

IN PREPARATION FOR YOUR WORKSHOP

# An invitation to view and explore equity



## CREATING SAFE SPACES IN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

**We are so thrilled to be running a workshop with your school!** As part of this work, we want to ensure both our Sierra Club BC staff and your school group are learning together in a safe, inclusive environment. We recognize that we all come from diverse backgrounds, with different genders, races, ethnicities, religions, ages, sexual orientations, disabilities, and lived experiences. **This document was prepared to help facilitate empathy and understanding to ensure we all feel welcomed and supported during our time together.**

## ABOUT SIERRA CLUB BC AND OUR VALUES

At Sierra Club BC, we are creating a more inclusive movement, empowering new partners and local leaders to take positive steps in their communities that help restore balance to vital ecosystems in B.C. From grassroots to the classroom, we support education, advocacy, and action that's welcoming and community-centered.

In the last couple of years, Sierra Club BC has embarked on a journey of growth and transformation. We have had to take a hard look at ourselves, acknowledging the harms that our organization and other organizations like ours have perpetuated over time. The field of environmental advocacy, education, and conservation has a rooted legacy of upholding colonial values, and access to the outdoors and outdoor education remain largely inequitable for certain communities. This has to change.

As we move forward with our work, we acknowledge our responsibility to create cultural safety within our organization and across all of the spaces that we enter. We are also striving to better balance our relationship with each other as well as Western, Indigenous, and other cultural knowledge systems and ways of knowing. This is an ongoing process that requires hard work, an open mind, humility, and a willingness to change. It is imperative for our collective ability to survive and thrive.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

As collaborators working with us, we are inviting you into this journey and ask that you are mindful of the following considerations:

- Diversity and equity includes an intercultural perspective. We all have different lived experiences and different perspectives, but we all come from a place of respect for the natural world and are working towards the same goal. An attitude of humility in seeking out and incorporating diverse perspectives into our practices is required to become truly effective in our work.
- Authentic Indigenous lenses and voices need to be invited into our place-based practices in education, especially within the context of land-based learning. For a learning environment (school district or classroom) this might look like inviting authentic voices from Nations within which the learning is taking place.
- As part of strengthening our relationships between people, it is important and expected that we acknowledge and are respectful of the words people use to refer to their names and pronouns.
- We must continue to be kind to ourselves and be brave; new skills, new culture, and new processes require practice to create 'muscle memory'. This can look like remaining open to corrections and learning as this is likely to be uncomfortable at the beginning. Change or transformation is not easy or comfortable for most.

## IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

**Diversity:** The differences among us based on experienced systemic advantages or encountered systemic barriers in access to opportunities and resources. Race and ethnicity are not the only ways in which we are diverse as a group. There are countless visible and invisible facets of diversity. Furthermore, a person cannot be “diverse” (as in “diverse candidate”). Diversity is the outcome of inclusion and equity efforts.

**Equity:** An approach based in fairness to ensure everyone has access to the same opportunities and resources. In practice, it ensures everyone is given equal opportunity to thrive; this means that resources may be divided and shared unequally to make sure that each person can access an opportunity. Equity is therefore not the same thing as equality. Equity takes into account that people have different access to resources because of systems of oppression and privilege. Equity seeks to balance that disparity.

**Inclusion:** Celebrating, centering, and amplifying the perspectives, voices, values, and needs of people who experience systemic barriers, mistreatment, or disadvantages based on their identities in order to ensure they feel a sense of belonging. Inclusion is not merely tolerating or accommodating differences; it’s about actively valuing and honoring them. Inclusion is also not about surmounting, overcoming, or transcending differences to focus on “our common humanity.” Diversity is what we are, and inclusion is what we do.

**Justice:** Justice involves dismantling systems of oppression and privilege that create systemic disadvantages and barriers to people’s ability to access resources and opportunities (e.g., the “isms”) or based on which people experience systemic mistreatment. Whereas equity is about reapportioning or redistributing resources so people can access opportunities, justice is about dismantling barriers to those opportunities.

*These definitions are shared by Sierra Club BC’s Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) board. The artwork is by the [City of Albuquerque’s Office of Equity and Inclusion](#).*

### Equality



### Equity



### Empowerment



## WANT TO DIVE DEEPER?

Here are a few extra resources to learn more about diversity, equity and inclusion principles. If you have any questions or want to chat, please connect with us at [education@sierraclub.bc.ca](mailto:education@sierraclub.bc.ca).

- To learn more about pronouns, [click here](#).
- To learn more about land acknowledgments, [click here](#).
- To learn more about environmental racism, [click here](#).