



Reconciliation and Equity Framework: A Guide for Child Welfare Leaders

As leaders dedicated to the well-being of all children, youth, and families in Ontario, it is essential that we recognize the ways we perpetuate harm even as we work to honour the truth of the past and present. We have a shared responsibility to work together to make sustainable changes to our everyday service delivery to achieve true reconciliation and equitable outcomes. We recognize that we can no longer work in silos, and that we must build strong partnerships with one another, and in the communities we live, work, and practice child welfare.

As we walk this journey together, this framework is designed to support the development of actionable plans and commitments to focus the sector's work on improving outcomes. The framework honours the principle that **Truth and Reconciliation** and **Equity** are practiced along two separate paths. The pathway to Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination is different from one focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. And yet, there is recognition that we must end all discriminatory practices, policies, and procedures immediately.

The framework is also guided by the principle of intersectionality. Each of these actions is written with the understanding that there are multiple intersections of identities that compound the marginalities many children, youth, and families experience.

We each have a responsibility to be informed, to listen, and to uphold the integrity of inclusive and collaborative partnerships. This includes the ways we support Indigenous, Black, racialized, and marginalized staff and Equity lead positions who remain committed to dismantling the inequitable systems and structures, while also carrying the bulk of this work on their shoulders.

We must acknowledge the truth and work towards embedding reconciliation and equity into all aspects of service delivery and throughout strategic and operational plans that can track accountability measures to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, the disproportionalities and disparities that remain in the child welfare system today. Centring both reconciliation and equity is critical for every role, every department, and every aspect of a child welfare agency.

This framework helps identify key aspects of building healthy relations and delivering services in a collaborative way across sectors and in the communities we serve. By acknowledging our role to support children, youth, families, and communities, we commit to ensuring that equity and truth and reconciliation are foundational throughout the continuum of service provision. The framework has been informed by the sector's [9 Indigenous Commitments](#), the work of [One Vision One Voice](#), and recommendations from the [2SLGBTQ+ Organizational Self-Assessment](#) and [2SLGBTQ+ Staff Survey](#).



It is the obligation of everyone within the child welfare system to understand their role and responsibility for moving the goals of reconciliation and equity forward within their organization. We can each act, regardless of our position, department, or level of seniority. This framework is a guide to actionable steps we can take, together, to make progress towards truth, reconciliation, and equity in child welfare in Ontario.

Note: There are some similar actionable goals for both truth and reconciliation and equity (e.g., eliminating disproportionalities). As such, some duplicate actions are written in both the "Truth and Reconciliation" and in the "Equity" sections.



Governors

Truth and Reconciliation

1. Ensure that our work is driven by the common goal of supporting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, peoples' inherent right to act and care for their own children and families and do so through meaningful inclusion with local Indigenous communities, collaterals, youth, and Indigenous staff. Ensure their voices inform governance and operational decision-making at all levels of our organization.
2. Hold each other accountable for meeting the sector's [9 Indigenous Commitments](#) through policy development and performance measurement.
3. Establish clear timelines for the development and implementation of the [9 Indigenous Commitments](#).
4. Work towards and achieve our established commitments in collaboration with Indigenous communities and relevant stakeholders who are impacted by this work, rather than in silos.
5. Identify and increase the Indigenous representation of our boards through an inclusive board recruitment and retention strategy.
6. Develop policies that support the Indigenous representation of our staff through an inclusive recruitment and retention strategy (e.g., access to an elder/knowledge keeper, space for ceremony, supports for supervision).
7. Develop and create policies to comply with Part X of the CYFSA section 12, pursuant to section 72 to enact how agencies collect Identity-Based Data (IDBD), and how we use it to address discrimination, disproportionalities, and disparities.
8. Monitor, evaluate, and plan for how agencies collect Identity-Based Data (IDBD), and how we use it to address discrimination, disproportionalities, and disparities.



