

OUR FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

FOR EQUITY,
DIVERSITY, AND
RECONCILIATION



About



The BC SPCA is committed to a future when diversity, equity, and reconciliation are meaningfully embedded in all aspects of its work and within the communities we serve. In our efforts to foster an environment of kindness, compassion and respect, we have a responsibility to stand up for those who are facing injustice and cruelty including people.

The humane community which we work towards and advocate for cannot come to be while systemic racism and intolerance exist. Until now we have been structurally blind to its impact on and within our organization. While difficult to acknowledge, we have been unaware that our efforts were not fully inclusive to all members of our communities and we have done little to truly understand the needs of communities who may think differently from us.

As an organization we are fully committed to systemic change within the animal welfare sector, and spell out below the foundational principles by which the BC SPCA considers equity, diversity, and reconciliation within our organization.

Diversity and Inclusion



Diversity refers to difference or variety. At the BC SPCA, we acknowledge that our organization is made better when individuals of different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds; abilities; worldviews; geographical origins; genders and/or sexual orientations bring together their knowledge, lived experiences, and interest for the benefit of animals in our province. Our organization strives to represent the communities we serve. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms¹ and B.C. Human Rights Code² ensure that all people are protected by law and the BC SPCA bases our commitments to inclusion on the tenets of The Charter and The Code.

Inclusion requires us to consider and address the range of conditions that create experiences of disadvantage. We consider the full context and impacts of our practices and processes, recognizing that these may be experienced differently by different individuals and groups.

The BC SPCA supports and encourages diversity and inclusion through the identification and removal of barriers. This creates workplaces and learning environments that are free from all forms of harassment and discrimination and are also welcoming, safe spaces. We value and cultivate full and meaningful engagement of all people, including historically and structurally excluded individuals and groups.



Equity and Accessibility



Equity is the understanding that everyone has unique needs and requires specific support in order to succeed. Equitable principles, policies, and practices enable access, representation, opportunities, and meaningful participation of socially diverse people. This encompasses legally designated individuals as well as other equity-seeking groups, including but not limited to: women, racialized people, persons of colour, Indigenous peoples, persons living with disabilities, and people of any sexual and gender identity and expression.

Accessibility refers to the degree to which structures of the BC SPCA are (re)designed to enable the full, meaningful, and equitable engagement of everyone in the community. Accessibility includes designing for physical, financial, sensory, social, and language-level access. The BC SPCA seeks pro-actively to reduce as many barriers as possible, while creating efficient and transparent processes.

We recognize that policies, practices, and informal processes are often created by and for particular groups of people, with a default norm in mind, which produce structural barriers that limit access and inclusion for other individuals and groups. The BC SPCA is committed to enabling historically excluded groups to have the same opportunities to succeed by utilizing equity and accessibility in our foundational principles.



Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples



The BC SPCA uses the term **reconciliation** to refer to the commitment to establish and maintain a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. It is a long-term relationship-building, learning, and healing process, as opposed to a specific outcome to be achieved. Our organization establishes and maintains relationships with Indigenous Peoples based on mutual respect, trust, and dialogue.

We recognize the distinctions between and within First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities and respect that cultural practices and traditions are essential to the health and well-being of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and their animals. The BC SPCA further recognizes that truth and reconciliation will be distinct to the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.³

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) final report⁴ identified the need for truth telling as an essential element of justice and healing in reconciliation. It is critical that the animal welfare sector build respectful relationships with Indigenous Peoples that are honest and constructive in our efforts to work toward rectifying any discriminatory practices. Similarly, it is important for all who work in animal welfare to understand the history of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and their innate connection to the environment and animals, in order to build a better future.

Intersectionality



An **intersectional** approach to equity, diversity, and reconciliation begins from the understanding that the different factors of social diversity (race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, nationality, worldview, language, age, etc.) do not exist separately or in isolation from each other. Instead, these various qualities are interwoven and interdependent.

Intersecting social categories play a role in exclusion and shape oppression through social belonging, cultural representations, political, and material marginalization. Intersectionality should be based on the wellbeing of everyone in our communities - including animals.



Justice



Justice refers to standing up for the rights of all and fostering an environment of kindness, compassion, and respect; the BC SPCA is driven by a call for justice that is inclusive. We are working toward the equitable empowerment of people to help create conditions where animals and people thrive together. A more humane society is not only about compassion for animals, but also how we treat other people and stand up for what is right.

With Gratitude

REFERENCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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References

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Cover animal: Chloe, BC SPCA Alumni

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