

Our Sixth Roundtable Discussion: Inclusion in Philanthropy in Canada

On May 6, 2026, WiP held our sixth nation-wide roundtable discussion online with women philanthropists committed to inclusion in Canada's philanthropic sector, who generously offered their insights and experiences.

Beginning to Think More Inclusively

Acknowledge differences

Structural and Systemic Change

- Philanthropic sector is shifting from a single-identity focus (e.g. women, children) to more intersectional considerations of layered identities.
- Communications language in outreach materials is welcoming broader identities.
- Organizations are reflecting on program designs that may, unintentionally, exclude groups.

- Sector must emphasize review of institutional policies and systems, as well as harmful individual behaviours.
- Environmental and systemic barriers must be addressed at the access points of funding, programming, or distribution.
- Inclusion embeds across organizational processes (governance, funding criteria, hiring, partnerships).

Power Dynamics in Decision Making

Foster community

Building Relationships

- Growing recognition of philanthropy as a site of structural power imbalance, requiring redistribution.
- Explicit acknowledgment of funders' and boards' lived experience as often different from the community.
- The sector is moving from "consultation" to more community-led and participatory grant-making models that shift decision-making power to affected communities.

- Prioritize building reciprocal relationships rather than transactional exchanges to establish trust over time.
- Practice non-extractive engagement by listening to needs and solutions proposed by community.
- Inclusive philanthropy requires flexibility in timelines, communication expectations, and sustained engagement with long-term collaboration rather than immediate outcomes.
- Some communities need more outreach for inclusion.

Practical Challenges

Focus on the work and keep trying

Importance of Language

- Leadership must navigate aspirational inclusion goals within operational feasibility and resources.
- Donors are recognizing that sustainable philanthropy must prioritize strategic focus areas.
- Governance must balance political realities and varying stakeholder priorities with limits imposed by funding capacity and reliance on government systems.

- Sector must prepare for when inclusive language is weaponised, diluted, or turned into buzzwords.
- A nuanced understanding is needed to assess when inclusive terminology may feel exclusionary to some.
- Recognition that different sectors (philanthropy, education, social services) use different vocabularies.
- Sector can bridge conversations across perspectives.

Ensure physical environments are inclusive while lowering barriers for inclusion.

This work is done day-to-day ... and every day it changes

Engage in conversations, even if just to learn and listen



Inclusion in Philanthropy in Practice

Ideas about inclusion and a growth mindset in philanthropy in Canada:

1. Throughout the philanthropic sector, *inclusion* as a lifelong iterative process, rather than a one-time training or initiative, with an emphasis on personal humility, self-reflection, recognizing gaps in knowledge, and continued learning.
2. Sector and donors may need to adjust expectations (e.g. immediate deliverables) due to pressures and capacity of organizational culture for more sustainable and more impactful outcomes.
3. Grantmakers and funders may need to commit to more sustained engagement with an organization or community to realize sector innovation and sustainable impact.
4. Diversity initiatives need to be framed in terms of community, organizational, and sector stakeholders (e.g. what is the economic value of diversity in a local business chamber of commerce?).
5. Inclusion initiatives involve making mistakes, apologizing, and taking accountability; they encourage us to respectfully ask questions, listen well, and change course when needed.

Roundtable Resources

Participants shared resources that have been helpful to them and their colleagues:

Books

- *The Uprising of Women in Philanthropy* by Ndana Bofu-Tawamba, et al.
- *I Never Thought of it That Way* by Mónica Guzmán
- *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo
- *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act* by Bob Joseph

Online Courses and Resources

- [First Nations Principles of OCAP training](#)
- [Rainbow Accreditation Program](#)
- [Calgary Foundation Governance and Grantmaking DEI Toolkit](#)
- [Nonprofit Ready DEI Courses](#)
- [Example of economic case for social program](#)

We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed with their stories and resources.

**Women in Philanthropy will be hosting online roundtables throughout 2026.
Email WiP@carleton.ca for more information and to join the conversation.**