Equity

1. Identify and increase the diversity of our boards through an inclusive board recruitment and retention strategy, including representation from those with system lived experience.
2. Ensure our board meetings are accessible for all members, including the spaces where meetings are held (in-person or virtual), materials, meeting times, and structures.
3. Understand our organization's reconciliation and equity journeys, how well we are doing, and where we are going.
4. Monitor and evaluate how our organization collects Identity-Based Data (IDBD) and how we use it to address discrimination, disproportionalities, and disparities.
5. Seek to understand how we can all be leaders and allies for issues requiring advocacy.
6. Build board capacity through ongoing learning opportunities in understanding principles of building allyship, anti-oppression, anti-racism, and anti-colonialism, and rooted in the knowledge and understanding of the history and journey of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Leadership

Truth and Reconciliation

1. Create partnerships with leaders of Indigenous Child Well-Being Agencies (ICWBA), Indigenous-led organizations, and local Indigenous communities.
2. When implementing any framework or embarking on any new initiative, examine how it aligns with the priorities of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and reducing disproportionalities and disparities.
3. Commit to doing a file crawl on every open file in the organization to identify missed opportunities with identity, family placement, repatriation, and change of circumstances.
4. Dedicate long-term resources for reconciliation work.
5. Develop workplans that prioritize addressing disproportionalities and disparities of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, youth, and families.
6. Ensure prior to approving any documents in the information system, that Identity-Based Data (IDBD) has been collected and use the results to identify disparities and inform service and organizational plans.
7. Develop a mentorship and leadership program alongside Indigenous staff who shall inform, engage, and consult in the design of the program.
8. Ensure our staff have access to ongoing learning and transfer of learning discussion opportunities accessed through Indigenous partners on topics such as white fragility,



white supremacy, confronting privilege, bias, anti-Indigenous racism, homophobia, and transphobia.

Equity

1. Create an internal equity committee from a decolonizing approach to inform our agency's operations and service. Ensure the equity internal committee has a direct communication line to our leadership team.
2. Ensure Identity-Based Data (IDBD) is consistently collected and the results are used to identify disparities and inform our service and organizational plans.
3. Plan an equity audit of our policies, procedures, and practices.
4. Dedicate long-term resources for equity work.
5. Develop workplans that prioritize addressing disproportionalities and disparities.
6. Commit to the [One Vision One Voice \(OVOV\) race equity practices](#) and include them in our agency's operational plan.
7. Incorporate recommendations from the sector's [2SLGBTQ+ report](#) when engaging in strategic and operational planning.
8. Develop a mentorship and leadership program for staff who experience persistent, systemic discrimination (e.g., Black; First Nations, Inuit, and Métis; racialized; 2SLGBTQ+; persons with disabilities, etc.).
9. Provide ongoing learning and transfer of learning discussion opportunities on topics such as white fragility, white supremacy, confronting privilege, bias, anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, antisemitism, anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim hate, heterosexism, and cissexism.
10. Support the complex work of Equity lead positions with the understanding that these roles are often trauma-inducing, particularly for those living in marginalized identities.

Service

Truth and Reconciliation

1. Ensure the three principles of the [Act representing First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families](#) inform all aspects of service with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, youth, and families.
2. Collect Identity-Based Data (IDBD) in alignment with our agency policies and procedures. Plan how each service area will use data intelligence in their team/department to inform service.
3. Support and be aware of Indigenous services in partnership with local Indigenous agencies and communities.



