



RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN

NWT Recreation & Parks Association

2022

Prepared by C. Okafor
Consulting in consultation with
Jennie Vandermeer Consulting



Traditional Land Acknowledgement

The NWT Recreation and Parks Association's physical office is located in S̓mba K'è on Chief Drygeese Territory in Treaty 8, the traditional home of the Yellowknives Dene and the North Slave Metis. This place is also known as Yellowknife, Northwest Territories (NWT).

The NWTRPA acknowledges that operating within the entirety of Denendeh (or the NWT) means we work, live, and recreate within the many traditional territories in place prior to creating Canadian borders. We operate on lands that are traditionally of Indigenous peoples, but also within their modern land claim agreements. The NWTRPA recognizes that we are all treaty people, and we all have a responsibility to honour the treaties.

In 2018, the NWTRPA identified the following strategic goal: Working with intention to advance decolonization and reconciliation through its work, workplaces, and relationships. Actions connected to this strategic goal can be found within our annual reports at nwtrpa.org



Decolonization & Reconciliation Work

As part of its 2018-2021 Strategic Plan, the NWTRPA identified a variety of strategic priorities to advance its work in decolonization & reconciliation. As highlighted under strategic goal number one: "The NWTRPA is working with intention to advance decolonization and reconciliation through its work, workplaces, and relationships."

As part of the strategic actions outlined within this goal, the NWTRPA has committed to:

- ◆ Invest in ongoing staff and Board development related to recreation, colonialism, decolonization, and reconciliation.
- ◆ Make decolonization/ reconciliation a standing agenda item at all face-to-face Board meetings to consider progress on these strategies and identify future actions.
- ◆ Review and update NWTRPA programs to advance decolonization/reconciliation (offerings, content, delivery, protocols).
- ◆ Enhance understanding of the relationship between colonialism and recreation in the NWT and advocate for decolonization/reconciliation in the recreation profession.
- ◆ Develop/sustain reciprocal relationships with Indigenous governments/organizations that respect community priorities and ways of working.

The NWTRPA's journey in working through a racial equity change process is simply a continuation of the work the organization started with its decolonization and reconciliation efforts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Northwest Territories Recreation and Parks Association (NWTRPA) is a non-profit organization that works with communities across the Northwest Territories to promote recreation by supporting leaders, communities and its partners through training, advocacy, and networking. Since its inception, the organization has focused on advocacy, training, professional development, information sharing, and networking.

The NWTRPA's 'Racial Equity Action Plan' seeks to further its commitment to racial equity by articulating specific goals, strategies, and measures for the organization over the next five years. During this period, the NWTRPA will continue to address systemic racism, in addition to its decolonization and reconciliation efforts, and strive towards embedding the principles of racial equity all through-out the organization.

The action plan outlines seven strategic goal areas for action:

- The principles of racial equity, decolonization and reconciliation are embedded through out the organization.
- Organizational policies and practices have a racial equity, decolonization and reconciliation lens.
- Awareness of board and staff members on systemic racism, decolonization and reconciliation.
- Research and data-collection is used to help inform organizational decisions, policies, programs and services.
- Employment standards and practices are equitable.
- The organization is representative of the population in which it serves.
- The organization will work to increase and foster engagement and partnership with the broader community.

The NWTRPA Action Plan was developed by C. Okafor Consulting in consultation with board and staff members within the organization. Jennie Vandermeer Consulting provided expert advice on Indigenous content provided all through-out the document.

INTRODUCTION



The NWTRPA is no stranger to the work of equity and has made strides over the last ten-years to advance the work of decolonization and reconciliation both within its organization and the recreational sector.

With the Idle No More movement, the remains of thousands of Indigenous children recently uncovered at former residential schools sites across Canada, the death of George Floyd and the rise of anti-racism protests around the world, the NWTRPA made a commitment to further its equity efforts by undergoing a racial equity change process.

As a leader in recreation, the organization recognizes that prejudice and discrimination are deeply woven in the fabric of our systems and institutions, and it cannot effectively spearhead the work without understanding the role that colonialism and racism have played within the field of recreation.

In the fall of 2020, the NWTRPA began its journey in working through a racial equity change process. The work started back in October 2020 with a two-day anti-racism session followed by an organizational audit using a racial equity assessment tool. The work later evolved with the development of a racial equity plan to further advance its anti-racism, decolonization and reconciliation work over the next five years.

The NWTRPA's racial equity plan 2022-2026, is the result of the work and commitment its board members and staff have made to further the work of racial equity within the organization. It identifies key strategic priorities and actions to help foster racial equity within the organization,

The beauty of anti-racism is that you don't have to pretend to be free of racism to be an anti-racist. Anti-racism is the commitment to fight racism wherever you find it. And it's the only way forward.

