee and Board of Directors.
- 5) To practice and encourage transparent communication in all interactions, and create opportunities for dialogue and self-reflection. Our work culture values accountability, kindness, care, and openness.
- 6) To respect and value everyone for their contribution, celebrating peoples’ differences, and providing equal opportunities for all.

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<sup>17</sup> CRRF

<sup>18</sup> CRRF

<sup>19</sup> CRRF

<sup>20</sup> The 519 Glossary of Terms

- 7) To continue to learn and increase cultural competence throughout the RMG by creating substantive learning opportunities and formal, transparent policies.
- 8) To annually review all policies. We will acknowledge and dismantle inequities within our policies, systems, and services that may be identified by anyone within or external to the organization. As language may change and understanding advances, the RMG will ensure that all policies are reflective of current equity practices
- 9) To commit time and resources to expand more diverse leadership with our Board of Directors and staff.

### **Related policies**

All RMG policies must uphold the principles of the Equity Policy.

### **Policy Review Cycle**

The Equity Policy is reviewed annually to ensure contemporary practices, understanding, and language related to equity is reflected. It can also be reviewed at any time that changes are deemed necessary by the CEO or government legislation. Any future changes or amendments to this Policy will be submitted to the Governance and Nominations Committee for review; the Policy will then be submitted to the Board of Directors for final approval. Approvals and review dates will be tracked in the Policy and Protocol Framework.

Date Established            November 25, 2021

Date Revised                Housekeeping changes, September 29, 2022

Definitions added and housekeeping changes, September 28, 2023