4. Create safeguards at pivotal decision-making points (e.g., tools, leadership approval, community roundtable consultation, etc.) to ensure a family's identity is confirmed and part of the clinical and service-related conversations and decisions.
5. Actively work towards increasing the use of Customary Care for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children and youth.
6. Create, in partnership and collaboration, a First Nations, Inuit, and Métis community circle to inform service delivery through an Indigenous worldview.
7. Complete file reviews to examine level of cultural and identity-specific service offered to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis families through an intersectional lens.
8. Examine legal data to determine the identities of families who have court files to assess disparate decision-making points.
9. Co-create a joint supervision plan with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis staff and community elders/advocates/leaders.
10. Identify the number of legal files involving First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children and families and develop, in partnership with service, concrete plans to reduce the number.
11. Establish clear expectations across all service and legal teams on centring truth and reconciliation and equity in all aspects of our work.
12. Deepen the relationship between service and legal colleagues through the lenses of truth and reconciliation and equity when reviewing files.
13. Actively advocate for a child's Indigenous name and pronouns to be used, with efforts to respect pronunciation and meaning of the name.

Equity

1. Collect Identity-Based Data (IDBD) and use the results to identify disparities to inform our service and organizational plans. Plan how each service area will use data intelligence in their team/department.
2. Follow best practice guidelines for providing culturally relevant and appropriate services to families (e.g., One Vision One Voice's [African Canadian Service Delivery Best Practices Framework](#)).
3. Create safeguards at pivotal decision-making points (e.g., tools, leadership approval, community consultation, etc.) to ensure a family's identity is confirmed and part of the clinical and service-related conversations and decisions.
4. Include advisory groups to inform service delivery, such as Black, racialized, SOGIE, and faith groups.
5. Work with community service providers to understand and support the gender and sexual fluidity of identities.



6. Complete file reviews to examine level of cultural and identity-specific service offered to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, Black, and 2SLGBTQ+ children, youth, and families through an intersectional lens.
7. Examine legal data to determine the identities of families with court files to assess disparate decision-making points.
8. Work with 2SLGBTQ+ communities to recruit volunteers, staff, and caregivers.
9. Establish clear expectations across all service and legal teams on centering truth and reconciliation and equity in all aspects of our work.
10. Build capacity across the legal team through ongoing learning opportunities to better understand the way structural oppression operates and its intersection across child welfare and the justice systems.
11. Deepen working relationships between service and legal colleagues through the lenses of equity and truth and reconciliation when reviewing files.
12. Actively advocate for a child or family's identified name and pronouns to be clearly written in all legal documents.

Human Resources

Truth and Reconciliation

1. Communicate and normalize the necessity of training and awareness with respect to any First Nations, Inuit, or Métis peoples, including onboarding practices for new employees.
2. Implement mandatory Indigenous awareness training and ongoing learning sessions within our organization offered by facilitators who identify as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis and/or other Indigenous groups with content written through an Indigenous worldview. The participation and engagement in these sessions will be incorporated into all staff's performance appraisals.
3. Create a robust plan to support Indigenous staff within our organization, in consultation and collaboration with Indigenous staff (where willing) and community partners.
4. Incorporate the sector's [9 Indigenous Commitments](#) and our organization's core values as it pertains to truth and reconciliation at probationary review periods and in employee annual performance reviews.
5. Integrate core truth and reconciliation competencies into our recruitment/outreach, hiring plans, and staff performance measures.
6. Create a baseline for recruitment and succession planning where there is a requirement for candidates to have demonstrated commitment to reconciliation practice and competencies as a core practice.



7. Establish an employee wellness program that integrates wholistic wellness through an Indigenous worldview, as consulted by an Indigenous leader and/or by members of the local First Nations, Inuit, and Métis community.
8. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of inclusive practices within our organization, honouring our Indigenous Commitments, and supporting staff and service recipients.