Ijeoma Oluo

DEFINITIONS

Racial Equity

Racial Equity is a process of eliminating racial disparities and outcomes for everyone. It is the intentional practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people and culture.

Race Forward, 2021

Decolonization

Once viewed as the formal process of handing over instruments of government, it is now recognized as a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 2012

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between [Indigenous] Aboriginal and non-[Indigenous] Aboriginal peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been included, atonement for the causes, and action to change behavior.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015



"The road we travel is equal in importance to the destination we seek. There are no shortcuts. When it comes to truth and reconciliation, we are all forced to go the distance.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

The NWTRPA's racial equity plan, 2022-2026, is the result of the work and commitment its board members and staff have made in advancing the work of racial equity within the organization. The process began in 2020 when the NWTRPA enlisted C. Okafor Consulting to facilitate a two-day anti-racism training series for the organization. Following the training, C. Okafor Consulting led the organization through an organizational assessment which included a series of engagement sessions with board and staff. The NWTRPA's racial equity action plan was then developed to help the organization identify goals and strategic priorities to support its work in racial equity.

October 2020

The NWTRPA's journey in racial equity began when C. Okafor Consulting was brought on board to deliver a two-day anti-racism workshop. The session was attended by staff within the organization and served as a precursor to ongoing engagement work with the organization.

January 2021

Following the workshop, C. Okafor Consulting led the NWTRPA Board of Directors through an organizational audit using "The Racial Equity Assessment Tool" (THE REAT). The REAT is a reflective tool designed to assess the state of readiness of an organization in embarking on racial equity work. It's meant to help organizations uncover their strengths, identify potential gaps and barriers in doing this work, and come up with solutions in advancing this work as part of its ongoing operations.

February 2021

A final report was drafted by C. Okafor Consulting and outlined a series of recommendations and next steps for the NWTRPA to consider as part of its ongoing work in racial equity.

March 2021

Another audit was conducted with the support of Mandee McDonald who was contracted to facilitate the session as an Independent Contractor outside of the organization. Mandee also compiled and prepared a summary of findings following the session.

THE ACTION PLAN

The NWTRPA Racial Equity Action Plan 2022-2026 is intended to guide the work of the NWTRPA in implementing its racial equity strategy over a five-year period. It identifies the core strategic goals and objectives the organization will prioritize within this time, the strategic actions it will engage in and the measures of success the organization will work to accomplish as part of its indicators.

01

Racial Equity Principles

Embed the principles of racial equity, decolonization and reconciliation throughout the organization.

02

Policies and Practices

Organizational policies and practices have a racial equity, decolonization and reconciliation lens.

03

Awareness and Education

Increase awareness of board and staff members on systemic racism, decolonization and reconciliation.

04

Research and Data-collection

Use research and data-collection to help inform organizational decisions, policies, programs and services.

05

Employment Standards

Ensure employment standards and practices are equitable.

06

Representation

The organization is representative of the population in which it serves.

07

Engagement and Partnerships

Increase and foster engagement and partnership with the broader community.

Goal 1–Racial Equity Principles

Embed the principles of racial equity, decolonization and reconciliation throughout the organization.

Objective:

Ensure the principles of racial equity, decolonization and reconciliation is embedded as part of the next strategic planning cycle.

Actions

- ◆ Review the organization vision, mission, and values using a racial equity, decolonization and reconciliation lens.
- ◆ Create a broad-level Racial Equity Vision Statement.
- ◆ Create opportunities for board members and staff to champion the work of racial equity within the organization.
- ◆ Ensure there is a sustainability plan in place for the racial equity plan. Part of the work may be contracted out to external consultants provided that funding is available.

Measures of Success

- ◆ Organizational values and goals around racial equity, decolonization and reconciliation and goals are clearly articulated within its vision, mission and values.
- ◆ The NWTRPA has a clear statement on where it stands in relation to racial equity, decolonization and reconciliation and one that is well articulated.
- ◆ The NWTRPA has an accountability structure in place to ensure its goals, objectives and strategic priorities are met.

Goal 2-Policies and Practices

Organizational policies and practices have a racial equity, decolonization and reconciliation lens and a plan is in place for operationalization.

Objective:

Review policies and procedures related to the board, recruitment and retention using a racial equity, decolonization and reconciliation lens.

Actions	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review and provide recommendations on all policies and the board nomination and elections process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Principles and best practices related to racial equity, decolonization and reconciliation are reflected in board processes.