Equity

1. Create a self-evaluation process for all staff to measure their awareness and application of anti-racism/anti-hate/anti-oppressive practices. Incorporate this process into supervision.
2. Begin a Staff Census Survey that includes questions about organizational demographics, individual demographics, and personal experiences in the workplace. Use the results of the survey to inform future employment equity plans.
3. Create and implement ongoing staff engagement sessions to better understand employee and service user experiences. Build an employment equity plan that clearly outlines goals for succession planning of marginalized staff (e.g., know the difference between a diverse workforce and an equitable one).
4. Create a mentorship program for racialized staff to assist with succession planning for leadership roles (e.g., One Vision One Voice's African Canadian Leadership Mentorship Program created to address agencies' organizational culture, cultivate leadership skills, and guide the professional development of African Canadian staff)
5. Review and revise our organization's recruitment strategy and ensure it prioritizes recruitment to marginalized communities and culturally and community-specific job boards, and that job descriptions include intentional language about commitments to truth and reconciliation and equity.
6. Endeavour to provide equitable processes for recruiting and hiring (e.g., blind CV/resume process, bias training for interview panel, salary transparency, etc.).
7. Review both internal and external complaint mechanisms to ensure investigations into complaints of discrimination are addressed quickly and thoughtfully.
8. Ensure Accessible Workplace Requirements are embedded in our organization according to AODA Standards.
9. Implement mandatory equity, anti-Black racism, and SOGIE training and professional development in our organization. The participation and engagement from these sessions will be incorporated into performance appraisals for all staff.
10. Assess the need for and implement other forms of learning sessions to support services to families in our community (e.g., sessions focused on Jewish identity, Islamic identity, sessions with newcomer community organizations, etc.).
11. Establish core equity values in staff probationary reviews and annual performance reviews.



12. Integrate core equity and reconciliation competencies into our recruitment/outreach, hiring plans, and staff performance measures.
13. Require any staff on interview panels to have completed formal learning/training on bias in the employee life cycle (recruitment, hiring, retention, promotions).
14. Establish an inventory of community supports that exist for 2SLGBTQ+ staff and families we serve.
15. Consult with marginalized groups of staff on the ways they would prefer for their lived experiences to be heard (e.g., Affinity Groups).
16. Create clear HR processes to address concerns raised when staff are experiencing oppression and micro-aggressions in the workplace, both by other colleagues and in the field.
17. Institute stipends for marginalized community members who volunteer for boards and advisory committees connected to our agency.
18. Establish learning opportunities for equity-based competencies at the supervisory level.
19. Create a baseline for recruitment and succession planning where there is a requirement for candidates to have demonstrated commitment to reconciliation and equity practice and competencies.
20. Establish an employee wellness program that is designed through an anti-stigma lens that includes intentional programs and conversations about mental health.
21. Create a safe space for Black staff in the sector to discuss critical issues, strategize, share experiences, and celebrate successes via regular sector staff meetings organized and facilitated by One Vision One Voice.
22. Create a safe space for 2SLGBTQ+ staff in the sector to attend the 2SLGBTQ+ staff meetings hosted by OACAS.
23. Hire, elevate, and support equity lead positions at our agency, and ensure the role(s) have direct participation and influence on our leadership team.

Finance

Truth and Reconciliation

1. Adequately resource and ensure the sustainability of meeting the sector's [9 Indigenous Commitments](#).
2. Establish specific goals to reduce the disproportionalities and disparities of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children and youth at our agency and ensure the activities to achieve these goals are appropriately funded and included in operational plans.
3. Consistently use Identity-Based Data (IBDD) to ensure the equitable allocation of resources. For example, purchase culturally appropriate services from Indigenous-led, community organizations and service providers.



4. Ensure procurement policies, procedures, and practices include an assessment of suppliers' ability to meet the needs of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children and youth in care and the extent to which their policies and approaches align with values of truth and reconciliation.
5. Support substantive funding for First Nations children when allocating resources for products, services, and supports as per Jordan's Principle.

Equity

1. Establish specific goals to reduce the disproportionality and disparities at our agency, specifically of Black, African Canadian, and 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth and ensure the activities to achieve these goals are appropriately funded.
2. Adequately resource equity initiatives within our agency.
3. Use Identity-Based Data (IDBD) to ensure the equitable allocation of resources.
4. Support 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth in care to meet their identity needs.
5. Allocate appropriate funding to meet the daily needs of Black children and youth in care, including providing culturally appropriate foods, skin care products, hair care products and services, books, toys, and other resources.
6. Purchase culturally appropriate services from Indigenous-led, Black-led, and other culturally specific community organizations and service providers.
7. Ensure procurement policies and practices include an assessment of suppliers' ability to meet the needs of Black, African Canadian, 2SLGBTQ+, and other marginalized children and youth in care and the extent to which their policies, approaches, values, and workforce diversity align with anti-racism/anti-oppression practices.

Data and Accountability

Truth and Reconciliation

1. Identify the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children and youth in our agency's care.
2. Collect and analyze data and use it to inform practice, supervision, and accountability measures (e.g., *Mashkiwenmi-Daa Noojimowin: Let's Have Strong Minds for the Healing: First Nations Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect*), including operational plans, reports to the Board, and reports to the community.
3. Collect and share data on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis staff experiences of colonialism and/or anti-Indigenous racism in the workplace.
4. If applicable at our agency, consider incorporating the First Nations Principles of OCAP®.



Equity

1. Collect and analyze data and use it to inform practice, supervision, and performance measures (e.g., the [*Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2018: Understanding Over-Representation of Black Children in Ontario Child Welfare Services*](#), recently completed by One Vision One Voice in collaboration with the Ontario Incidence Study Research Team).
2. Collect and share data on staff experiences of racism in the workplace.
3. Hold regular data drives with staff to clean up data in our organizational systems.
4. Improve data collection, management, and disclosure of disaggregated identity-based information within CPIN related to 2SLGBTQ+ identities.
5. Collect and analyze data on referral sources, the identities of the children, youth, and families referred, the Eligibility codes for referral, and the outcomes of the referral. Ensure these key decision-making points are embedded into accountability measures.
6. Analyze and report complaint data to the organization's board of directors. This report should include:
 - a. identity-based analysis of complaint data to identify issues and patterns of oppression
 - b. identification of bias in organizational policies or practices
 - c. Review and revise service tools and forms with an intersectional SOGIE lens to increase and affirm inclusivity.

Communications, Community Engagement, and Partnerships

Truth and Reconciliation

1. Identify and deepen community partnerships with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis organizations and leaders.
2. Include, consult, and respect community stakeholders at decision-making tables/committees.
3. Communicate and champion messages of truth and reconciliation and traditional Indigenous days of significance actively within our organization and in the local community we serve.
4. Ensure the planning, consultation, and writing of our annual reports through a truth and reconciliation lens and include voices from the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities we serve.
5. Clearly indicate our organization's obligations in public-facing communications.



Equity

1. Identify and strengthen community partnerships with 2SLGBTQ+ organizations and leaders.
2. Identify and strengthen community collaborations and partnerships with African Canadian parents and African Canadian community members.
3. Provide guidelines that highlight resources and relevant information for families in contact with a Children's Aid Society (e.g., One Vision One Voice's [*Guide to Navigating Child Welfare for the Black Community*](#))
4. Establish community feedback mechanisms that include opportunities for feedback and concerns of inequitable treatment or discrimination.
5. Provide opportunities for youth in care to be seen, heard, and uplifted (e.g., via youth events such as the [*PowerUp! Youth Symposium*](#) hosted annually by One Vision One Voice).
6. Engage and educate mandated referrers, especially when the analysis of data indicates racial disproportionality in referrals.
7. Ensure all website and external materials fall within the AODA standards for accessible communication formats.
8. Include, consult, and respect community stakeholders at decision-making tables/committees.
9. Communicate and champion messages of equity and inclusion through days of significance.
10. Work with internal and community stakeholder groups to ensure diverse faiths and traditions are recognized in our organization. For example, incorporate diverse faiths and holidays into our annual giving programs for families in need of support.
11. Include an anti-classism lens to empower families to make their own choices on annual giving programs (monetary gifts versus physical toys/clothing).
12. Ensure the planning and content in annual reports are written through an equity lens and are representative of the communities we serve.