Goal 3- Awareness and Education

Increase the awareness of board and staff members on systemic racism, decolonization and reconciliation.

Objective:

Continue providing awareness and educational opportunities for Board and staff members.

Actions	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ensure all board and staff have training and shared analysis, understanding and language associated with systemic racism, decolonization and reconciliation. Training and learning opportunities would be ongoing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Board and staff members engage in ongoing professional development opportunities.Board and staff members reflect these learnings in their work and articulate their own strategies for embedding the principles of racial equity, decolonization and reconciliation as part of their work.

Goal 4-Research and Data Collection

Use research and data-collection to help inform organizational decisions, policies programs and services.

Objective:

Use research and data-collection to support with decision making and planning.

Actions

- ◆ Start collecting and tracking data to support racial equity efforts.
- ◆ Create a data collection plan in collaboration with staff.
- ◆ Allocate a budget and funds for research and evaluation each year.

Measures of Success

- ◆ Data collected is used to inform policies, decisions, programs and services.
- ◆ Data collected is used to inform policies, decisions, programs and services. Sense of responsibility of staff in driving and implementing data collection measures.
- ◆ Implementation of data collection measures.

Goal 5-Employment Standards

Employment standards and practices are equitable.

Objective:

Ensure employment and standards embed a racial equity, decolonization and reconciliation lens.

Actions	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Improve recruitment, onboarding and retention practices.◆ Review hiring practices (I.e. job advertising, interview processes etc.).◆ Review and improve communication and marketing strategies related to hiring and recruitment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Principles and best practices related to racial equity, decolonization and reconciliation are reflected in recruitment and retention practices.◆ Recruitment, onboarding and retention practices are equitable.◆ Increased access to organization.

Goal 6- Representation

The organization is representative of the population in which it serves.

Objectives:

Explore opportunities to increase the representation of diverse individuals both at the board and staff level.

Actions

- ◆ Intentional practices are in place to promote diversity and inclusion within the organization.

Measures of Success

- ◆ Diversity is reflected all though-out the organization.
- ◆ Organization reflects an environment of inclusion and belonging.

Goal 7-Engagement and Partnerships

Increase and foster engagement and partnership with the broader community.

Objectives:

Continue to create and foster opportunities for partnership and collaboration within the community.

Actions

- ◆ Community outreach and partnership with residents and local organizations.

Measures of Success

- ◆ Programs and services are accessible to the community.
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CLOSING

If there's anything we've learned from the events of the last few years, it's that the work of racial equity continues to be as important now as it's been historically.

The NWTRPA recognizes that in order to create a truly inclusive and equitable future for all, it must continue to challenge itself by dismantling racism and other forms of injustices within its organization.

The NWTRPA's Racial Equity Action Plan provides an opportunity for the organization to strengthen and deepen its commitment to the work of equity by identifying key strategic goals and priorities to guide its work over the next five-years. It also includes a plan for the organization to implement and operationalize this work into practice.

The work of racial equity is an ongoing and ever evolving process and the NWTRPA remains committed to making a positive impact within its organization, and the field of recreation as a whole.





Acknowledgements

A **SPECIAL THANKS** To the NWTRPA and its board members and staff for embarking on this journey and for your commitment to creating an inclusive and equitable organization.

Your Consultant(s):

Cynthia Okafor is a settler who was born and raised in the unceded traditional Treaty 7 territory of the Blackfoot confederacy which includes the Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, as well as the Iyaxe Nakoda and Tsuut-ina nations.

She is the founder and lead consultant with C. Okafor Consulting and has over 18 years of experience in the social services sector. She is a registered and practicing social worker and is also an educator and facilitator. Cynthia is a thought leader in the field of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and regarded for her work in promoting transformational, systemic and sustainable change in organizations.

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Jennie Vandermeer (Great Bear Lake) and grew up in Dǎ́lǎ́nǎ́, Northwest Territories (NWT). She is an Indigenous language speaker (Dene Kedé-North Slavey) and a wellness advocate. Her educational background includes a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science from Royal Roads University. She has extensive experience working with communities across the NWT on water quality, environmental assessment, wildlife management, forestry, and protected areas. More recently, she worked with the territorial government on their anti-racism and Indigenous reconciliation initiatives.

She currently resides in Tłęgóhłı́ (Norman Wells), NWT and works as a consultant, specializing in the decolonization of policy, programs and services through the acknowledgement and incorporation of Indigenous culture and knowledge. Jennie leads projects, presentations and workshops on Indigenous reconciliation, leadership development and health & wellness from a Dene perspective. Jennie believes that a strong relationship between people and land are vital to health and well-being.

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